

Dear Friends in Christ,

I'm thinking the questions echo down through the generations. Different languages. The same questions. "What's happening to this world?" "Why is there so much tragedy?" "If God is love then why does He or why doesn't He..." (And you can fill in the blank.)

In a sermon from the 1990's, I stated:

It's a stunning thought, isn't it, that a goodly number of us will probably be alive in this world at the close of this decade? Stunning because it will mark not just the end of the decade but the end of a century and another millennium ... And where have we come?

Chilling, isn't it? We have come a long way to nowhere in particular, other than growing darkness. We're some two thousand years removed from when Jesus walked this earth. The dreams of a multitude of generations are dust. All the exciting plans and formulas for a better life have brought us...where? We cannot walk much of any city at night for fear of our lives. We dare not correct others who are doing wrong for fear of our lives. We fear the wickedness of people who have devised poisonous programs that pull our children into darkened and Godless thinking. Most everything we eat is bad. Most everything we drink is bad. And every generation sacrifices its quota of sons and daughters on countless altars of war and hatred.

Oh, I believe it's a question on the minds of most of Christ's people . . .

### **WHEN IS THIS GOING TO END?**

#### **I. The Flood.**

I suspect, in some way, Noah asked that question. And why not? He saw it all. Listen to this from Genesis 6:

Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt. For all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. (vv. 11-13)

Anything here sound familiar? Did you get the repetition of words? *Corrupt, corruption, violence.* "Earth...filled with violence...it was corrupt...all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth." Let's see. All of humanity's programs and schemes apart from God have brought us to what? Removing God and the 10 Commandments have given us what? *Corruption! Violence! Everywhere!!*

Consequently, the great Flood:

Then the Lord said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation.... For in seven days I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground. (vv. 1-4)

And some might ask: "Why would God do that?" But, again and again, that isn't the question. The question is: "Why does man do what he does?" And the question for this moment: "When is this going to end?" The answer is provided by the Lord through Peter: "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) And the next question is, "What promise?", as in "the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise." Well, here it is; first the words of Jesus:

## II. The Promise.

“For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.” (Matt. 24:38-39)

It is the Apostle Peter who gives further insight:

...knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming...all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.” For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. (2 Peter 3:3-7)

In one sense, life before the great Day will be business as usual. In another sense, there will be the most incredible intensification of violence and corruption. Concerning the movement of mankind toward its end - and concerning what we are seeing - Jesus said: “For there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.” (Matt. 24:21)

Twenty-one years ago, “The Religion & Society Report” stated the following in an article entitled “Can Crises Be Chronic?” There’s a reason for dragging us back 21 years ago, so please note the following from the article:

A sense of foreboding and impending doom effects ever broader segments of culture. Nothing helps, nothing works. Art no longer creates beauty, but is meant to “shock.” Education, from the grandest ivy halls to the humblest preschools, has become preoccupied with teaching about variations...of sexual conduct. Medicine can pause in its endless quest for new therapies and more effective treatments if it can be allowed to solve its challenges by interpreting the “full range of medical services” to mean such life ending measures as unhindered access to abortion and ready provision of “physician assisted suicide.” The news and entertainment media in several countries have perfected the technique of exposing each real and imagined flaw in public officials as soon as they take office, destroying every vestige of the moral authority that makes it possible for rulers to govern by persuasion rather than to rule by force or compulsion. With a few praiseworthy exceptions, the most notable leaders of the most prominent churches devote themselves to not telling their people what to believe and how to live in order to know and serve God, but what they do not need to believe and all of the rules of conduct that they may break with impunity in order to fulfill themselves and serve their own basest desires and grossest lusts.

Twenty-one years ago - 1996! We were and are in a power driven nose dive into the darkest depths! Again, the article was entitled “Can Crises Be Chronic?” That is no longer a question. It is!! Connect the dots. Prior to the Flood we’re told, “The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of his heart was only evil continually.” And Jesus said, “For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.” (Matt. 24:37) But don’t forget His words, “...there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world...” - even before the Great Flood! (Matt. 24:21) And concerning our inner stress with this, remember these words of Jesus: “And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.” (Matt. 24:22) And these words: “Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” (Lk. 21:28)

### III. And So, the Question.

Consequently, the question: "When is this going to end?" Well, let's remember these words from Genesis: "And those that entered (the Ark), male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him (Noah). And the Lord shut him in." (7:16) Isn't that something? "The Lord shut him in." - Noah and his family - 8 people - which comprised the total church of that time. God delivered them. It wasn't Noah's task or worry to shut the Ark from the mass of humanity. It was God's business. It wasn't Noah's concern to wonder *when* it was going to happen. It was God's business! It still is.

That's what we see at the foot of the Cross. We come before Him as beggars - sinners without a bargaining position -yet loved by Him! And here's the simplicity and wonder of the moment. Jesus got on that Cross to **shut** away our sin from God's sight - to drown out sin in the water of Baptism. Scriptures teach, "For our sake (God) made (Jesus) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Cor. 5:21) And this: "...God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you..." (1 Pet. 3:20,21) - that we would have the promise of eternal life.

Considering that most everything happening is global (as it was in the days of Noah!); considering that **the way things were is almost gone**; considering that what is happening will worsen - well - don't you think that the real priority of life is our understanding and strengthening through study of God's Word? We watch the majority of our Junior Confirmants persuaded away by this world; its educational system, its mind distracting technology, its approved immorality. We have watched members slowly but steadily cave in to this culture's and their families' and friends' wants and demands.

Rally Day. It's our begging, pleading, asking that you and our children will study with us - in preparation for what's to come for this world - and preparation for the world to come. The time is growing very short. The end isn't all that invisible.

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

*RALLY DAY*

*September 10, 2017*

*Genesis 7:1-16:*    ***“When Is This Going to End?”***

*I. The Flood.*

*II. The Promise*

*III. And So, the Question.*

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