

GOD'S RAINBOW COVENANT

– *FEBRUARY 9. – GENESIS 8:1-9:17. –*

"I do set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth." – Genesis 9:13.

THE HIGHER CRITICS refer us to recently excavated clay tablets found in Babylonia as the earliest record of the Deluge of Noah's day. These tablets, in coarse outline, represent Noah and a boat. A few words descriptive of the Flood follow. And we are asked to accept this as a superior account to the one given us in Genesis, of which today's lesson is a part! We are amazed! and recall to mind the prophecy of Scripture which discusses our day, saying, "The wisdom of their wise men shall perish and the understanding of their learned men shall not be apparent." – Isaiah 29:14.

Only the reputation of these men for learning saves them from ridicule; and we, of course, concede to them the right of their opinion. "Each has a right to his choice,' as the old lady said when she kissed the cow." As for our part, the logical statements of Genesis respecting the particular time when the Flood began, the number of days that it rained, and the increase of the waters, seem reasonable, as does the further account of the cessation of the rain, and of the length of time in which the waters gradually receded, and the length of time in which the surface gradually dried and vegetation manifested itself. Thus the Genesis account of the Deluge is stamped trustworthy – a hundred times more trustworthy than the crude record of the Babylonian! To us it seems evident that Divine Wisdom guided in the Genesis account, but not in the other.

Naturally Noah and his family might dread another Deluge, not clearly understanding the origin of the Flood which had overwhelmed the world. Very appropriately God called their attention to the rainbow, when He assured them that never again

would the whole earth be overwhelmed in water. *We* can see the *philosophy* of this, whereas Noah and his family merely had the matter by *faith*, not discerning the philosophy. We can see that when the last of earth's "rings" had come down there *could not* be another deluge, because there were *no waters* above the firmament *to be precipitated*. Since the Flood, we merely have the moderate supply of moisture, in the form of clouds in our firmament, and none in the form of a great envelope beyond the firmament.

Now we may see how it was that Noah had never seen a rainbow; because prior to the Flood, when the sun shone through the watery envelope as merely a great ball of fire, its rays did not strike directly through, and hence no rainbow was possible. But since the watery envelope broke, the fine vapors in the direct line of the sun's rays cause, naturally, the rainbow effect. And, as God declares, *so long as there is a rainbow*, there *can never be a flood*. God's words and ways are not less reasonable when we come to see their grand philosophy. On the contrary, the more we understand the Divine methods and operations the more we appreciate their wisdom.

THE TOWER OF BABEL

Generations afterward, when the family of Noah had multiplied, the meaning of the rainbow as a covenant between God and man – the guarantee against another deluge – was forgotten. The worldly-wise of that time were foolish enough to undertake the building of a great tower, to whose top they could go in the event of another deluge. Since they had neglected the Lord's message and disregarded His promise, He let them alone to make manifest their own folly in labor and sweat of face, which could prove of no avail.

Finally, however, when they were measurably wearied with their herculean task, and when they had, to some extent at least, learned a valuable lesson, the Lord confounded their language so that they could not understand each other, nor co-operate with each other in any such vast enterprise. Separated in tongue and in interest,

they scattered. Their interests became diverse, and gradually manners and customs and color of skin, during the centuries, became more and more dissimilar. Thus the various races with their peculiarities of temperament and language had their start.

St. Paul tells us all this was a premeditated plan on God's part, as being to the best interests of humanity and most favorable for the outworking of the Divine purposes. He says, God "hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him." – Acts 17:26,27.

How one part of God's Word sheds light upon another! Thus we are enabled to see how Divine Wisdom has had a supervision of the ultimate interests of humanity. Even though God has allowed man in his ignorance to become the servant of Satan, He still has protected him in a measure, and shaped his affairs for his ultimate good. That good, as we have seen, is to be fully attained by the world in general at the Second Coming of Jesus and the establishment then of His Messianic Kingdom, which will bind Satan and scatter the power of darkness and sin. It will shine forth as the Sun of Righteousness, to heal and bless and uplift the willing and obedient of mankind.

But the matter of separating the human family into different nationalities has been specially useful during the dark time preceding Messiah's Second Coming. More **[R5161 : page 13]** or less the nations have been occupied in watching each other and guarding themselves against each other. The barrier of language for centuries served to keep apart peoples living in close proximity, to hinder the running to and fro which has been going on, particularly within the last seventy years, since steam power became effective for transportation.

The commingling of all nations within the last sixty years is breaking down the national barriers wonderfully. It is fulfilling the word of prophecy, "My determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms." (Zephaniah 3:8.) The world of mankind is being brought into close touch, barriers of language are breaking down; and the breaking down of these barriers is favorable to human co-operation, either for good or for evil. Since mankind are sinners by nature, their co-operation is most likely to be along selfish lines, and therefore most likely to be evil.

So we find today that rich corporations are building together a great Tower of Babel for their protection against every kind of calamity which could come upon their riches. The laboring classes are doing likewise. The mechanics are building up a great Tower of Babel of Unionism, which they trust will deliver them from all adversity and in which they hope to be safe forever. Had it not been for the dispersion and for the language-barriers, no doubt these world-wide organizations of Capital and Labor would have developed long ago and the final great catastrophe or conflict between these great giants would have come so much the sooner, precipitating all its terrible anguish and disaster on humanity – **[R5161 : page 14]** "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation." – Daniel 12:1.

FIRE, THE NEXT CALAMITY

St. Peter divides the history of mankind into three great Epochs, called "worlds" in our common version Bible, but more properly designated three great Epochs. The first Epoch of earth's experience ended with the Flood, and then the present Epoch began, styled by St. Paul "this present evil world," or Epoch, because during this time evil holds preponderance of power amongst men, even though they do their best.

The first Epoch, or order of things, was overwhelmed and brought to an end by a deluge of water; and St. Peter tells us that the

present "world," or order of things, is to be brought to a conclusion by a deluge of "fire." But following the fire, there will be a new "world" or new Epoch, or order of things, much better than anything yet experienced by mankind. "The world to come whereof we speak" will be an Epoch of righteousness, because it will be under the direct rule and supervision of Messiah's Kingdom." – 2 Peter 3:10-13.

At first many Bible students were inclined to understand St. Peter's words to signify that the fire which will terminate the present order of things and usher in the New Age would be a literal fire, which would consume the physical earth and the heavens. However, closer study reveals the fact that the fire is of symbolic kind, which will merely consume present institutions – everything of the present time that is contrary to the Divine will – everything that is unjust, inequitable.

The "elements" which "will melt with fervent heat" will be the capitalistic and labor elements, and the strife between these, the friction, is already great. A little more and it will burst into a flame, as St. Peter prophesied. The "heavens" that will be involved will not be the Heavens of God's residence, but the ecclesiastical heavens – the church institutions. These will become involved in the strife between Capital and Labor, and they also will perish in that trouble time. But, thank God! the New Dispensation will, in the midst of the trouble, intervene; and it will prove to be as prophesied: "The desire of all nations." – Haggai 2:7.

As Noah and his family were the only ones spared from the physical wreck of the old order of things before the Flood, so St. Peter intimates that Christ Jesus is the Ark of Safety now for all who will be saved out of the present order of things. Christ's faithful followers of all denominations and nations will become, with Him, the Royal Priesthood of the future – the "new heavens" – the spiritual ruling power of the New Dispensation, or Messiah's

Kingdom. Under their supervision, speedily a "new earth" – a new social order – will be inaugurated, in which selfishness will be wholly eliminated, and in which righteousness will prevail. Of this new order of things we read: "We look for a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." – 2 Peter 3:13.

Although, doubtless, many human lives will be lost in that greatest trouble the world has ever known, with which this Age will end, nevertheless the great mass of humanity will still remain. But all their ingenious arrangements of the present time, social, financial and ecclesiastical, will have perished, and everything will have been put upon a new basis by the Great Messiah.

The Lord, in the prophecy of Zephaniah, describes the time of trouble that is coming, as a fire to consume; and then tells us that following the fiery baptism of trouble, He will send to mankind "a pure Message, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord to serve Him with one consent." (Zephaniah 3:9.) This teaches that mankind will not be wholly destroyed by the fiery trouble of that Day, but it teaches that the confusion of doctrines given forth in the name of the Lord will all terminate with this present Age. The Message of Divine grace and Truth which will be promulgated in the future will be pure, and the blessing to all who will receive it will be great.

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