The Mind Behind the World System

O ur Lord Jesus utters these words at a key point in His ministry. He has entered Jerusalem thronged by enthusiastic crowds; but almost at once He has spoken in veiled terms of laying down His life, and to this heaven itself has given public approval. Now He comes out with this great twofold statement. What, we ask ourselves, can it have conveyed to those who have just acclaimed Him, going out to meet Him and accompanying Him home on His ride? To most of them His words, if they had any meaning at all, must have signified a complete reversal of their hopes. Indeed the more discerning came to see in them a forecasting of the actual circumstances of His death as a criminal (v. 33).

Yet if His utterance destroyed one set of illusions, it offered in place of them a wonderful hope, solid and secure. For it announced a far more radical exchange of dominion than even the more discerning came to see in them a forecasting of the actual circumstances of His death as a criminal (v. 33).

“There is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself” (John 12:31, 32).

Yet if His utterance destroyed one set of illusions, it offered in place of them a wonderful hope, solid and secure. For it announced a far more radical exchange of dominion than even the more discerning came to see in them a forecasting of the actual circumstances of His death as a criminal (v. 33).

While it is true that...three definitions of “the world,” as (1) the material earth or universe, (2) the people on the earth, and (3) the things of the earth, each contribute something to a harmonious system of things, the whole picture, it will already be apparent that behind them all is something more. The classical idea of orderly arrangement or organization helps us to grasp what this is. Behind all that is tangible we meet something intangible, we meet a planned system; and in this system there is a harmonious functioning, a perfect order.

Concerning this system there are two things to be emphasized. First, since the day when Adam opened the door for evil to enter God's creation, the world order has shown itself to be hostile to God. The world “knew not God” (1 Cor. 1:21), “hated” Christ (John 15:18) and “cannot receive” the Spirit of truth (14:17). “Its works are evil” (John 7:7) and “the friendship of the world is enmity with God” (James 4:4). Hence Jesus says, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). He has “overcome the world” (16:33) and “the victory that hath overcome the world” is “our faith” in Him (1 John 5:4). For, as the verse of John 12 that heads this study affirms, the world is under judgment. God’s attitude to it is uncompromising.

This is because, secondly, as the same verse makes clear, there is a mind behind the system. John writes repeatedly of “the prince of this world” (12:31; 14:30; 16:11). In his Epistle he describes him as “he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4) and matches against him the Spirit of truth who indwells believers.

“We are touching that harmonious system behind the things seen, a system that is controlled by God’s enemy. So let us beware.”

The Bible opens with God’s creation of the heavens and the earth. It does not say that He created the world in the sense that we are discussing it now. Through the Bible the purpose of all things on the earth….Originally our physical earth had no connection with “the world” in this sense of a Satanic system,
nor indeed had man; but Satan took advantage of man’s sin, and of the door this threw open to him, to introduce into the earth the organization which he had set himself to establish. Just as the world belongs to Satan, so the Kingdom belongs to our Lord Jesus. Moreover it is this Kingdom that displaces and that will displace the world. When the “Stone not made with hands” shatters man’s proud image, then the kingdom of this world will “become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ” (Dan. 2:44, 45; Rev. 11:15).

Politics, education, literature, science, art, law, commerce, music—such are the things that constitute the kosmos, and these are things that we meet daily. Subtract them and the world-system will have reached its zenith; and at that hour every unit of it will be revealed to be anti-Christian. …In many parts of the world it has long been easy to trace an intimate relationship between idolatry and the arts of painting, sculpture, and music. No doubt the day is coming when the nature of antichrist will be disclosed more openly than ever through song and dance and the visual and dramatic arts.

But what of education? Surely, we protest, that must be harmless. Anyway, our children have to be taught. But education, no less than commerce or technology, is one of the things of the world, the men of the world, the things that are in the world, to head everything up eventually in the kingdom of antichrist. At that hour the world-system will have reached its zenith; and at that hour every unit of it will be revealed to be anti-Christian. …In many parts of the world it has long been easy to trace an intimate relationship between idolatry and the arts of painting, sculpture, and music. No doubt the day is coming when the nature of antichrist will be disclosed more openly than ever through song and dance and the visual and dramatic arts.

But what of education? Surely, we protest, that must be harmless. Anyway, our children have to be taught. But education, no less than commerce or technology, is one of the things of the world, the men of the world, the things that are in the world, to head everything up eventually in the kingdom of antichrist. At that hour the world-system will have reached its zenith; and at that hour every unit of it will be revealed to be anti-Christian. …In many parts of the world it has long been easy to trace an intimate relationship between idolatry and the arts of painting, sculpture, and music. No doubt the day is coming when the nature of antichrist will be disclosed more openly than ever through song and dance and the visual and dramatic arts.

But what of education? Surely, we protest, that must be harmless. Anyway, our children have to be taught. But education, no less than commerce or technology, is one of the things of the world, the men of the world, the things that are in the world, to head everything up eventually in the kingdom of antichrist. At that hour the world-system will have reached its zenith; and at that hour every unit of it will be revealed to be anti-Christian. …In many parts of the world it has long been easy to trace an intimate relationship between idolatry and the arts of painting, sculpture, and music. No doubt the day is coming when the nature of antichrist will be disclosed more openly than ever through song and dance and the visual and dramatic arts.

But what of education? Surely, we protest, that must be harmless. Anyway, our children have to be taught. But education, no less than commerce or technology, is one of the things of the world, the men of the world, the things that are in the world, to head everything up eventually in the kingdom of antichrist. At that hour the world-system will have reached its zenith; and at that hour every unit of it will be revealed to be anti-Christian. …In many parts of the world it has long been easy to trace an intimate relationship between idolatry and the arts of painting, sculpture, and music. No doubt the day is coming when the nature of antichrist will be disclosed more openly than ever through song and dance and the visual and dramatic arts.

But what of education? Surely, we protest, that must be harmless. Anyway, our children have to be taught. But education, no less than commerce or technology, is one of the things of the world, the men of the world, the things that are in the world, to head everything up eventually in the kingdom of antichrist. At that hour the world-system will have reached its zenith; and at that hour every unit of it will be revealed to be anti-Christian. …In many parts of the world it has long been easy to trace an intimate relationship between idolatry and the arts of painting, sculpture, and music. No doubt the day is coming when the nature of antichrist will be disclosed more openly than ever through song and dance and the visual and dramatic arts.

The above word from our brother was written in the 1940’s, yet it sounds like it was written for the beginning of this new millennium. Today, the world penetrates our homes through the medium of television; through the internet and the video games, it reaches into the very depths of the beings of many of our children as more and more of our homes become equipped with pc computers for all ages. More and more of the “common people” are becoming investors in the stock market. Politics, education, literature, science, art, law, commerce, music are all part of the world. We parents must know the world, and through example and teaching, train our children not to love it.