

No. 93

GOD'S COVENANT WITH NOAH.

An Address by Mr. P. W. Heward,
At 65, St. Mary Axe, E. C.
4th July, 1916.

OUTLINE:

1. The World Before the Flood and Since.
 2. God's Own Promise.
 3. Lessons from the Rainbow.
 4. Man's Privileges, Duties, and Responsibilities.
 5. The Different Sphere of a New Creation.
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Our subject is "God's Covenant with Noah". It is well to realise that God is the Same at all times, and that there can be no contradiction in His Character or in His standpoint, or in His actions. There may be diversities of method, He may give different commands to different people, but He is a God of Truth and without iniquity, and with Him is no variableness, neither shadow that is cast by turning. We rejoice, by grace, to be able to speak of God thus, and to speak of Him thus with the assurance, which He Himself has caused, that He delights in His people's perception of His perfect wisdom, righteousness, and power. I trust we are of one mind that the EARTH and the WORLD must be distinguished. Indeed each word of Scripture is used perfectly. We read in 2 Peter 3, "For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water; whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water perished. But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, or are treasured with fire, being kept, or reserved against, or with a view to, the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men". The EARTH IS to be burnt up. We look for new heavens and a new earth, but in the time of the flood, "the WORLD that then was perished" so says chapter 2.5 - "God spared not the old WORLD, but saved Noah the eighth person". You know how Eph. 2 reminds us that there are ages belonging to the world, for it says, "Among whom ye once walked according to the AGE of this

WORLD". So we have the age, the world, and the earth. I take it we acknowledge that the present earth is the FIRST earth, but that the term "world" can be used in a different way. There was the old world, i.e. the world before the flood, and there is the world since. Morally the world remains the same. The proof is in Genesis. There God says, in ch. 6, that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually, and when the sweet savour of Noah's sacrifice was enjoyed in ch. 8. 21, the Lord added these words, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth". Therefore, we have brought before us the sad fact that there has been no moral change. However has there been any change ~~xx~~ in the condition of affairs in the earth with respect to men who compose the world? I think there has been governmentally; we shall consider this later on (Point 4). Just now we would ponder the change physically. After the flood undoubtedly the age of man decreased, but that is not my present thought. I am rather concerned with the animal and vegetable creation. I take it that we see a contrast in the language concerning the animal creation in ch. 1 and ch. 9. In ch. 1 we read, "Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth!" In ch. 9, "The FEAR of you and the DREAD of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every fowl of the air." This language is distinctly stronger and implies a definite contrast. Before Adam fell all the animals were brought to him to acknowledge his sovereignty, and though, when Adam sinned, the creation was made subject to vanity, and the serpent cursed above all cattle, and the enmity placed between the serpent and the women, yet we do not READ of wild animals. The stress in 3:15 seems particularly on the opposition between the devil and the woman, and between the seed of the devil and the seed of the woman, which is Christ, with whom His people are linked by sovereign grace. And if we go along further we find that before the flood the earth was filled with violence because of MAN. This is brought out in ch. 4 respecting Lamech's family. Tubal was an artificer in brass and iron, and Lamech boasted of this. But the yet more striking language to

which I have referred is 6. 13. God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence BECAUSE OF THEM, and behold I will destroy them with the earth. Was it surprising to Noah that every living creature came into the ark? I am quite aware that we see in it, by grace, an anticipation of the millennial kingdom, and also a suggestion of that which was revealed to Peter in a vision. God saves out from all nations. The unclean are cleansed by Him. But was the obedience of animals surprising to Noah? Have we evidence that the animal creation was manifesting its violence before the flood in the same way as it manifested this afterwards? I hope I am willing for any proof upon this subject. My thought inclines definitely to the idea that after the flood the FEAR and the DREAD was put upon the beasts. At the same time began the slaying of the beasts for food, hitherto they had only been slain for sacrifices; and the definite statement that the blood of a man's life would be required from a beast, suggests that the beasts were brought into a different position after the flood. In other words it indicates that the fall was more definitely stamped upon them. I incline to think there is the reverse as to the vegetable creation. I need hardly say, beloved friends, I do not want you to hold these hints in the same way as you hold the fact that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised the third day according to the Scriptures, UNLESS YOU CAN FIND VERY DEFINITE TESTIMONY. I only suggest to you what I believe is implied by the pages of Scripture. The ground was cursed for Adam, and he was given to understand that in sorrow he was to eat from it all the days of his life. In the sweat of his face would he eat bread. I do not say we are now beyond such a state of affairs, in general. There is a contrast still with Eden's fruit. But the language of Gen. 3 is very remarkable and very striking, and Adam was sent from the Garden of Eden to TILL the ground from which he was taken. Cain brought that on which he had expended much pain and much effort, even the fruit of the ground. God had particularly said after the fall that thorns and thistles would grow. Herbs and bread are mentioned,

but fruit which was the only thing mentioned in Eden was expressly left out. Cain, denying the fall, brought fruit, which, however, had evidently cost him great pains to bring. He was religious to an extreme. I need hardly say that Antichrist will be intensely religious, and that many will be exceedingly religious in the days of Antichrist. Religion has nothing to commend itself to God. Only in Christ can guilty sinners, made righteous, be accepted and acceptable. The strain in connection with the land is marked out, if I mistake not, in chapter 5. In the other Lamech's family (ch.4) we do not read much about this. Musical instruments and military instruments were, as in Rev. 18 brought ~~it~~ into prominence, in connection with the remarkable type which is there presented. But in chapter 5 we find the family of promise. The line through which He should come Who has come, and in Whom His blood-bought people now are; and when Lamech called his son's name Noah, there is not only a stress upon the rest which is in Christ Jesus, though I believe that is the typical teaching; but there is also a stress on the strain as to the earth: - "Saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed". With all the great ages of the patriarchs they did not succeed in removing this curse, or in producing modes of labour which would make it unfelt. It was a great and grievous toil to obtain anything from the earth. In SORROW did they eat of it all the days of their life (Gen.3.17); nor were they allowed to partake of animal food. But God was pleased after the flood not only to give them an extension of food, and to simplify their problem in this way; but also to vary, at least in some measure, the mark of the curse upon the vegetable world, for in ch. 8. 21 we read, "The Lord smelled a sweet savour and the Lord said in His heart, I will not add to curse still the earth for man's sake, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will not add any more to smite every living thing as I did; Still (or yet) all the days of the earth (see margin) seed time and harvest and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, will not cease". You will notice verse 21 declares two things shall be withheld. First, the adding of a curse on the ground; secondly the

adding of the smiting of every living thing. The word "any more" is given twice, and even our English "neither" in the last sentence would imply that two distinct things are brought before us. God would not add to smite every living thing. Here we have a statement as to the animal creation especially. FURTHER, He would not add to curse the ground "still" for man's sake. I take it, especially in the light of verse 22, that our gracious God withdrew certain judgments on the ground, and that its fruit was brought forth more plentifully. Without excusing the sin of Noah, this may partly account for his failure when he came forth from the ark. Having lived in days when the earth was cursed manifestly, and when there was rather the tilling, he did not fully understand the fruit growing which God marks out again as soon as the flood is over, marks out in the olive leaf of the dove, and the vineyard which Noah planted. True he should have asked God how to deal with its fruit, but it would seem probably that, like Joshua in connection with the Gibeonites, there was the action, which we have all frequently repeated, the action of speed without asking counsel at the mouth of the Lord.

I do not know to what extent we can say there have come further changes since the flood, even geographically. There is a real problem as to whether the lands of the earth have been divided since the flood, or whether chapter 10. 25 refers rather to the nations and the division of the countries among them. But it is important that we should notice one sad evidence of man's utter wickedness. Before the flood there was open fellowship with demons. Gen. 6. 1-4 is clear in this connection. Supernatural beings chose the daughters of men. The fallen ones, as the word "giants" should be rendered, were in the earth in those days, and also "after that". Hence we are not surprised that AFTER the flood there were still the fallen ones, and the giants, whether called the Anakim, the Emim, the Zuzim, the Rephaim, or found among the Philistines. Man has ever sought fellowship with demons rather than with God. Human might has often been seen in this connection, but God has been dishonoured. Inasmuch as demonism has often demanded vegetarianism (Cf. 1 Tim. 4. 1-3), we have a Divine WARNING in the provision of animal food.

We now come to "God's Own Gracious Promise" which has

already been before us in Gen. 8. 21, 22. It is explained more fully in 9. 8-17. "God spake unto Noah and to his sons with him, saying, 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 with the waters of a flood} neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth". ~~THE~~ **A** twofold statement, - dealing with all flesh, and dealing with the earth. We think of the twofold statement of ch. 8. 21. Here is God's own promise. God emphasizes the everlasting covenant between Himself and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. God has kept His promise, for though there have been local floods, and though there have been limited famines, though myriads have been swept aside, the heavens and the earth which NOW are, having been stored with fire, are still kept (2 Pet. 3. 7 lit.) The earth is not stored with fire because it is a broken-off piece of something else. The earth is not stored with fire which is gradually cooling down as the effect of some development from years, countless years, gone by. No theory of men will account for this storing with fire. I do not say God stored the earth with fire at the flood, but it is evident that it has been stored with fire from that time, and that we have a very special mention of those who were destroyed in the flood, going, as spirits, into prison, - the prison being in the centre of this earth in accord with other Scriptures. God's own promise remained, and though some are willingly ignorant of it, we praise Him that He has made it known unto us.

And this leads us to consider Lessons from the Rainbow, for the covenant had a token. The second covenant with Abraham had the token of circumcision. The covenant with Israel had the token of the Blood on Israelite doors, - "The blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are, and when I see the blood I will pass over you". The word "token" is before us in chap. 9.12,13,17. "This is the token of the covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with YOU... It shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the EARTH". Again the two thoughts.

The living creatures and the earth. Then we read in verse 17, "This is the token of the covenant which I have established, between Me and all flesh that is upon the earth". The rainbow is very suggestive to God's dear people. It has sometimes been wondered why God speaks of setting His bow in the cloud after the flood. Were there no rainbows before? I suppose we are willing to acknowledge that whatever be the scientific basis of a rainbow, God could have suspended the application of laws of science until the appointed time, or He could have taken something which existed before and gave it a new meaning, as with the Sabbath which was brought before Israel thus at Sinai. But there is something else which needs to be noticed. Were ordinary rainbows existent before the flood? Were ordinary rain clouds to be found before the flood? Or did God's provision mentioned in Gen. 2, "There went up a mist from the earth" continue until He was pleased to grant that something exceptional came? We have seen exceptions in everything else. Would this be strange? I think not. I leave it to the meditation of God's dear people. But whatever be His plan as to the rainbow, it had a unique meaning from the day when He spoke to Noah, and to us it is still suggestive. It comes visibly in time of rain with sunshine telling through an angry cloud, as it were, of judgment, but of judgment met, of anger passed away, and of God's comforting grace. Its shape brings before us that we know but part of God's ways. Yet the semicircle unites heaven and earth. Yea, it appears more than a semicircle, but it is not till we get to the book of Revelation, around the throne, that we have the complete circle of the rainbow. On earth there is always a falling beneath the horizon of our view. Now we know in part, but when we reach the glory, the rainbow will be complete and also like unto an emerald. For though its colours will in measure remain, that which speaks of blood, the red colour, is seen there distinct in the reminder of atonement - the Lamb - and the same "red" speaks of wrath which fell on our Saviour; hence the "emerald" reminds of wrath removed, for God will not act against those who are brought into heavenly places in His Beloved Son. The rainbow, moreover, in its colours wondrously blended would suggest the harmony of the attributes of God, revealing a perfect righteousness and a perfect

proportion. His operations in mercy and wrath bring out the hidden beauty of His character, and therefore we praise Him that on a dark background we see more of what He is and does. Again the name definitely given "the rain-BOW" would suggest to us that God has HIS arrows of which Psalm 18 speaks, but the arrow is not seen in the bow. And if the arrow were seen there, would it be an arrow directed against man, or would not the appointed curve indicate an arrow directed against Himself? Our adorable Lord was pleased to come down to be the Rock smitten, He was pleased, though the Mighty One, to bear the weight of iniquity. It is part of His NAME to BEAR iniquity and transgression and sin (Ex. 34. 7 lit:) Where sin abounded grace did much more abound. God has no fury toward us. There is no bow of wrath against His blood bought people. Precious indeed is it to be in Christ Jesus our Lord. But the rainbow, though it has a circle aspect, and is curved in the heavens, touches the earth at TWO points, for God's grace is arranging in the present time that there should be a fellowship of His people out from Jew and Gentile, who are being delivered from earth that they might not be viewed as part of the earth, but might be viewed as those who have a heavenly position. This precious teaching of the present dispensation seems almost prophesied in the rainbow, though I am quite willing to acknowledge that the earthly blessing of Jew and Gentile is the primary thought, for the rainbow comes down to earth, and abides on earth, as it were, in two places, and immediately after its mention we read of the three sons of Noah, - Shem, Ham and Japheth; but ominously at once it says, "Ham is the father of Canaan". But - blessed be the Lord God of Shem, and God shall enlarge Japheth. Shem, the Jewish race. Japheth, blessed ones from among Gentiles. The covenant of the rainbow is a covenant for the earth.

And this leads us to consider Man's Privileges, Duties, and Responsibilities. I am speaking now of man as man, for the covenant with Noah, as the covenant with Adam, concerns all creation. It is not national, it is not limited. The covenant of Sinai had a special aspect, but the covenant at Ararat brings before us all mankind. We notice man's privilege on the earth over the animal

creation, and man's privilege to partake of food from the animal creation, even as from the Green herb. God afterwards gave certain limitations to Israel respecting clean and unclean animals, but to man in the covenant with Noah the words were plain, "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you, even as the green herb have I given you all things". But privileges were linked with duties and responsibilities. There is the prohibition of ONE thing, as in Eden. "Flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat, and surely your blood of your lives will I require: at the hand of every beast will I require it". The word "lives" is literally "souls". We think of Lev. 17. 11, with its stress on the blood in the soul. "At the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man." Mark the next words. "At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life, or the soul, of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man, (or if you will among men, but do not destroy the thought of "by man") shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man". Not that man has retained the image of God, for we read that Adam died and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image, and called his name Seth. It is only when we have a new creation (Col. 3. 10) and are quickened within, and are ALSO being transformed into the image of God's Son (2 Cor. 3. 18) that we can enter into the words that we are in the likeness of God. When we awake, moreover, it will be with the likeness of our Lord. This surely implies that in our BODY of humiliation we have a contrast with this likeness. We have borne the image of the earthy, we shall bear the image of the Heavenly One. It is important to realise this, but creation, though in measure wrecked through sin, wrecked morally, and also in part physically, - creation still reminds of what God did at first, and therefore it is a serious thing beyond measure to take the life of a man. Only God has a right to dispose of lives. He distinctly says that murder involves capital punishment at the hands of every man's brother. It is rather remarkable that the present day theory of a universal brotherhood would only bring about, in the light of this, fuller evidences of man's failure. And government illustrates this principle. Government carries out the arrangements, and represents

THOSE WHO ARE WITHIN ITS SPHERE, and part of it. Government is the executive of this appointment, to prevent private vengeance. Here then we have men's legal duties. May I now suggest to God's dear people that the whole stress in chapter 5, and in chapter 9 on the EARTH has a bearing for them as to their present position in the HEAVENLY calling. In Ch. 6 "The wickedness of man was great in the EARTH". God said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the EARTH". God looked upon the EARTH: "The EARTH is filled with violence" "I will destroy them with the EARTH". In chapter 9 "I establish My covenant with you, ...and with every living creature, ...of every beast of the EARTH with you, from all that go out of the ark to every beast of the EARTH": "Neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the EARTH": "A token of the covenant between Me and the EARTH": "The everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the EARTH": "This is the token of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is upon the EARTH". In Revelation we have the same stress as to those who are linked with this world and this earth. We in the present time have a heavenly position, whereas Israel were, and will be, viewed as on the earth. The arrangements here given as to government were expressly approved in that nation. The avenger of blood was peculiarly prominent, even when the cities of refuge were mercifully provided. But to believers there is another position, they are delivered from the brotherhood of men, they are placed in a new family. They are made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, and they can consequently take no share in vengeance or in wrath. Judicially they have no position, governmentally they exercise no responsibilities. They pray for all in authority, and recognise the powers that be are ordained of God, to carry out certain functions which date back to the Noachian covenant whether it be on the part of an individual or on the part of a company. If there is putting to death it must be answered by putting to death, and here we have the natural reply of one government to another. When in any district aggressive war is started, it is natural, it is connected with the principle of this passage, that there should be repression of aggressive war, although in the complicated state

of affairs those who are not primarily concerned are dealt with rather than those who are at the fountain and source of the problem. But the child of God in heavenly places in Christ Jesus is entirely delivered from all this. The judicial position and the revenging position are the same, and a believer must be clear of both if he would simply walk worthy of the high and heavenly calling. This is the attitude which a believer has, while linked to His Lord in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, and that link is an everlasting link; and his reigning on the earth is NOT at the present time. Nothing "penal" is committed to our responsibility to-day. Thus, beloved friends, I suggest that this passage is not only a refreshing encouragement to us in that we see God has kept His word, and will keep His word, and that even the rainbow may remind us of His truth, but it is also of momentous force in connection with our separated position unto our Lord, and by no accident did one brother suggest we should unitedly consider this subject in the light of Scripture, and I hope, in some measure, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.