

# The Noahic Covenant

by A.W. Pink

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*The Noahic Covenant was a divine promise to Noah and his descendants, providing protection from future floods and dominion over the earth's creatures, and foreshadowing the coming of Christ and the eternal covenant of grace.*

**Scripture:** Acts 9:1

**Topics:** "Christian Ethics", "Slave Masters"

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## Description

The preacher, Greek Word Studies, delves into the concept of threatening in the Bible, emphasizing the warning against masters being abusive or inhumane towards their slaves. Paul's exhortation in Ephesians highlights the need for masters to refrain from using threats, as both the earthly master and the slave have the same Master in heaven, who judges impartially without showing favoritism based on social status. By recognizing their accountability to the impartial Master in heaven, masters are urged to treat their slaves with fairness and kindness, reflecting the lordship of Christ in their actions.

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## Transcript

Noah is the connecting link between "the world that then was," which "being overflowed with water, perished," and the earth which now is "reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (2 Pet. 3:6, 7). He lived upon both, was preserved from the awful judgment which swallowed up the former, and given dominion over the latter in its pristine state. A period of sixteen centuries intervened between the covenant of works which God entered into with Adam and the covenant of grace which He made with Noah. So far as Scripture informs us, no other covenant was instituted by the Lord during that interval. There were divine revelations, divine promises and precepts--in fact, the antediluvians enjoyed very much more light from heaven than they are commonly credited with. But during those early centuries, where grace abounded, sin did much more abound, until "God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth" (Gen. 6:12).

"The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing" (1 Pet. 3:20), and "space" was granted the ungodly to turn from their wickedness. Enoch prophesied, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him" (Jude 14, 15). Noah too was "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Pet. 2:5), and therefore must have warned his hearers that "the wrath of God is revealed

from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18). But it was all to no avail: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Eccl. 8:11). The evil continued to increase, till the divine patience was thoroughly exhausted. The threatened punishment came, the ungodly were swept from the earth, and the first great period in the world's history closed in judgment.

The facts briefly stated above require to be carefully kept in mind, for they throw not a little light upon the covenant which the Lord God made with Noah. They explain the reason for the transaction itself, and impart at least some aid toward a right conception of the particular form it took. The background of that covenant was divine judgment: drastic, unsparing, effectual. Every individual of the ungodly race perished: the great Deluge completely relieved the earth of their presence and crimes. In due time the water subsided, and Noah and his family came from their place of refuge to people the earth afresh. It is scarcely possible for us to form any adequate conception of the feelings of Noah on this occasion. The terrible and destructive visitation, in which the hand of God was so manifest, must have given him an impression of the exceeding sinfulness of sin and of the ineffable holiness and righteousness of God such as he had not previously entertained.

"In one respect the world seemed to have suffered material loss by the visitation of the deluge. Along with the agents and instruments of evil there had also been swept away by it the emblems of grace and hope--paradise with its tree of life and its cherubim of glory. We can conceive Noah and his household, when they first left the ark, looking around with melancholy feelings on the position they now occupied, not only as being the sole survivors of a numerous offspring, but also as being themselves bereft of the sacred memorials which bore evidence of a happy past, and exhibited the pledge of a yet happier future. An important link of communion with Heaven, it might well have seemed, was broken by the change thus brought through the deluge on the world" (P. Fairbairn).

As I pointed out many years ago in my Gleanings in Genesis, the contents of Genesis 4, though exceedingly terse, intimate that from the time of Adam onward, there was a specific place where God was to be worshiped. When we are told in verses 3 and 4 that Cain and Abel "brought an offering unto the Lord," the implication is clear that they came to some particular location of His appointing. When we read that Abel brought "the firstling of his flock and the fat thereof," we cannot escape the conclusion that there was an altar where the victim must be offered and upon which its fat must be burned. These necessary inferences receive clear corroboration in the words of verse 16, "And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord," which can hardly mean less than that he was formally prohibited from the place where the presence of Jehovah was symbolically manifest. That place of worship appears to have been located at the east of the Garden of Eden.

In their commentary on Genesis, Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown translate the last verse of chapter 3 as follows: "And he [God] dwelt at the east of the Garden of Eden between the Cherubim, as a Shekinah [a fire tongue or fire sword] to keep open the way to the tree of life." The same thought is presented in the Jerusalem Targum. Thus it would seem, that when man was excluded from the garden, God established a mercy-seat, protected by cherubim, the fire tongue or sword being the emblem of His presence, and whosoever would worship Him must approach that mercy-seat with a bloody sacrifice. We may add that the Hebrew word "shaken" which in Genesis 3:24 is rendered "placed," is defined in Young's concordance "to tabernacle;" eighty-three times in the Old Testament it is translated "to dwell," as in Exodus 25:8, and so forth.

The signal and sovereign mercy which God had displayed toward Noah must have deeply affected him. He would be strongly constrained to give some sweet expression to the overwhelming emotions of his heart. Accordingly, his very first act on taking possession of the new earth was to engage in a service of solemn worship: "And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord: and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar" (Gen. 8:20). Nothing could have been more becoming and appropriate: it was an acknowledgment of his deep obligations to the Lord, an expression of gratitude for the rich grace shown him, an intimation of his sense of personal unworthiness, an exercise of faith in the promised Seed through whom alone divine blessings were conferred, and an avowal of his determination to consecrate himself to God and walk before Him in humble obedience.

It was in connection with this act of worship that the Lord God now entered into a covenant with the new head of the race; but before examining its terms, let us further ponder the circumstances in which Noah now found himself, and try to form some idea of the thoughts which must then have exercised his mind. "However remarkable the deliverance he had experienced, whatever the conclusions he might have been warranted to draw from it in regard to the certainty of the Divine favor towards himself, and however ardent his gratitude in the view of the great mercy of which he had been the recipient, he was still a man, and his novel situation could hardly fail to awaken anxiety and apprehension on several distinct grounds. He and his family were few in number, and with very slender means of shelter and defense in their reach. His condition was far from secure.

"Although the natural disposition of the animals preserved with him in the ark had been by Divine power brought under restraint, he could not be ignorant that, when again left at large, their natural tempers and the instinctive ferocity of some of them would be resumed; and multiplying, in a more rapid ratio than his own family, he might probably have distrusted his ability to cope with them, and might have anticipated the likelihood of perishing before their destructive violence. He knew, too, that the heart of man was full of evil, and that however his naturally bad propensities may have been awed by the fearful catastrophe from which he had recently escaped, the effect of it was not likely to be lasting; the time he might well fear would come--and that at no distant period--when the sinful tendencies of the heart would acquire strength, would be excited by temptation, and soon issue in the most disastrous consequences.

"He must have had a distinct and painful remembrance of those sins of lawlessness and violence with which he had been familiar in the old world. He might reasonably dread their repetition, and look forward to times when human life would be held cheap, and when wanton passion would not scruple to sacrifice it in the furtherance of its selfish purposes, unrestrained by any competent authority, and only feebly checked by the dread of revenge. The prospect would have been anything but cheering, and it cannot be thought surprising that he should have contemplated it with feelings of concern and dismay. He could form his views of the future simply from what he knew of the past, and his memory could recall little but what was painful and distressing" (John Kelly, 1861).

But more; Noah had not only witnessed the out-breakings of human depravity in its worst forms, he had also seen the failure of all the religious means employed to restrain the same. Outside of his own little family, the worship of God had entirely ceased, the preaching of His servants was completely disregarded, and profligacy and violence universally prevailed. Even his building of the ark--"by the which he condemned the world" (Heb. 11:7)--had no effect upon the wicked. The divine warnings were openly flouted, until the Flood came and swept them all away. Nor had Noah any reason now to believe that human nature had undergone any radical change for the better, or that sin had been eradicated from the hearts of the few survivors of the Deluge. As Noah reflected upon the past, his anticipations of the future

must have been anxious and gloomy.

What assurance could he have that the evil propensities of fallen men would not again break out in works just as heinous as any performed by those who had found a watery grave? Would not men still be impatient against divine restraints, and treat the divine warnings with reckless contempt? Were such fears realized, should the corruption of the human heart once more develop in enormities and unlimited crimes, then what else could be expected than a repetition of the judgment which he had just survived? And where could such a recurrence of crime and punishment end? Did there not seem but one likely answer: the Almighty, in His righteous indignation, would utterly exterminate a guilty race which refused to be reclaimed. Such fears would not be the bogies of unwarrantable pessimism, but the natural and logical conclusions to be drawn from what had already transpired upon the theater of this earth. It is only by thus entering into the exercises of Noah's heart that we can really appreciate the pertinency of that assurance which Jehovah now gave him.

But as we endeavor to follow the thoughts which must have presented themselves to our patriarch's mind, we must not overlook one bright ray of comfort which doubtless did much to relieve the darkness of his trepidations. When God had declared unto Noah, "And, 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 every thing that is in the earth shall die," He also added, "But with thee will I establish my covenant" (Gen. 6:17, 18). That gracious promise provided a resting place for his poor heart during the dreary days and months when he had been shut up in the ark, and must also have imparted some cheer as he now stood upon the judgment-swept and desolate earth. Yet, who that has any personal experience of the fierce assaults made by carnal reasonings (unbelief) can doubt but what Noah's faith now met with a painful conflict as it sought to withstand the influence of gloom and anxiety.

Some readers may consider that we have gone beyond due bounds in what has been said above, and that we have drawn too much upon our own imagination. But Scripture says, "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man" (Prov. 27:17). How had you felt, dear reader, had you been in Noah's place? What had been my thoughts, had I been circumstanced as he was? Would we have had no such fears as those we have sought to describe? Had we anticipated the unknown future without any such dark forebodings? Could we have passed through such a fearful ordeal, and have returned to an earth from which the last of our former companions had been swept away, without wondering if the next storm of divine judgment would not quite complete its awful work? Would we, only eight all told, have been quite confident that the wild beasts would leave us unmolested? Why, it is just this very mental background which enables us to appreciate the tender mercy in what God now said unto Noah.

"And God blessed Noah, and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and dread of you [why such repetition, but for the sake of emphasis?] shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. . . . And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And 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" (Gen. 9:1-4, 8-11). What does such language imply? What fears were such gracious declarations designed to calm?

What other conclusions can logically be drawn from these verses than those that we have sketched in the preceding paragraphs? To me, at least, an endeavor to place myself in Noah's position and follow out the thoughts most likely to engage his mind, has caused me to admire as never before the suitability of the divine revelation then given to Noah.

That which we have assayed to do in this first chapter on the Noahic covenant has been to indicate its background, the occasion of it, and why it took the particular form it did. Just as the various Messianic prophecies, given by God at different times and at wide intervals, were suited to the local occasions when they were first made, so it was in the different renewals of His covenant of grace. Each of those renewals--unto Abraham, Moses, David and so forth--adumbrated some special feature of the everlasting covenant into which God had entered with the Mediator; but the immediate circumstances of each of those favored men molded, or gave form to, each particular feature of the eternal agreement which was severally shadowed forth unto them. We trust that the reader will now the better perceive the reasons why God gave unto Noah the particular statements recorded in Genesis 9.

II.

Having contemplated the occasion when the Lord God entered into covenant with Noah, the unspeakably solemn circumstances which formed its background, we are now almost ready to turn our attention to the covenant itself and examine its terms. The covenants which the Lord established at successive intervals with different parties were substantially one, embracing in the main the same promises and receiving similar confirmation. The Sinaitic covenant--although it possessed peculiar features which distinguished it from all others--was no exception. They were all of them revelations of God's gracious purpose, exhibited at first in an obscure form, but unfolding according to an obvious law of progress: each renewal adding something to what was previously known, so that the path of the just was as the shining light, which shone more and more unto the perfect day, when the shadows were displaced by the substance itself.

We are not to suppose that the divine promises, of which the covenant was the expression and confirmation, were not previously known. The antecedent history shows otherwise. The declaration made by Jehovah to the serpent in Genesis 3:15, while it announced his doom, clearly intimated mercy and deliverance unto the woman's "seed" --an expression which is by no means to be restricted to Christ personally, but which pertains to Christ mystically, that is, to the head and His body, the church. The divine institution of sacrifices opened a wide door of hope to those who were convicted of their sinful and lost condition by nature, as the recorded case of Abel clearly shows (Heb. 11:4). The spiritual history of Enoch, who walked with God and before his translation received testimony that he pleased Him (Heb. 11:5), is a further evidence that the very earliest of the saints were blessed with considerable spiritual light, and were granted an insight into God's eternal counsels of grace.

There is a word in Genesis 5:28, 29 which we should carefully ponder in this connection. There we read that "Lamech lived an hundred eighty and two years, and begat a son: and he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us, concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed." This is the first mention of Noah in Scripture, and there is no doubt he had his name prophetically given him. His name signifies "Rest," and was bestowed upon him by his father in the confident expectation that he would prove more than an ordinary blessing to his generation: he would be the instrument of bringing in that which would speak peace and inspire hope in the hearts of the elect--for the "us" and "our" (spoken by a believer) obviously refer to the godly line.

The words of the believing Lamech had respect unto what had been said in Genesis 3:15, and were also undoubtedly a prophecy which looked forward to Christ Himself, in whom it was to receive its antitypical fulfillment, for He is the true rest-giver (Matthew 11:28) and deliverer from the curse (Gal. 3:13). The full scope and intent of Lamech's prophetic language is to be understood in the light of those blessings which were pronounced on Noah by God after the Flood blessings which, as we shall see, were infinitely more precious than that which their mere letter conveys. They were blessings to proceed through the channel of the everlasting covenant of grace and by means of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. The proof of this is found in the fact that they were pronounced after sacrifice had been offered. This requires us to glance again at Genesis 8:20-22.

"And Noah budded an altar unto the Lord, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar" (v. 20). The typical teaching of this carries us much further than that which was foreshadowed by Abel's offering. Here, for the first time in Scripture, mention is made of the "altar." The key which unlocks the meaning of this is found in Matthew 23:19--"the altar that sanctifieth the gift." And what was the altar which sanctified the supreme gift? Why, the Person of Christ Himself: it was who He was that rendered acceptable and efficacious what He did. Thus, while the offering of Abel pointed forward to the sacrifice of Christ, the altar of Noah adumbrated the One who offered that sacrifice; His person being that which gave infinite value unto the blood which He shed.

"And the Lord smelled a sweet savour" (v. 21). Here again our present type rises much higher than that of Abel's: in the former case it was the manward aspect which was in view; but here it is the godward that is brought before us. Blessed indeed is it to learn what the sacrifice of Christ obtained for His people--deliverance from the wrath to come, securing an inheritance in Heaven forever; but far more blessed is it to know what that sacrifice meant unto Him to whom it was offered. In the sacrifice of Christ, God Himself found that which was "a sweet savour," with which He was well pleased, that which not only met every requirement of His righteousness and holiness, but also which satisfied His heart.

"And the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done" (v. 21). The unusual words "The Lord said in his heart" emphasize the effect which the "sweet savour" of the sacrifice had upon Him. The remainder of the verse appears, at first sight, to mar the unity of the passage; for it seems to bear no direct relation unto what immediately precedes or follows. But a more careful pondering of it reveals its pertinency. The reference to human depravity comes in here with a solemn significance, intimating that the waters of judgment had in nowise changed the corruption of fallen man's nature, and announcing that it was not because of any change in the flesh for the better that the Lord now made known His thoughts of peace and blessing. No, it was solely on the ground of the sweet smelling sacrifice that He dealt in grace.

The blessings which were included in the benedictions which God pronounced upon Noah and his sons were granted on a new foundation, on the basis of a grant quite different from any revelation or promise which the Lord gave to Adam in his unfallen condition, even on the ground of that covenant of grace which He had established with the Mediator before' ever the earth was. That eternal charter anticipated Adam's offense, and provided for the deliverance of God's elect from the curse which came in upon our first parent's sin; yea, secured for them far greater blessings than any which pertained to the earthly paradise. It is of great importance that this fact should be clearly grasped: namely, that it was on the sure foundation of the everlasting covenant of grace that God here pronounced blessing upon Noah and his sons--as He did later on Abraham and his seed.

What has just been pointed out would have been more easily grasped by the average reader had the chapter break between Genesis 8 and 9 been made at a different point. Genesis 8 should close with verse 19. The last three verses of Genesis 8 as they stand in our Bibles should begin chapter 9, and then the immediate connection between Noah's sacrifice and the covenant which the Lord made with him would be more apparent. The covenant was Jehovah's response to the offering upon the altar. That offering was "a sweet savour" to Him, clearly pointing to the offering of Christ. Christ's sacrifice was not yet to be offered for over two thousand years; so the satisfaction which Noah's typical offering gave unto Jehovah must have pointed back to the everlasting covenant, in which the great sacrifice was agreed upon.

Noah's passing safely through the Flood, in the ark, was a type of salvation itself. For this statement we have the authority of Holy Writ: see 1 Peter 3:20, 21. Noah and his sons were delivered from the wrath of God which had destroyed the rest of the world, and they now stepped out onto what was, typically, resurrection ground. Yes, the earth having been swept clean by the besom of divine judgment, and a fresh start now being made in its history, it was virtually new-creation ground onto which the saved family came as they emerged from the ark. Here is another point in which our present type looked unto higher truths than did the types which had preceded it. It is in connection with the new creation that the inheritance of the saints is found (1 Pet. 1:3, 4). We are therefore ready now to consider the blessing of the typical heirs.

"And God blessed Noah and his sons" (Gen. 9:1). This is the first time that we read of God blessing any since the Fall had occurred. Before sin entered the world we read that "male and female created he them: and God blessed them" (Gen. 1:27, 28). No doubt there is both a comparison and a contrast suggested in these two verses. First, and from the natural viewpoint, God's blessing of Noah and his sons was the formal announcement that the same divine favor which the Creator had extended to our first parents should now rest upon the new progenitors of the human race. But second, and more deeply, this blessing of Noah and his sons after the offering upon the altar, and in connection with the covenant, denoted their blessing upon a new basis. Adam and Eve received blessing on the ground of their creature purity; Noah and his sons (as the representatives of the entire election of grace) received blessing on the ground of their acceptance and perfection in Christ.

"And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things" (Gen. 9:1-3). These verses (together with the closing ones of chap. 8) introduce us to the beginning of a new world. In several respects it resembles the first beginning: there was the divine blessing upon the heads of the human family; there was the renewed command for the propagation of the human species--the earth having been depopulated; and there was the promise of the subjection of the lower creatures to man. But there was one great and vital difference, which has escaped the notice of most of the commentators: all now rested on the covenant of grace.

This difference is indeed radical and fundamental. Adam was placed as lord over the earth on the ground of the covenant of works. His tenure was entirely a conditional one, his retention thereof depending wholly upon his own conduct. Consequently, when he sinned he not only forfeited the blessing and favor of his creator, but lost his dominion over the creature; and as a dethroned monarch he was sent forth to play the part of a common laborer in the earth (Gen. 3:17-19). But here we see man reinstated over the lost inheritance, not on the basis of creature responsibility and human merits, but on the basis of divine grace--for Noah "found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen. 6:8); not on the foundation of creature doings,

but on the foundation of the excellency of that sacrifice which satisfied the heart of God. Consequently it was as the children of faith that the heirship of the new world was given to Noah and his seed.

"Man now rises, in the person of Noah, to a higher place in the world; yet not simply as man, but as a child of God, standing in faith. His faith had saved him amid the general wreck of the old world, to become in the new a second head of mankind, and an inheritor of earth's domain, as now purged and rescued from the pollution of evil. He is 'made heir,' as it is written in Hebrews, 'of the righteousness which is by faith,'--heir, that is, of all that properly belongs to such righteousness, not merely of the righteousness itself, but also of the world, which in the Divine purpose it was destined to possess and occupy. Hence, as if there had been a new creation, and a new head brought in to exercise over it the right of sovereignty, the original blessing and grant to Adam was substantially renewed to Noah and his family: (Gen. 9:1-3). Here, then, the righteousness of faith received direct from the grace of God the dowry that had been originally bestowed upon the righteousness of nature--not a blessing merely, but a blessing coupled with the heirship and dominion of the world" (P. Fairbairn ).

"Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual" (1 Cor. 15:46). Though these words have reference immediately to the bodies of the saints, yet they enunciate a cardinal principle in the ways of God in the outworking of His eternal purpose. Divine grace cannot clearly appear as grace until it shines forth from the dark background of man's sin and ruin. It was therefore requisite that the covenant of works with Adam should precede the covenant of grace with Noah. The failure of the first man did but make way and provide a suitable foil for the triumph of the Second Man--whom Noah clearly foreshadowed, as his name and the prophetic utterance of his father concerning him plainly announced. The more clearly this be grasped the easier will it be to perceive the deeper meaning of the Noahic covenant.

Everything was now clearly placed on a fresh footing and established upon a new basis. This fact throws light upon or brings out the significance of several details which, otherwise, are likely to be passed by unappreciated. For example, that "eight souls were saved by water" (1 Pet. 3:20), for in the language of Bible numerics eight speaks of a new beginning. Hence, too, the reverent student of Holy Writ, who delights to see the finger of God in its minutest details, will regard as something more than a coincidence the fact that the word covenant is found in connection with Noah just eight times: Genesis 6:18; 9:9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17. It is to be carefully noted that the entire emphasis is upon the Lord's making a covenant with Noah, and not of Noah with God: He was the initiator and sole compactor. In it there were no conditions stipulated, no "ifs" interposed; all was of grace--free, pure, unchangeable.

The blessed promises recorded in Genesis 8:22 and 9:2, 3 were all well calculated to still the fears of Noah's heart and establish his confidence. Therein he was graciously assured that in God's full view of the evil which still remained in the heart of man, a similar judgment, at least to the same extent, would never again be repeated; that not only would man be preserved on the earth, but that also the whole animal creation should be in subservience to his use. By these divine assurances his fears were effectually relieved--adumbrating the fact that God delights to bring His children, sooner or later, into the full assurance of faith, and of confidence and joy in His presence.

III.

In the previous chapter we intimated that the blessings contained in the benediction which the Lord pronounced upon Noah and his sons were infinitely more precious than the mere letter conveys. In order

to attain a right understanding of the various covenants which God made with different men, it is highly essential that we carefully distinguish between the literal and the figurative, or the outward form and its inner meaning. Only thus shall we be able to separate between what was merely local and evanescent, and that which was more comprehensive and enduring. There was connected with each covenant that which was literal or material, and also that which was mystical or spiritual; and unless this be duly noted, confusion is bound to ensue. Yea, it is at this very point that many have erred--particularly so with the Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants.

Literalists and futurists have been so occupied with the shell or letter, that they have quite missed the kernel or spirit. Allegorizers have been so much engaged with the figurative allusions, they have often failed to discern the historical fulfillment. Still others have so arbitrarily juggled the two, that they have carried out and applied neither consistently. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that we use the best possible care in seeking to distinguish between the carnal and the spiritual, the transient and the eternal, what pertains to the earthly and what adumbrated the heavenly in the several covenants. The reader should already have been prepared, in some measure at least, to follow us in what we are now saying, by what was brought out in our examination of the Adamic covenant.

When studying the Adamic covenant we discovered the need for throwing upon the Genesis record the light of later Scripture, finding in the Prophets and Epistles that which helped to open the meaning of the historical narrative. We saw the necessity of regarding Adam as something more than a private individual--namely, as a public head or federal representative. We learned that the language of Genesis 2:17 conveyed not only a solemn threat, but, by necessary implication, also contained a blessed promise. We also perceived that the "death" there threatened was something far more dreadful than physical dissolution. We ascertained from other passages that while the "tree of life" in the center of the garden was a real and tangible one, yet it also possessed an emblematic significance, being the seal of the covenant. Let us seek to keep in mind these principles as we proceed to our consideration of the other covenants.

Each covenant that God made with men shadowed forth some element of the everlasting covenant which He entered into with Christ before the foundation of the world on behalf of His elect. The covenants which God made with Noah, Abraham, and David as truly exhibited different aspects of the compact of grace as did the several vessels in the tabernacle typify certain characteristics of the person and work of Christ. Yet, just as those vessels also had an immediate and local use, so the covenants respected what was earthly and carnal, as well as what was spiritual and heavenly. This dual fact receives illustration and exemplification in the covenant which is now before us. That which was literal and external in it is so obvious and well known that it needs no enlarging upon by us here. The sign and seal of the covenant--the rainbow--and the promise connected therewith were tangible and visible things, which the senses of men have verified for themselves from then till now. But is that all there was to the Noahic covenant?

The note made upon the Noahic covenant in the Scofield Bible reads as follows: "The elements of: (1) The relation of man to the earth under the Adamic Covenant is confirmed (Gen. 8:21). (2) The order of nature is confirmed (Gen. 8:22). (3) Human government is established (Gen. 9:1-6). (4) Earth is secured against another universal judgment by water (Gen. 8:21; 9:11). (5) A prophetic declaration is made that from Ham will descend an inferior and servile posterity (Gen. 9:24, 25). (6) A prophetic declaration is made that Shem will have a peculiar relation to Jehovah (Gen. 9:26, 27). All Divine revelation is made through Semitic men, and Christ, after the flesh, descends from Shem. (7) A prophetic declaration is made that

from Japheth will descend the 'enlarged' races (Gen. 9:27). Government, science, and art, speaking broadly, are and have been Japhetic, so that history is the indisputable record of the exact fulfillment of these declarations." This is a fair sample of the superficial contents to be found in this popular catch-penny, and we strongly advise our readers not to waste their money in purchasing or their time in perusing the same.

Asking our readers' pardon for so doing, let us glance for a moment at the above summary. The last three items in Scofield's "Elements" do not belong at all to the Noahic covenant, having no more connection with it than does that which is recorded in Genesis 9:20-23. The first four elements Mr. S. mentions all concern that which is mundane and political. The whole is a lifeless analysis of the letter of the passage. There is absolutely nothing helpful in it. No effort is attempted at interpretation: no mention is made of the significant and blessed connection there is between the offering on the altar (8:20) and the Lord's covenant with Noah: no notice is taken of the new foundation upon which the divine grant is made: no hint is given of the precious typical instruction of the whole: and the thought does not seem to have entered the editor's mind that there was anything mystical or spiritual in the covenant.

Was there no deeper meaning in the promises than that the earth should never again be destroyed by a flood, that so long as it existed its seasons and harvests were guaranteed, that the fear of man should be upon all the lower creatures? Had those things no spiritual import? Assuredly they have, and in them may be clearly discerned--by those favored with anointed eyes--that which adumbrated the contents of the everlasting covenant. Noah and his family had been wondrously saved from the wrath of God, which had destroyed the rest of the race. Now that the world was to be restored from its ruined state, what more suitable occasion than that for a fuller revelation of various aspects of the believer's so-great salvation! It was ever God's way in Old Testament times to employ the event of some temporal deliverance of His people, to renew His intimation of the great spiritual deliverance and restoration by Christ's redemption. Who can doubt that it was so here, immediately after the Flood?

It seems pitiable that at this late date it should be necessary to labor a point which ought to be obvious to all God's people. And obvious it would be, at least when pointed out to them, were it not that so many have had dust thrown into their eyes by carnal "dispensationalists" and hucksters of "prophecy." Alas, that I myself once had my own vision dimmed by them, and even now I often have to exert myself in order to refuse to look at things through their colored spectacles. That there were temporal benefits bestowed upon Noah and his seed in Jehovah's covenant grant is just as sure as that Noah built a tangible altar and offered real sacrifices thereon. But to confine those benefits to the temporal, and ignore (or deny) their spiritual import, is as excuseless as would be a failure to discern Christ and His sacrifice in what Noah presented and which was a "sweet savour" unto God.

Yet so dull of spiritual comprehension are many of God's own people, so prejudiced and stupefied are they by the opiates which false teachers have ministered to them, we must perforce proceed slowly, and take nothing for granted. Therefore, before we seek to point out the various typical, mystical, and spiritual features of the Noahic covenant, we must first establish the fact that something more than the temporary interests of this earth or the material well-being of its inhabitants was involved in what God said to our patriarch in Genesis 9. Nor is this at all a difficult matter. Leaving for our closing chapter the contemplation of later Scriptures which cast a radiant glow upon the seal of the covenant, the rainbow, we turn to one passage in the prophets which clearly contains all that can be required by us.

In Isaiah 54:5-10 we read: "Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed; neither be thou confounded, for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy Maker is thy husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel: The God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee."

The connection of Isaiah 54 with the preceding chapter (on the atonement) suggests that gospel times are there in view, which is confirmed by the use Paul makes of it in Galatians 4:27, and so forth. The church, under the form of the Israelitish theocracy, is pictured as a married woman, who (like Sarah) had long continued barren. Comparatively few of the real children of God had been raised up among the Jews. At the time of Christ's advent pharisaical formality and Sadducean infidelity were well-nigh universal, and this was a sore grief unto the little remnant of genuine saints. But the death of Christ was to introduce better times, for many from among the Gentiles would then be saved. Accordingly, the barren woman is exhorted to break forth into singing, faith being called upon to joyfully anticipate the promised blessings. Gracious assurances were given that her hope should not be confounded.

True, the church was then at a low ebb and seemingly deserted by the Lord Himself, but the hiding of His face was only temporary, and He would yet gather an increasing number of children into His family, and that with "great mercy" and with "everlasting kindness." God's engagements to this effect were irrevocable, as His covenant testified. In the days of that patriarch the Lord had contended with the world in great wrath for a whole year, the "waters of Noah" having completely destroyed it. Nevertheless, He returned in "great mercy," yea, with "everlasting kindness," as His covenant with Noah attested. Though the world has often been highly provoking to God since then, yet He has faithfully kept His promise, and will continue doing so unto the end. In like manner there is often much in His people to displease and try God's patience, but He will not utterly cast them off (Ps. 89:34).

Here in Isaiah 54 the Noahic covenant is appealed to in proof of the perpetuity of God's gracious purpose in the midst of His sore chastenings. There we find definite interpretation of its original import, confirming what we said in the earlier paragraphs. The prophet Isaiah was announcing God's mercy to the church in future times, and he adduces His oath unto Noah as a sure pledge of the promised grace--an assurance of its certain bestowment, notwithstanding the afflictions which the people of God were then enduring and of the low condition to which they had been reduced. The unalterableness of the one is appealed to in proof of the unalterableness of the other. How plainly this shows that the covenant with Noah not only afforded a practical demonstration of the unfailing faithfulness of God in fulfilling its temporal promise to the world, but also that the church was the chief object and subject concerned in it.

Why did the Lord promise to preserve the earth until the end time, so that it should not again be destroyed by a flood? The answer is, Because of the church; for when the full number of the elect have been gathered out of every clime and brought (manifestatively) into the body of Christ, the world will come to an end. That the Noahic covenant has a clear connection with the everlasting covenant (called in Isaiah 54 "the covenant of peace" because based upon reconciliation effected) and that it has a special relation to the church, is abundantly evident from what the prophet there says of it: "For this [namely, 'with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee'] is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters

of Noah shall no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee"--the church.

From all that has been said it should now be abundantly clear that, while the literal aspect of the promises made to Noah concerned the temporal welfare of the earth and its inhabitants yet their mystical import had respect unto the spiritual well-being of the church and its members. This same two-foldedness will come before us again yet more plainly, when we consider the rainbow, which was the sign and seal of the Noahic covenant. It seems strange that those who perceived that the laws which God gave unto Israel respecting the eating only of fishes with scales and fins and animals which divided the hoof and chewed the cud, had not only a temporal or hygienic value, but a mystical or spiritual meaning as well, should have failed to discern that the same dual feature holds good in respect to all the details of the Noahic covenant.

Once this key is firmly grasped by us, it is not difficult to reach the inner contents contained in the benediction which the Lord pronounced after He had smelled the sweet savor of Noah's offering. The guarantee that the earth should not again be destroyed by a flood (as the Adamic earth had been) pointed to the eternal security of the saints--a security assured by the vastly superior position which is now theirs from what they had in Adam, namely, their inalienable portion in Christ. The promise that while the earth remained seedtime and harvest should not fail, contained as its inner kernel the divine pledge that as long as the saints were left below, God would supply all their need "according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." The fact that those blessings were promised after Noah and his family had come on to resurrection and new-creation ground, foreshadowed the blessed truth that the believer's standing is no longer "in the flesh."

Noah is the figure of Christ. First, as the remover of the curse from a corrupted earth, and as the rest-giver to those who, with sorrow of heart and sweat of the brow, had to till and eat of it (Gen. 5:29; Matthew 11:28). Second, as the heir of the new earth, wherein there shall be "no more curse" (Gen. 8:21; Rev. 22:3). Third, as the one into whose hands all things were now delivered (Gen. 9:2; John 17:2; Heb. 1:2). Noah's sons or seed were the figure of the church. With him they were "blessed" (Gen. 9:1; cf. Eph. 1:3). With him they were given dominion over all the lower creatures: so the saints have been made "kings and priests unto God" (Rev. 1:6) and shall "reign with him" (2 Tim. 2:12). With him they were bidden to be "fruitful" and "bring forth abundantly" (Gen. 9:7): so Christians are to abound in fruit and in every good work. The fact that this covenant was an absolute or unconditional one tells us of the immutability of our blessings in Christ.

IV.

"While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. 8:22). These promises were made by God upward of four thousand years ago; and the un failing fulfillment of them annually, all through the centuries, affords a striking demonstration of His faithfulness. Moreover, in their fulfillment we have exemplified a fact which is generally lost sight of by the world today; namely, that behind nature's "laws" is nature's Lord. Skepticism would now shut God out of His own creation. A casual observance of nature's "laws" reveals the fact that they are not uniform in their operation; and therefore if we had not Scripture, we would be without any assurance that the seasons might not radically change and the whole earth again be inundated. Nature's "laws" did not prevent the Deluge in Noah's days. How then should they hinder a recurrence of it in ours? How blessed for the child of God to listen to this guarantee of his Father!

See here also the aboundings of God's mercy in proceeding with us by way of a covenant, binding Himself with a solemn oath that He would never again destroy the earth by water. He might well have exempted the world from this calamity and yet never have told men that He would thus act. Had He not granted such assurance, the remembrance of the Deluge would have been like a sword of terror suspended over their heads. But in His great goodness, the Lord sets the mind of His creatures at rest upon this score, by promising not to repeat the Flood. Thus does He deal with His people: "That by two immutable things [His revealed purpose of grace and His covenant oath] in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Heb. 6:18).

" 'I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake' (Gen. 8:21), was the word of God to Noah, when accepting the first offering presented to Him on the purified earth. It is, no doubt, to be understood relatively; not as indicating a total repeal of the evil, but only a mitigation of it; yet such a mitigation as would render the earth a much less afflicted and more fertile region than it had been before. This again indicated that, in the estimation of Heaven, the earth had now assumed a new position; that by the action of God's judgment upon it, it had become hallowed in His sight, and was in a condition to receive tokens of the divine favor, which had formerly been withheld from it" (P. Fairbairn). We pointed out the mystical significance of Genesis 8:21 in our last chapter.

"And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And 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. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant [literally, "My bow I have set in the cloud, and it shall be for a covenant sign"] between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: and I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh" (Gen. 9:8-15).

The above words contain the fulfillment of the promise which the Lord had given to Noah in Genesis 6:18, and amplify what He had said in Genesis 8:21, 22. That which we shall now concentrate upon is the "token" or "sign" of the covenant. There is no doubt whatever in our own mind it was now that the rainbow appeared for the first time in the lower heavens, for the purpose of allaying men's fears against the calamity of another universal flood and to provide them with a visible pledge in nature for the performance of her existing order and constitution; for had this divine marvel appeared before unto the antediluvians, it would have possessed no special and distinctive meaning and message after the Flood. The fact that the rainbow was an entirely new phenomenon, something which was quite unknown to Noah previously, supplies a striking demonstration of the silent harmony of Scripture; for it is clear from Genesis 2:6 that no rain had fallen before the Flood!

The first rain was sent in divine judgment; but now God turns it into a blessing. The sunshine of heaven falls upon the rain on earth, and lo, the beautiful rainbow! How blessedly suited, then, was the rainbow to serve as the sign of the covenant which God had made with Noah. "There is an exact correspondence between the natural phenomenon it presents and the moral use to which it is applied. The promise in the covenant was not that there should be no future visitations of judgment upon the earth, but that they should not proceed to the extent of again destroying the world. In the moral, as in the natural sphere, there

might still be congregating vapors and descending torrents; indeed, the terms of the covenant imply that there should be such, and that by means of them God would not fail to testify His displeasure against sin, and keep in awe the workers of iniquity. But there should be no second deluge to diffuse universal ruin; mercy should always so far rejoice against judgment.

"Such in the field of nature is the assurance given by the rainbow, which is formed by the luster of the sun's rays shining on the dark cloud as it recedes; so that it may be termed, as in the somewhat poetical description of Lange, 'the sun's triumph over the floods; the glitter of his beams imprinted on the rain-cloud as a mark of subjection!' How appropriate an emblem of that grace which should always show itself ready to return after wrath! Grace still sparing and preserving, even when storms of judgment have been bursting forth upon the guilty! And as the rainbow throws its radiant arch over the expanse between heaven and earth, uniting the two together again as with a wreath of beauty, after they have been engaged in an elemental war, what a fitting image does it present to the thoughtful eye of the essential harmony that still subsists between the higher and the lower spheres! Such undoubtedly is its symbolic import, as the sign peculiarly connected with the covenant of Noah; it holds out, by means of its very form and nature, an assurance of God's mercy, as engaged to keep perpetually in check the floods of deserved wrath, and continue to the world the manifestation of His grace and goodness" (P. Fairbairn).

But God's bow in the clouds was not only an assurance unto men at large that no more would the world be destroyed by a flood, it was also the seal of confirmation of the covenant which God had made with the elect seed, the children of faith. Blessed it is to know that, not only our eyes, but His too are upon the bow; and thus this gives us fellowship with Himself in that which tells of the storm being over, of peace displacing turmoil, of the dark gloom now being irradiated by the shining of the sun. It was the rain which broke up the light into its separate rays, now reflected in the bow: the blue or heavenly ray, the yellow or golden ray, the crimson ray of atonement. Thus it is in the everlasting covenant that God is fully revealed as light and as love, as righteous yet merciful, merciful yet righteous. The covenant of grace is beautifully expressed in the rainbow. For the following nine points on this covenant we are indebted to a sermon by Ebenezer Erskine, preached about 1730.

1. It is of God's ordering: "I have set my bow in the clouds." So the covenant of grace is of God's ordering: "I have made a covenant with my chosen" (Ps. 89). Though it be our duty to "take hold of" the covenant (Isa. 56:4), and to come under engagements through the grace thereof, yet we have no part in appointing or ordering it. The covenant of grace could no more have been made by man, than he can form a bow in the clouds.
2. The bow was set in the clouds upon God's smelling a sweet savor in Noah's sacrifice; so that the covenant of grace is founded upon and sealed with the blood of the Lamb--a reminder thereof being set before us every time we sit down to partake of the Lord's Supper.
3. The rainbow is a divine security that the waters should return no more to destroy the earth; so the covenant of grace guarantees against the deluge of God's wrath, that it shall never return again to destroy any soul that by faith flees to Christ (Isa. 54:9).
4. It is the sun which gives being to the rainbow. Remove it from the firmament and there could not be its glorious reflection in the clouds. So Christ, the Sun of righteousness, gives being to the covenant of grace. He is its very life and substance: "I will preserve thee and give thee for a covenant of the people" (Isa. 49:8).

5. Although the arch of the bow is high above us, reaching to the heaven, yet the ends of it stoop down and reach to the earth. Just so it is with the covenant of grace: although the great covenant Head be in heaven, yet, through the gospel, He stoops down to men upon earth "The word is nigh thee" (Rom. 10:6-8).

6. God's bow in the clouds is very extensive, reaching from one end of heaven to the other; so His covenant of grace is wide in its reach, stretching back to eternity past and reaching forward to eternity future, embracing some out of every nation and kindred, and tribe and tongue.

7. As the rainbow is a security against a universal deluge, so it is also a prognostic of refreshing showers of rain to the thirsty earth. So the bow of the covenant which encircles the throne of God (Rev. 4:3) not only secures against vindictive wrath, but gives assurance of the rain--the Spirit's influences.

8. The visible appearance of the rainbow is but of a short continuance, for usually it appears only for a few minutes and then vanishes. So the sensible and lively views which the believer gets of the covenant of grace are usually of brief duration.

9. Although the rainbow disappears, and that for a long while together, yet we do not conclude therefrom that God's covenant is broken or that a flood will come and destroy the earth. So too the saint may not now be favored with a sensible sight of the covenant of grace; yet the remembrance of former views thereof will keep the soul from fears of wrath.

The following paragraph is quoted from our work Gleanings in Genesis. "There are many parallels between the rainbow and God's grace. As the rainbow is the joint-product of storm and sunshine, so grace is the unmerited favor of God appearing on the dark background of the creature's sin. As the rainbow is the effect of the sun shining on the drops of rain in a cloud, so Divine grace is manifested by God's love shining through the blood shed by our blessed Redeemer. As the rainbow is the telling out of the varied hues of the white light, so the 'manifold grace of God' (1 Pet. 4:10) is the ultimate expression of God's heart. As nature knows nothing more exquisitely beautiful than the rainbow, so heaven itself knows nothing that surpasses in loveliness the wondrous grace of God. As the rainbow is the union of heaven and earth--spanning the sky and reaching down to the ground--so grace in the one Mediator has brought together God and man. As the rainbow is a public sign of God hung out in the heavens that all may see it, so 'the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men' (Titus 2:11). Finally, as the rainbow has been displayed throughout all the past forty centuries, so in the ages to come God will show forth 'the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus' (Eph. 2:7)."

The later references in Scripture to the rainbow are inexpressibly blessed. Thus, in the visions of the glory of God which Ezekiel was favored with at the beginning of his ministry, we find part of the imagery thus described, "As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about" (Ezek. 1:28). It is to be duly noted that this verse comes in at the close of one of the most awe-inspiring representations of heavenly things to be found in Scripture. It is a vision of the ineffable holiness of God, hence the presence of the cherubim. There is then the fervid appearance of metallic brightness and flashes of liquid flame, which shone forth from all parts of the vision. Then wheels of vast proportion are added to the cherubim: wheels full of eyes, speaking of the terrible energy which was going to characterize the divine providences. Above all was the throne of God, on which He Himself sat in human form.

It is well known that at the time of this vision the people of Israel were in a most distressed condition. Those amongst whom Ezekiel prophesied were in captivity, and the ruin of their country was nigh at hand. How blessed, then, was the introduction here of the sign of the rainbow into this vision! It intimated that the purpose and promises of divine grace were sure. Though God's judgment would fall heavily upon the guilty nation, yet because of the elect remnant therein, it would not be utterly cast off; and after the storm had passed, times of restoration and peace would follow. It was the divine assurance, for faith to rest upon and enjoy, that what Jehovah had pledged in the covenant would be made good.

"And there was a rainbow round about the throne in sight like unto an emerald" (Rev. 4:3). The canopy of God's throne is a rainbow. We understand this vision in Revelation 4 to have immediate reference to the glorious exercise of divine grace under the New Testament economy. There is a manifest allusion in it to Genesis 9: it signifies that God deals with His people according to His covenant engagements. Its emerald or green color denotes that, because of the faithfulness of Him who sits upon the throne of grace, His covenant is ever the same, ever fresh, without any shadow of turning. "Its surrounding the throne denoted that the holiness, and justice of God, and all His dispensations as the Sovereign of all worlds, had respect to His covenant of peace and engagements of love, which He had ratified to His believing people, and harmonized with them" (T. Scott).

Thus the Noahic covenant served to bring out in a new light, and establish on a firmer basis, the unfailing faithfulness of Jehovah and the immutability of His purpose. An assurance to that effect was specially needed just after the Flood, for it was over that basic truth that the judgment of the Deluge had seemed to cast a shadow. But the promises made to Noah, solemnly given in covenant form and sealed by the token of the rainbow, effectually reestablished confidence and stands out still--after all these many centuries--as one of the grand events in God's dealings with men; assuring us that, however the sins of the world may provoke the justice of God, the purpose of His grace unto His chosen people stands unalterably sure.

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