

Humanism-the Fifth Woe

by Martyn-Lloyd Jones

Martyn-Lloyd Jones explores the dangers of humanism and the folly of pride in intellect, emphasizing the timeless wisdom of the Bible.

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 1:9, Isaiah 5:21, Romans 1:21

Topics: "Humanism", "Pride of Intellect"

Description

Martyn-Lloyd Jones addresses the concept of humanism as the fifth woe pronounced by Isaiah, emphasizing that the Bible remains relevant and contemporary, revealing the timeless nature of human sin and folly. He critiques the pride of intellect that characterizes humanism, arguing that reliance on human wisdom leads to moral decline and rebellion against God. The preacher highlights that true wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord and that human beings must recognize their limitations and need for divine guidance. He warns against the illusion of modernity and the false confidence in human understanding, ultimately calling for humility and faith in Christ as the true source of wisdom and salvation.

Transcript

This is the fifth woe pronounced by Isaiah on his contemporaries and it deals with something for which we have a new word today - humanism, the creed of our so-called intellectuals.

The relevance of this verse in general, and in some particular respects, too, to our present condition, is something that should cause us to pause for a moment because it brings out certain truths so very clearly. The first is that it again reminds us that the Bible is a strangely contemporary book. People think it is out of date, and that is why they do not read it. They feel that the Bible has nothing to tell us about life today. But the simple answer is that if you but read the Bible, you will find that it tells you all about the modern world. If you want the best description of life as it is being lived at the present time, go to the Bible, and you will find it. That shows us that this is no ordinary book.

But the Bible also gives us the explanation of why things are as they are. It tells us that the essential human trouble is always the same. In other words, as the Bible puts it in the book of Ecclesiastes, "There is no new thing under the sun" (Eccles 1:9) - nothing at all. There is nothing so futile as the curious boast of modernity that it is "with it"; of all the boasts that is the emptiest. From the intellectual standpoint there is nothing quite so ridiculous as the way in which people think that modern life is something entirely new. They look back upon people who lived before them, and feel that those people knew nothing about life. They say, "But we have advanced, we have discovered a new way of thinking and of living!" But all that

has happened so many times before and it is all in the Bible.

Modern men and women, with all their cleverness, are incapable of inventing a new sin. The worst forms of vice and evil being committed today are to be found somewhere in the Bible. Nothing new under the sun! This boast and claim of modernity, and the idea that the majority of people are not Christians because they are "up to date" and "twentieth-century people", is a most futile and foolish claim. I can understand people who say that they are not Christians and do not accept the message, but they must not say that this is because they live in the twentieth century. There is nothing new about such a rejection of Christianity. People have been rejecting it throughout the centuries, and for exactly the same reasons, as we shall show.

This astounding chapter in Isaiah's prophecy shows us these things very clearly, both the contemporary character of the word of God, and the fact that there is nothing new under the sun. History is most important, and if you study it you will find that it goes round in cycles. We think that we are advancing, but that is an illusion; we are always going round in a cycle. This is seen very clearly in the matter of fashions in clothing, as everybody knows. I was reading in a newspaper the other day of a man who kept a suit a number of years. For a long time he had been ashamed to wear it, but now it had again become the fashionable thing to wear!

This is not only true of clothing - it is equally true in the realm of thought, indeed in every realm. Human beings are never very original; they merely go on repeating themselves and the Bible brings that out in a most extraordinary manner.

What does humanism mean? I cannot give a better definition of it than these words of Isaiah, "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" Humanism is belief in humanity. It is interested solely in men and women without God. It banishes God because it believes that human beings are sufficient in and of themselves. That is the very essence of humanism. Man is the centre of the universe, and there is nothing bigger, and nothing greater.

There are two main types of humanism. There is what is called "classical humanism", which means that for your guidance in life and your understanding of life, you do not go to the Bible but instead you go back to Greek literature and philosophy, Greek drama and Greek poetry. Classical humanists are people who study these great Greek authors and conduct their lives according to their teaching.

It is no part of Christian teaching to disparage those Greeks; they were truly great men. But classical humanism teaches that there is nothing beyond them and that if you desire wisdom you must go back to the thinking and the meditation of these giant brains of the past. You study them and grapple with them, and try to understand what they thought and what they laid down. Then you try to put that into practice, and that is the way to live a good and harmonious life in this present world.

The other form that humanism takes is what is called "scientific humanism". This is the more popular of the two at the present time. The classical represents the poetic, the philosophic and so on, and on the other side there is the scientific outlook, the approach which says that the answer to the problems of the world is not going to come from Greek philosophy or poetry so much as from a scientific understanding of the whole universe, human beings included.

This is the more modern of the two humanisms. It claims that it is new, because the discoveries are at least comparatively recent, going back very little more than some four hundred years at the maximum. By

delving into the mysteries of the universe and its constitution you discover the scientific truth about life, and from that you proceed to work out your whole scheme of living.

We must examine this because we are told, here in Isaiah, that this confidence in human wisdom leads to woe. But let us be clear about this. It is no part of the case for the Christian gospel to say anything derogatory of the intellect. Indeed, that is the very opposite of gospel teaching. The gospel places great value upon the intellect. Let nobody think that what Isaiah means is that there is no value in having a brain, or in the ability to use it, or in understanding, or the power of reason and so on. It is not that. There is nothing wrong with the intellect or with wisdom in themselves. Indeed, the Bible tells us that the highest gift that God has given to men and women in the realm of gifts--I am not talking about the soul and spirit but actual gifts-- the highest of all the gifts is mind, reason, understanding.

The wonderful thing about human beings is that they can contemplate their own selves; they can analyse themselves, evaluate and criticise themselves. This is a tremendous gift, given, according to the Bible, by God - So we must say nothing derogatory about the intellect, reason, or the mind. The Christian preacher is not just a sentimentalist or an obscurantist. He is not just a man who tells stories and tries to entertain people. He is here to reason with them, because God has given them minds which they are meant to use. But, as I am going to show, the real explanation of the world's trouble is the fact that people's minds have gone wrong, that they do not know how to use them properly.

What, then, is the attitude of the Bible to humanism? It is that while there is everything that is right about the mind, the reason and the understanding, what is wrong is that people put their final confidence in the mind. They are so proud of it that they begin to worship it, they think that it is sufficient in and of itself and nothing is needed beyond that. The trouble arises when they begin to boast of reason and to claim that with their mind they can encompass the entire cosmos. This statement of Isaiah's puts it so perfectly - "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes." They have put themselves up on a pedestal. "Look at me," they say, "am I not wonderful?" "Wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight." There is nothing wrong with being wise, but if you are wise in your own eyes, you are in a very dangerous condition. It is excellent to be prudent, but if you are prudent in your own sight, then you come under the condemnation that is delivered by the prophet.

I trust that that is clear. Far from saying that there is no value in intellect, I am going to use what little I have and I am going to ask you to do the same!

Why does God pronounce a woe upon those who are wise in their own eyes, and worship their brains and understanding - upon humanists? The first answer is that this is the very essence of their trouble and problem, this is the main cause of all the ills of the human race. Read the Bible and you will find that it says that this was their original trouble, and that it has been their trouble ever since. The temptation that first came to the man and the woman, as we have seen, was: "Hath God said?" (Gen 3:1). In other words, "Is God trying to keep you down? Is God trying to stand between you and a knowledge of good and evil? Is God trying to withhold something from you?"

"He is," said the devil, "because he knows that if you eat of that fruit you will become as gods yourselves, you will have understanding, you will know everything, you will be equal with God."

That was man's first sin, and it has been the cause of all his subsequent troubles.

But now let me show it in the New Testament. Take, for instance, what the apostle Paul says in the second half of Romans 1. He puts this very plainly. He is describing why the human race has become what it is, and he says,

"Because that, when they 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." There it is exactly - "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up . . ." (Rom 1:21-24). This is a summary of the history of the human race.

In chapter 12 of Romans Paul puts the problem in the form of a piece of advice. We probably all need this advice: "Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits" (Rom 12:16). It is the same thing - the danger of trusting to your own wisdom, your own intellect, the feeling that you are wonderful and need no help at all.

It is found still more clearly in a great passage in 1 Corinthians from chapter 1:17 to the end of the third chapter. Here Paul draws a contrast between the gospel and the wisdom of the wise. Because they were trusting to their own intellects and their own understanding the Greek philosophers were dismissing the gospel as "foolish". That has always been the great trouble.

The Bible is full of this teaching. No kind of person was more condemned by our Lord than the Pharisee. The trouble was his conceit. He thought that he was all right, that he was very wise and that he was doing everything perfectly. Pharisees "trusted in themselves that they were righteous" (Lk 18:9). It is the same thing. They did not need any help and they resented the teaching of this upstart, as they regarded our Lord. Who was he to teach them? Pride of intellect: it was their central trouble, a manifestation of a curious kind of humanism. Christ also taught exactly the same point in his parable of the rich fool in the twelfth chapter of Luke's Gospel.

The case put forward in the Bible is that pride of intellect is, in a sense, the ultimate sin. This is the primary trouble that leads to all the others - men and women glorying in themselves, glorying especially in their intellect and their mind. In 1 Corinthians the apostle Paul explains how this becomes the ultimate sin. It is because men and women misappropriate God's greatest gift. God complimented human beings by making them in his own image, and he gave them this astounding gift. But this is the very thing that they use against God and for themselves, and so bring themselves down.

The second reason why a "woe" is pronounced on this is that people believe a lie. They think that they are wise and prudent; but they are not. Now this, surely, is a most astonishing fact. Modern men and women are proud of themselves, of their intellect and wisdom; they feel they are superior to all who have ever lived before them. But how can they possibly feel like that about themselves with the world as it is now and as it has been during this twentieth century, with horrible wars, mounting crime waves and utter confusion?

And the Bible explains this by saying that people glory in their wisdom and in their prudence because they are fools! The wiser the man or woman, the more humble they are. It is those who have a smattering of knowledge who are always difficult. Those who really have great knowledge know enough to know what they do not know. "A little learning is a dangerous thing!" And so the Bible says that the ultimate truth about those who do not believe in God, and who are not Christians, is that they are fools.

The Bible uses many terms in its descriptions of the sinner, but "fool" is the one it uses most frequently. Our Lord uses it in the parable about "the rich fool". Here is a man boasting - "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry" (Lk 12:19-20). The man who thought he was so clever, so wise, was nothing but a fool.

"I'm all right, Jack!" That is the modern way of putting it - "I'm all right; I've got money put by for the future. I've used my mind. What a clever fellow I am!"

"Thou fool," says God, "this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" The Bible pronounces "woe" upon all this because it is a lie.

"But how do you prove that it's a lie?" asks someone.

Unfortunately, I can do so far too easily. I say that those who are wise and prudent in their own sight are to be condemned because they condemn themselves; they are a living lie. They claim to be wise; but how do they live? How do you test wisdom? How do you test intellect and understanding? It is not a matter of reading books and being able to give answers. That is the big mistake people make. No, the way to test people is not by how much they know, but by whether they have the power to apply what they know. Do they understand it sufficiently to put it into practice?

I have known many people who were excellent examinees, but who were useless afterwards. I have known people who, as medical students, could do well in examinations, they could learn facts off by heart and recite textbooks like parrots, but, clinically, when face to face with a patient, they were useless; they were quite incapable of applying their knowledge. But that is the test of wisdom.

The wise man or woman does not merely have knowledge - you can put that into computers - they have the power of appropriating and assimilating that knowledge until it becomes judgment. It becomes part of them, controlling their point of view, and determining their actions and practice. So our wisdom is judged not merely by the number of books we have read, or can quote and recite, but by the way we live, the way we use that knowledge. Christ put that in a famous question - "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world [of knowledge and of wealth], and lose his own soul?" (Mk 8:36).

What about human beings individually at the present time? How are the so-called "wise" men and women living? Look at these people who can tell us all about life. How many times have some of them passed through the divorce courts? Take many of the most famous philosophers. Read their records. Never take people's books alone - find out something about them. To write a book is so easy, very much easier than it is to live! Yes, it is easier to preach than it is to live. But living is the test of wisdom. I am not interested in a man or woman's claim to great knowledge and perspicuity if they are failing in their own lives, if they are drunkards, or adulterers, if you cannot trust them. What then is the value of their knowledge and learning? They say they are wise, but they are not; they are fools, deceiving and deluding themselves.

But what of men and women collectively? How proud the world is of its learning, but look at it! While they are so proud of themselves and their intellect and so on, they must be reminded of these facts. With all their wisdom and knowledge, they have already had two world wars and they have blasted more people to destruction in this one century than ever before. That is what modern men and women with their wisdom and prudence do in practice. And here they are, still arguing about missiles and the means of destruction, still troubled by tensions and insecurity and discord and moral muddle.

Yet people go on boasting about their wisdom. They are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight - with their world a mess, with a kind of carnage before their very eyes! It is a lie! That is why it is condemned in the Bible. It is just boasting, nothing but talk. It has the bigness of an inflated balloon. It is loud in its profession, but there is no practice.

But I can demonstrate this in another way and that is the failure of people even to understand. They like to think that though they are not perfect saints, as they put it, they do have great understanding. But have they? "Wise in his own eyes." So what is your view of yourself? What is man? Do you understand him? Do you understand yourself? Do modern man and woman really understand themselves? Do they understand the meaning of life? They are so proud of their wisdom and knowledge, but what do they really tell us about life? Is it big, or is it little? Is it something grand or something ignoble? What is it?

Where, then, is their understanding? Where do they show their prudence and their wisdom? What is the whole meaning of the world? What is history? Is there any design in it at all or any purpose? Or is it all just a bag of nonsense, pointless, purposeless, just blundering along in any direction without anyone knowing where or what or how? Where is the wisdom in all this? What do men and women know about the most important things? They know a great deal about electricity and the atom and power, and all these abstruse scientific matters. I do not criticise that, but when you are talking about wisdom, what I want to know is: How do I live? What is it all about? How can I find happiness and peace? How can I live in such a way that I shall not be ashamed of myself at the end of my journey? That is wisdom, that is prudence.

But, further, people do not seem to know anything about the cause of their problems. These people who have been "wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight" for the last hundred years have been prophesying wonderful things for us in this century. We were going to solve all our problems. The Victorian thinkers - the philosophers, the poets, the politicians, the agnostics - all said this. The trouble with men and women, they said, was that they were too poor, and crime was inevitable while you had poverty. But once people were educated, once you gave them good houses and better salaries, everything would be put right. Well, we have dealt with most of those defects yet the problem is greater than ever - indeed, we are now told that the rising crime wave is due to affluence! Where is the wisdom? Where is the prudence? People obviously do not understand their problem, still less are they able to discover a cure.

I am told that I must not criticise modern dramatists and novelists. I am told that they are moralists who are trying to improve conditions. But what is their method? Their method of trying to improve is to describe. But surely you do not solve a problem by simply describing it; you do not improve a situation simply by painting it? The business of the moralist is to solve the problem, to get us out of the predicament. We do not need any more descriptions. We know all about it. There is no need for anybody to write a book to tell us how people sin: it is all to be found in the Bible. And not only is it all there, but anybody who has lived in this world knows something about it. We do not need novels and films and dramas to tell us how people behave. What we want to know is how to get out of moral failure and confusion, how to stop doing wrong, how to be delivered.

But I am told that the work of modern writers and dramatists is very realistic! All right, but that makes no difference. What would you think of a doctor who, the next time you are taken desperately ill, comes to you and gives you an account of your temperature and your pulse rate and your respiration rate and the colour of your skin and the state of your pupils and so on, who describes your condition to you in a vivid manner and says, "That is your condition, very serious, very bad" - and then goes home?

That is not a caricature of modern pundits, that is exactly what our humanists are telling us today. I will grant them this, they are experts at description. They can tell us all about ourselves, and analyse the condition for US. "There you are," they say, "that is your condition."

But they have nothing to give us. Why? Because nothing is higher in creation than human beings, and it is they who have failed.

Take yet another reason why the Bible pronounces a woe upon the humanist. This is much more serious. It does so not only because humanism is a lie, but because of what it produces, because of what it leads to. This is the really serious aspect of the matter. So what is it? First and foremost, it is pride itself. Pride is the greatest of all sins. It is more prolific in causing trouble than anything else in the world. It is also the ugliest of the sins, and what havoc it has caused in the long history of the human race.

And what we are examining is nothing but pride of intellect. It shows itself in the despising of all who have gone before, and modern scientific humanists are very fond of doing that. Nobody knew anything until they arrived on the scene. They despise their forefathers. This is seen in every realm. They dismiss all previous books, all previous knowledge. Everything is out of date; nothing is of any value. Indeed, there are foolish people who occupy Christian pulpits who are really saying that, in effect, nobody could truly understand the Bible until this generation with its modern knowledge. They dismiss nineteen centuries of Christian exposition and Christian learning. That in itself is enough to put them out of court - their colossal conceit and pride. It is ugly. And God hates it. He sees man standing up and inflating himself, and he pronounces his woe upon it.

Then that in turn leads to self-confidence and self-satisfaction. Our Lord has painted the perfect picture of this in his parable of the Pharisee and the publican who went up into the Temple to pray. Look at that Pharisee walking up right to the front. Here is a man who is pleased with himself, a man who has a mind and a brain; and he thanks God that he is what he is. He does not need any help; he does not ask for anything. He has everything; he can do everything himself! That is the kind of man whom Christ denounced most bitterly. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" There is nothing more terrible in the sight of God than self-confidence.

But what makes this self-confidence such a terrible thing is that it always leads to rebellion against God. I reminded you earlier on that that was the cause of the original sin. The devil came and said, "God is trying to hold you down." And Adam and Eve believed him and began to feel a hatred of God. They felt that if only they could get that knowledge, then all would be well, and they would be able to lead an independent life. So they elevated themselves in their own esteem, and human beings have been on that pedestal ever since.

Rebellion against God - that is the essence of humanism. The humanist says, "I do not believe in God and I will tell you why. I do not need him. I can carry on perfectly well without him. There is no God."

God's comment on that is found in Psalm 14: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (v. 1). But there are many people today who think that nobody ever said that until this century. But David said that in Psalm 14 nearly three thousand years ago! It was true at that time, a thousand years before Christ was born. People were saying, "There is no God," and David said, "Yes, they say that because they are fools."

So humanists do not believe in God because, they say, we have no need of him. Why do people who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight, need God? If they understand everything and can

manage themselves and all life, well, they do not need God. That has increasingly been the position of the human race for the last hundred years, with knowledge growing and advancing and the various developments in scientific knowledge - we are all so advanced!

"Of course," they say, "there may have been a time when people needed God, but not now." Everybody has enough now. We have the money, we are getting better wages, we can get all we want! We can read, we have television sets, and we are men and women of knowledge. So we do not need God.

That is rebellion against God. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom 8:7). That is always an immediate consequence of rebellion against God. The moment people think they are wise, and rebel against God, they begin to go wrong morally. This is a very subtle matter. Men and women in their folly do not realise that their real objection to God is that they have to obey him, that God is a God of justice, of righteousness and holiness. And the Bible tells us that God made man and woman in his own image, and he meant them to live in the same sort of manner as God himself.

But people do not want to live like that; they do not want to live upright, pure, disciplined and holy lives. They want to give rein to their passions and lusts. Desire, that is the trouble; forbidden fruit, of course. The illicit ah! This is love!

"Of course, stupid people don't understand," they say. "I thought I was in love before, but this is the real thing. I have it now. I thought I had, but I hadn't - this is true love!" Let them do what they like; let them commit adultery and spit upon the sanctities. "Don't talk about law," they say, "don't bring in morality. That's legalism. Love!"

The truth is, of course, that it is nothing but lust, but to suit their own lust and deaden their own conscience, they try to work out a philosophy, and in that philosophy there is nothing higher than human beings. There is no God, so they have nothing to fear; all is well and they can go on pleasing themselves.

There has never been any form of humanism without moral declension. The humanists I know claim to be moral - and in their own personal lives many of them are moral people - but the teaching of the Bible is that in every period when humanism has been in the ascendant, morality has invariably gone down. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools," says Paul, as we have seen, in Romans 1:22. Then the moral declension came in.

Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather [in AV margin] than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature (Rom 1:24-26).

It is a recognised fact of history that some of the great Greek philosophers were moral perverts. High idealists, writing their blueprints of a Utopia, and yet guilty of the foulest vices! It always happens! The moral consequences always follow, and that is why God pronounces woe upon it. When people set themselves up as the final authority they always descend into the abyss. Why? Because they cannot extricate themselves, they have not got the power.

This leads us to the last point, which is that God pronounces "woe" upon this pride of intellect, this confidence in human understanding, because it is that which above everything else causes men and women to refuse God's way of salvation. This is the most calamitous thing of all. There they are in their awful plight and they try to extricate themselves. They perfect their educational systems, they multiply their cultural media. Never have they been so busy trying to put themselves right as they have been during the last hundred years. They have exhausted almost every conceivable approach and tried every avenue, but in spite of it all we see what is happening. And yet, in this very situation, when the gospel of Christ is offered to men and women, this gospel which alone can deliver them and set them free and save them, they refuse it.

Why is this? It is because they feel that they are sufficient, because they think that they are wise and prudent, because they still think that they can save themselves. Why do people not read history? Why do they not read their own books? History proves that men and women cannot deliver themselves, try as they will, with all their might and main. All great civilisations have gone down, and the present civilisation is going down. But people still refuse the offer of the gospel, They still laugh at Christ and ridicule the cross. They spit into the face of God and say they do not need him. This pride of intellect, this is the curse, this is the real trouble with humanity. They say, "I will not believe unless I can understand." They want to understand God! They think they are so big that they can measure God himself, they can measure Infinity!

So men and women are under the wrath and the woe of God, finally, because they refuse God's offer. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting.

For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light came into the world, and men love the darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. (Jn 3:16-19)

God pronounces a woe on all that; and I see calamity coming. More than ever before, men and women are standing up in their pride: proud of their own wisdom, wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight, saying they do not need God and that they can handle and order their own affairs. They maintain that they can perfect the world and they stand up and say all this, while refusing the gospel, ridiculing it and blaspheming against it! They are like that rich fool who turned to himself and congratulated himself, saying, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry" (Lk 12:19).

"It's a good world," they say, congratulating themselves. "We're having a great time. Never had it so good!"

"But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee" (Lk 12:20).

What if some scientists are right, and this universe has not got many more years to go, what then? Where is your wisdom and your learning - where is it all? When God says, "Now, this night you must go out of this world, you must die" - whether of a virus infection or by bomb does not matter, but you have got to die- "This night thy soul shall be required of thee." What then? Do you know where you are going? Do you know what happens to you after death? Can you tell me what happens in that great unknown beyond? Here is wisdom - what am I? How do I live? How do I die? What happens to me afterwards? Where is your

knowledge? What are you boasting of? The humanist has nothing, nothing at all, and God pronounces his "woes" upon it, and he does so in a very terrifying manner.

Let me direct your attention to some verses in the book of Revelation, which is the last book of the Bible, the book which tells us of the day that is coming when God will arise and say, "This night!" to the whole universe. And the great men of the earth, we are told:

..cried when they saw the smoke of her burning [this great city of Babylon, meaning civilisation], saying, What city is like unto this great city! And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate. Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her. And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all (Rev 18:18-21).

And this Babylon of civilisation is going to be destroyed in an hour when God arises. "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!"

Is that the last word.) Thank God, it is not. But that is the last word as far as humanism is concerned. It is wrong, essentially. It is a fraud. It is deceit. It is a failure. It can do nothing. And it calls down wrath upon itself. But it is not the last word. In spite of this insanity of men and women, in spite of the fact that they are such blind fools, God has mercy upon them. There is an answer to it all.

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov 9:10). That is the answer. People must be awakened; they must realise it. They must see that they are fools, that they are failures and that their outlook and life will lead to a fatal end. And they must submit. The apostle Paul says, "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise" (1 Cor 3:18). Human wisdom leads to nothing, but there is this "wisdom from God".

"We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:23-24).

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor 1:21).

When men and women had completely failed, "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law" (Gal 4:4-5).

So what is necessary? Those who want to be wise must become as little children and admit that they know nothing. Let each one say, "I am but a child. I thought I knew but I was just fooling myself. I was drunk on my own intellect. When it comes to the point, I see that I know nothing about myself. I don't understand life, I don't understand the world and I cannot do anything about it. I cannot control myself and I see everything going wrong. I'm a fool, a child, I know nothing!" Blessed are those who come to that position. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 18:3).

And to such people, God says, "I sent my only begotten Son into the world to redeem people like you. You have become as a little child, so I offer you in Christ my Son, who bore your sins in his own body on the

tree - I offer you free forgiveness. I will blot out all your sins as if you had never committed a sin in your life." God's wisdom in Christ! That is the way to solve the problem. This is heavenly, this is divine wisdom.

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