

# Beginnings — Chapters on Genesis

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## FOREWORD.

The Higher Critics (as a certain class of men ambitiously describe themselves) have made the book of Genesis of ill repute with unreflecting Bible readers. As the fruit of their evil work, the first book of Scripture is regarded by many as packed with fables and allegories, containing perhaps some spiritual lessons, but not to be taken seriously as a record of historical facts. Needless to say, where this unbelief prevails, the spiritual lessons are only perceived in the feeblest measure. The chapters now offered to the reader are based upon the conviction that Moses, when penning the book of Genesis, wrote by the inspiration of God, preserving for us the history of the first twenty-five centuries of the human family (where else can reliable history be found covering that long period?) and suggesting some of the great divine principles contained therein, which God would have His people understand. May this booklet yield profit and blessing to all those into whose hands it may come

## THE FIRST MAN.

GENESIS, as its name implies, is the book of 'beginnings.' It not only furnishes us with God's account of the origin of the heavens and the earth, and of the various denizens of the latter, but it shows us the rise of all the principles which have developed themselves in the subsequent history of the human race. To reject the book of Genesis is to cut away from our feet the foundations of all true knowledge.

The title of this article would possibly evoke a smile from some of the sages of this hour. "The first man, who can know anything about him? Is he not lost in the dim mists of antiquity? To such queries the soul that fears God pays no heed. The divine Spirit in 1 Cor. 15: 45 speaks of "the first man Adam"; and in Gen. 1: 2 every needful particular is recorded concerning him. This is sufficient for faith. Prove a man before Adam, or another man alongside of him, and the whole structure of Holy Scripture falls to pieces like a house of cards. For Scripture is manifestly the history of two men, the first and the Second; the one who brought in all the mischief, and the One who has triumphed over it all, and so made eternal blessing secure for all who are associated with Him through grace.

Adam may be regarded in a twofold way: (1) as a creation of God; (2) as a type of the Second Man, the Lord Jesus. First, as

## **A CREATION OF GOD.**

Gen. 1: 27 distinctly forbids the notion that man is an evolution from some lower order of being. Three times in this verse the Spirit uses the word "created," as if He would insist with all possible emphasis on the fact that he is a distinct and independent creation of God. Not on the first day, but on the last was the man brought into being. His home was fully furnished before he was formed to occupy and govern it. When the moment came for man to be brought forward, the divine procedure was altogether different from that of the previous days. "God said Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (Gen. 1: 26). Fishes, bird's, and cattle all sprang out of the waters and out of the earth at the divine fiat; but not man. A divine consultation is suggested in the words, " Let Us make man." The gravity and majesty of this utterance command our reverent attention.

What are we to understand by the words, "image" and "likeness"? Certainly neither term has reference to man's physical frame. Putting it briefly, "image"! represents; "likeness" resembles. An

image is not necessarily like the thing or person it is intended to represent. The coin that was shown to the Lord Jesus in Matt. 22:20 may not have borne a "likeness" of Caesar but it certainly bore an "image" of him. As made in the "image" of God, man is set in this world to represent Him to the lower creatures in rule and blessing; this term has thus to do with man's position. "Likeness" has reference to his moral being, as one capable of entering into relationships and bearing responsibilities. Neither God's "image" nor "likeness" has been lost by the fall (Gen. 9: 6; James 3: 9) It is because of God's image in man that the sin of murder is so serious. To kill one who represents God is high treason against Him whom he represents.

### **"SPIRIT AND SOUL AND BODY."**

Two steps in the creation of man are noted in Gen. 2: 7. "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." The body was thus formed first, but this passage teaches distinctly that life does not inhere therein. Something else was necessary ere there could be vitality. This reminds us of our Lord's words to His disciples in Matt. 10: 28: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." Man's constitution is described in 1 Thess. 5: 23 — "spirit and soul and body." Note the order (so often quoted by Christians in the opposite way), for God always begins with what is highest. (Compare Ex. 25, etc.; Lev. 1, etc.). The spirit is the seat of the will and of the intelligence (1 Cor. 2: 11); the soul of the passions and emotions (though the word is often used in the sense of mere personality, as in Ezek. 18: 4; 1 Peter 3: 20), the body is the outer vessel by means of which the spirit and soul manifest themselves.

Unlike the Second Man, who in His wondrous grace was born a Babe, and "increased in wisdom and stature" (Luke 2: 52), Adam came forth from the divine hand full of vigour from the moment that he first drew breath. He was, moreover, no savage having to work his way upward by painful stages; he was endowed with understanding from the beginning, able to receive and comprehend communications from his Creator (Gen. 1: 28), capable also of giving names intelligently to all the lower orders (Gen. 2: 19-20). The savagery subsequently observable in the greater part of the human family came in through sin, and especially as the fruit of idolatry. Rom. 1: 18-32 shows this clearly.

Many people have a vague kind of notion that Adam, had he never sinned, would have lived here a number of years, and then have gone to heaven. The opposite is nearer the truth. Adam was created for the earth, and should have remained here, working the will of God, and enjoying His beneficence. Sin has caused the forfeiture of the earth, but the infinite grace of God (which never knows defeat) has planned a better thing for sinners who believe, even eternal bliss with Christ in heaven above.

Let us now consider Adam as

A TYPE OF THE SECOND MAN the Lord Jesus. Our authority for doing so will be found in Rom. 5: 14. In 1 Cor. 15. the Lord Jesus is called both "the Second Man" and "the last Adam." As the former, He supersedes the first man, glorifying God where he so miserably failed; as the latter, He sums up in His own blessed person the whole divine thought for man, so that there can be nothing to follow Him, for there is no advance on Christ. As the "Last Adam," He is, moreover, a quickening Spirit, imparting life to others, in contrast with the first man Adam, who was simply what God made him — a living soul.

Adam typifies Christ in his various headships. Take first his headship of creation. The fish of the sea, the fowl of the air, and every living thing that moveth upon the earth was placed under his hands. In the grant of power to Nebuchadnezzar at a later date, men were added, but the sea was omitted (Dan. 2: 37, 38). An immensely wider dominion is reserved for the Second Man. God's purpose is to "put all

things under His feet," and to set Him at the head of all glory, both above and below. Adam's headship of creation was manifested before Eve came upon the scene. The Lord God brought every beast and fowl before Adam to see what he would call them, "and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof." Giving names is an expression of lordship. We see this in Pharaoh with Joseph, in Nebuchadnezzar with Daniel and his three friends, and in the Lord Jesus with Simon. Christ's headship of creation, though to be shared with the Church, is a thing above and apart from any such relationship. His headship flows from the mighty fact that "by Him were all things created" (Col. 1: 16) . Aaron, as typically representing Him!, was anointed, and the tabernacle and its vessels with him, before his sons received the sacred oil (Lev. 8: 10-12) .

Adam is also a type of Christ as head of a race. "In Adam" and "in Christ" describe the two families in Holy Scripture. In each case all share the position of their head. Adam was not the father of a family until after his disobedience; and his whole progeny stand with him under condemnation and death. Christ became head of a new and heavenly race in resurrection; all who are identified with Him stand eternally before God in His acceptance and blessing. Whatever God has made true of that blessed Man who, in contrast to Adam, became obedient unto death, is likewise true of all those whom grace has set "in Him." In the divine thought there has been a transfer from Adam to Christ; but are we in consciousness of it in our own souls?

A few words now as to Adam's headship of the woman. The very first type in the Bible shows us Christ and the Church. When the first man named every living creature he must have realised his own loneliness. Everything passed before him with its mate, "but for Adam, there was not found an helpmeet for him." Yet the Lord God had said: "It is not good that the man should be alone" How was this to be met? The woman was formed "The Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept." Wonderful foreshadowing of the deeper sleep of death that was experienced by our blessed Lord. "He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from" man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. In like manner the Church is the direct fruit of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. The first mention of His sufferings is in Matt. 16: 21, just after His wonderful words to Simon bar-Jona, "on this rock I will build My Church."

Mark, the bone was not taken from the man's head, nor from his feet, but from his side. The Creator's purpose was not to form for him one equal to him in every particular, still less was it His thought to create for him a slave. From his side the bone was taken, indicating the place of the woman in relation to the man; ever by him as his companion and counselor, and the object of his love .

We may find a contrast to Christ in Gen. 2: 22. The Lord God presented Eve to Adam; in Eph. 5: 27 Christ presents the Church to Himself. Why is this? The answer is very simple — Christ is God.

## **THE FIRST FALSE WORSHIPPER**

Genesis being, as we have said, the book of "beginnings," Cain and his brother must be regarded as representative characters. We have many amongst us corresponding to them to-day, if only we have eyes to recognise them. They are the Pharisee and the Publican of the Old Testament. Cain is the father of all those, who draw near to God on the ground of their own works; Abel is the parent of all who in faith approach Him on the ground of the death of another.

Let us look at Cain first. From our earliest infancy he has been held up to our minds as an object of infamy; indeed, as one of the wickedest men in earth's earliest ages. Presumably if many were asked why Cain is so generally regarded with abhorrence, they would reply, "Because he killed his brother."

But Scripture puts the case somewhat differently. "Wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." There was thus something behind his murder of Abel, which God calls "evil." Examination will show that his sin against man was preceded by sin against God. This latter, alas, is commonly regarded very lightly.

We would not willingly do Cain an injustice. He was no wastrel. He "was a tiller of the ground" (Gen. 4.). To be a successful farmer a man must be at least industrious. Then Cain acknowledged God, unlike many in our day who give the Creator no place whatever in their scheme of life. Industrious and religious! Such a person would be considered a most desirable addition to many a modern church-membership. Yet the man is held up to our stern reprobation in several portions of Holy Scripture!

## **WHAT WAS WRONG WITH CAIN?**

His supreme mistake lay in the character of the offering that he brought. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain" (Heb. 11: 4). Cain was of the school of Naaman who, although ultimately changed, said at the beginning, "Behold, I thought!" (2 Kings 5: 11). Men should not follow their own thoughts in the things of God; instead, they should, in all humility, seek to learn and follow His revealed will. "Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto Jehovah." It may be remarked by some that Jehovah Himself prescribed a handful of fine flour for a sin-offering in Lev 5: 1. But this was His merciful provision for poverty! The flour in this case (or a part of it) was burnt "upon the altar" "upon" not "according to," as in the Authorised Version) "the offerings made by fire" unto Jehovah. It was thus divinely connected with the sacrifices which spoke of death. Cain's offering savoured not of poverty, but of pride. There was in it no recognition of his fallen condition; no acknowledgement of sin and guilt; Cain approached his Creator as if all was right; when, indeed between man and God all is sadly wrong. The diligent toiler had produced "the fruit of the ground," and he judged God should be well-pleased to receive the tribute from his hands. It has frequently been said that man's religion is ever represented by the word "Do"; God's religion by the word "Done." Of Cain and his entire progeny it is true: "they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10: 3). A man's religion may be his undoing. Listen to the elder son of Luke 15: 29 as he parades his virtues in the father's ears: "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment." Such a speech suggests no sense of guilt and need, and no knowledge of grace.

## **"THE WAY OF CAIN"**

is pointed out in Jude 11 as one of Christendom's characteristic features at the end. It is the repudiation of the need of atonement; it is religion without blood. "Woe unto them," says the Spirit of God. God having sacrificed His Beloved Son for the salvation of sinners, will never tolerate men's slight of Him. When His long-suffering reaches its limit, He will arise in His might, and pour out the vials of His wrath upon all His foes. But the last great development of the Cain-principle, the Antichrist, will come upon the scene ere that day.

## **THE FIRST MARTYR.**

ABEL was in every way a contrast to his brother. The one was a farmer; the other was a shepherd. It is an interesting question why was Abel a keeper of sheep? Animal food was not sanctioned until after the flood (Gen. 9: 3); "every herb bearing seed, and every tree in the which is the

fruit of a tree yielding meat" was the food prescribed for man at his creation (Gen. 1: 29). Why, then, should Abel be a keeper of sheep, unless for the purpose of sacrifice?

But some will ask, how should Abel know that a lamb would be an acceptable offering in the eyes of God? Of this we may be assured, that whatever knowledge he possessed, his brother possessed also. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain?" and faith is always based upon some revelation from God. We need not go far for this in Abel's case. Had not the Lord God spoken in the ears of his parents of the Seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head, Himself a sufferer in the performance of His mighty work? Had not the Lord God also made coats of skins for Adam and his wife before expelling them from the garden for ever? (Gen. 3: 15-21). Is it too much to suppose that the parents instructed their lads concerning these great principles? Evidence is not lacking that Adam and his wife both welcomed the testimony of God into their hearts, Why, otherwise, should Adam call his wife's name Eve "because she was the mother of all living," when as a matter of fact, she was not the mother of anybody? Speaking of "life," at the moment of his expulsion — what was this but faith? Then observe Eve, when her firstborn came, "I have gotten a man from Jehovah." Is not this suggestive that the word in Gen. 3: 15 was ringing in her ears, and that in her heart she hoped her son was the promised deliverer? Doubtless she made a serious mistake as to the person and the time, but her words savour of faith nevertheless.

### ***CAIN AND ABEL NOT IGNORANT.***

We thus conclude that both Cain and Abel knew how God should be approached. Both had been instructed that, man being now a fallen creature, he could only have to do with God on the ground of death. But the one, like many another since, refused to take so humiliating a position; while the other accepted it in childlike faith.

Remark, it was a lamb that Abel brought — an animal the very symbol of meekness and submission (Isa. 53: 7). No wild beast could possibly typify Him whose deep delight it was to do the Father's will. Unlike his brother's fruits, Abel's offering did not in any way represent human effort; the lamb was of God's providing, which the worshipper appropriated in faith. It was a firstling also, reminding us of Him who is the firstborn among many brethren (Rom . 8: 29).

### ***FAT, NOT BLOOD.***

It is noticeable that the blood, of which so much was made in the sacrificial system of Israel at a later date, is not mentioned in connection with Abel's offering, nor indeed anywhere in the book of Genesis in connection with offerings to God. Not the blood, but the fat, is emphasised. The reason is this. It was a question, not so much of remission, as of acceptance. Not for some specific sin was the lamb brought, but as a means of approach to God. The fat represents the excellency Hence! he who had no excellency in himself, identified himself with a sacrifice which had. His sacrifice being "more excellent" than that of Cain, God accepted it, and Abel also, in virtue of it. God bore testimony to his gifts, and to himself also "that he was righteous" Not innocent, mark, but righteous. Abel "became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." "Righteous Abel." is his title in Matt. 23: 35.

This touching story furnishes us with

## ***A TWOFOLD TYPE OF CHRIST.***

The lamb upon the altar spoke to God of the sacrificial aspect of Calvary; Abel personally, in that which followed, typified Christ as the martyred witness for the truth. Cain developed into both murderer and liar, the two marks of Satan according to John 8: 44. Sin against God in the matter of the offering soon led to sin against his neighbour. Nothing so arouses men's hatred' as to have their religion impeached. For this reason Moses insisted with Pharaoh that Israel must put three days' journey between themselves and Egypt before they could offer sacrifice unto Jehovah (Ex. 8: 26).

Let it be distinctly noted that Abel was murdered in the interests of religion. His was the first of the religious murders with which earth's history has been stained, and nowhere does the stain lie deeper than in Christendom. Some of God's best wheat has been destroyed in this way (Matt. 13: 29).

If Abel typifies Christ as the slain witness, Cain represents the Jews who slew Him; though not the Jews only, for all the world was involved in the fearful crime (Acts 4: 27). But Cain was not to be destroyed, accordingly "Jehovah set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him" (Gen. 4: 15). In like manner, the Jew is being preserved by God with a view to another and a better age. He is pleased to regard him as a manslayer rather than as a murderer (Num. 35.). The history of the Jew being the history of man, when the former is once more owned of God, universal blessing will be brought in.

We are told in Heb. 11: 4 that Abel, though dead, by his sacrifice "yet speaketh." It is God's abiding testimony that men may only approach Him on the ground of death. Never were men less disposed to heed the testimony than in our day. The way of Cain is loved, followed, and preached, to the eternal ruin of the soul.

## **THE FIRST CITY.**

From a garden to a city was a great stride; indeed it marked a revolution in human affairs. It is surely significant that this development took place in connection with the line of Cain. The steps which led up to it are of the deepest interest. They are recorded in Gen. 4.

When Cain departed from the presence of the Lord after the murder of Abel his brother, he fixed his home in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden. Nod meant "vagabond," and it exactly described Cain's new circumstances. He is the standing type of Israel (but not of Israel only) — responsible before God for the blood of the Lord Jesus; and, in consequence, fugitives and vagabonds in a scene which otherwise would be filled with blessing for them. In his place of banishment Cain begat a son, to whom he gave the name of Enoch, which means "dedicated." What was intended by this soon became apparent, for the father presently built a city, and called it after his son. Enoch was thus dedicated to the worlds with his name stamped indelibly upon this doomed scene by his father's building operations. Turning over just one page of our Bible we meet with another Enoch, this time in the line of Seth, and of him we read, "he was not; for God took him" (Gen. 5: 24). The one man was thus dedicated to the world, and the other to God. The latter suitably has heaven as his abiding portion.

Immediately after the notice of the world's first city we have recorded the rise of

## ***MEN'S VARIED INDUSTRIES.***

Jabal was the father of such as dwell in tents and keep cattle; Jubal of those who handle the harp and organ, and Tubal-cain was the first worker in brass and iron. It would seem as if Cain's family,

having lost God, would now get the utmost out of the present world. The city Enoch thus soon resounded with the strains of music, and with the industrious clang of the smith. Comforts and accomplishments gave character to it. It became, as men would say, the centre of light and learning; and the great commercial depot of the human family. But God had no place there; it was a city of which he was not the builder and maker.

Not only did business and pleasure mark Cain's family and city,

## ***FAR GRAVER THINGS***

soon manifested themselves. Thus we have Lamech taking to himself two wives, then, we hear him telling them in poetic language how he had slain someone. Corruption and violence — the two well-known forms of human evil (Gen. 6: 11) .

The whole story of man's cities is told out in these brief sketches from the pen of the Spirit of God. Vast concentrations of men, whatever the conveniences and! comforts connected with them, are necessarily sinks of all evil, man being a fallen creature. The excellent and the noble that earth's cities contain are hopelessly overshadowed by the appalling evil which gives character to the whole. All the streams of human iniquity meet in one foul pool in the city of man's designing, and the larger the city the fouler the pool.

The old Mosaic record in Gen. 4. is of the greatest possible value as showing us the beginning of "the world" as we now know it. Its religious, social and commercial history are all foreshadowed in the few incidents divinely written in this chapter. It is no marvel that the apostle tells us: "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2: 16.)

Yet God has from the outset entertained the thought of

## ***A CITY FOR MAN.***

Out of harmony with the course of things in Adam's world, Abraham, and others looked for the city which hath foundations, of which the architect and builder is God. Not here, but above, is that city found, — "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. 11: to Heb. 12: 12). There holiness and! peace prevail; there too will be realised that fellowship which a city may suggest — all the fruit of redeeming love. To that sacred centre God will shortly bring the willing feet of all His beloved people. Earth's cities, with all their monuments of human pride, will come to nought when God arises to "shake terribly the earth"; God's city will abide for ever. Happy the man who has part therein!

Cain's line breaks off abruptly with Tubal-cain. This name means "flowing from Cain." Seven generations having run their course we thus come upon another Cain. The Spirit of God adds no more; a certain moral stamp marks the whole of that evil line.

Gen. 4. closes with another son born to Adam. His wife called his name Seth ("appointed"), saying, "God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew." Seth thus took the place of the dead one, and so becomes the type of Christ risen. In Him all blessing is centred for those who believe in His name, and in Him a new resurrection world of light and love is opened up for those whom grace calls and separates from man's doomed scene. May we in spirit live and move there even while walking here.

## THE FIRST PROPHET.

Genesis 5 is one of the most solemn chapters in Holy Scripture. It is a chapter of death. Eight times over we read of one and another that "he died." The wreck of all things here as the fruit of sin is thus brought vividly before us. Remarkably, right in the middle of this dismal catalogue of dying men, we read of one who did not die. "He was not; for God took him."

The man thus signalled by God's grace was Enoch — the first prophet. A few words as to this term, so often misunderstood. The common notion is that a prophet was a foreteller of things to come. But this will not do. Many passages in which the word "prophet" is found are altogether inexplicable upon this principle. Concerning Abraham, Jehovah said to Abimelech: "He is a prophet" (Gen. 20: 7); the same is said of all the patriarchs in Ps. 105: 15. Yet it was not given to them (generally speaking) to foretell the future. When Moses demurred with Jehovah about going before Pharaoh, he was told, "Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet"; and again, "he shall be thy spokesman unto the people" (Ex. 4: 16; 7: 1). Here we get the divine thought. The prophet was God's spokesman to the people; he was rather a "forthteller" than a "foreteller." This exactly explains the words of the woman of Samaria to the Lord Jesus: "Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet" (John 4: 19). He had so manifestly spoken to her from God, and had so laid bare her heart that she could not but say this to the Saviour. But while a prophet was thus not necessarily a herald of coming events, we shall find that Enoch did speak of things which have not had their complete fulfilment to this hour.

There are three things told us concerning Enoch in as many passages of Scripture. In Gen. 5: 22, 24 we have his walk; in Jude 14, 15 his testimony; and in Heb. 11: 5 his translation.

Let us consider first

### **HIS WALK.**

It is described thus: "Enoch walked with God," and this is twice repeated. To walk with God a man must be born of God, for flesh is absolutely incapable of entering into that which is divine. Nothing could be more decisive than the language of Rom. 8: 7, 8: "the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Never was Satan more opposed to this humbling truth than at the present hour. In one way or another men's minds are filled with the thought that there is some good thing in flesh. Scripture speaks otherwise. To so religious a person as Nicodemus the Son of God emphatically declared that a man can neither see nor enter into the Kingdom of God apart from new birth by water and the Spirit (John 3).

There seems to be a suggestion in Gen. 5: 22 that the dawn of the new life in Enoch synchronised with the birth of his son Methuselah. One can easily understand how this might be. Births and deaths are alike solemn family events, capable of being used by the Spirit of God to direct the heart to things eternal. Accordingly we read: "Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah; and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years and begat sons and daughters" (Gen. 5: 21, 22).

To "walk with" implies companionship. If you saw me going down the street in conversation with anyone, the suggestion would be that I appreciate his society. God values this in His people more than anything else. It was here that Mary shone in our Lord's day. It was not that He did not prize the hearty service of Martha; He most certainly did; but He prized yet more Mary's, delight in sitting at His feet listening to His word. Enoch is the first man of whom it is distinctly recorded that "he pleased

God." While others were occupied with making for themselves a name and a place here, building their city and perfecting their crafts, "Enoch walked with God." The presence of God and communion with Him. was more to his heart than anything a sin-cursed earth could give. How is it with us? We should know God better than Enoch. The Only-begotten Son having come into the world, and returned into His glory after accomplishing redemption, God is now fully revealed. The Father's name is declared. Our privileges are immensely beyond anything that could be known by Enoch. But are our hearts as responsive as his?

Walk," moreover, means progress. He who sets out to walk in any given direction terminates his journey at some point in advance of that from which he started. What progress are we making in our souls? Some of us have had the knowledge of God many years, but what advance have we made therein? "I long to make spiritual progress," says one; " how can I do so? "What do you read, dear exercised soul? This is a reading age, everyone does something in the reading line. But with what do we fill our minds? The literature to which we devote ourselves forms us in a considerable degree. What kind of story do our book-cases or magazine-racks tell? The profitless, if not positively pernicious, stuff with which some believers feed their minds is sufficient of itself to explain the lack of progress which so many deplore.

Then how do we spend our leisure? It was once remarked: "Tell me how you spend your holiday, and I'll tell you the kind of Christian you are." Is our vacation time a season when we devote more time to things eternal than is possible in the ordinary rush of life, or is it instead a season when we neglect more than usually prayer and meditation upon the Word, and the privileges of Christian fellowship? Is it a season when we put the flesh and its desires altogether in the forefront of our arrangements? Let us consider these suggestions; they may help us to see why our progress in the things of God is so feeble.

Enoch "before his translation had this testimony, that he pleased God" (Heb. 11: 5). And why should not we be equally sensible of the divine approval? "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God" (1 John 3: 21). How many of us are going about with a condemning heart?

The man who walked with God had a testimony committed to him. We find it in Jude 14, 15: "Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgement upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." The man who values communion with God is sure to have His mind revealed to him, for God loves to communicate His thoughts to His own.

## ***ENOCH'S PROPHECY,***

though it had a partial fulfilment in the flood, looks on to the day of the Lord. Indeed, all prophecy converges on that day. It would be a mistake to read any prophecy and endeavour to find an exhaustive accomplishment in events that have already taken place.

It is important to observe the use made of Enoch's utterance by the Spirit of God in Jude. He does not apply it to the world, but to the professing Church. This short epistle has for its theme the introduction, development, and judgement of evil in Christendom. "The ungodly amongst them" means wicked men amongst Christians. How many in our day, in pulpit and press, are saying "hard" speeches against Him! "The essential Deity and spotless humanity of the Saviour treated as matters to be trifled with, His every miracle denied, and His veracity impeached! When divine long-suffering reaches its limit, the stroke of God will fall unsparingly upon these appalling evils.

The witness was himself affected by his testimony His soul felt the weight of it. Accordingly he named his son Methuselah, which means "After he is dead it shall be sent." Are our souls influenced' by the testimony that we bear in this day? We speak oftentimes of the impending doom of the world; and also of the spueing out of the professing Church, but are our lives really affected by what we say? Holy separation from every form of evil, and godly sobriety, would surely characterise us were it really so.

The long-suffering of God seemed to respond to Enoch's faith in the naming of his son. The judgement of the ungodly was indeed held back until Methuselah was gone, yet his life was lengthened out beyond that of any other man who has ever trod the earth. What a God is ours!

A few words now as to

### ***ENOCH'S TRANSLATION.***

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him" (Heb. 11: 5). "He was not; for God took him," (Gen. 5: 24). We cannot forbear contrasting his lot with that of Noah, another herald of the coming judgement. The latter was not removed from the scene, but was mercifully preserved through the ordeal, and then established in the purified earth; Enoch was taken away before the judgement fell. Noah represents the pious remnant of Judah in the last days; Enoch represents those who in this day believe in the Lord Jesus. Our proper hope is translation. Oh the blessedness of such a prospect! Not death, but to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air is our true expectation. In 1 Thess. 4. the analogy between ourselves and Enoch is strikingly presented; 5: 17 reminds us of the first part of Heb. 11: 5, ver. 1 links itself up with the second part of Heb. 11: 5. We shall be translated presently; let us seek to be transformed in our lives while we await so glorious a consummation.

### **THE FIRST PREACHER.**

The most natural calling in the world is that of the farmer; the most unnatural is that of the preacher. Had men continued in innocency the ground must needs have been tilled (Gen. 2: 15), but had sin not intruded itself the admonitions of the preacher would never have been required. At the head of the long line of preachers who have testified amongst men stands Noah; he is the first man to whom this title is expressly given by the Spirit of God (2 Peter 2: 5).

The word "preacher" means "herald." Sometimes it is the privilege of God's servants to proclaim blessed things to men. Witness Paul's precious testimony as described by himself in 1 Tim. 2: 3. On the other hand God's preachers are sometimes charged with a heavy burden. Jonah in Nineveh and Noah amongst the antediluvians, are examples of this. The first is evangelising i.e., making known glad tidings. An interesting distinction in this connection may be found in the different Greek words employed in 1 Peter 3: 19; 1 Peter 4: 6.

Let us notice

### ***THE CONDITION OF THINGS***

in the days of the world's first preacher. He was born 1,056 years after the creation of Adam. During the long period men were possessed of no Bible, and there was no magistrate to call them to account. It was emphatically the age of conscience. But what state of things did this develop? Read

Gen. 6: 5, 6: "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart.' Such was the condition of the antediluvian world. Have things improved since that era? Hear what David said nearly 1,500 years after the flood: "the Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Ps. 14: 2-3) . No improvement is suggested in such language as this. And how does the world stand to-day? The world is now responsible before God for the murder of His Son, and lies under His judgement accordingly (John 12: 31). Awful position! How soon the divine stroke may fall is known to none but God.

Observe next, the moment in which Noah rendered his testimony. There is some analogy between that moment and the present. The Lord Himself pointed this out in Luke 17: 26, 27: "as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all." Noah thus lived at the close of a dispensation, when the thunderclouds of divine judgement were gathering up on every hand. Our lot also has been cast at the close of a dispensation, and once more the judgement of God is preparing for an evil world. Men are as careless and indifferent now as they were in the days of long ago.

Let us glance briefly at

### ***THE PREACHER HIMSELF.***

It is written: "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." This comes before the statement, "Noah walked with God" (Gen. 6: 8, 9). This is ever God's order. No man can walk with God until he has tasted the grace of God. " Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations." "Perfect" does not mean "sinless", his sad failure after he came out of the ark being sufficient proof (Gen. 9: 21); but (as the margin suggests) Noah was an upright man, seeking to walk before God in integrity.

The message of Noah resembled that of John the Baptist rather than that of Paul. Not grace, but righteousness, characterised it. Of Noah it is written that he was "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2: 5), and of the Baptist the Saviour said, "John came unto you in the way of righteousness" (Matt. 21: 32). Judgement was coming. and it was Noah's solemn business to announce it, if haply men would turn to God in repentance. Alas, he was met everywhere with disobedience while the long-suffering of God waited (1 Peter 3: 20).

A few words now concerning

### ***THE PREACHER'S SALVATION.***

It was wholly of God. He devised the ark, and furnished Noah with its specifications. The storm might rage, both above and around it, but the ark was never submerged. "The ark went upon the face of the waters" (Gen. 7: 9). Type of Him who bore the storm of divine wrath on behalf of all His people. The greatness of His person gave Him competency for so mighty a work.

"None but He in heaven or earth,  
Could offer that which justice claimed."

Mark how Heb. 11: 7 speaks of Noah and his deliverance. "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." Our own position is pictured here. We have heard God's announcement of judgement to come, and though "not seen as yet," we have bowed believingly to His word, and have fled to Christ for refuge. Men scoff now at the bare suggestion that God will again break in upon the world's arrangements, and turn them upside down, yet when the sixth seal is opened by the Lamb (Rev. 6: 12-17); and men see everything tottering around them, filled with alarm, they cry to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come, and who is able to stand?"

The ark being completed in the obedience of faith. the divine invitation was addressed to Noah: "Come thou and all thy house into the ark." "And the Lord shut him in" (Gen. 7: 1-16). None can open the door that God is pleased to shut. Divinely secure, therefore, were all the denizens of that unique vessel. The judgement of God having exhausted itself, we read: "the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat" (Gen. 8: 4). Surely no accident is here. The seventh month became the first at the time of the Exodus (Ex. 12: 2); accordingly the ark rested three days after the day appointed for the sacrifice of the paschal lamb?, the very day of our Lord's resurrection. The Saviour's triumphant return from amongst the dead is the public proof that the wrath of God in regard to the sins of His people has spent itself, and that rest and peace have been established for evermore.

## **THE FIRST PILGRIM.**

A Pilgrim is a man on a journey. Having seen (or heard) of a brighter portion elsewhere, he abandons his present surroundings and travels towards it. He gives up the present for the future. Abram was the first man divinely called to take such a path; every believer is, in the divine thought a stranger and a pilgrim to-day (1 Peter 2: 11). How far we are this practically, each heart must answer for itself.

Pilgrimage has been occasioned by sin. Adam in innocence heard no such call as "Follow Me." Indeed it was his duty and responsibility to continue where God had placed him, and never leave his first estate. But sin has upset everything. The man having been driven out of the garden. "the world" sprang up. Its beginnings are described in Gen. 4: 16-26. Between God and "the world" there is nothing in common. Everything in man's system of things is opposed to the Divine nature.

No one was called out into a place of distinct separation until Abram's day, though necessarily every earlier man of faith felt alienated in heart and mind from the godless order by which he was surrounded. In Abram's day there was a very definite reason for the divine call, "Get thee out." After the flood a new form of evil sprang up amongst men — idolatry. Its earliest phase is perhaps indicated in Job 31: 26-28 Abraham's kindred were no better than others as Joshua 24: 2 shows. Idolatry was a formal giving up of God for the worship of demons (1 Cor. 10: 20). Rom. 1: 18-25 is the divine arrangement of the world for this dreadful sin. Be it remembered that both Noah and Shem were alive at this time; the one dying two years before the birth of Abram, and the other living on until Abram was 150 years old. But the testimony of these witnesses was apparently without effect. Satan, in turning men's minds thus to idolatry, captured the whole situation, and God was thrust out of the world.

## ***THE DIVINE OBJECT IN SEPARATING ABRAM.***

It was at this point that Abram was called. What was the divine object in thus separating this man unto God? Simply to do him good as an individual? He was indeed blessed as an individual ("I will bless thee, and make thy name great"), but there was a larger thought than this in the mind of God. He wanted a channel by means of which He could bless the world. Hence the words "Thou shalt be a blessing . . . in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Thus we have in Gen. 10 & 11, the framework of the world as we now know it — parcelled out amongst the nations which have sprung from the three sons of Noah; and in Gen. 12 the man and the principle by means of which God could work in it. What grace!

Turn now to Acts 7: 1, 2; the call of Abram is there most touchingly described. "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia before he dwelt in Charran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come unto the land which I shall show thee." There came thus the moment when God — "the God of glory" — made Himself known to a poor dark idolater, and won his heart for ever. It was not a new religion that Abram learned, nor a new set of opinions, but he came to know a Person". The result was that, like the Thessalonians later, he turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God. Has the God of glory revealed Himself to you, beloved reader? He has raised up His Son from amongst the dead, and enthroned Him at His own right hand on high. All the 'glory of God' now shines in His face (2 Cor. 4: 6), or in other words, all that God is has been told out in the man Christ Jesus. Do you know Him? Is your heart entranced with what it has found in Him? If so, but not otherwise, you are in a position to take the pilgrim's place.

"Tis the treasure I've found in His love,

Which has made me a pilgrim below."

None can well give up who have not already received.

Note Jehovah's word to Abram in Gen. 12: 2: "I will make thy name great," and compare it with men's ambitious work in chap. 11: 4: "Let us make us a name." Men's schemes, be it the Tower of Babel or any other, commend, and the names of those who plan them and who labour them through perish with the world to which they belong; while he who identifies himself with the divine interests gets to himself a name which will abide for ever. Better far let God make our name great than seek anything for ourselves in such a scene as this.

Abram's obedience was but partial at first. The whole family connection removed from Ur of the Chaldees with him; and indeed Terah his father seems to have led the removal. Gen. 11: 3 says, "Terah took Abram his son," etc. Let us speak tenderly here; reproachful words ill become us. How often have we held up to reprobation the errors of those who have gone before us, with but little heart-searching on our own part! Peter's failure in looking at the winds and waves instead of at Jesus, and Martha's mistake in her complaint to the Lord concerning Mary are familiar examples of this. Yet Peter stepped out of the boat on the strength of but one word from the Saviour's lips; and Martha served with her very best and with all her heart even if she did put service before communion (Matt. 14: 29; Luke 10: 40). How many words from the Lord would we require ere we could leave the shelter of a boat to walk on the angry deep? And how many of us would be prepared to serve as Martha served?

## ***THE COMMENT OF HEB. 11: 8***

Long after Abram's pilgrim days were done, the Spirit spoke of his journey thus: "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance,

obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Heb. 11: 8). What an undertaking! Had anyone asked the patriarch when he was packing his camels where he was going, he could not have told them whether he was travelling north, south, east or west! In the eyes of his materialistic neighbours he was as great a fool as Noah, when he built his extraordinary craft with no outward: and visible sign of such a vessel ever being required. But the man of faith is ever a fool in the eyes of the world!.

Haran marked a halt from which there was no progress while Terah lived. The very names are suggestive. Terah means "delay," and Haran means "parched." Alas, how many hindrances are experienced by those who long to wholly follow the Lord, the most serious of them all frequently coming from our own family circle. Unconverted relatives, or worldly-minded Christian relatives, are often a sad drag upon our souls. But full blessing cannot be known until obedience is complete. "Parched" must be confession of the one who sees where the pilgrim's path leads, yet hesitates to pursue it. The Psalmist says, "I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments." "In keeping of them there is great reward" (Ps. 119: 60; 19: 11) .

### **ABRAM MOVES ON.**

Terah, being dead, Abram moved on again (Lot, however, accompanying him). "They went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came" (Gen. 12: 5). His first act, on arrival at the plain of Moreh, near Shechem, was to put up an altar. At this spot Jehovah appeared to him, and renewed His promise: "unto thy seed will I give this land." This is the first recorded divine manifestation since Abram left Ur of the Chaldees, and it just illustrates our Lord's words to His disciples in John 14: 21: "he that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." Obedience always brings the light and joy of the Lord's presence as its reward to the soul.

An altar and a tent characterised Abram in Canaan. Yet, says Heb. 11: 10: he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Man's cities had no appeal for his heart. Babylon and Nineveh had already reared their proud heads, and Egypt's cities (the ruins of which are the marvel of our time) were already in being. But Abram stood apart from them all with God. In looking for a heavenly country and city his faith really rose above his calling, for God had not spoken to him of such things, so far as the record tells us. In our case this is impossible. So exalted and wonderful is the calling wherewith we are called that faith can do no more than rise to it (Eph. 1: 18; Eph. 4: 1). And how many of us really apprehend! God's calling?

Compare for a moment two passages in the Epistles to the Hebrews — Heb. 2: 11; Heb. 11: 16. In the first we read: "He is not ashamed to call them brethren"; and in the second: "God is not ashamed to be called their God." In chap. 2: 11 it is grace speaking; in chap 11: 16 government. Of all Christians without distinction it is true that Christ is "not ashamed to call them brethren"; but it is not necessarily true of all that "God is not ashamed to be called their God." He never linked His name thus with Lot, nor even with Obadiah. Why? Because neither was willing to take the outside place with Him. Brethren let us exercise our hearts as to this. We are living in a worldly age, and on every hand we hear the tacit refusal of believers to accept the pilgrim's portion. Yet people are only useful to God as they walk in separation. When Abram declined into Egypt he brought trouble, not blessing, upon that land; when Israel mingled with the nations they brought down the hand of God upon themselves and upon all others. And what has the Church's pathway, been? May the Lord, in His mercy, raise up those who will, with holy determination, walk in spirit apart from all things here, and await with fervent desire His

Son from heaven.

## **THE FIRST PRIEST.**

There was no formal institution of priesthood until the time of Moses. For until that time there was no "people" in relationship with God. Believing individuals there were from the beginning, but in Israel was first established the principle of a "people" in special relationship with Jehovah. Priesthoods when set up in Aaron and his family, was designed for the help and sustainment of a people so wondrously placed. Every detail connected with Aaron's exalted office was typical of Christ and His present gracious ministry on behalf of His saints.

But long before Aaron's day, while his father Levi "was yet in the loins" of Abram (Heb. 7: 10), we have Melchizedek brought before us in Scripture as "priest of the Most High God" (Gen. 14: 18) . Christ as typified in Melchizedek as surely as in Aaron. But the differences between the two ministries are very marked. Aaron's was a service of sacrifice and intercession. With blood and incense he had to do. But we read of no sacrifices offered by Melchizedek, nor of incense burnt upon the altar of God. His was essentially a ministry of blessing. On God's part he blessed Abram, and on Abram's part he blessed the Most High.

### **WHO WAS MELCHIZEDEK?**

Men's speculations have been various. An angel. the patriarch Shem, and even the Son of God Himself have been suggested. Such speculations are as unprofitable as they are foolish. The omission of his pedigree was divinely planned in order that he might stand upon the page of Scripture as the more emphatic type of Him who indeed has "neither beginning of days nor end of life." But Melchizedek personally was a man as any other.

In Gen. 14 we have a remarkable picture of what will happen at the end of the present age. The Christ of God — King and Priest in one person — will show Himself from heaven with blessing in His hands for Israel and the earth. He will establish the divine supremacy ("the Most High God") and will insist upon the divine claim to everything ("Possessor of heaven and earth") — verities so long disputed. Righteousness and peace will characterise His sway (Ps. 72: Isa. 32.) Melchizedek: means "King of Righteousness," and Salem means "Peace" (Heb. 7: 2).

But the scene in Gen. 14 has also

### **ITS APPLICATION FOR TO-DAY**

Christians already enjoy by faith what Israel and the earth must wait for until Christ appears.

We have two kings coming forward to meet Abram as he returned from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer and his allies. They were Bera, King of Sodom, and Melchizedek, King of Salem. In the wisdom of God, Melchizedek was suffered to act first. He "brought forth bread and wine." What are these but the memorials of Christ slain? What so strengthening to the man of faith as to be vividly reminded of Calvary's mighty work? Too often, however, we think of Christ's death merely as that which has brought us salvation from coming wrath, and fail to understand that it has put us completely outside of all things here. The joy and gladness which the living Priest on high would minister to our souls is incapable of being comprehended by us if our hearts are suffered to cling to this death-doomed scene. The whole object of the present ministry of Christ (the Holy Spirit co-operating) is to lead us in

spirit even now into that other world of which He is the light and the glory.

"Blessed be Abram." Hear the King-Priest.

### ***PUT YOUR OWN NAME***

into the passage, beloved Christian reader. "Blessed be\_\_\_" Who and what is the God from whom all blessings flow? He is "the Most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth." He is thus higher than the highest, and richer than the richest. And this is my God! One's heart feels satisfied, elevated, energised at the thought of it.

Then on Abram's part Melchizedek blessed God for the victory which had been granted. "Blessed be the Most High God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand." Let us pause and ask ourselves a question here. Is the Lord on high able to give thanks for victories we have gained? Does victory or defeat characterise our lives? Are we like Abram, overcomers of the world, or are we like Lot, overcome by the world? Let each heart return its answer to this challenge.

Now mark

### ***THE EFFECT UPON ABRAM.***

He is thoroughly in the spirit of that to which he had listened. When the King of Sodom presently offered to him to keep the captured spoil for himself, he replied: " I have lift up mine hand to the Most High God, the Possessor of heaven and! earth, that I will not take from a thread to a Shoe-latchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich." Has he merely caught up Melchizedek's phraseology in speaking thus of God'? How easy it is to acquire mere forms of speech — words and expressions of which we know neither the meaning nor the power! How far are we prepared! to be held responsible for the language of even the hymns we sing?

Abram acted. How is it with us? The recovered spoil of five cities was doubtless a goodly pile, but the man of faith surveyed it all with supreme contempt. He had seen Melchizedek first. Else he might have said, "What harm?" Paul in Phil. 3: calls all his religious gains rubbish;\* what then would he have called the world's follies? We read of one that "he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat" (Luke 15: 6). Are we even in the smallest degree like that man?

{\*Not "dung" (Phil. 3: 8), which after all has a money value. The Apostle speaks of what is absolutely worthless. "Refuse" (R. V. margin.)}

How often believers say concerning this thing and that: "I really cannot see the harm in it!" They probably speak truly. But how is it they cannot see? Perhaps the Lord's word in Rev. 3: 18 will explain: "Anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest see." A neglected Bible will account for the lack of spiritual perception on the part of the many. The eye that sees Christ on high in the power of the Spirit of God, the ear that hears His heavenly ministry as the true Melchizedek is proof against all the wiles of the flesh and of the devil, The moral victory gained by Abram in the neighbourhood of Sodom was greater far in the divine account than the physical victory gained in the neighbourhood of Dan. Satan is more to be feared when he comes smiling than when he comes scowling.