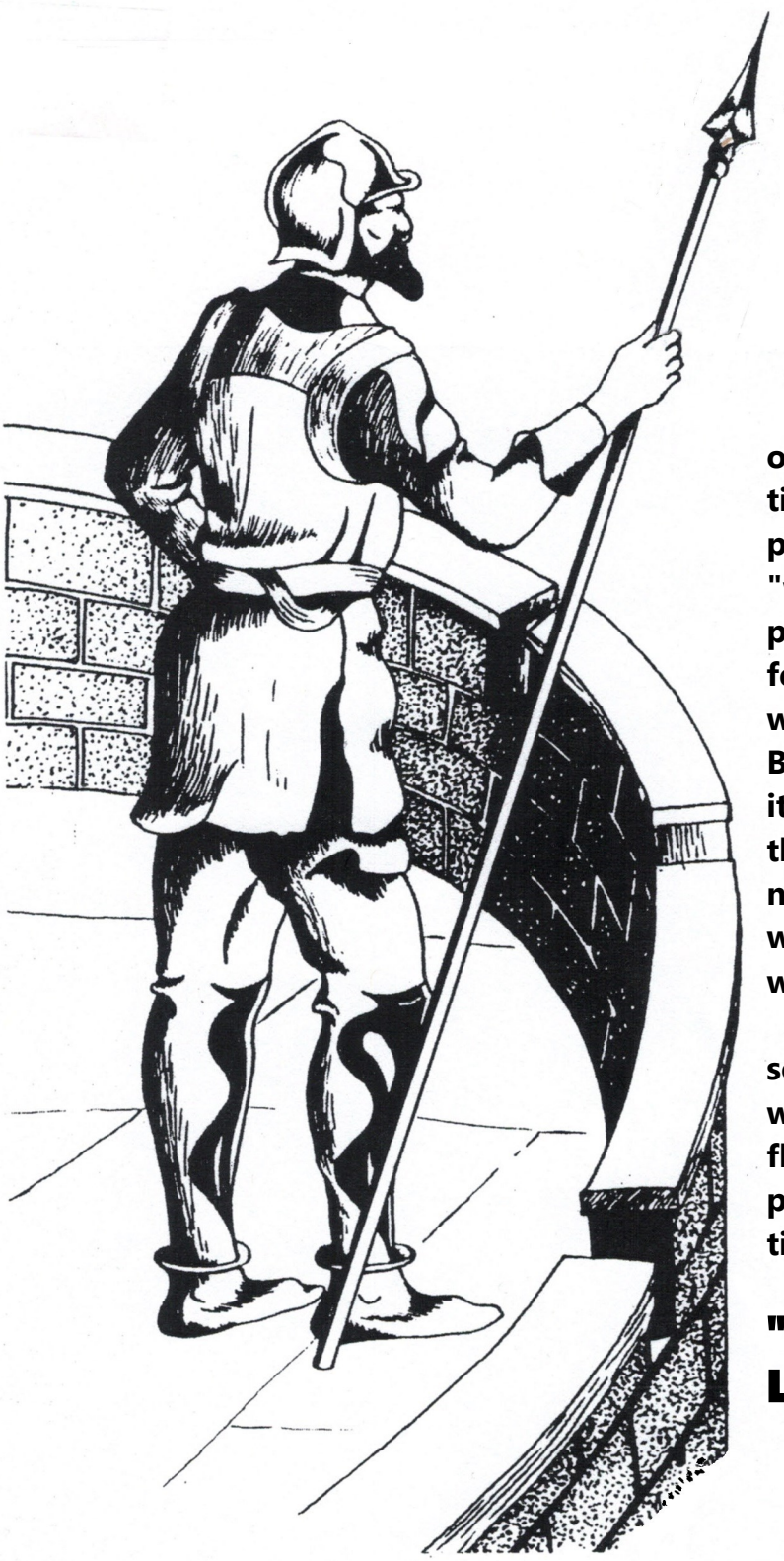
Issue # 17 ◆ June / July 2016

"Watchman, what of the night ?"

" The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you, the hour and the end!" Ezekiel 7:6 (Moffatt)



▶ THIS ISSUE'S READING

PARALLELS BETWEEN NOAH'S AND LOT'S TIME WITH OUR DAY : Christ's Emphasis Examined

Let's Talk It Over

An Excerpt From WWN, xxxiv - 9(01) by Elder William H. Grotheer pg. 6

Editor's Preface

The main article in this bi-monthly's publication of WWN is somewhat a follow-up and continuation of the topic covered in the previous thought paper for Feb. / Mar. 2016. Briefly, the theme of "worldliness" - its broad meaning, near universal prevalence, and far reaching implications and effect - were discussed within the biblical framework of "the otherworldly hope of our faith." The Bible clearly reveals that for humanity to place all its confidence, aspirations, affections, and hope in this "present evil world" which "lieth in wickedness" (compare Galatians 1: 4; with 1 John 5: 19) will ultimately lead to the ruin and demise of all who do so (Luke 12: 16-21).

With this issue, we will focus attention on the scriptural parallels between the condition of the world in the time before the great Noachian flood, along with the condition of the cities of the plain in Lot's time, and world conditions in our time just before the second coming of Christ.

"The days of Noah ... The days of Lot ... "

"And as it was in the days of Noe (Noah), so

shall it be also in the days of the Son of man ... Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot ... Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." (Luke 17: 26, 28, 30).

Our Lord, on a number of occasions during His public ministry, expounded on His future return in glory to consummate the victory He would gain upon the completion of His earthly mission. He stressed that no one but Our Father in Heaven would know the exact time of His second coming (Matthew 24: 36; Mark 13: 32-33), but also stressed the necessity to diligently "Watch" for various signs and indications of its nearness. One of those proofs entails a state of affairs on the earth existing at the time prior to Jesus' return that will mirror that which existed in Noah's and Lot's time. And what was the condition of the world like in those "days?" Concerning Noah's era, the record states:

"And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them ...

"The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth." (Genesis 6: 1-7, 11-13).

The Apostle Peter confirms this by declaring that God:

"... spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly." (2 Peter 2: 5).

And with regard to Lot's time, the account says:

"And the Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know ...

"And there came two angels to Sodom at even: and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them ... and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house ... But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and

young, all the people from every quarter: and they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them [have sex with them!, CJB [1]].

"And the men [angels] said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? ... For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it ...

"The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar. Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground." (Genesis 18: 20-21; 19: 1, 3-5, 12-13, 23-25).

The New Testament substantiates this by attesting:

"And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked." (2 Peter 2: 6-7).

"Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." (Jude: v. 7).

(Speaking of the corruption existing in the world before the great flood and its continuance down through the ages to his time, the Apostle Paul further testifies):

"God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worth of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." (Romans 1: 28-32).

Such, according to Jesus, will be the state of affairs on the earth just before His return. Humanity can indeed expect a universal condition of physical and moral degradation paralleling that of Noah's and Lot's time. The constant round in our day of crime, violence, amorality, greed, lust, sexual perversion, etc. - and the effect that it has on us and nature, both individually and societally - is often cited, particularly by professed Christians, as evidence that we are living in fulfillment of this prediction. Moreover, contrary to the criticism that these things have always been part of our experience offered by some, the biblical principle that events preceding the Second Advent are 'birth-pains' (Matthew 24: 8; Mark 13: 8, CJB [1]), indicates that this will *increase* in intensity and frequency up to that event. Since few would argue against the truthfulness of this steady progression, the main focus has been on the increasing corruption itself.

However, as true as that is, a closer look and contemplation of what Christ primarily directs our attention toward in this regard is often not given the emphasis that He gives it. Notice again what our Lord says in the

fuller context about the days of Noah and of Lot:

" ... in the days of Noe ... They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. *Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed*." (Luke 17: 26-30, emphasis added).

Clearly while the texts in Genesis, along with other subsequent texts, concentrate on the evil and wickedness of these times, there is no explicit mention of this by Jesus. Rather, and perhaps surprisingly, His description is one of the basic normalcy of everyday human life! True, the people of those days had even perverted this for the Writings (of Ellen G. White) inform us that:

"God did not condemn the antediluvians for eating and drinking; He had given them the fruits of the earth in great abundance to supply their physical wants. Their sin consisted in taking these gifts without gratitude to the Giver, and debasing themselves by indulging appetite without restraint. It was lawful for them to marry. Marriage was in God's order; it was one of the first institutions which He established. He gave special directions concerning this ordinance, clothing it with sanctity and beauty; but these directions were forgotten, and marriage was perverted and made to minister to passion." (PP, pg. 101 [2]).

Nevertheless, the Savior directs our attention to the general round of day-to-day living as a characterization of those days. The obvious question is what that has to do with the constant ungodliness that climaxed at those times. The parallel passage in the Gospel of Matthew provides an added detail towards the answer:

"For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, *and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away*; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." (Matthew 24: 38-39, emph. added).

This detail, italicized in the sentence above, is actually quite startling when due consideration is given to the fact that for "an hundred and twenty years" Noah, "a preacher of righteousness," testified by both word of warning and action (the building of the ark) concerning the coming destruction of "the world that then was." (compare Genesis 6: 3; with 2 Peter 2: 5, and 3: 6). Only a "few, that is, eight souls were saved" [Noah and his immediate family!] - (1 Peter 3: 20). How was it that the people, living the course of daily existence back then, "knew not"? The answer lies in the distinction between the antediluvian world's response to God's word and Noah's response to it. Noah reacted as follows:

"By faith Noah, *being warned of God of things not seen as yet*, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; *by the which he condemned the world*, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." (Hebrews 11: 7, emph. added).

In contrast, the people before the flood responded to Noah's preaching with unbelief. This attitude was borne out by the fact that *none* of them sought refuge within the ark. And what was the root cause of this universal unbelief? Worldliness - the very core of which manifests itself in idolatry! Again, from the letter to the Romans dealing with this topic, the Apostle Paul comments:

"Because that, when they [the antediluvians] knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools ... Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more (or rather, margin) than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen." (Romans 1: 21-22, 25).

The Writings expound further by adding:

"As they endeavored to represent God by material objects, their minds were blinded to His majesty and power; they ceased to realize the holiness of His character, or the sacred, unchanging nature of His requirements. *As sin became general, it appeared less and less sinful*, and they finally declared that the divine law was no longer in force; that it was contrary to the character of God to punish transgression; and they denied that His judgments were to be visited upon the earth. Had the men of that generation obeyed the divine law, they would have recognized the voice of God in the warning of His servant; *but their minds had become so blinded by rejection of light that they really believed Noah's message to be a delusion* ...

"They manifested their contempt for the warning of God by doing just as they had done before the warning was given. [Note: life as usual!] They continued their festivities and their gluttonous feasts; they ate and drank, planted and builded, laying their plans in reference to advantages they hoped to gain in the future; and they went to greater lengths in wickedness, in defiant disregard of God's requirements, to testify that they had no fear of the Infinite One ...

"The sins that called for vengeance upon the antediluvian world exist today. The fear of God is banished from the hearts of men, and His law is treated with indifference and contempt. *The intense worldliness of that generation is equaled by that of the generation now living*." (PP, pgs. 96, 97, 101, emph. added [2]).

If "the intense worldliness" of the generation living in Ellen White's time *equaled* the intense worldliness of the antediluvian generation (or Lot's generation for that matter), what does this reveal about the generation of *today*, living over a century later from her time? Who can sanely argue that this intense worldliness has not grown truly *more* intense? Everything that has just been presented from the Bible describes our world at this time to an even greater degree! Who, even among professed Christians, can honestly say that they are seeking "*first* the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" ... "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." (see Matthew 6: 33, emph. added; 2 Corinthians 4: 18). As sin becomes *more* generally prevalent, and appears "less and less sinful" *yet*, the "rejection of light" in our day (most no-

tably the rejection of the "present truth" for this time) has produced an apathy - especially in the Church - that is astonishing! Where is the sense of urgency? Where is the sense of alarm? Who are seeking "those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God"? [As King and High Priest after the order of Melchizedek] (Colossians 3: 1). The continuing repudiation of the light from Heaven (following by faith, the progressive phases of Christ's Heavenly High Priestly Ministry during the Final Atonement), is further blinding the minds of this generation at a shocking pace. Yet, Laodiceanism (see Revelation 3: 14-17) is deepening within the Church and the sense of "peace and safety" permeates all of earthly society, even in the face of dire forebodings. The Hour is far spent. The time to " ... prepare to meet thy God, O Israel" (see Amos 4: 11-12) is fast coming to an end. Will we heed the warning before it's too late?:

"The Scriptures describe the condition of the world just before Christ's second coming ... But who reads the warnings given by the fast-fulfilling signs of the times? What impression is made upon worldlings? What change is seen in their attitude? No more than was seen in the attitude of the inhabitants of the Noachian world. Absorbed in worldly business and pleasure, the antediluvians 'knew not until the Flood came, and took them all away.' Matthew 24: 39. They had heaven-sent warnings, but they refused to listen. And today the world, utterly regardless of the warning voice of God, is hurrying on to eternal ruin." (9T, 13-14 [3]). ❖

GLP

🗣 LET'S TALK IT OVER

"Have you ever, in your contemplation of the revelation of prophecy, placed yourself in the picture given? Consider for a few moments the picture in Revelation 20. The 'camp of the saints' has come down to earth. The description of this city is given in the final chapters of Revelation. It has crystal clear walls as well as many other features of dazzling brilliance.

"There is a great resurrection. The population of earth becomes in number 'as the sand of the sea.' Dare you place yourself, in contemplation, in that resurrection? You are outside of the city. You know what awaits you. You make a pilgrimage to see the city at closer range. You will have time as great preparations will be made to take the city. You know who the commander-in-chief really is. When you arrive at the city walls, you recognize certain ones inside. How will you react to them? The same as when on earth prior to the millennium? Will you bring yourself to join in the final attempted assault on the city?

"The answer to these questions is that you will. Satan will deceive you. In the contemplation, you reject the idea with abhorrence. The fact remains, that with all the warning not to be deceived in the earthly spiritual conflict, you were, or you would not be where you will find yourself.

"In your return trip to the small plot on earth which is yours, you meet others whom you know - some are the very ones used by Satan which caused you to be where you now find yourself. How will you address them? What will you attempt to do to them?

"When you arrive back to your small plot of earth, you decide, you will not join the forces that Satan is preparing to take the city. But you will! The prophecy indicates

that all went up and compassed the city. Why will you do this? You will again be deceived.

"We have on record the greatest deception of all time which led Israel to reject the Messiah. How could a person reject One who had resurrected a man who had been dead four days? Yet it was done, and some of the very ones who had witnessed the event would later join the religious leaders in shouting, 'Crucify Him!' In John 7 we find a record of the reaction of the populace to the evidence of truth. Conversing among themselves, the throng who had gathered at Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of tabernacles concluded that when the Messiah came, no man would know from where he had come (ver. 27). They said that they knew from where Jesus had come. It is evident that some of the people perceived of Him as coming from Galilee. They asked the question, 'Shall the Messiah come out of Galilee?' These knew the Scriptures for they cited Micah 5:2 as evidence to where the Messiah was to be born (vs. 41-42).

"What was the source of this misconception concerning Jesus? A dispute in the Sanhedrin in which Nicodemus was involved, the Pharisees threw at him this same distortion of fact as to the origin of Jesus (v. 52). The fact of His birth, and place of birth was a matter of record right there in the temple (Luke 2:21-24). With the record available, the Pharisees had ignored the place of His birth in Bethlehem; and circulated instead the idea that Jesus was a Galilean. This was either done in ignorance, or with purposeful intent. The same holds true today. The voices seeking to guide the 'historic' dissidents are either ignorant - and many of them are - or they are purposefully covering truth so as to escape its implications. The price to be paid for such deception is too high. Think again, what it will be like to be outside, 'the camp of the saints'"! - (pg. 7) ❖ WHG

"The Christian life is a battle and a march. But the victory to be gained is not won by human power. The field of conflict is the domain of the heart. The battle which we have to fight - the greatest battle that was ever fought by man - is the surrender of self to the will of God, the yielding of the heart to the sovereignty of love." (Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* - pg. 141).

1. David H. Stern, *Complete Jewish Bible* (Clarksville, MD: Messianic Jewish Publishers, 1998), 17, 1254, 1280.

2. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs And Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1958), 101, 96, 97, 101.

3. White, *Testimonies For The Church, volume nine* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 13-14.

* All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

"Watchman, what of the night?" is published by the Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Iowa, Inc., P.O. Box 665, Nora Springs, IA 50458-0665, USA.

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