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*For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;
he shall set me up upon a rock.*

—Psalm 27:5

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MEDITATION

And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth. And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth. As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go?

—Exodus 9:13–17

Between the sixth plague and the seventh plague, God sent Moses to stand before Pharaoh early in the morning with a solemn declaration. The declaration began as the previous declarations had, with God's command to Pharaoh: "Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me." But the declaration continued with two dreadful announcements.

First, God announced to Pharaoh that the end had come for Pharaoh and Egypt. Very shortly they would be destroyed. The plagues had been falling upon Egypt for some time by now, perhaps several months or more. But now God would empty out the cup of his wrath upon Pharaoh swiftly. The last four plagues would come in rapid succession. "For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart." The effect of these plagues would be to smite Pharaoh and Egypt with such death and destruction as they could not imagine. "For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth." The word translated *pestilence* is not used here to mean a disease but is used in its more basic sense of *death*. The terrible thunder-hail, the cloud of locusts, the thick darkness, and the destruction of the firstborn would now fall upon Egypt blow upon terrible blow, with no respite between.

Second, God announced Pharaoh's reprobation. God announced Pharaoh's reprobation by announcing his purpose with Pharaoh. "And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power." The power that God showed in Pharaoh was not merely God's power to take life, as tremendous as that power is. Nor was the power that God showed in Pharaoh merely God's power to bring down a powerful kingdom, as tremendous as that power is. Rather, the power that God showed in Pharaoh was God's power to harden a man according to God's reprobation of that man. This is the apostle's explanation of God's announcement: "whom he will he hardeneth" (see Rom. 9:17–18). What was God's purpose in creating Pharaoh? What was God's purpose in raising Pharaoh to be the most powerful king in the world? What was God's purpose in commanding Pharaoh to let Israel go? God's purpose in all of it was to show to all men that God has the sovereign right to do with each man exactly what God wills. Whom God wills to save, he saves. And whom God wills to harden, he hardens. Behold the mighty Pharaoh, who was raised for the very cause of being hardened according to God's righteous decree of reprobation. "And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power."

All the world would hear the name of the sovereign Jehovah. In Jericho they would hear

and be terrified (Josh. 2:9–11). In Edom they would hear and be amazed. In Moab they would hear and tremble. In Canaan they would hear and melt away (Ex. 15:15). Even in hell the devils would hear and tremble (James 2:19). All men everywhere must know that God is God, and there is no other.

Ah, yes! God is God, and there is no other! For Pharaoh and the devils and Edom and Moab it is dreadful news. For whom he will he hardeneth. But for Israel, for the church, it is glad

tidings of great joy. For God is God! And he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy (Rom. 9:18). “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy” (Rom. 9:16). What good news for you and me, who can never will perfectly enough or run hard enough. Salvation has not come by the works of the law but by the faith of Jesus Christ, in whom God has chosen his elect people as vessels of mercy.

—AL

HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S *BANNER* ARTICLES

The Banner

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(Pp. 357–58)

Our Doctrine by Rev. H. Hoeksema

Article XXXV. The Fallen King and His Kingdom (continued)

A few articles we intended to devote to a discussion of the historical development of the fallen king and his kingdom as traced in Scripture. We found that also the seed of the serpent exists and develops in this dispensation according to the subjective principle of the law of sin and death, and that under the external influence of the blessings of God's grace. They do not constitute the real organism of the human race, for the main line of this organism in its developments runs thru the seed of the woman. But they are to the seed of the woman what the chaff is for the wheat. They partake of the natural organic life of the race, for all have their common root in Adam. They also participate in the blessings of God's covenant for this entire historical dispensation, receive the overflow of these blessings, and just because of the rain of these blessings upon them they can develop according to the principle of sin, along organic lines, till thru them the root-sin of paradise reaches its climax in the man of sin. And it is the history of this development of the principle of sin in the line of the seed of the

serpent which we will briefly trace as it is revealed in Scripture.

In this development of the kingdom of the world under the law of sin and death we may, I think, distinguish especially three periods also in harmony with Scripture's presentation. The first of these three periods is rather definitely marked off as it terminates in the flood and covers approximately sixteen centuries. Not so inappropriately Blackstone in his “Jesus is Coming” designates this entire period as the period of freedom. The second period would cover approximately twenty-five hundred years, extending from the deluge, more particularly from the building of the tower of Babel, to the definite decline and ultimate fall of the Roman Empire and might be called the era of the world-kingdoms. The people of God are isolated and exert no appreciable influence upon the life of the world, while the world-power attempts to realize itself in kingdom after kingdom. The third period extends from the decline of the Roman empire, which takes place contemporaneously with the entering of the exalted Christ into the world, to

the final development and manifestation of the man of sin and the battle of Armageddon in the future. It is this period which is evidently characterized in Revelation 20 as the time of the reign of the saints with Christ.

Of the first period, the period of “the first world,” Scripture speaks but very briefly. Yet, a true understanding of this pre-deluvian age is significant. Let us notice in the first place some of the general characteristics of this early period of history. First of all it may be remarked that in this period the blessings of God’s grace are allowed to flow almost without restraint upon the seed of the serpent. Of course, they also descend upon the seed of the woman, but we wish to trace the development of the kingdom of the world under the principle of sin, not that of the main line of the covenant, and therefore, we must now speak of the influence of these blessings upon the seed of the serpent. And, then, we repeat that this period is characterized by an abundant flow of the blessings of God’s grace almost without any restraint. This has often been overlooked. The general impression often seems to be, that the blessings of God’s grace began to flow more abundantly after the flood, when the covenant with Noah was revealed. And, considered from the point of view of the positive development of the covenant, there is an element of truth in such a conception. There surely was a change after the flood. There is a difference between the life of the world in the pre-deluvian and that of the post-deluvian period, and the change was undoubtedly a blessing for the development of the covenant of God. But from the point of view of the world-power it was different. The changes that are made after the flood consist chiefly in this, that the free development of life in the world is restrained and hence the progress of the development of sin is being checked. For the rest, it was before the flood that the blessings of God’s grace overflowed most freely upon the seed of the serpent. That this is true, is evident in the first place from the fact that there was no specially instituted authority of government. Of course, there must have been some natural authority of the one

over the other, of the parent over the child, the patriarch over his tribe. But this belonged to the natural development of the human race. It was no restraint. The development of life was free. It was allowed to run its own course. And it was not until after the flood that this free development was placed under restraint by the special command of God, that whosoever sheds man’s blood, his blood shall be shed by man. In the second place, there was no such manifestation of the power of corruption and death before the flood as after. Man lived to be nearly a thousand years old. At least this is told us of the line of Seth. And that these ages were at least as long in the line of Cain may easily be surmised. This fact alone already presupposes in the first place that there must have been men of tremendous physical strength, giants over whom death seemed to have no power. And thus we read, that in those days before the flood, at the time when the sons of God and the daughters of men began to intermarry, there were giants, mighty men of renown in the earth. Besides, these long ages naturally would create the opportunity for tremendous individual development. In the present day the development of the individual covers but a few decades and no matter how great genius one may be, his development is very limited by the short time he is allowed to live in the earth. But at that time a man of a couple hundred years was still a youth and could develop his powers and talents for hundreds of years to come. It was not till after the flood that there is a rather sudden decline in power and a noticeable reduction of the number of years of the individual. And finally, before the flood there was as yet no division of the human race into nations, and national barriers did not exist. They all spoke one language and they were not separated by national pride and prejudice from one another. Also this is changed soon after the flood, when God from heaven laughs at the bold attempt of the world power and separates them, scattering them over the earth. In a word, life before the flood from every point of view was far more free and unrestrained in its development and course than in the post-deluvian times. The blessings of God’s

grace flowed very freely, also upon the seed of the serpent.

In the second place it is, no doubt, a general characteristic of the period before the flood, that the power of sin develops with astounding rapidity. So fast is the development of sin during this period that already after little more than sixteen centuries it becomes necessary to destroy that first world by the flood. You will realize the significance of this fact if you observe that since the flood the world has existed and developed for more than four thousand years without having as yet become ripe for judgment. Before the flood it took only sixteen centuries to ripen the power of iniquity and to reach such a stage of development of sin that the Lord righteously could destroy them all, except the single family of Noah. After the flood a period of forty centuries passes by and still the time for judgment is not come. The development of sin was, therefore, much more rapid than in our own times. And the reason for this is not far to be sought. It lies exactly in the more unrestrained flow of the blessings of God. It is, of course, not possible that essentially man is better in our day than he was before the deluge. But the rich blessings of God's grace overflowed freely upon the seed of the serpent, and under the influence of this unrestrained flow of blessings the principle of sin developed rapidly. To refer to the illustration employed by the sacred writer of Hebrews 6:4–8 once again, the more abundantly the blessings of rain and sunshine are bestowed upon the seed of the thorn and thistle in the field, the more readily the seed will sprout and the more luxuriantly the thorn will grow. In the bare and dry Sahara the weed cannot flourish. But where the soil is rich and rain and sunshine appear in due season it grows most splendidly. The same is true in regard to the seed of sin. The richer the outward blessings of God's grace the more opportunity it has to develop. And since God allowed pre-deluvian life to develop freely, practically without any external restraint, the result was an amazing progress of sin in the world.

If we consider some of the details that are recorded concerning this period in Scripture, we may observe in the first place, that the main line of the human race is presented as running, not in the line of Cain, or the seed of the serpent, but in that of the generations of Seth. True, up to Lamech and his powerful and talented sons the generations of Cain are traced too, but not as if they represented the true human organism according to the election. For strikingly we read in Gen. 5:1, "This is the book of the generations of Adam," and then follows simply a brief record of the generations of Seth, while those of Cain are not included. In the second place, it cannot escape our attention that not in the line of Seth's generations but in that of Cain we meet with the greatest and most splendid manifestation of human development. In the line of Cain we meet with the attempt to have dominion over the world, and to develop human power. Of Cain we are told that he built a city, that symbol of organized social life, that very hearth of progress and civilization. In Lamech we meet perhaps with the climax of that imposing progress. His bold speech witnesses of conscious power and human attainment from a carnal aspect. His wives were perhaps among the fairest and most influential of women. And his sons are the fathers of industry and art. Jabal becomes the father of pioneers and of those that live in tents. Jubal is a talented musician and inventor of musical instruments. Tubal-Cain is a powerful worker in iron and brass. In the line of the reprobate, in Cain's generation we meet with the best of human talent, with the greatest gifts of human genius, and the progress of industry and art, of civilization in general, reserves its impetus from them. But, in the third place, it is also there that we find the development of sin in all its forms. The principle of grace is lacking, and all the rich bestowal of these outward blessings becomes a curse. Cain commits deliberate murder. Not possessing the principle of grace like his brother Abel, he cannot bring the sacrifice of repentance that is pleasing to God, and in his own self-righteous way he seeks to serve God,

disregarding the fact that the Lord of heaven and of earth cannot receive the naked sinner. And when day after day Abel receives testimony from the Lord, while his own offering is rejected, he reveals the principle of sin within him by committing fratricide. With Lamech we find for the first time mention of polygamy. Carnal lusts begin to dominate and the original ordinance of creation is violated. His well known address to his wives reveals the height of self-exaltation and autocratic tyranny. And if we take in consideration the testimony which Enoch, a contemporary of Lamech and his sons, bore against that entire generation, we conclude that the power of sin had reached an awful stage of development.

And finally we notice that the factor of amalgamation thru intermarriage enters in, and the two lines of Seth and Cain merge almost into one. The beauty of the daughters of men together with the indeed imposing development of civilization in the line of Cain attracted the sons of God, the lines of demarcation are gradually wiped out, and it soon seems as if the seed of the serpent is to have complete control of all the world and before long the seed of the woman will be exterminated. It is then that the time for judgment is ripe and God sends the deluge, to punish the unrepentant world, but no less to save His kingdom and covenant in the ark.

—Holland, Mich.



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