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*The Mystery of Christ and the Church
and The Covenants*

Chapter 5.3

Continued

Genesis 5:25-32

(25) And Methushelah lived a hundred and eighty-seven years, and begot Lemech. (26) And Methushelah lived after he had begotten Lemech seven hundred and eighty-two years, and begot sons and daughters. (27) And all the days of Methushelah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years; and he died. (28) And Lemech lived a hundred and eighty-two years, and begot a son. (29) And he called his name Noah, saying, This [one] shall comfort us concerning our work and concerning the toil of our hands, because of the ground which Jehovah has cursed. (30) And Lemech lived after he had begotten Noah five hundred and ninety-five years, and begot sons and daughters. (31) And all the days of Lemech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years; and he died. (32) And Noah was five hundred years old, and Noah begot Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

(From W. Kelly)

It is but little that is said of Adam's line through Seth. They lived many days on the earth; they begat sons and daughters, besides the one who continued the succession; and they died. This gives great significance to all that is said beyond. Thus we saw the strong moral difference expressed in Seth's case compared with Adam. But the vivid contrast appeared in Enoch, the witness and manifest enjoyer of life which shone out in his walk, and superior to the power of death, as it pleased God to prove, when his comparatively tried pilgrimage closed in a sort altogether heavenly.

His son was Methuselah.

And Methuselah lived a hundred and eighty-seven years and begat Lamech; and Methuselah lived after he begat Lamech seven hundred and eighty-two years, and begat sons and daughters. And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years; and he died (Gen. 5:25-27).

In his instance it might have seemed that man was exceptionally to reach a

millennium. But not so. This is reserved for the reign of the Last Adam; and He will make it good throughout His world-kingdom as the rule, and not the exception, for such as welcome Him when He appears to reign in righteousness. Mighty and beneficent the change in that day, when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea! {Isa. 11:9} It is in vain to reason from the first Adam experience, the prolific source of unbelief.

He is Jehovah Who deigned to become a shoot out of the stock of Jesse and a branch out of his roots {Isa. 11:1} shall bear fruit in days to come; in virtue of Him shall Jacob

take root; Israel shall blossom and bud; and they shall fill the face of the world with fruit {Isa. 27:6}.

For in truth He also is the root of Jesse.

And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse: standing as an ensign of the peoples: it shall the nations seek; and his resting place shall be in glory {Isa. 11:10}.

Then, when he that had the power of death is bound, and the Conqueror reigns over the earth, man shall fill his days. And Jehovah will rejoice in Jerusalem and joy in His people; and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying {Isa. 65:19}. There shall be no more thenceforth an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days; for the youth shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed {Isa. 65:20}. And as Christ is the key to our understanding the scriptures now, so will He be the One in that day to put down evil in power and righteousness, and to bless man subject to His scepter.

And Lamech lived a hundred and eighty-two years and begat a son; and he called his name Noah, saying, This [one] shall comfort us concerning our work and concerning toil of our hands because of the ground which Jehovah hath cursed. And Lamech lived after he begat Noah five hundred and ninety-five years, and begat sons and daughters. And all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years; and he died (Gen. 5:28-31).

Here again the Holy Spirit pauses on the occasion of Noah's birth; and his father was made to utter an oracle about his son. The prophetic spirit is evident in Lamech's utterances.¹ Noah he recognized as the witness of comfort for man's work and toiling hands. And so Noah is the type of Him Who will govern and

1. {We have previously noted that there were two Enochs, one in each line. The first was in the line of the first man and the other Enoch, the seventh from Adam, was in the godly line, the line of the second man. There is a similar case concerning the two Lamech's. The first was in Cain's line, the first man's line, the seventh from Adam. *This* Lamech is in the godly line and is the ninth from Adam. "First that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual."}

bless the habitable world to come, after it has passed through His judgment of those that defile or destroy the earth. Lamech acknowledges the righteous dealing of Jehovah no less than Enoch does in his prophecy recorded by Jude. But the difference is characteristic. Enoch speaks openly of the Lord's coming with myriads of His saints; for a heavenly portion only adds to the sense of coming judgment of all, and not only in their works of ungodliness which they ungodlily wrought but in the hard things which ungodly sinners spoke against Him. Lamech was given, though more darkly, to see in Noah the pledge of consolation for the earth, after the judgment of the quick has done its work.

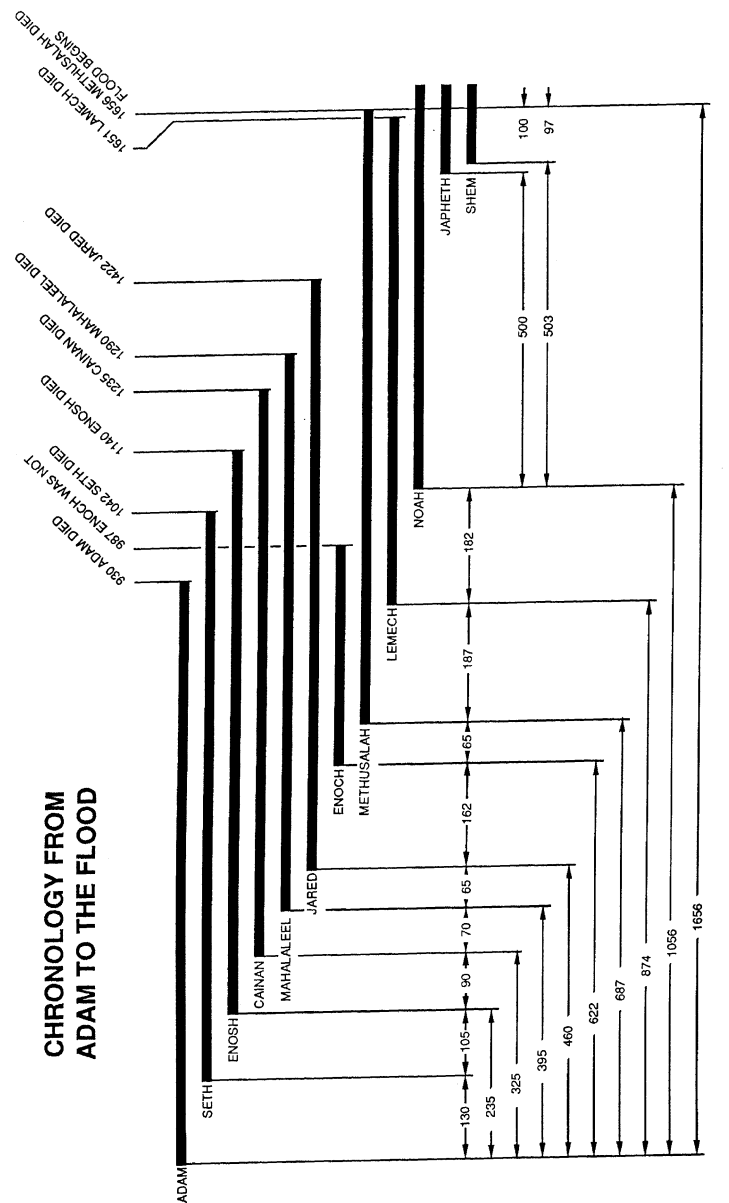
They are the complement one of the other; and both look on to a day not yet come; for a judgment in providence makes nothing perfect more than the law did. They are shadows of what is coming, and not only of destruction at the Lord's hand, but of comfort to follow for this toiling earth. It is well to accept the pledge; it is better still not to rest in that measure, but to await the full blessing Christ alone is competent to bestow. Then Jehovah's work will appear to His servants, and His glory upon their children; then the beauty of Jehovah their God shall be upon His people, and He will establish the work of their hands upon them; yea He will establish the work of their hands. No doubt to share Christ's position on high in the Father's house is incomparably more, and this we shall have who share His rejection; but it is wrong to overlook and worse to deny the blessing He will also pour on the earth, and on the ancient people, and on all peoples, in that day of glory.

Nor is there any question that on Christ's first advent and on His infinite work of atonement all depends for blessing to souls now, and for glory in the heavens and the earth at that day, because therein God was glorified in Him even as to sin, the otherwise insuperable block in the way. But while owning this fully and finding now in Him life, peace, joy, liberty, relationship with God as children and union with Himself our glorified Head, through the Holy Ghost given, the more ought we to be freed from every hindrance and testify with might from above His coming, not only to take us on high, but to execute judgment on a guilty world and a guiltier Christendom, and to bless the earth gloriously and Israel and all the nations; and so much the more, because we see the day approaching.

We need not dwell on Noah more now, but just observe what we are told in v. 32: "And Noah was five hundred years old [son of 500 years], and Noah begat Shem, Ham; and Japheth." Shem is first named, not because he was eldest, which Japheth was, but as in the direct line of the blessings of Israel. ²

2. *The Bible Treasury* 20:65, 66.

Chronology from Adam to the Flood



Chapter 6.1

The Judgment on Man by the Deluge

The Ways of God and the Deluge

There is a very clear distinction between the ways of God before and after the deluge. Since the fall, there has always been a people of God, and the world of the ungodly. God has never left Himself without a witness. The prophecies of Enoch were the instruction of the people of God in those days, and the hope of the faithful in our days. Nevertheless, in those times, there was no manifested judgment, no nation, no external call, which formed believers or an elect people into a body acknowledged before God; and there was consequently no development of the principles of the character of God. It was a fallen race; and the fallen nature of man showed itself, and followed its course in spite of the witness of God; and God did nothing until (the evil being intolerable) He swept them from before His face, by a judgment which none could escape, save the little band in the ark; and the world, swallowed up in the waters, perished. God “repented that he had made man,” for “the earth was corrupt before God; and the earth was filled with violence,” and God destroyed it.³

In the epoch from Adam fallen to Noah, God had left man to his evil acquisition of the knowledge of good and evil, with its attendant acquired conscience -- a bad conscience, as we have seen. There had also been acquired “sin in the flesh” as Rom. 8:3 calls the principle of evil that became resident in the soul consequent upon the fall. The trial of the fallen, first man during this epoch -- to show that he was not recoverable -- is given in Gen. 6:1-7. So much for man’s progress and development! So much for leaving persons to their conscience! On the other hand, God had sovereignly communicated the new nature (of which John 3:1-12 speaks) to some during this epoch and that is why there was something for Him. All that is for Him has its source in Him. We may recognize that such were “just” persons (see Heb. 11:40 and Heb. 12:23 -- “spirits of just [men] made perfect”), were “saints,” and were born of God. This is not what constitutes the body of Christ, though those who constitute that

3. *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby* 2:132.

body are also just, saints, and born of God. It is of God’s will, “the fruit of his own mind,” that anyone is born of God.⁴

While the world began with Adam, an important change took place consequent upon the flood. 2 Pet. 3:6 says:

. . . through which [waters] the then world, deluged with water, perished.
But the present heavens and the earth . . .

In contrast to the “*then* world,” i.e., in contrast to the pre-flood world, this indicates a new order *now* for the world which continues on until the postmillennial conflagration leading to the new heavens and new earth (2 Pet. 3:10-13) occurs. **Government** was placed into the hands of man, and this continues until the end of the present earth.

We are shown how soon Noah failed in governing himself, and how his several sons treated this, but government in the hands of man continues, as does man’s failure regarding it. But government will be taken up by Christ for the millennial reign, and perfectly carried out by Him. Indeed, all wherein man has failed is taken up by Christ for God’s glory. It is really a very sorry thing to see Christians teaching that Christ is reigning now (amillennialism). Among the many erroneous consequences of that system is that God has not been, and will not be, glorified regarding the government given to Noah. Is it possible that some can bring their minds to construe post-cross history as an exhibition of God-glorifying carrying out of government?

Genesis 6:1-4:

The Awful Wickedness

(1) And it came to pass when mankind began to multiply on the earth, and daughters were born to them, (2) that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and took themselves wives of all that they chose. (3) And Jehovah said, My Spirit shall not always plead with Man; for he indeed is flesh; but his days shall be a hundred and twenty years. (4) In those days were the giants on the earth, and also afterwards, when the sons of God had come in to the daughters of men, and they had borne [children] to them; these were the heroes, who of old were men of renown.

4. This is considered in detail in *The Sovereignty of God in the Election of Lost Men*, available from Present Truth Publishers.

The Awful Violation of the First Estate

In Cain's line we saw the development of the "then world." In Gen. 6:1-7 we have the awful moral conditions that developed since Cain murdered Abel. In a footnote it was pointed out that the sons of God spoken of here were some of the fallen angels. This seems too much for the mind of many, since they cannot understand how this can be, so their conclusion is that it is not the case -- as if they can explain how it can be that angels have appeared as men in the OT. W. Kelly wrote:

There is a slight difference in the popular view, some holding the sons of God to be great men, or nobles; others, the progeny of Seth.

But it is impossible to deny that "sons of God," the early books of the Bible (Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7), are found appropriated to angels. So in slightly different form of the Hebrew we read in Psa. 29:1, and 89:6. When the prophet Hosea predicts in ch. 1:10 (or 2:1) what the apostle Paul applied (Rom. 9:26) to the present call of Gentiles during the eclipse of Israel, the phrase is pointedly distinct, besides its having no retrospective bearing. Indeed in the Alexandrine MS. of the Septuagint version of Gen. 6: 2, for υιοι the Vatican is read of οι αγγελοι. But apart from this, which goes rather beyond the place of a translator, there is no ground from OT usage to question that the application of the phrase is to angels, and not to men even if faithful and righteous. And the apostolic reference is indisputable. Peter and Jude, regarding the awful crisis at the end of this age in the light of this scripture, though from quite different aspects, bear the concurrent testimony of the Holy Spirit that angels were here intended by "sons of God."

This to a believer in divine inspiration is decisive. God knew all and cannot lie. Difficulties there assuredly are to us, who know little of what is possible to beings so far transcending human estate. But we learn even from the reserved terms employed in the original text and the inspired comments that angelic commerce with mankind was exceptionally heinous in itself and in its results. God therefore avenged the flagrant departure from all the bounds He had laid down for the indigenous dwellers on high, as well as for the creatures of earthly mold by a judgment that slumbered not nor spared either. For it is evident that the fruits of the iniquity no less than the guilty mothers perished in the deluge; while the appalling sentence of consignment to everlasting bonds under darkness befell such angels as kept not their own first estate, to await the great day's judgment. Their lot, so different from that of the devil and his angels, marks the enormity of their sin for which God cast them into Tartarus (2 Pet. 2:4). They had so daringly abused their liberty that they were handed over to the gloomiest custody; unlike the rest of the fallen angels, who have even access to

heaven and accuse the saints and deceive the whole habitable earth as yet.⁵

Jehovah's Long-suffering Nearly Ended

In v.3 we see that God would give 120 years before the flood. The situation of this verse between vv. 1, 2 and vv. 3, 4 indicates that it has to do with the coming judgment, not the length of time for man's life after the flood.⁶ The 120 years seems to be a special period of the patience of God, His long-suffering, in the trial of the first man. Lemech and Methushalah were still living during this period; but the period began before Japheth, Noah's eldest, was born.

It was a period of God's Spirit striving with man, but the end was in sight. Methushalah would die the year of the flood. It seems as if it was an apostasy from any light that man had, from God's clothing the nakedness (exposure) of man with the skins, the lesson in Abel's sacrifice, and the warnings of Enoch, who was translated before this period. In Gen. 6:3 we learn that God's Spirit was striving with the ante-deluvians. In 1 Pet. 3:18-20 we learn that it was the Spirit of Christ doing so, through Noah. W. Kelly has commented at length concerning the Spirit of Christ preaching through Noah, to the ante-deluvians, in the series from which I have frequently quoted.⁷ He rightly denounces the notion that Christ went personally somewhere (perhaps to the middle of the earth where He preached to spirits in prison there). The truth is that it was the Spirit of Christ that preached through Noah to those persons before the flood; and who, disobeying the Word, are kept in prison until the judgment. Christ was:

5. *The Bible Treasury* 20:81. See also *ibid.*, 13:169; J. N. Darby, *Notes and Comments* 1:50-53.

6. An exponential decay curve may be drawn through a plot of the ages of persons after the flood, starting with Shem and ending with Aaron (died at 119) and Moses (died at 120) and Joshua (died at 110) -- as if the ages of Aaron, Moses, and Joshua indicated that Gen. 6:3 speaks of this. And then there was a further drop, to 70 years, as indicated in Psa. 90:10. But this does not seem to be the true explanation of the 120 years. Rather, it points to the patience of God. Regarding His patience, judgment for the murder of Christ has not taken place for well over 1900 years.

The curve is quite interesting. No doubt God was working to reduce the life of man and we do not know how it was effected. It is known that when a stable system is disturbed by receiving a shock, the system seeks a new point of stability, following an exponential curve in the process.

The earth also may have received a very large shock accompanying the flood. It seems that the earth itself is in an incomplete process of righting itself from a huge shock that caused the axis to move considerably. Like a spinning gyroscope that is deflected and seeks to have its axis recover its former position, so with the earth. Such curves have been published by "young earth" scientists. The work is based on the Australian astronomer, George Dodwell.

7. *The Bible Treasury* 20:97, 98; and see his book, *Christ Preaching to the Spirits in Prison*, as well as his *Epistles of Peter*, in loco.

. . . put to death in flesh, but made alive in [the] Spirit, in which also going he preached to the spirits [which are] in prison, heretofore disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was preparing . . . (1 Pet. 3:18-20).

And why would Christ go personally to preach to those in prison who had refused the word in Noah's day? -- for a 'second chance'? At any rate, here is how W. Kelly regarded the notion:

The heterodoxy we are considering treats these very persons, if not all the wicked dead, as kept for hearing Christ to save them from judgment! Can one conceive grosser ignorance, and, what is worse, more arrant trifling with solemn scriptures, or a more evident desire to bring their meaning to nought? ⁸

The Nephilim and the Gibborim

Regarding v. 4, W. Kelly wrote:

As to ver. 4, the construction is not without difficulty. It appears to distinguish between the Nephilim ⁹ or giants in those days, as afterwards also, and the Gibborim, mighty ones or heroes, who were the fruit of the union of the sons of God with men's daughters. In fact, notwithstanding the dark confusion of the old heathen remains, traces of this distinction are not wanting; though nothing can be more marked than the superiority of scripture in the very little it says on this painful subject over the traditional lore respecting the Giants and the Titans, which the later poets jumbled inextricably. Num. 13:33 of itself easily accounts for the clause here parenthetically marked. It may run, without parenthesis, "And also after that the sons of God . . . : these [are] the mighty ones which were of old, men of the name," thus distinguishing the giants and these heroes. One shrinks from boldness in speaking of such a phrase; but the latter part distinguishes a class which was not found afterwards: "These [are] the heroes, who [were] of old, men of renown." These, as being of quite a different source and character, had a fame peculiar to themselves for might. The reputation they acquired of old was not founded on mere stature, like that of the Nephilim.

In result it is clear that the bounds of creation were wickedly traversed by certain angels, and thus a peculiarly evil corruption introduced among men, where evil in its ordinary character grew apace as we are afterwards shown. But that unnatural amalgam touched the rights of Jehovah, though

8. *The Bible Treasury* 20:98.

9. The name has been derived from "felling" or "falling." Aquila has ἐπιπύροντες, Symmachus βιαῖοι, as the LXX, γίγαντες for both the Nephilim and the Gibborim.

outwardly He had left man to himself since his expulsion from Paradise; as it played its grave part in calling for divine intervention in the governmental act of the deluge of which Genesis speaks, but in those deeper, lasting, and unseen ways which the epistles of Peter and Jude reveal in unison with NT truth for eternity. The evasive reading of the passage which many pious ancients and moderns have adopted to escape its only fair interpretation, because it conveys what is to us beyond measure strange, if not incomprehensible how it could be, is nothing but a makeshift of unbelief. Received simply, it gives the sure, though purposely reserved, revelation on the darkest scene of old, the true source of what was expanded, after its wonted fashion in Jewish tradition and Pagan mythology. In scripture the evil was dealt with in holy judgment; among men it became the basis of fame for beneficent might on man's behalf in vain struggle against envious but superior gods: no untrue description of beings who were really demons. "Jehovah, what is man that Thou takest knowledge of him? or the son of man, that Thou makest account of him? Man is like a breath, his days are as a shadow that passeth away. Bow Thy heavens, Jehovah, and come down." ¹⁰

Those of the fallen angels

who had not kept their own original state, but had abandoned their own dwelling, he keeps in eternal chains under gloomy darkness, to the judgment of the great day (Jude 6);

and Peter speaks of it also (2 Pet. 2:4). This matter was one reason for the judgment of the deluge over the earth.

Genesis 6:5-8: Man's Condition

(5) And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of Man was great on the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart only evil continually. (6) And Jehovah repented that he had made Man on the earth, and it grieved him in his heart. (7) And Jehovah said, I will destroy Man, whom I have created, from the earth -- from man to cattle, to creeping things, and to fowl of the heavens; for I repent that I have made them. (8) But Noah found favour in the eyes of Jehovah.

10. *The Bible Treasury* 20:98, 99. See also J. N. Darby, *Notes and Comments* 1:51-53.

Man Wicked in Practice and in Heart

Verses 5-8¹¹ speak of another reason for the flood, with which we will couple the statement in Gen. 6:11. In v. 5, two matters are noted.

1. The wickedness of Man was great on the earth. No doubt this included what we considered above. In v. 11 we read:

And the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was full of violence.

This is the two great characters of evil. The corruption started in the garden of Eden and in Cain we see the corruption in offering to Jehovah from the fruit of the cursed ground. Then we see the violence in his killing Abel. These things had reached a crescendo by the time of the flood. Thus God has described what man had done.

2. In v. 5 there is the description of man's state of soul:

. . . and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart only evil continually.

This is what is within man as fallen. In the fall he acquired "sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3), as it is designated in the NT. This is the spring from which the corruption and violence flow. The sub-conscious tendencies and the conscious tendencies of the innermost being are only evil continually. The "heart," used in Scripture to point to the affections, is where the evil root that produces evil fruit resides. Man loves sin.

Gen. 6:5 gives us the state of man after he had been left to the conscience, and the knowledge of good and evil, acquired (not dispensed) as a result of the fall. The fact that God had His elect during this epoch does not indicate otherwise, but shows that God quickens souls as He will.

After the fall, man was left without government, which was dispensed by God after the flood for restraint of evil (Rom. 13), though man fails in governing as in all else. Government remains to be taken up by Christ in the millennial reign and God be glorified in it. Gen. 6:5, then, gives us the true condition of man brought into bold relief under the condition of being left to himself. It may be said, 'but that is because he was left to himself rather than receiving divine guidance.' Well, under the Mosaic Administration, man in the flesh, in the persons of Israel, was guided, yes cultivated, by Jehovah in many ways, yet at the end of that trial, the first, fallen man put the second man to the cross, using the "secular arm" (i.e., government) as the instrument to do so. Rom. 8:7 gives us the state of man evidenced by the trial under the law. What would one expect in view of Gen. 6:5? Such Scriptures as Gen. 6:5 and Rom. 8:7 shows the

11. The reader would profit from reading W. Kelly on these verses in *The Bible Treasury* 20:113-114.

incurability of fallen man, hence the necessity for the sovereign grace of God to quicken the lost. A man needs a new nature from God, as was told to Nicodemus (John 3). The Covenantist notion that the saint does not have both an old nature and a new nature means that God works to improve the old. The truth is, there is nothing for God to work on. He must sovereignly implant a new nature. Such texts as we are considering also show the fallacy of the self-flattering notion that the lost have moral free-will. It is the pretension not to be totally lost.

Satan has these two characteristics: violence, seen in him as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8); and, corruption, seen in him as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). These features also mark the Antichrist as a man of blood and deceit (Psa. 5:6).

It is well for us to dwell a little longer on our awful state as fallen. W. P. Mackay wrote:

He saw that their "wickedness was great." Man thinks little of wickedness, and much of what he can do. God thinks little about what man can do, but much about his wickedness.

"Every imagination!" Sweeping statement! There was no exception. It was not that man had many bad imaginations. He had none good. The original Hebrew makes it very strong, . . . the whole mind, including purposes and desires. It comes from a root meaning to frame or form. The whole moral formation of man was evil; there was no remaining grain of good, not one divine ray, lighting up the surrounding darkness; a moral chaos as real, dark, formless and void, as the physical chaos of Gen. 1:2.

"Only evil," unmixed in its character as universal in its spread. Here we can find no palliation, no mingling of good and bad, "only evil."

"Evil continually." The evil was in all places, of all kinds and all times . . . The thoughts of youth and old age equally evil; the thoughts of morn, noon, and night "continually" evil. The actions are not mentioned, for the whole root of the tree was rotten. What a moral cesspool man has become! And this is the opinion of the holy God, while they can boast of their arts, science, and culture, their great giants and great deeds, and can cultivate their fine arts, with the organ and the harp; make money with their sheep and cattle, and build their monuments in brass and iron.¹²

This evil within man's being is unalterable. It is not improved by the new birth. What is flesh remains flesh. In the new birth God sovereignly simultaneously implants a new nature and faith -- and the person is brought to repentance.

In Gen. 8:21 we see that when Jehovah smelled the sweet odor of the burnt-

12. *The British Herald* June 1874, p. 67.

offering he said:

. . . the thought of man's heart is evil from his youth.¹³

This is said at the beginning of the post-flood world. The judgment of God that fell upon the "then world" did not, of course, change "sin in the flesh" in fallen man. The fallen, first man is incorrigible, and "sin in the flesh" is never ameliorated or modified, though Reformed Theology (which recognizes only one nature rather than the two natures in the believer) may teach otherwise. Nor is fallen man able to be subject to the law of God (Rom. 8:7), though Arminianism may say otherwise in its pretension that man is not totally lost.¹⁴ But in the burnt-offering Jehovah had before Him Christ for His pleasure and devotion, even unto death, yielded up to Him on the cross. Though man was incorrigible, He would not again so smite every living thing as He had done in the flood. Christ rendering Himself up for the satisfaction and glory of God, on the cross, was the basis on which God could righteously act towards man in salvation, according to His purpose to glorify Himself in Christ in the heavenly and earthly spheres.

Jehovah Repenting and Grieved in His heart

In Gen. 6:6 we find two matters:

1. Jehovah repenting that He had made Man on the earth. It is well to be clear concerning what God repenting means. Clearly, it does not mean that God had done some evil thing or had an evil thought. We see in Num. 23:19 in the God-controlled prophecy of Balaam, that God does not repent (see Rom. 11:29). That refers to *divine purpose*. On the other hand, concerning God's *governmental ways with man* during the trial of the fallen, first man, to show that he was not recoverable, we find some statements concerning God repenting. See Ex. 32:14 and Jer. 18:7-10, for examples. J. N. Darby remarked:

It is not as if some change took place in God, but that the aspect of His mind is changed towards an object that has itself changed.¹⁵

It has been rightly observed that after the cross we do not read of God repenting about something. Why? It is because the trial of the first man ended at the cross and therefore God now enjoins all everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). God's dealings with man as under trial are finished; all must now repent or perish. The trial of the first man is concluded and therefore God is no longer

13. See also 1 Chron. 28:9.

14. See my, *God's Sovereignty in the Election and Salvation of Lost Men*, available from Present Truth Publishers.

15. *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby* 19:84.

changing His ways with man as if lost man has not been tested under all conditions.

2. It grieved Jehovah in His heart. Does God have pleasure in the death of the wicked? See Ezek. 33:11. Think of the Lord Jesus weeping over Jerusalem.

The Judgment on Man and the Lower Order, With Exception

The Spirit had spoken in Noah, a preacher of righteousness, as before Enoch had warned of judgment to come. Judgment is certain but man will not heed, for he loves sin. But God's holy hand is the executor of holy moral government, and warnings spurned bring sure destruction. In faith, a huge ship was being built. Likely there had not yet been rain and man reasons in favor of continuing in his sinful course, filling up the measure of judgment to be poured upon him. The time arrived for God to vindicate his Word and sweep away every vestige of unbelief. And as Adam's fall had affected the lower order, so the flood affected the lower order over which man had been set.

It is not intended to enter into details of the flood. We know not how high mountains were before the flood, but we are assured they were all covered.¹⁶ We know not where all the water resided for this, but we are assured that it was as God said.¹⁷ Man and his science, arts, and pleasures, his skills and talents, his having totally rejected the claims of God -- and in the face of testimony of Methushalah, and perhaps Lemech, who could have spoken with Adam, and others who knew Adam, and those removed but one generation from Adam --

For as they were in the days which were before the flood, eating and drinking, marrying and given in marriage, until the day on which Noe entered into the ark, and knew not till the flood came and took all away (Matt. 24:38, 39).

16. A Christian, who was a scientist, assuming Mt. Everest was as high before the flood as now, objected to the idea of a world-wide flood, and said that the atmosphere would be too rarified with the ark at that height. It was a slip, of course, because the whole atmosphere would lift up with the surface of the water at whatever height it reached.

How should the language of Scripture be changed in order to indicate that it was a "local" flood, not world-wide? Note that if it was a local flood, afterwards God said:

. . . neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood, and henceforth there shall be no flood to destroy the earth," (Gen. 9:11).

Is that mere redundancy or are there two things being stated? Well, the flood divided two worlds, "the then world" and the world that now is (2 Pet. 3:6, 7).

17. Regarding the "kinds" that went into the ark we do not know where that fits in present day taxonomy, but hardly at the species level.

“Knew not” are solemn words.¹⁸ There was not one iota of divine knowledge in them. They were all devoid of the least fear of Jehovah. Yet, ending this description of the horrible sins and the condition of man’s heart is a happy note regarding Noah:

But Noah found grace in the eyes of God (Gen. 6:8).

Why? was he inherently better than others? Not so. It was Jehovah’s grace *upon* him and that wrought *in* Him for the pleasure of Jehovah. As did Enoch, Noah walked with God:

This is the history of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect among his generations: Noah walked with God (Gen. 6:9).

Perfect is not flawless, or sinless, as we might use the word, but upright (cp. Job 1:8). Each saint must walk with God according to the light that God has given for the time. The truth that He gives is the truth most opposed at the time for which it is given. What is the truth given to us now? What is the truth most opposed now?¹⁹

The circle in which Noah moved saw a man altogether different from themselves. Morally, they were like Cain, away from the presence of Jehovah. Yet here was one consciously in Jehovah’s presence, walking with God. Concerning man as lost, there is not a just man on the earth. There cannot be such unless God steps in, in sovereign grace communicating a new nature and faith. Noah was a bright trophy of that grace, a man of faith:

By faith, Noah, oracularly warned concerning things not yet seen, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which [is] according to faith (Heb. 11:7).

God spoke to him, and spoke of “things not yet seen.” That may refer to rain and flood, by which judgment would swallow up the ungodly, things which had not been seen by Noah. Faith lays hold of what God has said concerning things not yet seen (Heb. 11:1). Noah’s faith in things not yet seen had to do with *God’s moral government*, the coming flood of judgment. And when the flood was past, God committed to him human government for the restraint of evil.

There was a period of time, then, when Noah prepared an ark:

18. This reminds us of the scoffers noted in 2 Pet. 3:3-6 who deny the Lord’s coming in judgment, claiming that there had been no world-wide flood of God’s intervention in judgment in the past. Thus shall there be a repetition of Noah’s day, as Matt. 24:38, 39 says. Traditions concerning a flood have been found spread world-wide. The ignorance of it is due to, as Peter wrote: “through their own wilfulness.” It is willful disbelief.

19. See *God’s Counsel for the Time is the Truth Most Opposed*, available from Present Truth Publishers.

What is often said of Noah’s carpentry is man’s imagination. Yet he had plenty to do, he had plenty of time. But let us bear in mind that, as to preparing the ark, it is not necessary to suppose that he and his sons did it all by themselves. Such things are not much if no doctrine be founded on them.²⁰

Noah: Type of the Godly Remnant in the Tribulation

(From *The Girdle of Truth* 9:94-96, 143-159.)²¹

482 years elapsed between the translation of Enoch and the deluge. Methuselah, the son of Enoch, lives to the year of it, and Lamech, the son of Methuselah, is the father of Noah, whom he thus named in prophetic faith, which reached on to a time beyond that of which even Enoch had foretold, even the days when the earth, now cursed, should again be blessed by the Lord, and when the heavens should rule. “This same,” he says (i.e., Noah, which signifies rest),

shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed.

He had found nothing but toil here, and he does not, like Cain, attempt to improve the earth. He had no hope from it in its then condition, having seen the growing misery of all around him. But he had also seen the translation, the victory of God’s witness not only over the earth, but over the penalty of death. He had, doubtless, hearkened to the prophetic warning of Enoch as to the coming judgments, and he is allowed to discern in the distance a happier scene beyond those judgments; a time of rest even for the cursed earth. In token of this he names his son Noah; he who was to pass through the deluge unscathed and be blessed anew in a purged earth; even as it will be with those whom Noah typified, in the days of millennial rest which will succeed the judgments which Enoch had foretold, and which that of Lamech and Noah’s day had foreshadowed. Lamech did not die till within five years of the flood, and when the ark must have been well nigh completed, having, perhaps, assisted in its construction. His age is significant being, 777 years; the number seven being, as we know, that used in Scripture to denote perfection; and the three sevens stand out in contrast to the three sixes (666) given in Rev. 13, as the number of the

20. *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby* 19:87.

21. J. G. Bellitt’s *The Patriarchs* is an excellent book. He has a chapter on “Noah” which may be read with profit.

Beast -- the "Man of Sin." ²²

Lamech is properly the last before the flood and outlived all his forefathers except his father Methuselah, who, as living up to the last year, indicates, I should suppose, that the line of testimony should be unbroken to the last, and thus brings us in the year of the world to the flood, which I shall reserve for the next chapter.

* * * * *

Long before the death of Methuselah the building of the ark had begun, and Noah had thereby inaugurated the new and peculiar testimony committed to him. How long before the flood this took place we cannot determine, for if it were for 120 years, as some have supposed, how can we understand the word of God to Noah, when directing him to build:

And thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

For 120 years before the date of the flood, Noah's sons were not born. Moreover, it is not material to fix the date when the building commenced, it is only important to bear in mind that long before the death of Methuselah, who was the continuing link from Enoch, Noah, a "preacher of righteousness," had begun by word and act to announce to the world that God was about to deal with it, and that righteousness must be manifested when evil is dealt with, and while condemning the world on the one hand, he, according to divine instruction, prepared an ark for the saving of his house. The evil of man had now betrayed itself in wanton disregard of the line of holy separation which was due to God. Man allied himself as he chose; his lust was the arbiter of his actions. God's claims he set at defiance, his violence was great upon the earth, and every imagination of his heart was evil continually. The terrible character of man's nature was now exposed. It is manifested to God, and it grieved Him to His heart that He had set man, that which He had formed like unto Himself, on the earth. A most momentous moment is this for us to ponder on, and then gather up at this early date, on the one hand, the inconceivable repulsion with which God now viewed man, and, on the other, what He, notwithstanding, in His eternal goodness, purposes to do with man.

Noah is chosen of God to be the witness of His mind, and as such God directs him to build an ark, gives him the measurements of it, details who and what the occupants of it shall be, and announces,

22. {The writer is mistaken concerning the man of sin (2 Thess. 2) being the first beast of Rev. 13. The man of sin is the second beast of Rev. 13, the false prophet, the Antichrist, i.e., the mouthpiece of the first beast, the one whose number is 666. The first beast is the coming Roman prince of Dan. 9:26, 27, the Lucifer of Isa. 14.}

Behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh wherein is the breath of life from under heaven, and everything that is in the earth shall die.

Noah and his house alone of mankind are to be saved, and that through means of the ark. The testimony to be maintained is, that God will destroy all men except one whom, with his house, He will save out of the overwhelming judgment, to take his place again on the restored earth. Noah, accepting what is worthy of God touching the earth and man on it, maintains this testimony, which, as is evident, is twofold; one relating to the judgment and the time of it; and the other, after the judgment has passed away. One, comprising the building of the ark, and Noah's leaving it after the waters had dried up; the other, dating from Noah's occupancy of the restored earth.

First let us trace out how Noah maintained the testimony connected with judgment. Before there were any indications of judgment, nay, when men ate and drank, bought and sold, married wives, &c., and did as they pleased, apprehending no special catastrophe, Noah, walking with God, and having learned His mind, practically avows what is worthy of Him; and while maintaining his true place *for God*, at the same time and by the same act maintains the true place *for himself*. "Moved with fear" he prepares an ark -- for how many years I do not say, but for many -- testifying by every hammer-stroke he gave to it that his hopes from earth in its then condition were at an end; announcing thereby to all his belief in the coming judgment, and, in God's purpose, to save himself out of it. If he falters, he has lost his own true place, and his true place for God; for it was worthy of God that all here should come to an end. And this was necessarily the first part of his testimony, as a preacher of righteousness and a witness against those who gave no heed to him and his preparations. How he must have looked on everything around him, all soon to be submerged in judgment, while his own hopes rested in God's provision for him out of it all! He carried out distinctly and fully the divine measurements. His *all* he knew would be there. His expectations, completely turned from the earth, all centered in the ark, where all that was valuable to him, all that of God he could surround himself with, was to be. This he declared, and this in practice he maintained. Many were the years, and much must have been the toil and exercise of mind, while, like another Paul (in Philippians), he had not yet attained, but yet this "one thing" he did in order to attain. He presented to an unbelieving world, that the ark would not only save him and his house, but contain in it every order of creature. No work of the Creator's hand would be lost, and none would he be deprived of, but it was all to be *within* the enclosure which God was providing for it; and from earth he ceased to expect anything. On he worked towards the completion of that which comprised, confined, and concentrated all his thoughts and energies. God had done with the earth, and man as he then was on it; and this Noah strictly and unequivocally bore witness of. If he had betrayed any hope

from the earth, as it then was, he would have failed in being a witness of God's mind, for he could neither have prepared the ark nor condemned the world. He must not flinch or falter, or deviate from one of God's instructions to him. The testimony, to be maintained at all, must be perfect in all its parts. What a life was his! What a position he held! One singularly apart from all human hopes and desires, which were centered, and all his labors expended, on that which alone was worthy of God, and in which he had been instructed through God's revelation to him. What a testimony at this early date! Even that God could sustain a man on the earth, not as Abel, in acceptance, and persecuted to death because of it; nor as Enoch, walking with God, apart from everything on it, and in the hope of being translated out of it; but, as in Noah's case, assured of judgment coming on the earth -- nay, more, knowing that, as under sentence, it was already judged in the sight of God -- yet equally assured of a place of inviolable security for himself in the ark; thus simply and definitely presenting to us, even now, how we should rest in Christ in a world under judgment because of His death; for in Him, our ark, we are in spirit out of this world, while the Holy Ghost convicts it of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

The second part in this the first line of Noah's testimony now follows (Gen. 7:16). God²³ has shut him in! and there, amid the overwhelming judgment, relentless in its course, he testifies to the heavenly hosts, knowing in himself full and perfect security, though death and judgment reign universally and without restriction. For a year, which comprises all the vicissitudes of season and climate, and this typifies one natural life, Noah remains in the ark floating on the waters. For many years he had testified to men on earth of his hope of safety, and entirely apart from their hopes, had occupied himself solely and exclusively with the ark, but now he is in that which he had for so long been preparing, and through it he surmounts the waters of desolation of which he had predicted, and which now prevail upon the earth. How wondrous is this two-fold testimony to us when read in the light of the glory of Christ? How beautifully and significantly these two parts of the first line of Noah's testimony come out and unite in their application to ourselves! For though with Noah the two lines were successive, with us they exist at one and the same time, even as Paul in Philippians and Paul in Ephesians. In the one he is building the ark, counting everything but dross to win Christ; his hopes as to earth are at an end, and Christ, whose death sealed the judgment of this world, is simply and entirely his object. In the other he is *in* the ark -- "seated in heavenly places in Christ," in whom he is blessed with

23. {It is instructive to note the use of divine names in Gen. 6:17 as an indicator of the excellency of Scripture. *God* is used concerning the direction of the animals; *Jehovah* is used concerning God's care for his servant, Noah, and so we read "Jehovah shut Him in." Really, the multiple document sources notion, while silly, is worse than silly.}

every spiritual blessing.

Noah, therefore, while personally a type of the remnant of the latter day, who will be borne scathless through the time of judgment, and possess the renewed earth, presents a testimony which in a still more comprehensive way in its two-fold features, answers to what our own should be. The saints now fulfil the Noahic testimony by witnessing on the one hand that while *waiting* for the judgment Christ is their only object and hope, and on the other that the judgment of the earth being sealed by His death, we are *in Him* above all the ruin and death here. If we do any other thing than seek to win Christ, we are not in our own true place, nor are we in our true place for God; and if I am not sensibly in Him, "*shut in*," knowing that all that is valuable to me from the Creator's hand is *there* -- inside -- and not looking outside for anything, I am denying what is worthy of God in ending all flesh. I am not a witness for Him, or rejoicing in His grace to-wards me. I may have light enough to see my place, but failing to maintain it, I cannot be happy in myself, or a witness for Him; for I do not accept that which alone is worthy of Him. Noah in heart, life, aim, and position, declared that it was worthy of God that the end of all flesh should come before Him, and he himself be saved in the ark. In like manner it is for us to declare that the judgment of this world is come, and that we through grace shall not come into judgment; that it is worthy of God that in Adam all should die, and in Christ all should be made alive; and that He is the depository and centre of every blessing, so that it is as vain for us to look for anything outside Him as it was for Noah to look outside the ark, when all that belonged to him, or that he needed, had been brought into it, and the waters of judgment were overwhelming all the rest. And so we shall find as we go on, every faithful servant of God, from Noah down, is ruled in his walk and finds his own blessing in maintaining what is worthy of God; and thus their own souls grew and were enlarged in the greatness and goodness of God to themselves. For as we maintain what is worthy of Him, so do we enjoy it in ourselves; and as we enjoy it, so do we maintain it.

After a full year, after patience and hope had been exercised and proved, Noah leaves the ark for the restored earth, and here the second line of his testimony commences. On the purged earth he takes his place in type of the millennial saints, and he sets forth by offerings of every clean beast and fowl (Gen. 8:20) on the altar, man's true place with God's as to worship, and the relation in which through sacrifice and redemption man should stand with God. This infantine expression of man's true place is acknowledged by God, and He renews man's term on the earth with a large mitigation of the original penalty and in the sweet savor of the sacrifice, man becomes the object of fresh and multiplied blessings, while a second trial is ensured for Adam's race and that with the promise,

I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake, neither will I

again smite any more every living thing 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.

God blesses Noah and his sons, and makes him the representative of government. Every created thing is delivered into his hand, and every moving thing was to be for meat, while it is also added,

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, for in the image of God made he man.

It is important to gather up the elements of the testimony which Noah was called to support. Man is on his trial again, and for a moment fills the place appointed of God. The bow in the cloud is the token from God of His new arrangement with man, as He said,

I will establish my covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood. Neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

Noah for a moment maintains this testimony, a faint expression of that time {the millennium} when

the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

And very interesting is it to connect ourselves with God's great purpose at such an early date, and to discern how the things unfolded now, or which are about to be manifested, had an existence, and had been witnessed of characteristically by man ages ago; thus intimating the nature of God's purpose eventually.

But it was only for a moment that Noah maintained this testimony untarnished. Man's sufficiency in this his new trial and under new circumstances, is again found wanting. He drops into nature, and is exposed by his own son, who, in proclaiming his father's shame, shows man's advance in evil, and that man's nature is not only weak and foolish in itself, but that it is insensible to its shame.

Noah lives 349 years on the earth after leaving the ark, and this period embraces the building of Babel (man's effort to make for himself a name on the earth), little more than 100 years after the flood! This new form of man's evil -- systematic and combined purpose -- to be independent of God, and to make a name for himself, takes place on the earth so lately cleared of all that was of man, and under the very eyes of him who had been the witness of its destruction, and, with his house, was the sole survivor. So great and universal had been the judgment that for a whole year or more no man had set foot upon the earth; yet now, on the new earth, how rapidly man's evil and presumption had sprung up

and ripened. Man's purpose now is in advance of and very different from that of Cain, who acknowledged a claim from God, yet being ignorant of what that, His claim, was; not understanding the distance between himself and God, he proposed to meet it by a work of his own. But here, the builders of Babel assume entire independence, and seek to effect it by systematic combination. The terms of the new covenant are entirely over-looked, and Noah, like Paul, survived to see the total failure of the testimony entrusted to him. How checkered was his life, and yet how fine the line of his testimony! Nor did he pass away from the earth till another and new order of testimony was ready to be revealed. For more than 200 years after the division of the earth, in the days of Peleg, did Noah live. He died two years before the birth of Abram, and whose father, Terah, was then 128 years old. God always continues one line of testimony until there is a full manifestation of man setting it aside. Noah's does not terminate at the building of Babel, where first the great full purpose of man's independence was developed; for he who had seen and witnessed of God's dealings and purposes respecting man, is continued on the earth for more than 200 years after the judgment on Babel. God's witness on the earth is still Noah; he who had demonstrated in such a terrible way God's judgment, and who had commenced again when God made a new trial of man on the earth; even he lives to see the development of man's evil in a more independent form than ever; and that mercy from God only exposed the more the estrangement of man's heart. God has no other testimony for the earth at such a time. Noah's is the suited one during the action and course of this evil. From the confusion of languages the various kingdoms were first formed; but the point for us to bear in mind, is that God vouchsafed no new line of testimony until the evil of man in the judged earth, which every one knew had been judged (no event was ever so universally known or admitted under heaven as the flood), was fully developed.

The faithful had still Noah to look to and rest in as their guide from God; but after his death Terah, I conclude, in faith calls his son Abram the "great father," as the expected one to lead the people of God into the line for him, suited to the evil which had now grown to its height universally on the earth.

Before the death of Noah the two great kingdoms of the earth were founded -- the kingdom of Egypt and that of Assyria. Thus we see of what long continuance was the Noahic testimony, and it is most interesting and instructive for us to bear in mind the moral conveyed in its continuance for such a period without any addition. Nothing else could God present to the faithful until the independence of man was fully developed and until as kings they had laid hold of the earth, and were governing it without Him. Then Noah dies, and two years after, Abram is born, who is called to set forth a new line of testimony, which I reserve for the next chapter. ❖

Exposition of Romans 9-11

Romans 9:19-29

(19) Thou wilt say to me then, Why does he yet find fault? for who resists his purpose? (20) Aye, but thou, O man, who art *thou* that answerest again to God? Shall the thing formed say to him that has formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? (21) Or has not the potter authority over the clay, out of the same lump to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour? (22) And if God, minded to shew his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering vessels of wrath fitted for destruction; (23) and that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared for glory, (24) us, whom he has also called, not only from amongst [the] Jews, but also from amongst [the] nations? (25) As he says also in Hosea, I will call not-my-people My people; and the-not-beloved Beloved. (26) And it shall be, in the place where it was said to them, *Ye [are] not my people, there shall they be called Sons of [the] living God.* (27) But Esaias cries concerning Israel, Should the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant shall be saved: (28) for [he] is bringing the matter to an end, and [cutting [it] short in righteousness; because] a cutting short of the matter will [the] Lord accomplish upon the earth. (29) And according as Esaias said before, Unless [the] Lord of hosts had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom, and made like even as Gomorrha.

God having shown mercy to Israel in the past by sovereign mercy, may by sovereign mercy also bless Gentiles (apart from covenants and promises). Thus, while Israel is set aside, it is unfolded that Christians (believing Jews and believing Gentiles) are vessels before prepared for glory, serving as an example of God's sovereign ways in blessing. Verses 25-29 show that He will yet act in sovereign grace to Israel, though they have presently stumbled over the stumbling-stone (vv. 30-33), Christ, to whom Christian believers belong.

Romans 9:19-21: Fault-finding With God

"THE FIRST OF ALL JUSTICE IS, THAT GOD SHOULD HAVE HIS RIGHTS"

This section (Rom. 9:19-29) begins with a question following upon the question in Rom. 9:14. It seems almost universal in Christendom to find fault with God's

sovereign, uncontingent election of sinners from eternity. Hence the effort that goes into circumventing this truth and to maintain the false notion of moral free will towards God. There is self-righteousness in finding fault with God's sovereignty. What the notion of moral free will towards God involves is the pretension not to be totally lost!

J. N. Darby wrote:

It would be a horrible blasphemy to say that God made them wicked. But those who received not the love of the truth were judicially sent strong delusion. And here, observe, it is not said that God fitted the vessels of wrath to destruction, but "what if he *endured with much longsuffering* the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction"; that is, after long sufferance, God makes an example of what righteous judgment is; as He says to Pharaoh, "even for this cause have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee." And in effect says, Now you shall see who Jehovah is; for Pharaoh had said, "who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?" That is not your business to inquire; you are but a man, and yet you are replying against God! shut your mouth, for God gives no account of His matters to man. The first of all justice is, that God should have His rights; and if God have not His rights, who ought to have, who shall have? It is morally important that you should take your place, and leave God His place; you are but a mere man, and therefore it is not your place to be replying against God; you are to hold your tongue when God speaks.²⁴

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

Rom. 9:21 applies to God the same rights as a potter has regarding what he does with the clay. It is not stated that God has actually acted in the way described in v. 21, but His right to do so is asserted. Why would we deny His right to do so? God maintains His rights though man will not do so. See Jer. 18:3-6; Isa. 29:16; 45:9; 64:8. J. N. Darby remarked:

. . . Of course the potter has power to make what he pleases; but if we do not let God have His right and proper place, who is to set things in order when sin has brought in disorder? The mark that a soul is right, morally right, is saying, I am a sinner, deserving everlasting destruction, and all my trust is in sovereign goodness. Faith says, I was bringing on myself "swift destruction," but God's grace stopped me; this is taking my true place before God. It is always seen (even in those systems which differ in this) that individual faith feels and acknowledges itself to be a debtor to sovereign mercy alone. But again, "hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel to honor, and another to dishonor?" Now, in this passage, though we have strongly asserted the absolute title of God to do what He pleases, it is not said

²⁴. *Collected Writings* 33:399. See also 26:180.

that He made any vessels to dishonour; but the passage simply asserts His prerogative, His title to make of the same lump what He pleases, and that unqualifiedly and fully. But God does bear with these wicked men, as He said to Israel, by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, “thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities” (ch. 43:24). Then again by the prophet Amos, “behold I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves” (ch. 2:13).²⁵

Romans 9:22-24: Vessels Before Prepared for Glory, Vessels of Wrath fitted to Destruction

This matter was briefly alluded to in a quotation above, but here the distinction between the vessels will be emphasized. God’s election has never hindered anyone from coming to Christ.

IS GOD’S ELECTION A HINDRANCE TO ANYONE?

The following is very old (1700s?) and the author is unknown:

But doesn’t the Bible tell us of God’s eternal election?

It does; but what of that?

Why, if I am not elected I must perish.

I suppose, then, that you wish the doctrine of election were not in the Bible.

I do.

Why, would it mend the matter? would it give you a better chance of being saved?

I think it would.

How?

If election were taken away, I think I might repent of myself.

I do not see that. Is it election that gives you that hard heart?

No, certainly.

Would the taking away of election take away your hard heart?

No, it would not.

If, then, all your impenitence and hard-heartedness and unbelief would remain as before, of what use would be the putting away of election? It would make your case not a whit better.

But election does seem to me a hindrance.

No; it is your hard heart that is the hindrance, not election. You may

quarrel with your hard heart, but you cannot quarrel with election.

But are not they only who are elected saved?

Yes, indeed, that is true; but how does this make election a hindrance? It seems to me as if it were a help, and not a hindrance. Take away election, will you be any better? Will you be more able to repent? Will you have a better chance of being saved?

Put in this light, certainly election seems to be the sinner’s friend, not his enemy; and to take it away would be to take his only chance of being saved.

Most true; take it away, and you cast away the cable which is thrown out to you, and by which only you have any hope of reaching the shore. I admit that if man be not wholly depraved and evil, if he has still some strength and goodness left, election would be a hindrance and discouragement; but so long as man is wholly lost and ungodly, it is the sinner’s only hope.

But does it not discourage?

Not as I understand it. It hinders no one. It does not prevent you from repenting if you like. If you can repent of yourself, you need not mind election, it will do you no harm; but if you cannot, oh, then it is your only hope.

How then should I use it?

In this way, you ought to learn your utterly lost estate that required such a salvation. You ought to see God’s free love in it. You ought to be led by the knowledge of it to put yourself calmly and simply into the hands of God, and this is salvation. You ought to remember that it never, never can in any way, or at any time, interfere with the blessed truth, ‘Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out.’

ENDURED WITH MUCH LONG-SUFFERING VESSELS OF WRATH FITTED TO DESTRUCTION

And if God, minded to show his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering vessels of wrath fitted for destruction . . . (Rom. 9:22).

God’s Wrath and Power. There are two things God is said to be, concerning His nature: God is light (1 John 1:5) and God is love (1 John 4:8). And, this is brought before us in that order. Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil (John 3:19). Sinners even delude themselves that since God is love, He will overlook sin. Not so. Sin will be punished, either in Christ having born it for the believer, or the unrepentant sinner lying under eternal punishment.

Christ will occupy the great white throne of Rev. 20, for the Father has committed all judgment into the hands of the Son, because He is the Son of man (John 5:27). There God’s holy wrath against sin will be manifested as well as

25. *Collected Writings* 33:399. See also 26:106, 107.

His power to punish eternally. It is awful to contemplate the destiny of the wicked as they are overwhelmed by His wrath and power. Christ is the eternal, mighty God and will eternally maintain the blessedness of the blessed as well as the eternal punishment of eternally obdurate sinners.

God's eternal power and divinity may be apprehended by the mind from the creation (Rom. 1:19, 20), and staggering as the greatness of that creation is to the mind, there has been the manifestation of:

the surpassing greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the working of the might of his strength, [in] which he wrought in the Christ [in] raising him from the dead, and he set him down at his right hand in the heavenlies . . . (Eph. 1:19, 20).

This surpasses creatorial power because the surpassing greatness of His power towards us involves in a special way the moral being of God as light and love, and eternally manifesting in us that He is love. Christ had been under the judgment in accordance with God as light, provided as the lamb for sacrifice by the love of God to sinners, and raised from the dead by the glory of the Father (Rom. 6:4). All that the Father is as light and love was brought into action in raising Christ from the dead and giving Him that place above. This "surpassing greatness of his power" was shown by the "Father of glory" (Eph. 1:17), and it is "towards us who believe."

God will yet manifest His wrath and moral power as light upon the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. Not surprisingly, in this case His power is not said to be surpassing power. Such vessels will eternally be evidence to the fact that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.

Vessels of Wrath Fitted to Destruction. The state of the unredeemed is here described. The way in which their state was brought about is not expressed. It is not indicated how they were fitted to destruction.²⁶ God looks upon the sinner

26. Calvinists will say something like this:

The expression then refers to the wrath of reprobation. It denotes the ungodly as the Most High ordained them from before the foundation of the world to be the manifestations and objects of his righteous wrath (Herman Hoeksema, *God's Eternal Good Pleasure*, Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, p. 75, 1979).

James R. White says that "there are only three logical possibilities here," namely, that all were prepared for glory, or all prepared for destruction, or:

some vessels are prepared for glory and some are prepared for destruction and it is *the Potter* who decides which are which. Why is there no fourth option, one in which the pots prepare themselves based on their own choice? Because pots don't have such a capacity! Pots are pots! Since God wishes to make known the "riches of His grace" to His elect people (the vessels prepared of mercy), there *must* be vessels prepared for

(continued...)

and sees him as fitted for destruction. Men are ready for destruction. It is not stated that they were *before prepared* for destruction, as if there is a decree of reprobation. Moreover, He endures them. The state of mankind is given in Eph. 2:3 also:

. . . and were children, by nature, of wrath, even as the rest . . .

Concerning "as the rest," eternal wrath shall lie upon them as they remain eternally stony-hearted in unrepentant obduracy (awful, awful, awful eternal state of soul); for destruction does not mean annihilation²⁷ (cessation of being), but ruin of the purpose for which created. Such is man's perverseness against God; universally, willfully, refusing to come to the great supper (Luke 14).

He never made them as they are; but the sin of man now fallen He endured spite of countless and constant provocation. They sinned, they transgressed, they despised His mercy, they braved His wrath; but He endured with much long-suffering.²⁸

When we think of God's long-suffering, we should keep in mind 2 Pet. 3:15.

VESSELS OF MERCY, WHICH HE HAD BEFORE PREPARED FOR GLORY

. . . and that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared for glory . . . (Rom. 9:23).

Make Known the Riches of His Glory. It was not stated that God makes known the riches of His glory in the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. Rather, it is His wrath and power. What His heart delights in is the saints, the vessels of mercy, and He has been rich in grace towards them (Eph. 2:7). God

26. (...continued)

destruction (*The Potter's Freedom*, Amityville: Calvary Press Publishing, p. 214, 2000).

I cannot understand one saying this, except that the doctrine of the election of reprobation is in control and it is clear from these remarks that he believes that God in eternity prepared these vessels for destruction by a decree of reprobation. The text states no such thing, nor implies it. He is not satisfied with how the text actually states the difference between the two kinds of vessels. Every man sins because he chooses to do so. Certainly the vessel has the capacity to choose to sin.

In a footnote he adds that "Others argue the term should be translated as a middle so that these are vessels who 'prepared themselves for destruction.'" See the rebuttal of this viewpoint by Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 417-418. I will merely say to this last remark that J. N. Darby and W. Kelly were both very capable Greek scholars and found no such teaching in the passage that the vessels of wrath were before prepared for destruction. There is nothing about the vessels of wrath being before prepared. God comes and finds them so fitted.

27. Annihilationism is a fundamentally evil teaching, undermining the truth of the atoning sufferings of Christ on the cross.

28. W. Kelly, *Notes on the Epistle of Paul, the Apostle, to the Romans*, London: Morrish, p. 185, n.d.

has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11) and judgment is His strange work (Isa. 28:21). But it is the glory of God to save sinners and He has before prepared them for glory, as He has the glory for them. Indeed, we are to be the display of His glory and He will be glorified in the assembly eternally:

. . . to him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the ages of ages. Amen (Eph. 3:21).

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea exists no more.

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (Rev. 21:1, 2).

Vessels of Mercy, Before Prepared for Glory. Vessels of mercy are the vessels that are stated to be of God's preparation. We read of these being "before prepared." What are they prepared for? Why has God prepared them? When considering the great supper of Luke 14, we see that the supper was for the display of, and celebration of, God's grace. He would express Himself in grace and would have His house full of celebrants of His sovereign grace. And here we see the same blessed truth:

that he might make known the riches of his grace upon vessels of mercy (Rom. 9:23).

What if He endured vessels fitted for destruction? not which He had fitted, but, like Pharaoh, showing His wrath on these already such; and then make known the riches of His glory on vessels of mercy. And now the work on them was His doing, which He had afore prepared for glory. They were vessels of mercy, and He prepared them for glory itself. So with us who have believed through grace. The others were vessels of wrath, and in them (fitted for destruction) He displayed His wrath and made His power known, as in Pharaoh. All were evil to begin with. He displayed His divine title and ways in both mercy and glory. He is sovereign in Himself, preparing for glory "even us," says the apostle, "whom he hath called of Jews and Gentiles."²⁹

But when speaking of mercy, the apostle instantly brings God in; "that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory." It is moral dealing here, and not mere cold barren doctrine. We see how God deals with these vessels which He had afore prepared unto glory, and then how He endures with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. And again, mark, that it does not say that these vessels of wrath were afore prepared for destruction, neither does it merely say that the vessels of mercy were fitted unto glory. No; for the vessels of mercy were afore prepared of God unto glory, while the vessels of wrath are fitted to destruction by their iniquities having come to the "full." But

29. *Collected Writings* 26:180.

whatever there is of good must come from God, and God only; the evil, alas! is already in us. But if the question still be put, Why has God been bearing with this wickedness, and only at last shown out His wrath in those vessels fitted to destruction? The answer is, that after He has proved the ways of men, and shown all shut up under judgment, He then comes in with mercy, sovereign mercy; and so the apostle applies it. Cannot He then let in the Gentiles? Surely; for if God is setting up vessels of mercy, He can prepare a Gentile as well as a Jew.³⁰

Jews and Gentiles are now called (Rom. 9:24) to participate in this mercy; mercy which is something undeserved, but which is sovereign in God's ways, both governmental (in His dispensational dealings), and individual (bringing sinners into the place where they become the display of the riches of His grace). Indeed, concerning the body which will be fashioned to be like Christ's body of glory (Phil. 3:21), we learn in 2 Cor. 5:5 that God

has wrought us for this very thing.

Every blessing we have is part of the "riches of His grace." The believer is a vessel of election and all operations of grace in us, from the very first, are God's doing, excluding man's will:

For we are his workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works . . . (Eph. 2:10).

All evil will be used of God for His own glory, whether in His ways dispensationally in time, or in eternity. He shows His sovereignty both in mercy and in judgment, both for time and for eternity.

Regarding the erroneous notion that election is only corporate, note that these are *individual* vessels of mercy just as the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction are individual vessels. Sovereign preparation for glory "before" does have individual vessels in view. Romans does not speak of a corporate election of the church, though it does speak of a national election of Israel in Rom. 11, a national election to supremacy over the nations, which will be realized when the deliverer shall come out of Zion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob (Rom. 11:26).

Jews and Gentiles Called.

. . . us whom he has also called, not only from amongst [the] Jews, but also from amongst [the] nations (Rom. 9:24).

There are individual Jews called out from among the Jews, as vessels of mercy.

30. *Collected Writings* 33:400

That is not corporate election but the election of individuals.³¹

Thus, then, in the present time also there is a remnant according to election of grace (Rom. 11:5).

“Also” indicates that it was so also in Elijah’s time (Rom. 11:4). Thus, in his time there was also a remnant according to election of grace. But that did not, obviously, mean the entire nation of Israel. It is not a reference to corporate, i.e., national, election, either in his day or in the present time. Presently, then:

What Israel seeks for, that he has not obtained, and the rest have been blinded, according as it is written, God has given to them a spirit of slumber, eyes not to see, and ears not to hear, unto this day . . . (Rom. 11:7, 8).

Both Jews and Gentiles are presently “called.” In Ephesians we learn of their unity in one body, united to the head in heaven

Romans 9:25-29: The OT Quoted for Mercy for Israel

(25) As he says also in Hosea {2:23}, I will call not-my-people My people; and the-not-beloved Beloved.

(26) And it shall be, in the place where it was said to them {Hos. 1:10}, *Ye [are] not my people, there shall they be called Sons of [the] living God.*

(27) But Esaias cries concerning Israel {Isa. 10:22, 23}, Should the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant shall be saved:

(28) for [he] is bringing the matter to an end, and [cutting [it] short in righteousness; because] a cutting short of the matter will [the] Lord accomplish upon the earth.

(29) And according as Esaias said before {Isa. 1:9}, Unless [the] Lord of hosts had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom, and made like even as Gomorrhah.

These texts are not quoted to show that they are presently fulfilled in the church; rather, they indicate that God will yet fulfil His call of Israel. The apostle had made clear the rights of God to show mercy to Gentiles; and, moreover, that mercy to the Gentiles is compatible with the OT, though the prophecies of Gentile blessing refer to the millennium. Meanwhile, God is doing a work among Gentiles before the millennium, though not excluding all Jews, for there is an election of some of them according to grace. Now, believing Jews and Gentiles have believed before the millennium. They have trusted before that

31. Individuals are elect, as in Mark 13:20, 22, 27; Luke 18:7; as well as the “elect lady” (2 John 1) and the elect sister (2 John 13).

time, i.e., “pre-trusted”:

that we should be to [the] praise of his glory, who have pre-trusted in the Christ (Eph. 1:12).

But concerning the nation of Israel, that nation will only realize the six things of Rom. 9:3-5 by God’s sovereign grace. That nation must be the object of mercy to realize these things. The four verses quoted above show this to be so.

The first two quotations have to do with Israel’s national blessing, Rom. 9:25 speaking of their recovery as God’s people. In Hos. 1 they were pronounced Lo-ammi (not my people). “Ye are not my people” refers to the loss of their national standing as being the center of Jehovah’s government (for the throne of Solomon was the throne of Jehovah (1 Chron. 29:23). This loss is their national status governmentally until the times of the Gentiles end when the Smiting Stone crushes the powers depicted in the image in Dan. 2 and then governmental power will flow from Jerusalem outward, for Christ will occupy the restored throne of David.³² After that putting down of the Gentile power of empire first committed to Nebuchadnezzar by Christ, Israel shall be pronounced Ammi (my people), as in Hos. 2 – and her beloved, that was not beloved.

They shall call on my name, and I will answer them: I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, Jehovah is my God (Zech 13:9).

Next, Rom. 9:26:

And it shall be, in the place where it was said to them, *Ye [are] not my people, there shall they be called Sons of [the] living God.*

Read the whole of Hos. 1:9, 10. There is no “concealed” reference to Gentiles in the passage. It is going to be in *that place* where they were pronounced Lo-ammi, “*there*,” that is the place where they shall be called “sons of [the] living God.” The place was the land of Israel, and that is the place where they will be called “Sons of [the] living God,” referring to Israel’s *national adoption* (as in Rom. 9:4. (That, of course, is on the basis of God’s sovereign action.) This must not be confused with the sonship now, having the Spirit of sonship whereby we cry “Abba, Father.”

32. The reader should understand that we speak not of some literal throne set up in Jerusalem and that Christ must sit there for 1000 years. That governmental power invested in David will be in force during the millennium. Concerning an earthly ruler, a scion of the house of Israel will rule, called the prince (Ezek. 45:7, 8). But the power of kingship is invested in Christ, as is the Melchizedec priesthood, for Christ shall be priest upon His throne (Zech. 6:13). These two offices are depicted as the two sons of oil in the vision of the great candelabra of Zech. 4, constantly supplying the bowl above the candelabra, the bowl feeding the oil through seven sets of seven pipes to the seven lights respectively. It is Christ as the great millennial light, in the power of the Spirit of God, the sevens setting forth the fulness and completeness of it.

The next two verses (Rom. 9:27, 28) show that Israel's national restoration is limited to a *remnant* that shall be saved:

But Esaias cries concerning Israel {Isa. 10:22, 23}, Should the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant shall be saved: for [he] is bringing the matter to an end, and [cutting [it] short in righteousness; because] a cutting short of the matter will [the] Lord accomplish upon the earth.

We learn in Ezek. 20, for example, that the rebels will be purged out; and elsewhere that two-thirds of those in the land will be cut off (Zech. 13:8). Thus, God's righteous judgments will be executed, and a remnant, a seed, will be left. It is Jehovah's work in undertaking to fulfill all to the nation as promised, while showing that it is all mercy to them, the work of sovereign grace, not of merit on Israel's part. The remnant, ethnic Jews who are true Jews, spiritual Jews, will be the nation that is saved (Rom. 11:26).

God will work repentance, the fruit of which is noted in Hos. 6:1-3. God will deal with them (Ezek. 20:43, 44; Joel 2:15-18) and pour out upon them the spirit of grace and supplications (Zech. 12:10-14). Yes, He will bring them into the bond of the covenant (Ezek. 20:37). Then shall all Israel be saved (Rom. 11:26). God ever acts consistently with what He is in Himself. He is righteous in all His acts, and in this too, of course. When once Christ rises up in judgment upon the living, introductory to the millennium to clear the earth of opposition, there will be a "[cutting [it] short in righteousness; because] a cutting short of the matter will [the] Lord accomplish upon the earth."

Thus, a remnant shall be saved and it depends on the Lord of hosts leaving a seed. It is the only reason that Israel will not be as Sodom and Gomorrah:

And according as Esaias said before {Isa. 1:9}, Unless [the] Lord of hosts had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom, and made like even as Gomorrha (Rom. 9:29).

That seed is an election of grace. It will be Jehovah's sovereign grace that forms this seed. And in the reference to Sodom and Gomorrha we may detect the character of the overwhelming judgments that will attend the coming of the Son of man when He comes in glory to the very place where man sought to put Him to the lowest place.

1 Pet. 2:10, addressed to the election of grace from among the Jews, does not indicate a present fulfilment of Hos. 2:23; it is analogy, not fulfilment. Hos. 2:23, as Hos. 1:10, will be fulfilled in the millennium. The believing remnant of the Jews now are saved by the same grace as that by which the entire nation of Israel will be saved in the future. The NT has many such quotations from the OT for an application of a principle, while the texts remain to be fulfilled in the millennium.

Romans 9:30-33

(30) What then shall we say? That [they of the] nations, who did not follow after righteousness, have attained righteousness, but [the] righteousness that is on the principle of faith. (31) But Israel, pursuing after a law of righteousness, has not attained to [that] law. (32) Wherefore? Because [it was] not on the principle of faith, but as of works. They have stumbled at the stumblingstone, (33) according as it is written, Behold, I place in Zion a stone of stumbling and rock of offence: and he that believes on him shall not be ashamed.

What shall we say about those things that have been brought out thus far in Rom. 9, especially in answer to the two objections (Rom. 9:14, 19)? The answer is two things:

1. "That [they of the] nations, who did not follow after righteousness, have attained righteousness." On what basis have they attained righteousness? "righteousness that is on the principle of faith."³³ That excludes human merit. Contrary to Arminians as well as four-point Arminians,³⁴ this faith is not of ourselves, it is God's gift (Eph. 2:8).³⁵ The idea that faith is not the gift of God means it is humanly generated faith. That is a denial of man's state as a result of the fall, a denial of man's incapacity to respond

33. While there was always grace shown in the OT, and while there was truth in the OT, yet a change in the ways of God's dealings with man occurred in displacing the law (John 1:17). The same is true regarding faith. Gal. 3:23 means:

Now before faith came (that is, Christian faith, as the principle of relationship with God, before the existence of the positive objects of faith in the Person, the work, and the glory of Christ as man, had become the means of establishing the faith of the gospel), the Jews were kept under the law . . . (JND).

"The principle of faith" opens the door for uncovenanted blessing where Jew and Gentile are treated with "no difference" (Rom. 3:22; 11:10:12; 11:32).

34. A four-point Arminian believes in eternal security of the believer. He will say that he believes in eternal security because the Scripture teaches it. Well, the Scripture teaches election also, as we have been considering it in Rom. 9. It is interesting that a four-point Arminian will hold that you choose God by an act of your own free moral will towards God, but once you do so, you are locked into salvation and you cannot by your alleged, free moral will towards God, get away from God again. The idea of free moral will towards God is the pretension of the first man not to be *totally* lost. Too bad we feel the need to put an adjective before the word "lost." Arminianism is: yes, I am lost, but not *that* lost.

35. The view of the sinner presented in Eph. 2 is that he is dead toward God and in need of quickening. That is an action by God. With quickening there is an implantation of faith into the soul. "For we are his workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus . . ." (Eph. 2:10).

to God. There is a confidence in the flesh in this. And that is why there is such a struggle against Acts 13:48:

And [those of] the nations, hearing it, rejoiced, and glorified the word of the Lord, and believed, as many as were ordained to eternal life.³⁶

2. “But Israel, pursuing after a law of righteousness, has not attained to [that] law.” Israel did not attain to righteousness that is on the principle of faith. Israel undertook to attain righteousness under the Mosaic Covenant and the final result was the rejection of Christ Himself. Why had Israel not attained? “Because [it was] not on the principle of faith, but as of works.” The trial of the nation of Israel under the Mosaic Covenant was part of the trial of the first, fallen man, to show that he was not recoverable. Israel had an outward religion, suitable to man in the flesh, to show his true state. Some godly souls were mixed among the ungodly -- and, sad to say, such is the state of Christendom ripening for judgment. But “Israel” did not attain. The phrase, “a law of righteousness,” indicates the ground, i.e., the basis, on which they pursued righteousness: attainment by keeping the law. Verse 33 shows that faith and works are at opposite poles and that works cannot attain righteousness.

It is not that Israel was devoid of being able to know that righteousness must come from outside. See Isa. 64:6; Psa. 76:16; Isa. 53:11; etc.

And what was the final result of this attempt to attain righteousness by law-works? They have stumbled at the stumbling stone.

It is instructive to see Christ in two contrasted positions as a stone. Here we see Him as the stumbling-stone, elsewhere as the smiting stone. The stumbling-stone speaks of Him as here when He had humbled Himself, taking a servant’s form (Phil. 2:7). As Simeon said to Mary:

Lo, this [child] is set for the fall and rising up of many in Israel, and for a sign spoken against; (and even a sword shall go through thine own soul;) so that [the] thoughts may be revealed from many hearts (Luke 2:34, 35).

Israel stumbled at Him:

But he looking at them said, What then is this that is written, The stone which they that builded rejected, this has become the corner-stone? Everyone falling on this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder (Luke 20:17, 18; see Psa. 118:22;

36. This verse has been considered at length in my *The Sovereignty of God in the Salvation of Lost Men*, pp. 99-104, available from Present Truth Publishers.

see also 1 Pet. 2:7, 8).

He speaks of Himself as falling on others and grinding them to powder. See Dan. 2:34, 35, 45).

Rom. 9:33 quotes the warnings in Isa. 8:14 and 28:16 in connection with Christ down here as the stumbling stone. In Rom. 10:11 it is quoted again, but in connection with Christ in resurrection.

Let us pause to look at 1 Pet. 2:7-9:

To you therefore who believe [is] the preciousness; but to the disobedient, the stone which the builders cast away as worthless, this is become head of [the] corner, and a stone of stumbling and rock of offence; [who] stumble at the word, being disobedient, to which also they have been appointed.

It is a mistake to think the Jews were appointed to be disobedient. God is not the Author of sin and disobedience. Israel, *being disobedient*, was appointed to “stumble at the word,” stumbling over the stumbling stone. And so they were blinded. Hardening by God is not the cause of disobedience and sin and stumbling over Christ; judicial hardening follows upon man’s hardening himself against God.³⁷

In Pharaoh we saw the hardening of an individual and it was pointed out that the hardening by God took place after Pharaoh repeatedly hardened his heart.

Hardening follows man’s manifested infidelity in view of some testimony that God has provided.

There is no such thing as an eternal decree of reprobation that hardens sinners in advance (or any other kind of eternal decree of reprobation).

Reprobation follows man’s manifested infidelity in view of some testimony that God has provided.

See Rom. 1:24, 26, 28.

Stumbling at the stumblingstone follows man’s manifested disobedience in view of some testimony that God has provided.

Ed.

37. See my *The Sovereignty of God in the Salvation of Lost Men*, available from Present Truth Publishers.

God's Word Versus Covenantism

It is quite possible to show (and indeed it has been done) that amillennialism, historicism, postmillennialism, preterism and posttribulationism are false prophetic schemes. Generally underlying these schemes is Covenantism, i.e., Covenant Theology, in some degree, which molds Scripture into a system whereby God's spiritual blessings are mediated through an overall Covenant of Grace which shows itself as various Covenants. The Christian, therefore must be under the New Covenant, for, according to Covenant Theology dicta, God does not spiritually bless apart from covenanted blessings.

Whenever needed to ensure that the Christian is under a covenant, a hermeneutic of spiritual alchemy is used to transmute what is literally meant in the OT prophets, regarding the kingdom for Israel, into references to the NT church (assembly of God).¹ In order to support this interpretive alchemy, certain NT guideposts that orient the understanding toward dispensational truth must be knocked down and contradicted. The purpose in this short article is to state several of these sign posts, which, of course, Covenantism explains away in some manner so that the system appears supported by Scripture.

Two prominent anti-Covenantism sign posts appear in Romans; the first is this:

. . . my kinsmen according to flesh; who are Israelites; whose [is] the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the law giving, and the service, and the promises; whose [are] the fathers . . . (Rom. 9:4, 5).

These covenants are the covenants of promise (Eph. 2:12) -- Abrahamic, to Phinehas, Davidic, and New Covenant -- to which Gentiles are strangers, as being outside the commonwealth of Israel, as are all Gentiles, saved or lost, now and in the millennium. No Gentile is a kinsman of Paul "according to flesh," i.e., according to that character -- and the covenants are for Paul's kinsmen according to that character. We know that after the future purging of rebels (Ezek. 20) Israel shall all be righteous (Isa. 60:21; Rom. 11:26), but only elect Jews, Paul's kinsmen according to flesh, have the covenants. The Christian is not under any covenant.

The second sign post in Romans is the concomitant secrecy of the mystery:

. . . according to [the] revelation of [the] mystery, as to which silence has been kept in [the] times of the ages, but [which] has now been made

1. This is done along with acknowledgment of figurative and symbolic language, as well as apocalyptic language, in both the OT and NT.

manifest, and by prophetic scriptures . . . (Rom. 11:25, 26).

The prophetic Scriptures which make the mystery known are, of course, the NT prophetic Scriptures written by the Apostle Paul. Covenantism transmutes silence into partial silence. If this is not done Covenantism cannot be true, nor the various prophetic schemes that are held under that umbrella. But silence = silence.

. . . the mystery which [has been] hidden from ages and from generations, but has now been made manifest to his saints (Col. 1:26).

This mystery was hidden from time periods and from generations of persons. Is that so difficult to understand? Where was the mystery hidden?

. . . what is the administration of the mystery hidden throughout the ages in God (Eph. 3:9).

"Silence," "hidden from ages and generations," "hidden throughout the ages in God" -- how was God to say this if that is what He really intended to say? He did say it, did He not?

It was not hidden in the OT. It was "hidden throughout the ages in God" The OT did not speak of the mystery. Types in the OT are not a violation of this "silence." "Types" is a good word, especially as it is found in 1 Cor. 10:11 in reference to some things mentioned by Paul that are typical of us. We should be comfortable with that word because it is used by the Spirit of such things as we are discussing. Types did not inform the OT saints of a NT truth. Types fall within "silence has been kept" and comply with "hidden from." A type is only seen as a type now that the mystery is revealed.

In Heb. 8:5 we are informed that the tabernacle was a shadow of heavenly things.

- 1) The tabernacle was a shadow of *heavenly* things;
- 2) silence was kept concerning the mystery;
- 3) therefore, shadows (and types) are not a violation of silence kept.

Had it turned out that there was no mystery, there would not be the types -- even if the OT was the same. It is interesting that there is no type of the one body.

Another remarkable concomitant point is the announcement of the kingdom as at hand by John the Baptist (Matt. 3), by the Lord (Matt. 4:17) and by the disciples (Matt. 10). The people held John to be a prophet. It is generally admitted that the Jews were expecting a literal fulfilment of the kingdom prophesied by the OT prophets. However, if John came preaching a kingdom in accordance with the alchemization of the Covenantist hermeneutic -- some kind of spiritual kingdom envisioned by Covenantism -- they would not have held him to be a prophet

In fact, the Jews who heard the OT prophets and read their writings had no basis to understand the prophecies in any other way than that a literal kingdom was prophesied. Of course, these prophecies might well be understood literally.

The well-known amillennialist, O. T. Allis, in his polemic against dispensational truth, stated this:

The Old Testament prophecies if literally interpreted cannot be regarded as having been fulfilled or as being capable of fulfillment in this present age.²

What here concerns us is the phrase “thy people.” From the Old Testament standpoint this passage like Jeremiah’s [Jer. 30:7] might be regarded as referring exclusively to Israel. But we have seen that the New Testament gives a larger meaning and scope to Old Testament prophecies which seem to be restricted to Israel³

So the OT prophecies could, as a matter of fact, be “literally interpreted” and they “seem to be restricted to Israel.” The godly Jew really had no other choice but to understand it that way. It is the New Testament, he alleges, that gives a larger meaning and scope. Old Testament prophecies might be regarded as referring exclusively to Israel. And how was the godly Jew to know that it only *seems* that way and there was going to be a New Testament that would give a “larger meaning and scope”? Moreover:

- ◆ If the meaning and scope were *enlarged*, what was the meaning and scope in the Old Testament before it was enlarged in the New Testament?
- ◆ What was Daniel to understand by “thy people” (Dan. 9:24) before this term was allegedly enlarged?

This raises the question -- was God deceiving Daniel and the Jews? So, after all, God *did* tell the Old Testament Jews that there would be a literal kingdom, and the expectation of it was correct.⁴

What basis did the Jews have to understand the prophecies other than literally? What basis did John the Baptist have to understand the prophecies other than literally, as every Jew had to understand them? And what is it that would lead a Christian to think John preached a Covenantist notion of the kingdom to the Jews and that the Jews held John to be a prophet in doing so? When we submit to the plain statements concerning the fact that the covenants are for Paul’s kinsmen according to flesh, and that silence was kept concerning the mystery, we will hardly have to *force* John the Baptist into a Covenantist mold.

The Lord Jesus preached the same message in Matt. 4:17 -- before the turning point in Matt. 12, the moral rejection of Himself, consequent upon which He

2. *Prophecy and the Church*, p. 238.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 209.

4. This concerning O. T. Allis was transcribed from *Elements of Dispensational Truth*, vol. 1, which goes into these matters in more detail.

began to unfold the heretofore hidden mysteries of the kingdom (Matt. 13).

Then in Matt. 10 we see the disciples preaching the same kingdom message. Let us suppose that they were preaching the kingdom as spiritually alchemized by Covenantism. That would mean that the disciples were not expecting a literal kingdom and they were actually preaching a Covenantist-type kingdom as at hand. How strange then, that in Acts 1:6 we read of them asking:

Lord, is it at this time that thou restorest the kingdom to Israel?

If they had been preaching a Covenantist-type kingdom in Matt. 10, they would have known there never was going to be a literal kingdom for Israel.

* * * * *

Now, one can always renew efforts to explain Scripture away so as to maintain a cherished theological system. How good it is to submit to the Scriptures rather than do as the amillennialist commentator, W. Hendrickson, who illustrates the idea that the mystery as to which silence was kept can be found widely spoken of in the OT. What he does is equate the mystery with OT predictions of the future blessing in which Gentiles would share (actually Scriptures that are millennial in fulfillment); and then, of course, finds the silence spoken everywhere in the OT. Commenting on Eph. 3:5, he wrote:

The Old Testament writers, in fact, did know about it and referred to it again and again (Gen. 12:3; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; Ps. 72; 87; Isa. 11:10; 49:6; 54:1-3; 60:1-3; Hos. 1:10; Amos 9:11ff; Mal. 1:11, to mention only a few references).⁵

“To mention only a few references”! Look how easy it is for Covenantists to find what Scripture says was hidden from ages and generations! This is a mystery as to which silence was kept? or, as the Lexicon of Arndt and Gingrich said: “a secret that was concealed for long ages”? Is this not, in reality, a mockery of God’s word, whether intended or not? -- and I doubt not that no disrespect for God’s word was willfully intended. It is the exigency of a false theological system clouding the mind.

Covenantism practically equates the mystery of Christ and the church with salvation, puts the Church under an earthly covenant (covenants are for the earthlies) and undermines the heavenly position of the saints.

R. A. Huebner

5. *New Testament Commentary: Galatians and Ephesians*, Grand Rapids: Baker, p. 154, 1990. He remarked that there was something not made clear in the OT: “. . . the old theocracy would be completely abolished and in its place would arise a new organism in which the Gentiles and the Jews would be placed on a footing of perfect equality,” *ibid.* “Not made *clear*”? There is not the slightest hint about it. At any rate, what we see here is that some of the mystery is found all over the OT and some was not made clear in the OT.

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