

“As It Was in the Days of Noah...”

A Word of Warning By Arthur A. Oakman

"As it was in the days of Noah, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24: 37).



Apostle

Arthur A. Oakman

This is a day of tremendous possibilities. Never at any time before has knowledge been so wide or deep as it is now. In every realm of the outer world men have extended their conquest of physical substance. Wind and tide, heaven and earth, atom and universe have yielded up their treasures to the ceaseless search for power. We have built our dams, our bridges and our aircraft. We have released energy that has been for generations locked in substances which a few years ago were not discovered. The possibilities that lie in these achievements are enormous. If we use our powers with good will toward all, nothing but mutual benefit can come to men and nations. If, however, we use these achievements in the spirit of fear and hate, then destruction awaits us; and the very discoveries become a means of cursing instead of blessing. Bacon once said that knowledge was power: but the ultimate significance in the possession of knowledge and power lies in the purposes for which it is gained, and the ends to which it is devoted. Knowledge of physical substances is the servant of men for good or for ill. It is impervious to moral issues, and it is in the moral realm that today we must work out our salvation.

The dominion which has been given to man over the outer world is entirely secondary to the dominion which it is intended by Divinity he should achieve within himself. The record of our ability to keep the peace with each other is lamentable. We have yet to learn how to win the kind of warfare that will insure peace. Knowledge in the moral realm is not easily gained, and when it is, it is diffused with difficulty. Prophet-souls have arisen in history who have seen the destruction that awaits the people of wickedness, and the peace that is dependent upon righteousness. Most of these men have lost their lives in an attempt to educate the public conscience. There is a kind of moral blindness which prevents people from seeing the consequences of their acts. And, it is not unusual to find this blindness of mind coexistent with the highest culture. Nineveh and Tyre, the glory that was Greece and Rome are dust. Any peace that was ever given them was transient. Their culture did not save them because the forces in which they trusted cheated them. When fear and hate, envy and malice dominate the social order as they do today, any ray of light wrested by men of science from the physical world serves only to intensify the gloom. "The light in them is darkness." We dare not be deceived by our physical accomplishments. The lull of carnal security is the breath of spiritual death. Even now there lives within the fabric of our society the seeds of destruction.

If only some Power could help this generation to see clearly what awaits it! In these days of trial and perplexity, in these days of great opportunity for good or ill, foreknowledge would be priceless. Is there any hope in "that which is to come"? Many good men are asking that question today, and there is a growing "fear of that which is coming upon the earth." Under the pressure of fear the achievements of men of science are being used for defense, and aggression in the spirit of hatred uses these same things for attack. Sin reigns in the hearts of men—men, who, if they knew differently would gladly have it otherwise!

It is our business as the ministers of Christ, to set forth clearly and understandingly that which awaits this generation. We believe men will ultimately respond to the love of God in His Son. We are sure that some day men of goodwill shall reign on the earth.

The greatest of all seers knew the value of foreknowledge and to His disciples said, "behold, I have foretold you all things." "Prophecy," said one man, "is the ability to look forwards into the past...." Bishop Butler said that prophecy was "History written aforetime." But sometimes history itself constitutes prophecy, because over and over again the principles which make for the preservation of the righteous and the destruction of the wicked are clearly revealed. Such vision had Jesus, and never more surely than when He said, "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Son of Man." We may inquire then what conditions prevailed in that ancient day, and see if the future is revealed in them.

The Generation of Noah Gloried in Its Physical Achievements

"Behold," they said, "we are the sons of God."

"Our wives bear us children ... the same are mighty men, which are like unto them of old, men of great renown."

"Are we not eating, and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage?"

This was the temper of mind of the people then. How blind they were! Christ said of them, "... and they knew not until the day that Noah entered the ark!" Knowledge of moral values, understanding in the realm of the Spirit, is denied men who find carnal satisfaction in the lusts of the flesh. Similar conditions we are told, are to apply to the generation in the day when our Lord shall return. Do they? Who will deny that the chief inclination now is to find satisfaction in the physical and in the sensuous? Who will deny that marrying and giving in marriage is hardly questioned? Or that eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building occupy first place in our affections? Our inordinate emphasis on the physical, its strength and beauty, the lust for power in armies and armaments, the fear of death, the trust we put in "reeking tube and iron shard," all point to the conclusion that Jesus was eminently right, and that these days parallel with the days of Noah! And, who will deny that we know not whither we are going?

The prophet Joseph Smith puts it thus:

For every man walketh in his own way, after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world, whose substance is that of an idol, which waxeth old and shall perish in Babylon (Doctrine and Covenants 1: 3).

Now the substance of an idol is material. We are worshiping the physical.

Noah's Generation Was Warned

It was fortunate that there arose in that ancient day one man who was not deceived by the outward appearance of things. Noah's soul sickened as he contemplated the way those around him lived, and would to God it were otherwise. With deep conviction he preached that unless a change of spirit were manifest, the flood would come in upon them. He saw clearly that such judgment was not vindictive, but just. Unborn generations had a right then, as now, to know the truth. This they could never do if

that condition of wickedness were permitted to continue. His preaching was born out of the knowledge given him of the inevitable end of sinners who continued in their sin. A prophet arose in Noah's day. "As it was ... so shall it be." A prophet has arisen in our day too. Joseph Smith has proclaimed that unless repentance comes, destruction awaits this generation. War, famine, pestilence, disease, earthquakes, storms are to be the instruments of Divine justice, to make an end of ungodliness. The earth in Noah's day was baptized, according to his word, to its cleansing. Since that day, according to Joseph Smith, the earth has become defiled under the inhabitants thereof, and it shall again be baptized, this time with fire. What the water has failed to do, the fire will! Can it be possible that God, who spared not the old world because He loved generations then unborn, shall permit forever children to be born to be made cannon fodder? We might well exclaim with those of old "How long, how long, O Lord!" Deity's warning voice is revealed in characteristic phrases from the revelations given in this day....

And again, verily I say unto you, O inhabitants of the earth, I the Lord am willing to make these things known unto all flesh, for I am no respecter of persons, and willeth that all men shall know that the day speedily cometh ... when peace shall be taken from the earth, and the Devil shall have power over his own dominion; and also the Lord shall have power over his saints, and shall reign in their midst, and shall come down in judgment upon the world (Doctrine and Covenants 1:6).

I, the Lord, am angry with the wicked; I am holding my spirit from the inhabitants of the earth. I have sworn in my wrath and decreed wars upon the face of the earth, and the wicked shall slay the wicked, and fear shall come upon every man (Doctrine and Covenants 63:9).

The whole earth shall be in commotion, and men's hearts shall fail them ... and there shall be many desolations (Doctrine and Covenants 45:4).

These warnings are but restatements and extensions of the warnings given by the apostles and prophets of Christ's day. Peter proclaims essentially the same judgments when he declares, "The elements also shall melt with fervent heat" (2 Peter 3:10).

The Testimony of Noah Was Redemptive

We have learned the name of Deity as "Almighty." This means that regardless of what transpires, He is powerful over and above all things. His word and His works cannot come to naught. This was proved abundantly true in Noah's day. The destruction of the wicked was not to frustrate the purpose of creation, but to further it, and restore the order of heaven which had been defaced by sensualism. The physical creation must continue, and so the ark was prepared. To have judgment preached, and provide at the same time a means of escape, was eminently like God. The testimony of the preachers of righteousness was reinforced by the work of their hands. Amidst the derision of unbelievers, day by day, the place of safety was built. Finally, into it was gathered every needful thing. In Noah's day preaching and building went hand in hand to fulfill the work of God. "As it was ... so shall it be" we are reminded again.

"I change not," saith the Lord. We may expect to find then, in this day, Deity moving to prepare a way of escape, and a means to further His purposes in the earth. This is exactly what is designed to take place. The second emphasis of Joseph Smith is that of the gathering. A city is to be prepared. Into it is to be gathered every needful thing. What of grace and truth the race has gained by toil and sacrifice is to be conserved and made glorious in the city of Zion. In Noah's day the emphasis seemed to be on the flesh and its preservation. Today the concern is for both flesh and spirit. Notice the tremendous task to which the call of God today commits all who will.

As ye have asked, seek to bring forth and establish the Cause of Zion. Seek not for riches but for wisdom (Doctrine and Covenants 11:3).

As I live, even so will I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance ... gather out mine own elect from the four quarters of the earth, to a place which I shall prepare, a holy city ... Zion ... a New Jerusalem (Doctrine and Covenants 36:12).

And it shall be called the New Jerusalem, a land of peace, a city of refuge, and a place of safety (Doctrine and Covenants 45:12).

Zion shall not be moved out of her place ... they that remain, and are pure in heart shall return to build up the waste places of Zion. And all these things that the prophets might be fulfilled (Doctrine and Covenants 98:4).

The ark was built by the believers. It was a task conceived by Deity whereby men in doing it might save themselves and others. Zion, the goal of the Church of Jesus Christ, is an exact parallel. In the ancient day, the warning to escape would have been useless without the means of escape. Such warning would be equally useless today without the means of salvation from destruction. Our generation must be warned. But a way of escape must also be provided. Some structure must arise built under Divine guidance by believers which is of such a nature that it will rise triumphant over every judgment which must come upon people of wickedness. In the process of preaching and building opportunity must be given to all who will to share in the task. This is the evident intention of Divinity and the task of His Church. A city is to be built. It will be built when men believe sufficiently to build it. It will be free from the judgment which comes to cities where wickedness reigns because the inhabitants will keep the law of righteousness. Peace will be in its borders because its people will give allegiance to the Prince of Peace. In it, disease will be looked upon as sin, and every person will be healthy. The love of men, instead of waxing cold, will grow warmer and warmer, because every man will seek the interest of his neighbor, and all shall have equal opportunity, under God, of making the most of himself. Such a city "hath foundations," and its "builder and maker is God."

Such shall be. "As it was ... so shall it be." The gospel shall be preached, the world shall be warned, a way of escape shall be prepared, into which shall be gathered every needful thing to perpetuate the purposes of Deity. The cry today is "Save yourselves from this untoward generation." "Gather ye out from Babylon." "Stand ye in holy places."

Noah's Salvation and Ours

One more parallel needs to be strongly emphasized, for in it lays the key of salvation for our time. Noah was baptized, and those who found salvation with him in the ark, in the very element which was used as a means of destroying wickedness. Peter says of his day:

Some of whom were disobedient in the days of Noah, when the long suffering of God waited while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is eight souls were saved by water. The like figure wherein baptism doth also now save us (1 Peter 3:19–21).

If baptism "also now" saved the saints of Peter's day, it did so in the days when Noah was preaching the same message. Those who were counted worthy to stand on the cleansed earth, had themselves to be cleansed. They were cleansed by the "answering of a good conscience toward God," which was manifest in the outward ordinance of baptism. Those who could not be cleansed by water, were

destroyed in it. The people who would not be baptized, lost their lives. The parallel is overwhelming. Of the destruction which now is in store it is said:

Behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all that do wickedly shall be as stubble, and the day cometh that shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts (Malachi 4:1).

But the heavens and earth, which are now, are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men (2 Peter 3:9–11).

I shall come down in heaven, from the presence of my Father, and consume the wicked with unquenchable fire (Doctrine and Covenants 63:9).

The earth is again to be cleansed. But this time with "unquenchable fire." This kind of fire is not physical, for we know the physical fire is quenchable. There is a kind of fire which Peter describes as "fervent heat." It is the moral power of righteousness. "The anger of the Lord is kindled" we are told. Other prophets have seen this day. Isaiah cried, "Oh, that thou wouldst rend the heavens ... that the mountains might flow down at thy presence!" and John discerned that at the presence of Him that sat upon the throne "heaven and earth fled away." It is in this "unquenchable fire" that the disciples must be baptized in these latter days. John the Baptist acknowledged the inadequacy of his baptism. True, it was from heaven, and was necessary. But it did not go far enough. "I indeed baptize you with water, but there cometh one mightier than I," he told the Jews, "he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire"(Luke 4:23). Fire! The same "unquenchable fire" that is to finally destroy wickedness!

Remember the days of Noah! Those who were not then baptized in water were destroyed by what they refused to do. In this, the day of the coming of the Son of Man, those who live so that they cannot be baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire, shall be consumed. "Righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood," said Deity to Enoch.

Let us not be deceived. Many people complain today saying, "Where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." "We have always had wars, and earthquakes, and pestilences," they say. "There is nothing different now, than always has been." "People in other days did not hear of the things we hear of today, but they were just the same."

These people are willingly ignorant. The world in the days of Noah was overflowed with water, and the inhabitants perished.

But the heavens and earth, which are now, are reserved ... unto fire.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promises ... but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish.

But the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up (1 Peter 3).

The restraining gates my mercy,
Led me oft to interpose,
Shall the devastating current,
Fraught with woe, no more oppose.

—Joseph Luff

This is a day of warning and a day of work. The work of the fire is to destroy wickedness. If people are to be saved, and saved from the fire, they must be baptized in the fire. They must be possessors of a burning hatred of all that robs men of their rightful heritage, and come to look on sin with abhorrence. "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am straightened until it be accomplished," said Jesus. "Are ye able to be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" He asked on another occasion. The baptism of the Spirit is essential to salvation. It can be ours if we take to heart the admonition of the prophet on this American continent:

Blessed are they who seek to bring forth my Zion at that day, for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost, and if they endure to the end, they shall be lifted up at the last day, and shall be saved in the everlasting kingdom of the lamb (1 Nephi 3:187–188).

Shall we heed the Divine invitation? What shall be our response? "Take heed to yourselves," said Jesus. "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the coming of the Son of Man."

The Father saith "Yea!" The Spirit "Amen!"
Repeat to the nations this warning again.
The end is approaching—Redemption is near,
And Jesus, ere long, will in glory appear.

—Joseph Luff



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