

Noah

Genesis 6 - 11.

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How changed is the whole condition of things since the day of Genesis!

Were I to read the opening of this fine scripture, and just expose my heart to the simpler earliest impression of what I get there, it is this thought which would engage my mind; and yet with all ease we can account for this strange and wondrous revolution. In Genesis 1 God was alone, producing the fruit of His own handiwork, in wisdom, goodness, and skill, and then all was good and desirable. On the return of every evening and morning the divine delights lingered over what the divine hand was working out, and behold all was very good; and the seventh day was sanctified for the celebration of this rest and enjoyment. But now, it is not God's hand presenting a perfect work to God's thoughts and affections, but it is man, the apostate artificer, spreading out a wide scene of corruption and violence for the grief and repentings of the divine mind. The secret of the chance lies there. Man has been at work; man has been fashioning and furnishing the scene, and not the living, blessed God. The earth is therefore filled with violence; giants there are, mighty men, men of renown; and the imaginations of that heart which was now making "this present evil world" are only evil, and that continually.

Here lies the secret. The change was complete because of the new potter that had been at the wheel; the change could not be less. The song of the morning stars, the shout of the sons of God, had no echo in the scene of creation now; man was now abroad — not as a part of the work, but as a reprobate workman.

It is just this which gives character to the opening of chapter 6. And there is no relief for all this in the creature — the best sample and portion it could offer is itself defiled. The sons of God themselves are dragged into the mire — their will, their desire, their taste, are supreme with them. The daughters of Moab have seduced to fornication; and the Nazarites, who were purer than snow and whiter than milk, whose polishing was of sapphire, are become blacker than a coal. The witness against them is, "he also is flesh."

If Adam was seduced by the subtlest of enemies, and followed the sight of his eye and the desire of his heart, the sons of God are now seduced by an enemy equally successful. He works, it is true, from within rather than without — "he also is flesh" — but the sight of the eye and the desire of the heart are again followed. Wives are taken of all "whom they choose;" other lords are listened to, for God is not in all their thoughts, and then it matters not whether it be the promise of the serpent, or the fairness of the daughters of men. Gen. 3: 4, 5.

The multiplying of men on the face of the earth is noticed as connected with all this corruption — just as in the history of the Church. Acts 6: 1. It was when the number of disciples was multiplied that murmurings and disputings began to arise; and these kindred cases in Genesis 6 and Acts 6 tell us that man is never to be trusted, and that the more we get of him the worse things are. "Jesus did not

commit Himself to them, for He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man."

Such was the condition of the scene from one end to the other; and against all this corruption and violence which now overspread the earth, the judgment of God is marked — "My spirit shall not always strive with man." There may be, and there shall be, a term of long-suffering — as it is said, "his days shall be one hundred and twenty years" — but still judgment is marked, and the day of visitation will come — the Spirit will not *always* strive.

But there is resource in God, as well as judgment with Him. If man, the work of His *hand*, have "grieved" Him, still, drawing from Himself, He will (may I say?) go deeper, and find His joy in the counsels of His *heart*.

"Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Man, as a sinner, shall become the object of electing, pardoning, justifying love — he shall engage the *heart* now, as of old, at creation, he engaged the *hand* of the Lord.

Thus from Himself the Lord draws, but from Himself in a deeper sense and way than before. This was to be no more repairing of the creature — such a thing would have been no fit work for God. As to man, God had to repent that He had made him on the earth; and as to the scene around him, the mind of God was changed — changed unalterably, and for ever. Man, as a thing formed of the dust, was never to be the divine delight again — mere man. But grace can make a new thing — not repairing the work marred on the wheel, but making it another vessel, as it seem good to the potter to make it. In its old estate it was ruined, but in its ruins grace will take it up to make it a goodly and a pleasant vessel of richest treasures and all-desirable beauty.

We admire a ruin; and some, as they have thought of this, have suspected the moral of such a sentiment, and been ready to condemn the heart and eye that could linger with pleasure over what was the witness of decay and death, and the entrance of the power of sin. But I would venture to embolden such, and to tell them that they may still admire a ruin, and do so without fear or self-judgment. The redeemed thing is a vast, and precious, and beautiful ruin; it will bespeak the power of sin and death for ever, while displaying the boundless, glorious victory of death's Destroyer. And the thoughts of the Spirit of God, the mind of Christ, as well as heaven itself and all its hosts, will linger over that ruin for a happy eternity. It will be the ornament and the delight of the creation of God. "Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it! Shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob!" And again, "Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety-and-nine just persons which need no repentance."

This is heaven's admiration of a beautiful ruin; and these are the ways of God. The operations of His hands were, of old, His delight, and the counsels of His grace are now His delight, and the attending angels have their music, and their dancing in the house of the prodigal's Father.

Noah, having thus found grace in the eyes of the Lord, becomes the subject of divine teaching. An elect vessel is always the vessel for the handiwork of God, through the Spirit. The Lord communicates His mind to him; He tells him that the judgment of an evil world, which had now filled up its measure, was marked before Him, but that for him and his house there was safety, and a great deliverance.

This communication has a very precious character in it — *it is strictly according to the previous counsel of His own bosom*. This is very much to be prized. God tells His elect one, that the end of all

flesh was come before Him — as, in His own secret counsels He had already said, "My spirit shall not *always* strive with man;" He tells him of the sense and judgment He had of the *moral* condition of the earth — just such as He had uttered in secret before; and, further, He tells him to get ready an ark for the saving of his house, as, in the counsels of His electing love and sovereign purpose, Noah had already found grace in His eyes.

It is very establishing to the heart to notice this. It lets us understand how *exactly* the revelation made to us puts us into possession of the divine mind, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" says the Lord, on another occasion, when He was, as here, speaking to Himself. And a *fulness*, as well as exactness, I may say, distinguishes these revelations. Jesus says to His disciples, "All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" — with, however, one exception. The Lord God had fixed 120 years as the term of His long-suffering. Noah's preaching, as well as ark-building, was to be for that period. Such was the purpose of God. But Noah was told nothing of this predestinated interval. The Lord kept back all mention of the 120 years. Noah knew, indeed, that the waters could not prevail till he and his were safe in the ark, but how long that might be preparing, or whether or not, after it was finished, any time should pass ere the waters should begin to rise, he knew not. This part of the divine counsel the Father kept in His own power; this was the exception to the fulness of the communication. Events were to take place, signs were to precede "the day of the Lord" — such, at least, as the finishing and filling of the ark. In the language of the prophet, the bud was to become tender, and to put forth its leaves. Had any one talked to Noah about the waters rising ere the ark was ready, Noah would not have been shaken in mind, or in anywise troubled. That could not be. "The time draweth nigh" would have been deceit then, as it will be by-and-by, when the earthly remnant, or election, are, like Noah, waiting for redemption. Luke 21: 8. But still, the period itself, the term of the divine long-suffering, was put in the Father's power, and no one knew the day nor the hour. So rich and full are those harmonies in earlier and latter days, in typical and closing actions of God's hand. Noah was at this time an *earthly* man — that is an elect one destined for inheritance in the earth, as the nation of Israel, by-and-by, will be; and both of them, in their several days, are provided, by divine instructions, against the deceits which might alarm them, or the promises which might seduce them; but the day and hour of their deliverance are not told.

The ark, in the size, fashion, and material of it, is entirely the prescription of God. Noah has but to make it — the Lord plans it as well as appoints it. The making of it is only the trial and the proof of faith — "by faith Noah, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." Israel fashioning the sanctuary, in after days, was a like act of faith. They had to make it, and make it they did, with willing hearts and ready service, yielding their brass, and their silver, and their gold, their fine linen, badgers' skins, shittim-wood, oil, spices, and precious stones. But in this was only the obedience of faith to the way of deliverance and peace, which God Himself had planned and revealed. They made the sanctuary as Noah made the ark; but neither was his act nor their act anything more than faith in the provisions of God. And what is the gospel, and faith in the gospel, to this hour, but such a revelation of the provisions of grace, and such obedience to that revelation? The religion of the elect has ever been the same — "It is of faith, that it might be by grace." Faith in God's sovereign provisions was Adam's religion at the beginning, then it was Noah's, afterwards it was the religion of Abraham, and of every true Israelite; and so at this day it is ours. We all, as well as Adam, come forth from our shame, and fear, and confusion of conscience, at the tidings of the bruised and bruising Seed of the woman. We all, as well as Noah, prepare an ark for salvation, and become heirs of the righteousness which is by faith; we all as well as Israel, betake us from the fiery hill to the sanctuary of enthroned mercy — and Jesus, Jesus, is the name borne along the line, from one end of it to the other, of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and saints, Gentile and Jewish, small and great, in the deep-

toned melody that is to charm the eternity of heaven.

It is not merely mercy. Heaven knows no such thought. Neither is it simple, naked promise. It is *propitiation* and victory, and *purchased* as well as promised blessings.

Inspect the sanctuary of God and you will find that it is not mere mercy that is there. It is enthroned mercy, mercy on the ark of the covenant, mercy sustained by the work and on the person of the Son of God. And faith has respect only to such a mystery as that. Faith never talks of mere mercy. It could not. It could no more talk of mere mercy in God than it could of moral righteousness in man. The gospel does not know such ideas, and therefore faith cannot apprehend them. The gospel reveals One who is just, while justifying the ungodly. Mercy and truth have met together. It is glory to God in the highest while it is peace and good will to men. This is the way of the gospel.

Abraham is in the faith of this, as we see in Genesis 15. The Lord had said to him, "I will give thee this land to inherit it." This was a promise, the promise too of One that could not lie. It was an immutable thing. And Abraham rightly listened to this. As a sinner, who knew full well and full justly, that promises to such an one must have foundations and warranty, he listened to it; therefore he at once says, "Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" Is this a challenge of the promise? Is this a question of the divine truthfulness? No, indeed. It is only faith letting God know, that it was a conscious sinner who was listening to His promise, which needed therefore some warranty, or consideration, to carry it with certainty to the heart. And the Lord was well pleased with this. Faith always pleases Him, as without it nothing does. And at once He prepares to let Abraham know that *sacrifice sustained the promise*.

Our patriarch, before Abraham, was in the like faith. And walking in the steps of the same faith he takes an advanced character. He attains righteousness. "Thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation," is now the word of God to him. "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*."

Love, and faith, and the patience of hope were, however, each to animate his soul, and form his life, for that solemn interval of 120 years. While the ark was preparing, the Spirit, in Noah's preaching, was striving with that generation. Nothing can be more beautifully replete with meaning than all this. Noah was in the work of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope — a true Thessalonian saint. He was preparing the ark in that faith which had received the divine warning — in love he was telling his generation of righteousness. 2 Peter 2: 5. Just like a saint of this day. His own safety is settled and sure — *that* he knows; but he is careful that his neighbours should share it with him. The Spirit then strove in the testimony as now He strives; but every stroke of Noah's hammer day by day told that He would not always strive.

At the close of this predestinated but undisclosed period, Noah enters the ark. This was the great salvation in a mystery. It was as the night of Egypt's doom and Israel's rescue. Nothing less than safety and deliverance under the fullest securities and dearest title in an hour of most solemn judgment, was now the story of Noah. And this is the salvation of the gospel. In Egypt afterwards, the very hand which carried the sword of destruction along the land had appointed the sheltering blood. Could the sword strike? Impossible! And now it was He, who took counsel with Himself about the judgment of the world, who had also counselled His elect about the way of escape. It was the hand which was about to let the waters out which was now shutting Noah in. Could they then prevail against him! Just, in like manner, impossible!

"The voice that speaks in thunder

Says, 'Sinner, I am thine.'

The One to whom vengeance belongs has settled all the plan of safety. He that is bearing the sword into the land has appointed the scarlet line in the window. But a solemn scene of judgment accompanies all this. The sun was risen on the earth, as, after this, Lot entered into Zoar. And yet that sunny hour was the very time for the rain of brimstone and fire to fall. Nothing could be done till Lot entered the city, but then nothing remained to be done ere the fire came down.

How deeply was the moment of visitation hid! They might well have said, "Peace and safety," when they saw that morning sun, as he was wont, gilding the bright and happy surface of the scene around them. But even then the "sudden destruction" fell.

Noah's generation was eating, and drinking, and marrying, just as the water began to rise. There was no harbinger, save, like Lot's escape to Zoar, Noah's entrance into the ark. But that was folly. To imprison himself and all that he had in the sides of a ship aground, that *was* folly. But the flood came in the moment of fancied security, and took them all away. They were "willingly ignorant" of the word of God, the testimony of the "preacher of righteousness;" one who addressed them in the power and on the principle of a resurrection hope. 1 Peter 3.

Sudden and sure destruction on all outside, but divine, infallible security on all within. The city of refuge was *appointed of God*, and its walls must be salvation. Impossible to be less. The same righteousness which has pronounced a curse on every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them, has likewise pronounced a curse on every one that hangeth on a tree. Gal. 3. Can He then deny His own remedy to the sinner, cursed under the law, when he pleads, by faith, the Saviour cursed on the tree? Alike, impossible.

"The Lord shut him in." The hand of the Lord imparted its own strength and security to Noah's condition. It is not too bold to say, that all within the door of the ark were as safe as the Lord Himself. The Lord returned, we may say, to His own heavens, or to His throne, which is established for ever, and Noah was left on the earth, in the place and day of judgment. But Noah was as safe as the Lord. "We may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world." Jesus has gone back to heaven, and we are still in this world, the judgment of which is marked before God; but we have the boldness which is proper to Jesus. Wonderful to utter it! And yet is all that mysterious, glorious security figured in that little action, "The Lord shut him in." God's own hand imparted its strength to Noah's condition ere He returned to the heavens.

Some of every sort are borne with Noah from the place of death into the ark of salvation. The "eight souls," as Peter speaks, but with them, remnants of the beasts of the earth, small and great, winged fowl and creeping things all are housed and redeemed together with Noah.

So was it afterwards in Egypt. Not a hoof was left behind. The great redemption of that day, in like manner, provided for all — Moses and the 600,000, with their wives and little ones, and also all their cattle; all again knew and manifested the saving strength of God. As in the day of Nineveh, long after, "the much cattle" are the Lord's thought, as the six-score thousand persons that could not discern between their right hand and their left.

And in the coming day of the inheritance of Christ, His dominions will measure all the works of God's hand, "All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea;" and the fields and the floods, and the hills and trees of the wood, shall be joyful before Him. Psalm 98.

Welcome mystery! Are they not all His creatures? Did not His hand of old form them, and His

eyes and His heart rest and delight in them? And is this lost to Him? May Jonah grieve for his withered gourd, and the Lord not spare the works of His own hand for His abiding joy? He will renew the face of the earth, as it is written — The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever, the Lord shall rejoice in His works. Psalm 104: 31, "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God."

But it is here that I may pause for a moment, to notice the dispensational character of these days of Noah.

The earth, as the scene of God's delight, and of His people's citizenship, had been lost by the apostasy of Adam; and the hopes and inheritance of the saints, all through the days before the flood, were heavenly — the Lord thereby disclosing, though faintly, certain portions of the great secrets of His own bosom — the secrets of the good pleasure purposed in Himself ere worlds were, that heaven, as well as earth, should be connected with the destinies of man. The heavens were opened to man, when Adam, the man of the earth, failed. Gen. 5: 24.

That was so. But earth was not shut because heaven was thus opened. The divine counsel ran otherwise. It was this — that God would "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth." And the heavenly calling having been already revealed in the story of the saints before the flood, the due season had now come for the revelation of God's great purpose concerning the earth, and to make it known that He had not given it up, because, in His dispensational ways, He had taken up the heavens.

As in Rev. 4. When the heavenly saints, "the fulness of the Gentiles," the mystic elders and living creatures, are seated in their heavenly places, the thoughts of Him who sat on the throne there return to the earth. The rainbow is *at once* seen around the throne — the witness of this, that the covenant which gives security *to the earth* was about to be the spring of action in heaven. And so now in these days of Noah. When the heavenly family had ended their course, and Enoch was translated, the Lord's thoughts returned to the earth, and that, I may say, *at once*; for the next thing of character in the progress of the hand, or the Spirit of God, is the prophecy of Lamech, pledging God and His mercies to the earth again, and introducing Noah — "This same [Noah] shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed."

This is all simple — scarcely capable of being misunderstood. The prophecy of Lamech, which introduces it, tells us what we are to expect and find in the mystery of Noah. "The key of the parable lies at the door." The recovery of the earth, the return of God's rest and delight in it, all this will be made good in the coming times of the true Noah, in whom, and in whom alone, all the promises of God are yea and amen.

A great action, however, must usher in those times. The call of the heavenly people is quite otherwise, as in the call of the antediluvian saints. There was in those days no interference with the scene around. Cain's family was left in possession — quiet, undisputed possession — of their cities and their wealth. The visitation of God then, as always under such a call, only separated a people without affecting either to regulate or judge the world. It left it as it found it. But God's claim to the earth, and His purpose to take it up again, is necessarily otherwise. There He is as *thoroughly interfering with every thing*, as in the other way of His "manifold wisdom" He was *utterly leaving all alone*. For by judgment He must purge the earth, and get it fit to be His footstool.

All this is the dispensational truth we learn here, in this parable, or in these times of Noah. The

earth has been remembered, and is now resumed, but through purifying judgments. All takes the sentence of death into itself, that it may stand as a new thing, in the strength and grace of Him who quickens the dead. The earth itself was in the water, or under the water, and the elect remnant were saved — as in the appointed city of refuge — from the hand of the avenger; and all therefore appears again, as in resurrection.

Beasts, and fowl, and creeping things, some of every sort, go into the ark; and there, within that refuge, which kept its charge in peace from fear of evil, the ransomed passed the days of their patience.

But they were more than safe. They were *remembered* — "God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark." go did Joshua, in other days, remember Rahab. The scene of death and judgment lay all around our patriarch. It was one vast, and deep, and mighty ruin — an extended Jericho the accursed — another and a wider land of Pharaoh, with the doom of the Lord resting darkly and heavily upon it. But He who had already shut His remnant in, now remembers them; and in that remembrance there was present life, and, in prospect, a goodly inheritance.

It will be so with another elect remnant, in coming days. Before the same covenant God, who was now keeping Noah in mind, a book of remembrance will be written for them that fear the Lord and think upon His name. Mal. 3. And of them the Lord says, "They shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels;" as now, in virtue of this covenant-remembrance, the Lord causes a wind to pass over the earth, the waters abate, and the ark rests on the mountains of Ararat.

This remembrance of God was most precious. But Noah, in his city of refuge, had other consolations. The divine remembrance was the hidden comfort of faith; but he had also blessed, conscious exercises of spirit.

The ark had a window in it. The door was in the keeping of the Lord, but the window was for Noah's use. He who had shut him in, alone could let him out — the times and the seasons were in His hand. But while the time of his pilgrimage, as a prisoner of hope, cannot be shortened, yet may the hopes of such a prisoner be very preciously nourished, and his spirit within him blessedly exercised. Noah may open the window, remove the covering, look out, and send forth his messengers, his Caleb and Joshua and their companions, to spy out the land, and report to him what it is, whether it be fat or lean, good or bad, and to bring him the fruit of it.

What beauty and what wisdom strike the eye and the heart in all this! This window in the ark, and its uses, are so significant! The divine *methods* are so worthy of the divine *communication!* "Apples of gold in pictures of silver" are the Spirit's words.

Typical, symbolic, parabolic teaching is very acceptable to the heart, and makes ready entrance there. We all prove this, just as children like pictures and stories. Not only, I would here observe, are doctrines thus taught — not only the great mysteries of the glory, but experiences of the soul, the personal inworkings of the Spirit, are illustrated by these same methods. Conviction of sin, for instance, was expressed in Adam retreating from the voice of the Lord God, amongst the trees of the garden. The longings and inquiries of a soul awakened to a sense of its condition, if haply it might find its path, are given to us in the Israelite standing at his tent door stripped of his ornaments, and looking after the Mediator as he entered the Tabernacle. Ex. 33. And Moses, with his veiled and unveiled face, might have spoken of exercises and experiences of heart to us, even had not the Spirit, by His light in the Apostle, helped our understandings. 2 Cor. 3.

We might go through a thousand such instances. And by this method the great things of God are pressed home upon the heart. By these figures the Lord is standing very near the heart, and knocking there. It is not His grace displaying itself in the distance, or shining from afar, but it is the Lord Himself, and His blessing, coming very near for our full acceptance. We may *admire*, but if we do not also *enjoy*, the purpose of the revelation is not answered.

Now this method is beautifully preserved in these days of Noah. Indeed the whole of Genesis is full of it. It is a book of "allegories," as St. Paul speaks — divine stories written for the school of God.

The ark, as I have already noticed, had its door and its window, and Noah had his spies to send into the promised land — and the mission of these spies, the raven and the dove, express the experience of the saint in the contrary workings of the flesh and spirit, which contend in him.

The raven never returns. The earth may be still unpurged, but the unclean nature can take up with it. The "present evil world" will do well enough for fallen, degraded man. Indeed, the ark was rather a place of captivity than security, to the unclean raven. She never returns to it when once escaped. But Noah will not trust her. Beautiful saintly intelligence! The raven may remain outside; but that is no proof to Noah that the earth is clean, or fit for the sole of his foot. Noah will not trust her, but sends out a clean creature after her. And different indeed are the tidings which she bears. It is, in principle, the contest of Caleb and Joshua with their companion spies. The dove returns instinctively. There was no rest for her in a place still under judgment of God, and unpurged. And Noah, conscious that he can trust her and commit the question to her settlement, sends her out a second and a third time. And well indeed he may trust her. Her only sympathy is with the pledges of peace and of a new creation. On her second return she bears an olive-leaf in her mouth, and after her third mission she never comes back.

Beautiful mystery! The earth was redeemed from the curse now, and in its new-creation state the dove can delight. All is native air to her. It is now the land of the turtle and the olive, and Noah understands the absence of this clean creature. He at once removes the covering from the ark, and looks out; and the God of glory shortly lets him out, as the God of all grace had before shut him in.

Surely the ways of a saint, the ways of the mind of Christ, are here! I know not that any action can be more pregnant with meaning. There was the ark, and its window, and its door. The ark itself was for safety, the window for a prospect, and the door for an exodus, in due season. All this was faith and hope ending their pilgrimage in the place of promised glory.

Noah suspected not the ark; he did not occupy himself in feeling its timbers, whether indeed they were keeping the waters outside — he had no doubt of that. He had no pump in his ship, if I may be allowed the figure; and I may utter it, since, homely as it is, it glorifies Jesus in the security He gives the sinner; for such is the very style of Scripture itself.

The lesson taught us may be the profoundest in the mind of the Spirit, but the school where it is learnt may be a despised place. Look, for instance, at Genesis 48. You are there at the bedside of a dying old man — a common homely spot. But there, some of the deepest and richest secrets of the mind of God are, in a figure, conveyed to us — the great mystery of our adoption, according to divine good pleasure; and then our welcome into the family of God, in the day of our manifestation, or conversion. And what richer counsels of grace are there than those? And yet in what more common or homely school could they have been taught us?

As in still earlier days, in Genesis 16. There you are introduced to the domestic arrangement of Abraham's family as to the servant and her mistress, and their disputes; and yet, in all that, you get the

profound mystery of the two covenants. Gal. 4. And again, in the act, the ordinary act, of discharging a servant, another feature in the same mystery is presented to us, in chapter 21. The wisdom of God delights in these scenes and materials; they rebuke the erring thought of man's heart, that important things must be done or said by imposing methods — that the prophet must come forth and strike his hand over the place. 2 Kings 5: 11. But it is with rude and inartificial instruments that both the wisdom of God and the power of God are commonly seen. Rams' horns blew down Jericho, and fishermen turned the world upside down, as was said of them. But these homely methods of God's wisdom aid in carrying the instruction home, and lodging it deep in the intimacies and recollections of the heart. I may therefore still say that Noah's ship had no pump in it. Indeed it could not. Such a thing would have witnessed against it. God's provisions would have declared their own insufficiency. That could never have been. God's provisions and God's works always tell whose they are by being what they are. Simplicity, and yet sufficiency, give them their character. "Let there be light, and there was light." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" and the sinner, believing, rejoiced in God with all his house.

So, in like simplicity, in these earlier days. The heart of Noah was not soiled by a suspicion. He rested in the seaworthiness of his vessel, because of God's appointment and approval of it — nay, I may say, because of God's building of it. Faith keeping his heart quiet and assured as to the judgment, hope fills it as to the coming glory.

Such is the beautiful way of this "prisoner of hope." A *prisoner of hope* is one of the Spirit's titles, I may say, for all the saints of God. Jeremiah was such an one in his day. Jeremiah was shut up in "the court of the prison, which was in the king of Judah's house," and this, too, for Christ's sake. He was God's prisoner, and such an one is always hope's prisoner. Jeremiah is told to purchase Hananiah's field, and that was food for hope, like the olive-leaf in the mouth of the dove. It told the prophet of good days to come, though at that moment he was in a prison, the Chaldean army at the city gates, and all the land deserted. The waters were again all around and abroad; but the ark of the prophet, like that of the patriarch, had a window in it.

So was Israel a prisoner of hope in the night of the passover. With shoe on foot, staff in hand, and girded loins, Israel waited in the very midst of the judgments of the Lord; but, like our patriarch, they waited there only to pass out to the inheritance of the Lord. And having the pre-eminence in all things, Jesus again and again shows us the perfect way of a prisoner of hope, looking for a resurrection portion. As when He entered Jerusalem, in John 12, the Jewish multitudes and the Gentile strangers being drawn thither to inquire after Him, and all the dignities and joys of the Son of David seeming to wait on Him, His heart waits on the resurrection hope still, "the joy set before him," and forth from that attitude of soul, or place of expectation, He speaks of the corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying. Steadily and desirously did His eye rest on the glory which lay, not *in* that hour, but *beyond* it. In a spirit of entire consecration and sacrifice, He surrenders *that* hour (bright to Him in the world as it was, and big with the promise of all its kingdoms and the glory thereof) to the Father: and the voice from heaven then visits this perfect, blessed "prisoner of hope," with assurances that, in due season, even resurrection times, His name and victory and honour should all be provided for and secured.

Matchless Jesus! — This voice from heaven was again the food of hope's prisoner. And what was the transfiguration on the holy hill but the same? Jesus had been speaking to the disciples of His death, and encouraging them (as He would us, beloved) not to love their lives in this world, when, soon after, six or eight days, as we read, the holy hill shines suddenly with the light of resurrection or millennial regions. And what was all that visitation of glory, but the grapes of Eshcol brought from

Canaan to the camp of God in the desert; or as the return of the dove to Noah, with the olive-leaf in her mouth?

The time, however, for "rendering double" to this ((prisoner of hope" (Zech. 9: 12), comes in due course. "And God spake unto Noah, saying, Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee! bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee, of all flesh, both of fowl and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." And Noah went forth. He landed on the renewed earth, where, at that mystic moment, all was, in a great sense, according to God's mind again, no longer corrupt, as when he had last trod it in its old estate, but clean, under the refining of the judgment.

Not a thing had gone into the ark thirteen months before, which did not now come forth. The small and the great had been in it, and the small were as safe as the great; the creeping thing of the ditch or the hedge, as free of all danger or harm as Noah himself. Precious mystery! We may be little, and we are little, as the heart knows full well; but heaven, or the coming system of glory, has fitted itself like the ark, for the receiving of the small as well as the great. "A voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great." We may be calm, though we know ourselves to be "small" in every way, even as the creeping thing that went in with Noah — for such a little one was equally in the covenant, or "the family settlement," which made each and all, in their way and measure, inheritors of the new world. The Father's house on high has surely made its reckoning according to these differences of "small and great." As in ancient days of typical glory, all the congregation of Israel, the distant ones of Dan and Naphtali, as well as the princes of Judah, joined in the shout of triumph when the fire came down, and in mystery, the kingdom was entered. Lev. 9. Clement and others were not Paul in the measure of their labours, or in the energy of the Spirit; but they were Paul as having their names, alike with his, in the book of life. Phil. 4: 3. The Father has built His house in the heavens, on the very plan of its receiving the saints as well as Jesus Himself. It was part of the original design. Ere foundations were laid, that plan and purpose were laid. In counsels of everlasting love it was provided that the house should be a large one, a many-roomed or mansioned house, that all the children might be there.

What say we, beloved? Do our thoughts of it and glances at it do justice to this love of God? As well might you say, your prospect from the highest of the hills could do justice to God's creation. Could your glance then measure the ten thousandth part of the earth? The length, the depth, the breadth, the height — the love of Christ which passeth knowledge!

"And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savour: and the Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth: neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." The cleansing of the waters of judgment had made no change in the imaginations of the thoughts of man's heart. They were still evil, and that only. The heart was uncured, for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh though there be water to cleanse or fire to refine. It was no change there which gave the Lord thoughts of peace and not of evil towards men.

"Faith eyes the blood of Christ, and not victory over corruptions," as one has said, even where there is such victory. But here, in *spite of corruptions*, that blood awakens thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give the sinner an expected end. Christ was under the eye of God, and that was enough; as in the day of atonement. The blood of sprinkling is then seen everywhere. That was the great secret,

the great principle, of that mystic day in Israel. The blood of the lamb (Lev. 16) went into the presence of God, attended by a cloud of incense; so that Aaron himself was hid, and there was no man in the tabernacle of the congregation, as the holy service of putting the blood on every thing proceeded. Christ in mystery was seen, and nothing else — and the fruit of that was the bearing away of sins into the wilderness, a land not inhabited, a place of forgetfulness, where there was no voice to accuse, to judge, or to condemn, where nothing could be heard but the voice of that blood which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.

That blood, now under the eye of the Lord God, had moved His heart. Do I speak as a man? No, the word is, "The Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground." As the Saviour Himself says (in spirit bound for the altar), "Therefore doth my Father *love* me, because I lay down my life." The heart of the Lord God has scaled the acceptance of the sacrifice. It did so here, in the times of Noah.

This word that broke from the heart of the Lord God in Noah's day, the passage of the burning lamp in Abraham's day (Gen. 15), and the answer of God to Solomon (2 Chr. L), all witness to the value of the cross of Christ with God established. The rending of the veil from top to bottom, the breaking of the rocks, and the bursting of the graves, witness the same, when the true offering was once and for ever accomplished. In rich variety of form and character is the acceptance of the work done in "the place that was called Calvary" testified and published in every tongue and language, as it were, in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.

And Noah becomes at once the object of fresh and multiplied blessings, blessings in glory and inheritance now, as already he had blessings in election, an acceptance of grace and the righteousness which is by faith.

God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you, and the dread of you, shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea: into your hand they are delivered."

Noah was blessed in the new world. That blessing conveyed to him property and dominion in the earth, and the use or enjoyment of the creatures good for food. "Every moving thing that liveth" was given to him, that it might be meat for him.

Here was a large grant, as wide as the scene which lay around him. He was monarch of all he surveyed, lord, like Adam in the garden, of the new world. Instructed, however, as well as honoured and enriched — taught that the *blood* of the animal was not to be eaten with its *flesh*: "the flesh with the blood thereof, which is the life thereof, thou shalt not eat" — a principle which involves all the thoughts and counsels of God in His way with sinners — as suited a prohibition, or limitation to the grant made to Noah now, as had been the prohibition of the tree in the midst of the garden, to the grant of all things else made to Adam.

The blood was the life, and man was not to eat it. It would have been a bold re-assuming of that which through sin he had lost, a challenge to regain life by forcing the passage kept by the sword of the cherubim. For this ordinance told the sinner, that having lost his title to the tree of life, he can never return to it in his own strength. The life has reverted to God. Blood is His. And the gospel comes to tell us how He has used it, even providing with it and through it new, eternal, infallible life for the dead sinner.

The way of God in the gospel was, therefore, rehearsed to Noah in this ordinance: "The flesh

with the blood thereof, which is the life thereof, thou shalt not eat." His altar had already told us that he stood with Adam in the faith of the woman's Seed, and that that mystery was the principle of his religion and his worship. But here, while making over every thing to him for property, dominion, and use, the Lord will not pass by this great exception out of the grant; conveying, as it does, the great secret or principle of His gospel. In the changed circumstances of Adam and Noah, in the difference between an upright creature and a ruined sinner, this exception was as fitting and necessary, as I have said, as that of the tree of knowledge out of the grant of all with which the Lord, the Creator, had of old, furnished and filled the scene.

We take life from Christ who has made atonement by His blood. But we deeply own we can get it nowhere else. *We do not look for it elsewhere, but we refuse it not from Him.* We know we were dead in trespasses and sins, but we know that we have life in Him, though only in Him. Adam learnt these things in the promise of the woman's Seed, and in the sword of the cherubim; Noah learnt them or witnessed them in his altar and in this ordinance; these things the whole book of God declares; and eternity will celebrate them.

Further, however, still — for in this blessing we find Noah with the sword of justice in his hand. His fellow-man was to be both protected and avenged. Man's person was sacred; and his life or blood, if shed by either man or beast, would be required. "And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother, will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."*

*It has been justly said by another, that the principle of *government* was represented in Noah; that Adam had been the representative head of *creation*, and that Noah is the same now of *government*. And I doubt not, that after the judicial scattering from Babel, the nations became associations in which God still recognized the sword of justice and the seat of government, which therefore are still to be exercised, and ought still to be religiously owned and revered.

Who does not instinctively approve of this? All that we feel judges the fitness of thus treating the person of man as sacred. While every other moving thing that lived was submitted to the use of man, his fellow-man was to be sacred in his eyes.

We instinctively approve this. But this scripture accounts for this instinct. The reason lies here — "in the image of God made He man." There is a dignity in man that is entirely his own. He is the natural head of creation. Man is the possessor and governor, and not part of the conveyed inheritance, or of the delegated dominion. He is the object and not the subject of the divine grant. The instinctive verdict of our own hearts is thus divinely accounted for.

After this, however, a great subject opens before us. "With thee will I establish my covenant" had been God's word to Noah, before the ark was made, or the waters had come. Gen. 6: 18. Now that the judgment is past, and the new earth is inherited, that covenant is fully detailed, as well as pledged again, to God's elect. Gen. 9: 8-17. And it is here that the word "covenant" is first used. The covenants of which we read in Scripture are all specific, having their parties and their objects well defined and plainly declared. There is no mistaking of them. Whether it be this covenant of the earth with Noah, the covenant with Abraham and his seed, the covenant of priesthood with Phinehas, or that of the throne with David, all is defined — the parties are declared and the objects set forth. Nor do these, nor any of them, I surely judge, contemplate the peculiar calling of the Church. Spiritual calling in heavenly places, and the results of oneness with Christ, are neither described nor conveyed by them. But the Scriptures of the New Testament abundantly declare a purpose, or a counsel, of God according to the good pleasure of His will; a mystery hid in God, before the foundation of the world, in which

the Church is directly interested. See Romans 16: 25; 1 Cor. 2: 7; Eph. 1: 9; Eph. 3: 8-11; Col. 1: 26; 1 Tim. 2: 9.

The inquiry may arise, Does this purpose or counsel take the form of a covenant? Let us call it covenant, or simply a purpose taken of God; still the great and holy and august transaction itself is richly found in the New Testament. But has it, we may still ask, the character of a covenant?

I would not be careful to say that it is ever called so; but I believe we may say, that many things of a covenant nature are intimated as attaching to it. Promises are made, consideration or price contemplated, arrangements formed and fixed, and all this as between distinct parties. "In the volume of the book it is written of Me" — "I was set up from everlasting" — and such words of deepest and holiest import have their place in settling these thoughts that arise. And not only were our election, and appointment to our peculiar glory, as in predestination, matters before the world (Rom. 8: 28, 29; Eph. 1: 4, 5; 1 Peter 1: 2), but we were then formally or virtually given by the Father to Christ. John 6: 37, 39; John 10: 29; John 17: 1, 6, 8, 9, 11.

And eternal life is declared to have been promised before the world was — language which intimates Christ as a party to a blessed transaction then, and one that has covenant character in it. Titus 1: 2.

I do not, then, say that this transaction is called a covenant, as God's dealing with Noah is, and His dealing with Abraham, with David, and with Phinehas; but it has these qualities, or this form of a covenant; the presence of distinct parties, considerations and purposes all settled, and the whole confirmed and acted on. And how does the spirit of a saint welcome the blessed truth of this great eternal transaction, engaging all the Godhead in the behalf of our souls! — as we read, among other passages, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."*

*As intimating blessed and distinct actions among the Persons of the Godhead, according to covenant arrangements, we may remember Messiah's words in Isa. 48 — "And now hath the Lord God and His Spirit sent me." What words! how full of deep, counselled, and ordered grace towards sinners! And they are quite according to the structure of things in the Gospels — for there not only does the baptism of Jesus but many passages tell us or show us, according to this word of the prophet, that the mission and ministry of the Lord Jesus were under the ordaining of God and the anointing or the Holy Ghost; — the Lord God and His Spirit sent the Son, the Christ or Messiah.

But what strong foundations are these! what wondrous discoveries of grace! God Himself, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in counsel and in action for us! In the Gospel, man is in the place of *vision and audience only*. It is *God* that is active. The activities and sacrifices are *God's*, and the sinner has but to hear and live, to look and be saved. But these doings of God in the gospel of His grace, are the fruit (as we thus see) of precious and wondrous counsels, taken in Himself ere worlds were framed. And what, I ask, can surpass this? Can title or stability for a sinner, such as may allay all motion and uneasiness of conscience, be conceived beyond what he gets in this? Doings for him by God, and sacrifices made for him, and all this according to counsels ere worlds began! A sinner made happy (may I use this word?) at God's expense!

It is covenant or counselled service that Jesus has rendered us. A promise is made to Noah, that the waters shall not again prevail to destroy the earth, but this promise rests on the strong foundation of the blood of a covenant. Noah's altar had already sent up a sweet savour, a savour of rest, to God, and in the satisfaction and delight of that the Lord had said, I will not again curse the ground for man's sake. That blood was the foundation of the promise. Just as with Abraham afterwards. The land is

promised to him, but it is by the covenant of Him who passes through the pieces of the sacrifice. No *promised* blessing that is not a *purchased* blessing also — no throne of grace, as we have said before, that does not stay itself on the ark of the covenant. Gen. 15: 17.

But the covenant comes with its seal, as well as with its blood. As here. There is *the bow which witnesses it* as well as *the blood which sustains it*. Wondrous thoughts keep themselves before the soul in all this! The foundation and the witness, the blood and the token, the consideration and the attestation of the great act and deed of God come to mind here. The like figure whereunto even circumcision afterwards; for as the bow in the cloud, so circumcision in the flesh, is a sign of covenant engagements.

All such signs however, beautiful and sure as they may be, are lost when we think of the great original. For it is the Holy Ghost Himself that is now given as the great sign, the seal of our adoption, the earnest of our inheritance, the witness of the accomplished work of Jesus, and of the, acceptance of it in all its sufficiency and preciousness.

What thoughts are these! The promise of God sustained by the blood of the Son, and witnessed by the presence of the Spirit! How has God imparted Himself to us in this marvellous act and deed for sinners! The soul can conceive nothing richer. In divine activities we are interested, but such activities as are founded on everlasting counsels, and which make manifest to us and for us the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

How should it take us out of ourselves, to stand in sight of this! What a mystery it is; and what have we to do, but with Moses to "turn aside and see this great sight," turn aside from all else! The grander "this great sight" presents itself to our eye, the more commanding will it be. Let us get rich thoughts of

oh this mystery. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." Let us see this great transaction settled ere worlds began, see it calling forth all the energies of divine love and power in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, see it undertaking the most deep and marvellous purposes of grace and glory for the elect, keep the eye on it, like Moses, till, like him, we discover Him who dwells in the midst of it, and whose name explains it all.

"Oh, all ye rich, ye wise, ye just,
Who the blood's doctrine have discussed
And judge it mean and slight —
Grant that I may, the rest's your own,
In shame and poverty sit down
At this one well-spring of delight!"

If it be but a man's covenant, there is both the consideration and the deed, the purchase money and the muniments, the price and the witness of its payment. God treats with our souls in language thus well understood, and tells us thus of the *consideration* and the *deed*, or that which *sustains* and that which *witnesses* the counsels of His sovereign good pleasure. It is a deed of gift to the elect, but it is nothing less than the blood of the Son which sustains it, and the presence of the Spirit which witnesses it.

What a secret! By nature I am at a great distance from God, an alien and a foreigner. I am also shut up, so that I cannot come forth. But in this great transaction God Himself undertook to travel this

unmeasured distance, and assail the house of my strong enemy; and in His incarnation, sorrows, and victory all this mighty doing of love is accomplished, and I am "compassed about with songs of deliverance."

Can it be, as I gaze at such a mystery, that I fear lest the distant one be not brought nigh, or the captive one be not delivered? "Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto me." I may say — "*Thou* art my hiding-place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance."

"Strong Deliverer!

Be Thou still our strength and shield!"

This may well be our confidence in the faith of such truth. But to these general thoughts on the covenants and their signs, I might add, the token given to Noah has a beautiful significance. The bow, as it were, rode triumphant on the cloud. It rolled away the stone and sat upon it. Its form and bearing were those of a conqueror. It said to the cloud, "Hitherto shalt thou come and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." It gave the angel of death his measure, and said to him, "It is enough, stay now thine hand."

And all this lives in the divine remembrance. The earth and the covenant that secures it are there. "The bow shall be in the cloud, and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth." Accordingly this promise to the earth is remembered, the bow in the cloud is looked at, through every stage and variety of the dispensational actings of the Lord.

It was remembered, of course, all the time the Lord had His seat in Zion, for then the glory made *the earth* its residence. The Lord then dwelt between the cherubim, in the temple at Jerusalem, in the land of Israel. But when the throne of the Lord leaves that city, and the sanctuary loses the glory, because abominations had grieved and disturbed it, the throne and the glory are accompanied by the rainbow to heaven. Ezek. 1: 28. (though the earth then ceased, for a while, to be the dwelling-place of God, still it was before Him in counsel. He would be mindful of it, as the object of His faithful care, according to the promise.*

*Just like the throne of David. That throne is for the present in the dust — the crown of Judah is cast down — but the promise of the Lord to it is remembered, as is His promise to the earth. This analogy Scripture giveth us in Jer. 33. Dishonoured now or made the sport of the wicked, the promises to the earth and to David's throne are still in full remembrance, and, in their season, will be accomplished

And therefore when heaven is opened to our view, we see the faithful and remembered bow encompassing the throne. Rev. 4. And further still. The rainbow is seen when the Lord is presented as coming down for the direct, immediate execution of judgment. The mighty angel, the divine executor of the day of the Lord, comes down to the earth clothed with a cloud, the symbol of judgment, and the fearful vessel of wrath. Gen. 9: 14; Rev. 1: 7. But even then the rainbow is with Him (Rev. 10); as much as to tell us, that to the end, and at the end, God remembers His promise to the earth, and will debate with judgment. The cloud is to descend, it is true — "They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven." The judgment must sit — the books must be opened — the vials must be emptied; but it is only to take out of the kingdom them that offend — to destroy them that destroy the earth. The cloud, as it executes its commission, must stay itself at the beginning of the bow. The *day* of the Lord, or the judgment, must give place to the *presence* of the Lord, or the refreshment and

restoration. Time shall be no longer, the mighty angel may cry; the present course of things may cease again, as once it did in the days of Noah; but the bow shines, in the eye of the Lord, as brightly as ever, and His promise lives in His heart. The earth is still beloved, for Noah's sake, as Israel is for the fathers' sake — that true Noah, in whom (but in whom alone) all the promises of God are yea and amen; and of whom it shall be said in all its fulness and truth, "This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed."

This earth of ours, given to the children of men, therefore outlives the judgment. It stands the shock of the descent of the mighty angel, though clothed with a cloud, planting his right foot on the sea, and his left on the earth, and crying aloud, as when a lion roareth. Rev. 10.

And what is it reserved for? For more than the bow had promised it. It is not only preserved — with its seed time and harvest, its summer and winter, its day and night, its cold and heat — but it is to be delivered into "the liberty of the glory of the children of God." This is more than had been promised.

Such was the token, and such will be its acknowledgment — such was the pledge, and such will be its redemption. Beautiful mystery! The covenant, with its blood and its sign! God's promise, with the sacrifice of the Son as its foundation, and the presence of the Spirit as its witness!

But here this thought occurs to me: Are we, beloved, to stand before such ways and revelations of God in the same calmness in which they are delivered to us? Is that the thing that becomes us? The Queen of Sheba did not stand before the glories of Solomon in the same way that Solomon himself dwelt among them. Solomon was at home in the midst of them. They were all his own. It was *his* wisdom, and *his* house that he had built. The meat of the table, and the sitting of the servants, with their apparel, were all *his*. The ascent by which he went into the house of God was his. But the Queen of Sheba, from the distant south, was but introduced to it all. Fitting it was that he should be at ease there; and fitting it was that she should be all rapture. So with the book of God and the disciple. All the profound and precious mysteries which the Spirit is unfolding there are His own — the thoughts and counsels of the divine mind. There is no effort to produce effect in the communication of them; the tale of the wonders of grace and glory is told artlessly. But is the soul, introduced to them, to be, in like manner, unmoved? Such an one may rather gaze with more of rapture than she who came from the uttermost parts of the earth, for "a greater than Solomon is here."

And it is more of this Sheba-rapture we want. We too easily afford to talk of God's things as though there were no more preciousness and excellency in them than our hearts could measure; but as secret after secret comes forth from the wisdom of the greater than Solomon, surely our souls should say, "Happy are thy men, and happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom."

Endowed and blessed, enriched and honoured — instructed too, and ordained as "the power" under God, and with all this, at ease, in conscious safety, "no evil or enemy occurrent," Noah is seated in the new world. A new trial of man, under new circumstances, was proceeding; and, as with Adam in Eden, nothing is left undone on God's part. The oxen and fatlings were killed and all things were ready. But where is man's sufficiency? If Adam failed before him, and lost the garden; if Israel failed after him, and lost their land of milk and honey; it may be said to Noah, "Lovest thou me more than these?" In Christ, and in Him only, are unfailing fidelity and strength. And Noah, like the rest, fails, and the virgin soil of the new world is quickly tarnished by the very first foot that trod it.

"And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard, and drank of the vine, and was drunken, and he was uncovered within the tent."

Noah himself is put to shame; the very first man, the Adam of this new system, begins the history of this second apostasy, like his first father.

The "little fire" is thus kindled; but it is for "a greater matter." Noah is put to shame; but Ham, his son, glories in the shame. That was a terrible advance in the progress of evil. "Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without."

It was a terrible advance in evil; this was not simply the being "overtaken in a fault," but "rejoicing in iniquity." The common moral sense rejects this — "Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on their shoulders, went backwards, and covered the nakedness of their father." And the saint himself is soon restored. Noah awakens from his wine. He that was overtaken recovers himself, through the Spirit, and the grace of God gives him a great triumph — a very precious and glorious triumph indeed, for the restored one judges his judge, and condemns his accuser — "Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.

This is something more than recovery — it is triumphant recovery. Even the apostle's fine word, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" scarcely measures it; for that is only the silencing of the accuser, while this is turning back on the pursuer. "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall rise. . . . Then she that is mine enemy shall be trodden down as the mire of the streets."

Here, however, we may stand for a moment — the rich and interesting prospects of the Spirit of prophecy here spread themselves out before us.

This curse upon Canaan is part of Noah's prophecy. Noah, in spirit, looked out from the renewed earth, but anticipated the return of corruption and violence, though the grace of God were to have its witness in the midst of it. In detail, he saw that one branch of the human family (now about to re-people the earth) was to be distinguished by the revelation and presence of God among them; another by their success and advancement in the world — a people to be enlarged and made honourable in the earth; another, by the constant, unchanging token, in their flesh, of degradation and servitude. His prophecy contemplated, as we may say, the Asiatic, the European, and the African man; or, the Hebrew in the East, with whom was to be the sanctuary of God — the Gentile of the West, who was, under the hand or providence of God, to make himself great in borders beyond his own — and the slave of the South, who might know a change of masters, but who was to be a slave still.

Short is the notice of the world's history, but just and perfect as far as it goes, and enough to answer the purpose of the Spirit in Noah, who was taking his son Ham for his text.

The three prophecies, which we get in these earliest times, that of Enoch, that of Lamech, and this of Noah, all touching the earth and its history, though respecting different stages or parts of that history, together present a very perfect outline of the whole thing. We must take them in this order — Noah's, Enoch's, Lamech's.

Noah's prophecy has been accomplishing from of old, and is still getting its seal and witness in all the changes of the world's solemn and interesting story. Enoch's (Jude 14), which spoke of judgment, will have its answer, its full answer, when the present course of things is closing, and the day of the Lord comes to convince the ungodly. Lamech's (Genesis 5: 29), which spoke of rest, will be made good afterwards, when, "the day of the Lord" having fulfilled the judgment, "the presence of the Lord", will bring its restitution and refreshing.

The present and the future of the world's history, the varied good and evil of the present, and the judgment and the glory that are to share the future, are thus sketched before us in these prophecies. It

is easy to discern these things, and to give these early patriarchal oracles their order and character.

It is Noah's, however, that I must look at more particularly, as what we have more properly to do with here. It was delivered on the discovery of the evil of his son Ham, and the onward course of evil is then detailed to its close and maturity, ere we leave these chapters.

We have already watched the infant springing of it in Noah himself, and the advanced form of it in Ham. Its further growth is next to be seen in the builders of Babel, some hundred years after the flood. And an awful exhibition it is.

At the birth-time of this new world, Noah's altar was raised, witnessing faith and worship — but now the city and the tower are reared, witnessing defiance of God and the affected independency of man. And the answer of heaven to these things is just as different. Noah's altar brought down words and tokens of peace and security — the cry of the city and the tower now bring down judgment. Corruption here, and vengeance from on high, mark the scene, instead of worship here, and blessing from God. Then it was, that the Lord hung the bright token of His covenant in the heavens, but now He is sending abroad over the earth the witnesses of His righteous anger.

But this is not all. The tower is over-topped, high and proud as it was. The builders may be scattered, but their principles survive. Judgment does not cure. All the apostate mind that quickened that proud and rebellious confederacy, gathers itself rapidly for its perfect work and display in one man. For soon after the scattering (it may be about thirty years) Nimrod, a grandson of Ham, plants his standard on the very spot which had witnessed the judgment of God. The beginning of his kingdom was Babel. Gen. 10: 10. He unfurls his banner in the very face of Him "to whom vengeance belongs," and cries, "Where is the God of judgment?" He was as the fool of Ps. 14 — "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." He begins to be a mighty one in the earth. "Before the Lord he hunted." In defiance of God he sought conquest and power. He added house to house and field to field, in the desire to be lord alone. Erech and Accad and Calneh are mother-cities, and mighty Nineveh with Rehoboth and Calah, and that great city Resen, are but colonies in the system of this vaunting apostate. He had no heart for any portion which God could give him. He undertook to provide for himself, to be the maker of his own fortune, that his dignity and honour should proceed from himself. And such an one is the man of the world to this day. His intellect or his industry, his skill or his courage, makes him what he is, and provides him what he cares for. Such was this distinguished apostate, this earliest representative and type of that one who, in closing days, is to do according to his will, and fill the measure of man's iniquity.

It is a serious sight for the matching and observance of our souls. Are we, beloved, waiting for other and purer scenes? and are our hearts upon such enjoyments as God can sanction, and Jesus share with us?

These chapters properly close with this — these scenes of evil and proud rebellion pass from before us, with a faint and distant view of the call of another heavenly stranger apart from the world. But all that is the dawn of another era in the ways of God, and our present subject only looks at it in the distance.

The second part of the book of Genesis, I may say, ends here. It presents a complete, distinct action, suitably following what had preceded it, and as suitably (were it my purpose to show it) introducing what is to follow it.

In this portion, Gen. 6 - 11, the scene is laid in the earth. The heavenly family have already been before us, Gen. 1 - 5, and their course ended in the translation of Enoch; now the scene is laid in the

earth again, as at the beginning in the garden of Eden.

The contents of this little volume, which I have now closed, might be given in the following order:

Gen. 6 - 8. These chapters present the sin and judgment of the earth, with the election, faith, and deliverance of the saints in the midst of it all, and out of it all.

Gen. 9. This chapter shows us the new condition of man in the new world, endowed and enriched there by the God of heaven and earth, secured in the covenant mercy, and made the representative and executor of divine authority.

Gen. 10, 11. These chapters unfold great portions of the history of the new world, the springs, workings, progress, and maturity of evil, leaving or rendering the earth such a place as that the Lord must again, a second time, retire from it (at least for the present) and bring out from it, also a second time, a people to be heavenly strangers in the midst of it, like the antediluvian saints.

Heaven and earth have thus, in their season, been rehearsing the mystery, till together, in coming days, the days of the glory, they shall display it, when "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

"The land shall not be sold for ever," says the Lord; for the land is mine." Lev. 25: 23. Man has a term of years granted him, in which it is left in his power to disturb the divine order. For forty-nine years in Israel disturbing traffic might go on, but in the fiftieth year the Lord asserted His right, and restored all things according to His own mind; for it was a time of "refreshing" and of "restitution" as from His own "presence."

Bright and happy expectation! "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," is the proclamation of Psalm 24. And then the challenge goes forth, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?" — that is, Who shall take the government of this earth and its fulness? And the answer is made by another challenge to the city gates, to lift up their heads to the Lord of hosts, the King of glory; a fervent form of words whereby to convey the truth, that the Lord, as in strength and victory, the Lord as Redeemer and Avenger, should take the government. As again in Rev. 5 a like proclamation is heard, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" And the answer from every region is this, "The Lamb that was slain, the Lion of the tribe of Judah." He who sat on the throne gave that answer by letting the Book pass from His hand into the hand of the Lamb. The living creatures and crowned elders joined in that answer by singing their song over the prospect of their reign over the earth. The hosts of angels add to it, by ascribing all wisdom and strength and honour and faculty of dominion unto the Lamb — and every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth and in the seas, in their order and measure, join in uttering this same answer. The title of the Lamb to take dominion in the earth is thus owned and verified in the very place where alone all lordship or office could be rightly attested — the presence of the throne in heaven.

And so it is. The nobleman has now gone into the distant country to act for himself a kingdom. Jesus, who refused all power from the god of this world (Matt. 4), or from the desire of the multitude (John 6), takes it from God, as He owns in Psalm 62 that to Him it belongs. And in due season He will return, and those who have owned Him in the day of His rejection shall shine with Him in the day of His glory; those who have served Him now shall take another city with Him then.

In the prospect of such a day, Paul says to Timothy, "Keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in His time He shall show, who is

the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords." And in the like prospect the same dear apostle could say of himself, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

May the Lord give our poor hearts — for they need it much — more of the like spirit of faith and power of hope! Amen.