

THE COVENANT OF MY PEACE

In the days of Noah, men were exceedingly wicked, and the Lord took note of their wickedness. The Scriptures say, “And GOD 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.” (Genesis 6:5) The Lord is patient, but His patience has its limits. The Lord said, “My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.” (Genesis 6:3) The Lord would give mankind one-hundred and twenty years, three generations, to change their ways, or be destroyed, and He sent Noah, a righteous man, to call them to repentance. Men did not repent, however, and they continued in their wicked ways. They were so violent, they would destroy each other, if God did not destroy them first. So, the Lord sent upon the earth a great flood, killing every man, but saving Noah and his household. The Lord removed sinful men, and so purified the world. This was the world’s baptism, the beginning of its salvation.

After the Great Flood, the Lord vowed never again to destroy the world. He said, “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.” (Genesis 8:21) Concerning this vow, the Lord made a covenant with Noah and his sons, and with all mankind. He said “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.” (Genesis 9:11) In this Noahic covenant, which some have called the Covenant of Providence, and some the Covenant of Preservation, the Lord promised never again to destroy the world, and He gave the rainbow as the sign of His covenant promise. The Noahic covenant is unbreakable, because God is, in respect of His word, immovable. If the Lord cannot by nature tolerate sin, and if He cannot by covenant destroy the world, then He is bound to redeem the world.

As in the days of Noah, so in the days of the Divided Kingdom of Israel, men were exceedingly wicked. As the Lord sent Noah to preach repentance to mankind, so the Lord sent prophets, prophets like Isaiah, to preach repentance to His covenant people. As in the days of Noah, so in the days of the prophets men did not repent. As in the days of Noah, so in the days of the prophets, the Lord punished wicked men. He Lord sent the army of Assyria to conquer the northern kingdom of Israel and carry the people away into exile, and He sent the army of Babylon to conquer the southern kingdom of Judah, and to carry the people away into exile. The army of Babylon overwhelmed Judah like a flood, and destroyed Jerusalem, the capital city, and the temple there. As the Great Flood purified the earth, so the Bablonian army purified Judah, destroying wicked men, but leaving a righteous remnant. The Lord is severe, but He is also merciful. The Lord judged His people, but He also gave them great hope. Through Isaiah the prophet, the Lord said to the people:

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. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.
(Isaiah 54:9, 10)

As the Lord in Noah’s time promised never again to destroy the world, so He in Isaiah’s time promised never again to judge His people as He did in the days of the Divided Monarchy, and He never breaks a promise. This Covenant of Peace is as sure as His Covenant of Providence. The mountains may be shaken, but His lovingkindness toward His people can never be shaken.

In the days of Jesus, the people of God again were wicked. Although Jesus is the Son of God, and the son of David, His own people, the Jews, rejected Him. Jesus, like Noah, and like Isaiah, called upon the people to repent. Yet, as with Noah and with Isaiah, so with Jesus: the people would not listen. The religious leaders of Israel, with the support of the mob of people, would demand that the Romans crucify Jesus. So, Jesus warned them that the Lord would judge the Jews. He said that there would come a time of great trouble, a time of terrible judgment, and that it would come upon the generation of Jews that rejected Him. He said, "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (Matthew 24:34, 35) One generation after the Jews crucified Jesus, Jesus sent the Roman army to destroy the city of Jerusalem and the temple there. This was no judgment upon His people, however; no violation of the Covenant of Peace. For the Jews then, as a people, were no longer God's people. The church, which comprises all people, both Jew and Gentile, have since Pentecost been His people, and the Lord preserved them from the Great Tribulation. The Lord's loving kindness never departs from His people, the Church of Jesus Christ.

Now unto the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.