Articles by N. L. Matthews

N. L. Matthews

First published in Food for the Flock / Ministry in Focus (Food for the Flock, Inc., Ontario, Canada).

KEE Ministry Library · Faithful Men
kee-ministry-library.netlify.app

The Nature of God (March–April 1972)

From Ministry in Focus, March–April 1972.

Editor's note: This address by N. L. Matthews, Q.C., was heard by the Editor over the radio. It seemed so relevant that he requested permission to publish it. It answers many problems of the sincere thinker, and at the same time vindicates the character of God. It is an excellent presentation of the moral attributes of God and a revelation of His dealings with man today.

Scripture Reading Romans 1:16-32

If we were to be asked today if we believed in God, it is most likely that each one of us would answer in the affirmative. But what would we mean by that answer? We might mean several different things. Some would mean that they believed in the existence of some Being that they called God. Others might go further and assert that they believed that there was in existence only one true God. Still others might say that they believed in the existence of the one God in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But belief in any of these forms is merely giving mental assent to a factual situation. When the Bible speaks about believing in God, it means much more than that. It means having faith in or trusting God. Now, having faith in a person or trusting him is a totally different thing from merely believing that he exists. Probably every one in this country believed that Hitler existed, but how many of you would have put your trust in him? Isn't it reasonable that before you put your trust in a person, before you would trust your life to him, you want to know all you can about him? And isn't it even

more important, if not only your life, but your eternal soul, depends on the person in whom you put your trust?

I would like to consider with you this morning what God's Word, the Bible, says about the nature of God. Most of His attributes are well known to you and I will not take time to dwell on them. For instance, there is His omnipotence. God is not only the Creator but the sustainer of the whole universe. In these days of space travel, the universe has taken on even greater meaning. Some of the laws of nature are, even now, just being discovered, and when we consider that God made all these laws of nature thousands of years ago and figured out every detail to the minutest degree, we can get some idea of how insignificant we really are by comparison. Then when we think of God we think of His omniscience. We realize that He is a God not only of infinite power but a God of infinite knowledge and intelligence. Not only does He know all about the operations of the entire universe but Christ told us that even the sparrow does not fall to the ground without God's knowledge.

The third attribute that we sometimes think about is the omnipresence of God. In the person of His Holy Spirit, He can be everywhere at the same time. He is here today. Jesus said: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20).

One of the facets of God's nature that we like to think most about is His love. We think, and rightly so that He is a God of love. God demonstrated His great love for us and for all mankind by sending His only begotten Son into the world to suffer death upon the cross for our sins. We read in II Corinthians 5:21 that Christ, who

knew no sin, became sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

Now let us consider for a few moments another attribute of God that we sometimes lose sight of, namely, His holiness. We like to think of God as all powerful, as all knowing, even as always present, and we particularly like to look upon God as a God of love. But somehow we tend to forget that this same God is a holy God, and yet the holiness of God is proclaimed all through the Old Testament. In Leviticus 11:44, where the Lord spoke to Moses and prescribed certain ordinances for the people to follow, He stated: "For I am holy." In Psalm 22:3 we read: "But Thou art Holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." In Isaiah 6:3, we read: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory." And finally, in Revelation 4:8, we are told: "The four beasts rest not day and night, saying holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

I now want to turn to another attribute of God that is not popular today. I am referring to the wrath of God. Many false religions teach all of the other attributes of God but they ignore this attribute. They would have us believe that God, being a loving God, would not send any of us into eternal punishment, that somehow we will all muddle through into Heaven regardless of what we do or what we believe here and now. But I declare, my friends, that this theory is not based on the Bible. Rather, it is the same old lie that the devil first used in the Garden of Eden, when he contradicted God and said: "Ye shall not surely die." I tell you today that there is no fact more clearly taught in the Bible than the fact of the wrath of God. Of course God is a loving God. That is why

He provided at such infinite cost to Himself a way by which we could escape the wrath of God. But just as surely those that reject that way of escape, the way of salvation which God has provided, will experience no longer the love of God, but the wrath of God.

If this were simply my theory, or the theory of any other man, you could well disregard it. But I want you to hear what the Bible teaches about the wrath of God. In John 3:36, John the Baptist told his disciples: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." In Matthew 3:7, Jesus said to the Pharisees and Sadducees: "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" In Romans 2:5, Paul writes: "After thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against a day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." In Revelation 6:15-17, we read: (15) "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; (16) and said to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him who sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:' (17) For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" In Zephaniah 1:14-15, the prophet states: (14) 'The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. (15) That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness.'

The final act of God's wrath will take place at the judgment of the Great White Throne, foretold in the twentieth chapter of Revelation. There you read in the tenth verse about the ultimate doom of Satan: "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever." This is followed by the final judgment of all those who in their life-time rejected the offer of Christ as the propitiation for their sins. The Bible tells us that if we repent of our sin, accept the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and commit our lives to Him, our names are immediately written in the Book of Life. This is especially significant in view of the account of the judgment of the Great White Throne in Revelation 20, verses 11 to 15: (11) "And I saw a Great White Throne and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them." (12) "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." (13) "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works." (14) "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death." (15) "And whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."

But while the final scenes foretold in the passages I have quoted are in the future, and we are not told how far in the future, I believe that the beginnings of God's wrath

are already here! We are experiencing the reaping of what we have been sowing. Never before in the world's history have so many people had the opportunity to turn back to God but never before since the days of Sodom and Gomorrah has wickedness increased at such an alarming rate! Even in so-called Christian countries, such as Canada and the United States, the permissive society seems to have taken over our nations. Every change in our legislation appears to get our nations further away from the holiness and the righteousness that God demands. Laws have already been passed condoning sexual perversion, legalizing abortion, and making it possible for children to drink liquor at a younger age. Consideration is already being given to the legalizing of certain harmful and dangerous drugs; a large part of our current literature glorifies extra-marital sex. Obscenity and nudity characterize our books and movies. In New York city, murders during the first half of 1971 were up over 50% from the same period in 1970.

What is the harvest of all that is being sowed?

We already see it in broken homes and broken lives. The number of our young people who are using drugs today, who have dropped out of school, run away from home, and who are living on charity under degrading moral conditions, some of which is even subsidized by government out of our pockets, is a staggering result of the permissiveness that we have been sowing.

Another indication that the wrath of God is beginning to fall is seen in the withholding of wisdom from our national and international leaders. Any unprejudiced observer would agree that the international situation is

chaotic, and that our national situation is very little better. Hardly a day goes by but what we read of violent demonstrations in cities, on university campuses, and even on the steps of our legislatures. These demonstrations are not by any means intended as a protest against injustice. We have protests by students who want to control the manner in which they receive their education. We have protests by young women demanding free abortions. We have protests by school children demanding that they be given free devices for birth control. No one taking an unprejudiced look at our culture today could claim that we have peace in our land. If you read the 4th chapter of Amos, you will see that peace is a by-product of righteousness.

The beginnings of the wrath of God are also evident in the slaughter that is going on in Vietnam and the tension in the near East. All of these are declared by the prophet Amos to be part of the wrath of God. We read in Amos, the fourth chapter and the tenth verse: "Your young men have I slain with the sword, yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Lord."

(d) In the Scripture reading today, in the first chapter of Romans, we read how the wrath of God abandons the unrepentant sinners to even deeper sin. That result of the wrath of God is abundantly apparent in the moral turpitude which is so obvious today.

(e) The wrath of God will finally come to its peak in the appearance of anti-Christ, described both as the beast and the man of sin. Speaking of the second advent of Christ, Paul tells us in II Thessalonians, Chapter 2 and verse 3: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away

first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." It will be under the direction of the anti-Christ that the world will endure the great tribulation spoken of so graphically in Revelation. This will take place just a short time before the return of Christ in glory.

This is not a bright picture that I have painted today but I would be less than truthful if I were to do otherwise! However, there is one bright hope, and in concluding I would like to remind you that there is a way to escape from the wrath of God, both now and in the future. The Bible tells us quite clearly that we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God and that as such we are deserving of the wrath of God which culminates in eternal punishment. However, God's love provided this way of escape. He sent His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into the world to die on the cross, to bear our sins so that we by faith in Him might escape the wrath of God and might have eternal life, here and now. If we will just turn to Him, accept Him as Lord and Saviour, and commit our lives to Him, we will then immediately have our names written in the Lamb's Book of Life and they will be there for all eternity. If your name is not already written in the Lamb's Book of Life you can have it placed there this morning by simply turning to Him in faith and trusting your life to Him.