

THE WATERS OF NOAH.

THE thoughts of the Lord are not as our thoughts. In one point this may be seen in the contrast between the largeness of the Lord's, and the littleness of man's thoughts about Noah. What a little place does Noah hold in the mind of man! and how, even among good men, is the instruction to be derived from his history, narrowed down to some one or two points: but how large a place does his history occupy in the Divine mind, and how many different lessons is it made to teach! Thus, in 1 Pet. iii.—The Spirit, as it were, looks back to the deluge and bids the saint trace the correspondence between the mode of salvation by the ark in the one case and the fellowship with Christ crucified and risen in the other.

Again in 2 Pet. iii. the Spirit, looking at the course of present outward things, turns from it to the deluge, and argues of judgment to come, &c. &c. &c.

In Isaiah liv. *the Waters of Noah* are spoken of in another way still, viz. in connection with Israel's day of trouble.—(ver. 8,) "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...Behold they shall surely gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall...I have created the waster to destroy."

That Israel is to be in deep affliction *from the peoples*, previous to the Lord's return to deliver them, is well known. This trouble is referred to here—waters, in the figurative language of prophecy, meaning peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues.

In attempting to call attention to one or two points connected with that time, I desire to leave UNSTATED my own view of the "where will the church be in the time of that great tribulation?" My wish is so to speak as that if there were three persons present—one of whom thought that that which is now the church would have died away,—a second who considered that it would be scattered, perhaps, but still in the great tribulation,—and a third who believed it to have been previously caught up to meet the Lord in the air; none of them might either be pained by or differ from my statement, or be able to judge from it my thought, concerning that other question, "Where shall we be then?" I do this ADVISEDLY; because, first, the points to which I advert are of much independent interest; and secondly, there is too strong a tendency among us, on any point's being mooted, to consider its bearing upon *us*, and not upon the Lord.

One peculiarity of that which we call the church is, that in it there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free. Col. iii. 2; see also Eph. ii. 11—19.

To my own mind then, wherever such distinctions are recognized...that in which they are so, is not identical with "the Church."

Now throughout a large part of the Revelations (say from chap. vi. onward to xviii.) there seems to me to be a distinction kept up, not only between Jew and Gentile "as parties in the world" but between Jew and Gentile "as the objects and receivers of testimony."

Thus in chap. 7, I find a sealing of "the servants of our God in their foreheads"; and there were sealed 144,000 of all the tribes of the children of Israel, of each tribe 12,000. Here there is a distinct recognition of *Jews* as servants of God, and consequently there is the setting of Gentiles as such apart by themselves. These 144,000 are sealed for protection from providential visitation.

Again I see no reason to call in question the popular explanation of "the seed of the woman," chap. xii., as being Jews.

Concerning this body I would notice two things; first as to what they are;—they are servants of God...sealed in their foreheads, and they keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus, chap. xii. 17. These scriptures suffice to convince me these stand in conscious separation to God and in affection to the Lord. But secondly, what is the work of God in connection with them? Not actions of long-suffering grace, but of holy avenging power.

It is said of the two witnesses (chap. xi. 5.), "if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies and IF ANY MAN WILL HURT THEM *he must in this manner be killed.* These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy; and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will."

The acts of these two witnesses lead the mind to those of Moses and Elias,—the former a witness for God with His people against the infidelity and wrong use of civil power in Egypt's king: the other a witness for God against His people's apostacy in ecclesiastical things.

Now these actings of the witnesses give a peculiar light to the position of these enlightened Jewish servants. Their works are righteous and holy, not long-suffering and gracious.

Such acts were not of old His who went about doing good, nor of His servants Peter, Paul, or John. And every one would feel shocked if I were to say, "hear a specimen of long-suffering grace, worthy of our gospel," and then were to read of Moses turning the water to blood, or smiting the earth with plagues; or again of Elias shutting the heaven, or calling down fire from heaven. Grace is grace, and judgment is judgment, and they may not be confounded.

To my own mind then, the actions of these witnesses, who ascend up to heaven in a cloud, suggest that they are not at all in the same position morally as is the Church. While at the same time, as I said before, the taking up of a Jewish set of servants in some sense sets the Gentiles in separateness again. And throughout chap. xiii. and xv., I think I see many traces of testimony to them as Gentiles of every kin-

dred, tongue, and nation, and proofs, too, happy and sufficient, that the testimony is not in vain, but that a remnant of Gentiles as such pass through the great tribulation, and are taken up to the Lord.

That the Jews referred to are distinct from the remnant saved as the seed of the earth for the coming dispensation is, I think, commonly admitted. With regard to mercy to the Gentiles, there seems to me a double tale also. The contrast between the Gentiles referred to, and the Jew, suggests to my own mind that the testimony is to Gentiles as such, and not to the Church in which there is neither Jew nor Gentile.

But I would notice there is also a definite mention of another kind of mercy to some of the Gentiles found in rebellion against Jerusalem,—“And it shall come to pass, *that* every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.” Zech. xiv. 16.

Seven years I held with tenacity that “the saints,” and “the kindreds, tongues, and nations,” mentioned in Rev. and Dan., must include “the Church;” I have now seen cause to question this upon the ground of the dispensational changes connected with that time: NOW it is neither “Jew nor Gentile,” THEN it is “Jew and Gentile;” NOW it is “suffering,” THEN it is “self-defence;” NOW Satan is in the heavenlies, THEN he will have been cast out.

May the saints weigh these things.

I speak only of the crisis.