

THE “NATURE” OF THE APOCALYPSE

As apostasy deepened in the northern ten tribes of Israel, the intensity of God’s efforts to bring them to repentance grew. Isaiah passionately said:

- “Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isaiah 59:1-2).
- God is capable of saving, but separation is occurring because of sin (*chataah*) and iniquity (*avon*).

Isaiah was commissioned to be the prophet of condemnation and warning. That commission was given with these words:

“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression [pesha], and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God” (Isaiah 58:1-2).

His role was similar to that of God’s witnesses at the end of time. Then the cry will be “*Babylon is fallen*” (Revelation 14:8, 18:2). How that occurs will be a focused message which will address *chatah, avon and pesha* – the sins of Daniel 9:24 and the focused themes of Revelation 14:6-7.

The Hebrew in Isaiah does not say “lift up thy voice as a trumpet” but “lift up thy voice like a *shofar*.” The *shofar* was blown to announce the beginning of a Jubilee year (every 49 years, then a fiftieth Jubilee). Most importantly, it was blown at the onset of the Feast of Trumpets on a Sabbath warning day. Their probation was about to end. That *shofar* cry was a loud warning that irrevocable decisions relative to eternity were pending. Isaiah’s commission and cry, again, are metaphors for the commission to the 144,000, which is now about to occur. Then they will raise their voices, crying that the righteous manifestations of God’s justice will shortly be poured out on a rebellious earth. Probation is about ended. The “hour of his judgment” has come!

When will their cry occur? When will we shout that the enemy is coming and that God’s wrath follows quickly on its heels? Is there a battle plan for the remnant? What do the saints need to become part of His militia, ready to respond at a moment’s notice?

God has a battle strategy that He implemented over 4000 years ago. If we understand that and how it has been used over and over – it will help us understand its final apocalyptic use. Luke recorded these words: “*And **when** these **things** begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh*” (Luke 21:28). That is our cue to engage the enemy and witness for Christ.

- “When” relates to a point in time
 - “Things” conveys specific signs
- } God leaves **nothing** to guesswork!

That goes along with several eschatological rules that He has laid out.

1. Apocalyptic prophecy is event-driven.
2. It is always in a defined sequence.
3. It is always based within a framework of time – the “hour has come.”

His strategy thwarts Satan and assures victory. That is why the crowns that the saints are assured are called *stephanos*. If we know God’s end-time approach, defeat will take flight. Here is His plan:

God’s Five-Point Apocalyptic Strategy

As God’s mercy approaches a divine “time limit,” an unyielding strategy is laid out to warn and to appeal for repentance. A clear probationary period in which to respond to His last call is published. This plan is incredible because justice is anticipated under an umbrella of open mercy!

This is His five-point sequential approach:

1. He gives a warning message that desolation or utter destruction will soon occur.
2. God has chosen special leaders who will quickly step forward to be His militia.
3. They will invite everyone to enter a spiritual and/or physical safety zone that God has predefined.
4. A precise and clear timing message is given – mercy in apocalyptic prophecy has a time limit. That period in itself is an expression of patient love and mercy.
5. God always gives final warning signs – just before mercy ends.

Let’s see how this plays out in Biblical history.

A. Flood – Great Deluge (time of Noah):

1. Desolation coming:
“It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth” (Genesis 6:6).
“I will destroy man whom I have created ... both man and beast” (Genesis 6:7).
“I will destroy them with the earth” (Genesis 6:12).
2. Special messenger:
“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (Genesis 6:8).
“With thee will I establish my covenant” (Genesis 6:18).
3. Zone of safety:
“Thou shalt come into the ark, thou and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons’ wives with thee” (Genesis 6:18 – place of refuge).
4. Time of probation:
“His days shall be 120 years” (Genesis 6:3).
“In seven days I will cause it to rain upon the earth” (Genesis 7:4).
5. Final warning sign:
All the beasts marched into the ark (Genesis 7:2-9).

There was no failure of the prophecy, the call, the timing, the plan. The people scorned the warning and were lost.

B. Time of Judah's Rebellion (before Babylon destroyed Jerusalem)

1. In the 700–600 B.C. era God decided that this nation would become desolate (Jeremiah 4:27).
2. He chose Jeremiah to be the messenger (Jeremiah 1:2-5).
3. There would be mercy if they repented (Ezekiel 33:11).
4. A timing message was given that within 40 years, one generation, some end would come (Jeremiah 2:31, 7:9).

“And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.” (Jeremiah 25:11)

5. God gave a final sign – a warning attack:

“In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand.” (Daniel 1:1-2)

That was in 605 B.C. – it was when Daniel was taken captive. Jerusalem was not destroyed then. Mercy continued. One more warning sign would be given.

1. In 597 B.C. more captives were taken – the city was still preserved.
2. Then in 586 B.C. Jerusalem was destroyed and the land became desolate.

There was no failure of the prophecy, the call, the timing or the plan. The people scorned the warning, and thousands were killed or taken captive.

C. Fall of Jerusalem (model for the very end of time)

Jesus had given very specific messages of these apocalyptic steps that God's people knew and needed.

1. There would be a sin or abomination that would lead to desolation (Matthew 24:15) – “The end is coming!”
2. Through the disciples/apostles (the messengers), that warning was successfully given.
3. If they fled out of the city at the “sign,” they would be saved.
4. Everything would occur within one generation (40 years) (Matthew 24:34, Mark 13:30, Luke 21:32).
5. The sign to flee was “when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know ...” (Luke 21:20-21).

Everything happened exactly as Jesus predicted and followed the apocalyptic sequence that God had introduced before the flood!

Interesting is a similar unique **apocalyptic** strategy that was related to Christ's First Advent:

D. Birth of Jesus (a spiritual apocalyptic event)

1. New kingdom would come (opposite of desolation) – “Jesus is coming!”
2. Special people were to be the messengers of the incarnation!
3. Saints would possess that kingdom (Daniel 7:18)
4. Daniel 9:24-27 and I Chronicles 23:3 tell us when Jesus would be born.
5. Prophecies of that arrival included a virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14), place of birth (Bethlehem – Micah 5:1-2), that He would be from lineage of Judah (Genesis 49:10).

There was no failure of the prophecy, signs, timing or plan!! BUT – the people didn't know He had arrived.

Stunning – thousands in the non-Jewish world knew of the event and its timing. They had studied prophecy.

“Outside of the Jewish nation there were men who foretold the appearance of a divine instructor. These men were seeking for truth, and to them the Spirit of Inspiration was imparted. One after another, like stars in the darkened heavens, such teachers had arisen. Their words of prophecy had kindled hope in the hearts of thousands of the Gentile world.”¹

The Final Apocalypse

Do you think that at the very end of time, when the conflict between good and evil closes and Jesus is about ready to come, He will follow the same sequence? Or will He “scrub” 4000 years of consistent history of dealing with man?

“Those who place themselves under God's control, to be led and guided by Him, will catch the **steady tread of the events** ordained by Him **to take place**. Inspired with the Spirit of Him who gave His life for the life of the world, **they will no longer stand still in impotency**, pointing to what they cannot do. Putting on the armor of heaven, **they will go forth to the warfare**, willing to do and dare for God, knowing that His omnipotence will supply their need.”²

If we are going to be part of the last work on earth, we (God's messengers) will:

1. Have a desolating message (warnings) (this encompasses the second, third and fourth angels' messages – Revelation 14):
“I am bidden to declare the message that cities full of transgression, and sinful in the extreme, will be destroyed by earthquakes, by fire, by flood. All the world will be warned that there is a God who will display His authority as God. His unseen agencies will cause destruction, devastation, and death. All the accumulated riches will be as nothingness.

¹ White, Ellen G.; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 33.

² White, *Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 14 (emphasis added).

“Notwithstanding the scientific care with which men safeguard buildings from destruction, one touch of the great and rightful Ruler will bring to nothingness the idolatrous possessions that have been laid up in a sightly and magnificent display. The devices of men will come to naught.”³

“***Bible history is to be repeated.*** Calamities will come – calamities most awful, most unexpected; and these destructions will follow one after another. If there will be a heeding of the warnings that God has given, and if churches will repent, returning to their allegiance, then other cities may be spared for a time. But if men who have been deceived continue in the same way in which they have been walking, disregarding the law of God, and presenting falsehoods before the people, God allows them to suffer calamity, that their senses may be awakened. – Ms 35, 1906. (‘Adopting Infant Children,’ General manuscript bearing date of April 27, 1906.)”⁴

2. Be part of a select group with a distinct message (especially the first angel’s message). The Bible describes this group as:
 - A white horse going out conquering and to conquer (Revelation 6:1-2) (representing the 144,000)
 - The two witnesses, who “have power” (Revelation 11:6) (representing the 144,000 and the multitude)
3. Have an “ark of safety” to give the world eternal hope.
 - They have the testimony of Jesus (Revelation 12:17) (that is the whole book of Revelation!).
 - They have the faith of Jesus (Revelation 14:12) (this is righteousness by faith, just as Jesus had!).

“The solemn messages that have been given in their order in the Revelation are to occupy the first place in the minds of God’s people. Nothing else is to be allowed to engross our attention....

“Satan is pleased to see the diversion of minds that should be engaged in a study of the truths which have to do with eternal realities.

“The testimony of Christ, a testimony of the most solemn character, is to be borne to the world. All through the book of Revelation there are the most precious, elevating promises, and there are also warnings of the most fearfully solemn import. Will not those who profess to have a knowledge of the truth read the testimony given to John by Christ? Here is no guesswork, no scientific deception. Here are the truths that concern our present and future welfare.”⁵

4. Have a timing message (no ethereal guess work here).
 - Did you know that Revelation 11:3 says that God’s militia, the two witnesses, the 144,000 and those converted at that time will have **1260 days** to accomplish their work?
 - That timing prophecy is mentioned **seven times** in Daniel and Revelation and is symbolically modeled in many other places.

³ White, Ellen G.; *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 4, p. 90 (emphasis added).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 91 (emphasis added).

⁵ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 302 (1904).

- The Bible calls that period of time “**the appointed time.**”
5. Observe convincing signs that time is about ended.
- These are what the Bible’s end-time prophecies are loaded with!
 - The whole book of Revelation occurs during that last three-and-a-half-year period!

Signs of the Times or Guessing the Times?

The most *definitive* “*sign*” that Jesus is coming soon relates to the Gospel going to the whole world. Yet, as of 2010:⁶

- 6.75 billion people were on planet earth
- 2.8 billion had yet to hear the gospel (41.5%)
- There were 5871 people groups unreached
- 201 languages hadn’t heard the name of Jesus

Some say that the number of individuals who have yet to hear about Christ is increasing. Unless we understand the meaning of the signs, this data suggests that Jesus will never come. Are we missing something? Revelation 14:6 says that it will go to every nation, tribe, tongue and people. That “sign” is **not** an anticipatory sign! We won’t know when that happens! It’s going to be Holy Spirit assured.

Another favorite, by some Protestants, is the beautiful quote: “When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.” Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.”⁷

Since the church and the world are becoming more and more liberal and the beauty of Christ’s character is more social than spiritual, it appears as though Jesus will not come for centuries. What are we missing?

We frequently say that His coming is imminent – but statistics “testify” against our hopes and profession.

What must we believe? How are we to deal with apocalyptic prophecy?

- The Bible says that God is going to intervene in a very unique way!
- Through natural disasters the world will wake up.
 - Then, when the gospel is preached
 - One group will be fully receptive
 - The other will rebel against Him

⁶ www.Joshuaproject.net

⁷ White, Ellen G.; *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 69.

When the Bible says that He will cut the *work* short in righteousness – that is what it means (Isaiah 9:28). It doesn't mean "*time* will be cut short."

- He takes events into his own hands. What might take centuries now occurs in a short time!
- The human heart is quickly brought to a decision.

Prophecy notes that in the last four years of time God steps in to bring everything to a close.

- The Seven Trumpets reveal divine intervention into that apocalyptic end. Then:
- *"There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken"* (Luke 21:25-26).
- Jesus comes shortly thereafter.

Increasing our Awareness – God's Timing Strategy!

In the Bible we have repeated timing templates that are modeled after the flood.

First Stage – Vague:

1. 1000 years before the flood, God gave His first intention.
 - Enoch was inspired to name his son Methuselah.
 - Meaning: "The year he dies, it will be sent."
2. At first, people didn't know the nature of what would be sent.
3. Methuselah died 969 years of age when his grandson, Noah, was 600 years old.
4. Genesis 7:6: Noah was 600 years old when the flood waters came on the earth.

Second Stage:

1. God specifically said that man's days would be 120 years – then the earth would be destroyed (Genesis 6:3, 7, 13).
2. A distinct time period was given in anticipation of desolation!

Third Stage:

1. In 7 days, it will rain for 40 days and 40 nights (Genesis 7:1, 4).

At the end of time, the same exact timing strategy is followed:

First Stage:

1. On or after the end of 2300 years the Daniel 8 prophecy (ram, he-goat, little horn) would be fulfilled – at the "time of the end."
2. Special focus – Daniel 8:17 and 19 reveal the framework for that end.

Second Stage:

1. Time of Sorrows would begin one generation of 40 years (Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21) before His coming. We are in that now!

Third Stage:

1. 3½ years – then deliverance (Daniel 12, Revelation 11–13). That is anticipated to begin shortly.

Conclusion:

- Very soon we will be asked to become one of God's final ambassadors of His apocalypse!
- What will you teach? Can you really **prove** Jesus is about to come?
- The Bible tells us how we will prove so convincingly that it will stir the whole world. God has an event strategy and a timing strategy.

An appeal to us – right now:

- “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (I Peter 3:15) – or we run the risk of lamenting:
- The harvest is past and we, with others, are not saved (Jeremiah 8:20).

Study, study, study – set aside prejudice and plead with the Lord to reveal to you what is in the Bible for this stunning time! The details of those final three stages are precise and clear in Daniel and Revelation!

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