

4. The Spirit in the Age of the Flood

Passing on to the sixth chapter of Genesis, we encounter specific mention of the work of the Spirit in the antediluvian age. "And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all that they chose. And Jehovah said, My Spirit shall not strive with man for ever, for that he is also flesh: yet shall his days be a hundred and twenty years" (Gen. 6:1-3). Here we have a picture of the ungodly antediluvian world, floundering in a cesspool of iniquity as a result of the intermingling of the pious Sethites ("sons of God," *i.e.*, in the Messianic Line) and the irreligious Cainites ("daughters of men"). It is invariably the case that when the good intermingles with the bad, on the level of the bad, the badness spreads and becomes quite general; and the case of the antediluvians was no exception to the rule. "And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. . . . And Jehovah said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the ground," etc. (Gen. 6:5, 7). Wickedness had become universal; those who had once been God's people were being consumed with iniquity, were spending both day and night in riotous living. But there was one exception,—Noah, the son of Lamech and grandson of Methuselah. "These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, and perfect in his generation: Noah walked with God" (Gen. 6:9). "Noah found favor in the eyes of Jehovah" (Gen. 6:8).

It will be noted that God said, "My Spirit [not the divine principle of life breathed into man at his creation, but the *Ruach Elohim*, the Spirit of God of Gen. 1:2] shall not strive with man for ever"; but that He immediately added the qualifying statement, "Yet shall his days be a hundred and twenty years." We infer from these pronouncements that the Spirit of God had been "striving" with the antediluvian world for some time, probably from as far back as the time of Enoch. But in view of the fact that the antediluvians continued to reject the testimony of the Spirit and to persist in their rebelliousness and vice, God finally determined that this "striv-

ing" should not go on for ever. The Almighty, however, has always tempted justice with mercy; and in this case He decreed that the unbelieving and rebellious race should be given one hundred and twenty years of grace. In substance God's decree was this: "My Spirit shall not go on striving with these wicked people for ever. Yet I shall give them another one hundred and twenty years of grace. If they do not, in that time, heed the Spirit's testimony and repent of their sins, I will destroy them from the face of the earth."

Hence, the question arises at this point: *How, or by what means, did the Spirit strive with the ungodly antediluvian race?* This question is clearly answered in the New Testament, in 1 Pet. 3:18-22. Here the Apostle says: "Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit," etc. This is the reading of the American Revised Version. The Authorized Version gives it: "beng put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." The difference is in the capitalization of the "s" in "spirit"; the Old Version gives it, "Spirit"; the Revised Version, "spirit." Is the reference here to the Spirit of God or to the "holy human spirit of Christ"? To my way of thinking, this is largely a distinction without a difference, for the simple reason that the "holy human spirit" of Christ was so absolutely possessed by the Holy Spirit that, in Scripture, the terms "Holy Spirit" and "Spirit of Christ" are used interchangeably. Besides, we are told explicitly in Rom. 8:9, 11, that Jesus was raised up, made alive, quickened, by the power of the Spirit of God: "But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. . . . But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you." Moreover, it is obvious from this passage that the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ are one and the same Spirit. This conclusion is further corroborated, as we have seen already, by the language of Acts 16:6-7, and by a correlation of 1 Pet. 1:10 with 2 Pet. 1:21. All these Scriptures are sufficient to prove that the Spirit of Christ was the Holy Spirit. God did not give the Spirit *by measure* unto His Only

Begotten Son; on the contrary, God gave Him the Spirit without measure (John 3:34).

Continuing, then, our exegesis of 1 Peter 3:18-22, we read: "Being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which [*i.e.*, in the person and power of which] also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, that aforetime were disobedient," etc. Christ was put to death in the flesh, that is, His body died and was buried in Joseph's tomb; but He was made alive by the Spirit. By what Spirit? By the Spirit of God, of course. "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8:11). What can this passage mean but that the same Divine Spirit that raised Christ from the dead will eventually overcome mortality in all the saints as well: the ultimate end of the Plan of Redemption being that "what is mortal may be swallowed up of life" (2 Cor. 5:4)? Hence we read elsewhere that Christ "was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). And again: "So also it is written, The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit" (I Cor. 15:45). It is impossible to draw any hard and fast lines of demarcation between the "holy human spirit of Christ," "the Spirit of Christ," and "the Holy Spirit." And if the Scriptures teach anything at all, they teach that Christ was raised up from the dead by the agency of the Spirit of God.

Now, says Peter, by this Spirit, that is, in the person and power of the Spirit of God, Christ went and preached unto the spirits in prison. Three questions obtrude themselves at this point: 1. To what "spirits" was this preaching done? 2. In what "prison" were they? 3. When did all this occur?

To what spirits (persons) was this preaching done, by Christ, in the person of, or by the agency of, the Spirit of God? The next few words give us the answer to this question: They were the "spirits in prison,, that aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water." Certainly the Apostle in this instance is writing about the spirits in prison in the

time of Noah while the ark was in process of being built. In other words, Christ went, in the person of the Spirit of God, or by the agency of the Spirit of God, and delivered the Divine call to repentance to the antediluvian world. This is the only exegesis that is in harmony with the teaching of the sixth chapter of Genesis.

Now in what sense were the people of Noah's day "in prison"? Isaiah speaking prophetically of the work of the Messiah, said that God would send Him "for a light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house." Cf. Isa. 29:18—"And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness." Also Isa. 35:5—"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped." These passages are all quoted in various places in the New Testament as having reference to Christ. Consider again Isa. 61:1—"The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me; because Jehovah hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Jesus quoted this prophecy on one occasion, at the beginning of His public ministry, and stated expressly: "Today hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:18-21). The ungodly and unsaved are, and have always been, in the prison-house of sin; and it is the special work of the Divine Logos in every age to open the prison to them that are bound and to bring them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house. The ungodly antediluvians were in this same prison-house of iniquity, and the One whom we know as Christ went, through the Spirit, to call them to repentance.

Thus it becomes quite evident that the preaching referred to by the Apostle in the Scripture passage before us was done to the antediluvian world. Then, how, and by what means, and through what instrumentality, did the Spirit communicate the message of the Eternal Word to the people who lived on earth in the days of Noah? The answer is obvious: the *means* was the spoken Word; the *instrumentality* was Noah. There may have been other instrumentalities in earlier ages, other prophets, that is: no doubt Enoch was one of them. However,

God's preacher to the generation immediately preceding the Deluge was Noah. "For if God spared not the angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the ancient world, but preserved Noah with seven others, a preacher of righteousness, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly," etc. (2 Pet. 2:4-5). "By faith Noah being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; through which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith" (Heb. 11:7). Since "belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17), we conclude that the word of Christ came to Noah through the agency of the Spirit, and that Noah in turn proclaimed it to the ungodly world around him. Noah, like other holy men of old, "spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21). The Spirit, in other words, did not strive with the wicked antediluvian world in some mysterious, unexplainable manner; on the contrary, He strove with sinners through the medium of the Word of Christ and through the instrumentality of Noah, a preacher of righteousness in his day, who proclaimed the Word. Noah's testimony continued over a period of one hundred and twenty years, but the people believed him not. They continued in their wicked way, eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage, thus rejecting the testimony of the Spirit, until the Flood came and destroyed them all. When the Deluge came, the Spirit ceased His striving with the antediluvians, and, with the exception of Noah and his immediate family, judgment came upon them to destruction.

Thus Noah's name has gone down in the sacred chronicles as that of a "preacher of righteousness." That he was a prophet in the fullest sense of the term is further evident from Gen. 9:25-27. Here we find a remarkable prophecy which was uttered by Noah in his declining years, the occasion for which was a manifestation of disrespect on the part of his son Ham, a character-trait which would seem to have been handed down by heredity to Canaan, the son of Ham. (Cf. Gen. 6:10, 5:32; Deut. 27:16, Lev. 20:9, Ezek. 22:7. The name "Ham" is given variously as meaning "hot," "black," etc. "He was regarded as the eponymous ancestor of the African peoples, as

Japheth his brother was of the Indo-Europeans, and Shem of the Semites."¹ Rotherham writes: "Undoubtedly Canaan and not Ham: Shem and Japheth, for their piety, are blessed; Canaan, for some unnamed baseness, is cursed; Ham, for his neglect, is neglected."² The prophecy gives in bold outlines the fortunes of the three great races of mankind—the Hamitic, Semitic, and Japhetic—throughout the entire scope of human history. The prophecy reads thus: "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. . . . Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant. God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant." History discloses the fact that the details of this prophecy have been fulfilled to the very letter: (1) the story of many of the Hamitic peoples has been that of idolatry, backwardness and servitude, from the most ancient times down to the present; (2) the Canaanites were actually subjugated by the Hebrews under Joshua and his successors; (3) the Japhetic peoples have actually spread over the whole earth. And they have literally dwelt in the tents of Shem, first, as physical conquerors, possessors, and rulers of the Holy Land and other originally Semitic areas; second, as participants spiritually in the blessings and privileges of the New Covenant, which includes Gentiles as well as Jews. That Noah was a prophet of the first rank is amply demonstrated by the historic fulfilment of these prophetic statements uttered in the very infancy of the race. And by virtue of his being a prophet, we can only conclude that Noah "spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit." For where there is prophecy, there the Spirit is at work.

Two important lessons stand out for us in what we have learned thus far from the book of Genesis regarding the Spirit and His work. The first is that *the Spirit cannot be resisted by material things*. In the operations of the Spirit upon and within the physical universe there is no recalcitrance on the part of the latter; when the Word of God was spoken, matter obeyed. There was no opposition, no rebelliousness, no delay. Into the primordial chaos and darkness came the Spirit of God, bringing the Word; and the moment each succeeding Divine decree was issued, all Nature hastened to comply.

1. Harper's *Bible Dictionary*, D.V.
2. *Emphasized Bible*, 41, n.

When God said, "Let there be light," there *was* light. Whatever God said, at the beginning of each epoch of Creation, was done. The stars did not presume to dissent, nor did the planets refuse to march at the Divine command. But we must never lose sight of the fact that any grammatical arrangement of words is constituted the Word of God only by the agency of the Spirit: to be the Word of God they must have been revealed by the Spirit, they must have been God-breathed. Thus the Spirit is in them, giving power to them, bestowing upon them the sanction of His authority. For all practical purposes, the Thought-power, Word-power, and Spirit-power of God are one and the same. And so when holy men of old spoke the Word of God—the Word inspired by the Spirit—miracles were performed. Moses, for instance, spoke the Word of God (or stretched out his rod, which was a symbol of the Word), inspired by the Spirit, and signs were wrought which astonished Pharaoh and his pagan court. Similarly, Jesus, who possessed the Spirit without measure, had only to speak the Word, and the sick were restored to health, the lame were healed, the deaf were made to hear, and the blind to see, demons were cast out, tempests were calmed, the fig-tree was blasted, multitudes were fed with a few morsels of food, and even the dead were raised up. When God's Word, as revealed by is Spirit, is spoken, Nature has to obey. So when this Word shall be spoken in the finality of human history, the universe will roll up as a parchment and the temporal process will come to an end. Nature is powerless to resist the Spirit and the Word.

The second lesson is that *the Spirit of God can be resisted by human will*. A person is the only entity in the universe who can resist the Spirit. The fact that man was endowed by creation with an infinitesimal portion of the Spirit's attributes (Gen. 2:7) makes him a self-conscious and self-determining creature. Man is akin to God because he was created in God's image. Possessing the essential elements of personality, he has the ability to hear, weigh, think, understand, reason, decide, choose, and *reject* if he be so disposed. These very powers make him a man: without them he would be either an automaton or a brute. When the Holy Spirit operated in the world of things, His voice was the law from which there was no appeal. He spoke, and it was done; He com-

manded, and it stood fast. But alas! when He began to operate in the world of fallen and rebellious human beings, He found His testimony ridiculed and rejected by them. He found His preacher, Noah, despised and persecuted of men. When He operated, later on, in the Jewish nation, He encountered the same recalcitrance; like the Son of God, He came unto His own and His own received Him not. As Stephen said to the mob that was bent on killing him, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51). So did the antediluvian world which sank to destruction under the waters of the Flood. So did ancient Israel, destroyed by storm and fire, and scattered to the ends of the earth. So do thousands, yea millions, of people in our day resist, reject and neglect the testimony of the Spirit. So do thousands of professing Christians, lukewarm, form-loving, ritual-following, indifferent, proud and cold, spineless and worldly, grieve the Holy Spirit of God. So do many others who make the start in the Christian life but soon drift back into the world, do despite unto the Spirit of grace and count the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified an unholy thing! Preoccupied as they are with the things of this present world, the things of time and sense, they are totally unmindful of the awful truth that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31).

5. The Spirit and the Fathers of the Hebrew People

Traditionally, the fathers of the Hebrew People were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (cf. Matt. 8:11). To these three, however, the name of Joseph should be added, whose life-story takes up the last fourteen chapters of the book of Genesis.

On examination we find that God Himself, in a vision to Abimelech, King of Gerar, alluded to Abraham as a prophet: "Now therefore restore the man's wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live" (Gen. 20:7; cf. 1 Sam. 7:5, Job 42:8). Being a prophet, Abraham was in a special sense a "man of the Spirit." This truth is further corroborated by the numerous instances in Scripture in which God is represented as having communicated with him personally (cf. Gen. 12:1-3, 13:14-17, 15:1-21, 17:1-21, 22:1ff., 22:15-18, etc.).