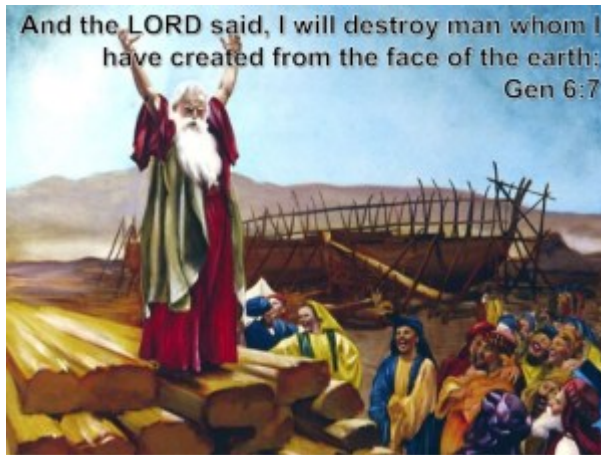


The Divine Programme of The World's History Chapter II. The Noahic Programme. – Part I



Continued from [The Divine Programme of The World's History Chapter I. The Adamic Programme. – Part II.](#)

THE voice of prophecy was not altogether silent in the intervals between the seven successive commencements of human history of which we have spoken. From time to time it gave utterance to isolated predictions—such, for example, as that of Enoch about the coming of the Lord with ten thousands of His saints to judge the wicked—a very glorious prophecy, yet one which had in view exhortation and warning rather than definite prediction. It was no chart of future events, it did not foretell the course of human history, but only the moral aspects of its final issues. As such detached and hortatory (tending or aiming to exhort) prophecies do not form parts of the programme we have to consider, we do not pause to dwell on this utterance of “the seventh from Adam,” who was translated that he should not see death.

With the second father of the human family the *definitely predictive element* reappears. Not only was the approaching end of the antediluvian age made known to Noah—not only was he acquainted beforehand with the purpose of God to destroy by a flood the evil generation which had corrupted the earth—but he was informed also of the exact chronological distance of the deluge. It was not to overtake the world for a hundred and twenty years: thus far would the longsuffering of God wait, if men would perchance be warned and repent. This is the first chronological prophecy in the Bible, and it indicated in advance the end of the antediluvian age. We shall see, as we proceed, that all the other chronologic predictions of Scripture similarly throw their light forward to the *close* of the different ages to which they respectively belong.

Moved with fear—the fear born of faith—Noah prepared an ark to the saving of his house, and while doing so acted as “a preacher of righteousness” to the evil generation in whose midst his lot was cast. His knowledge of the approaching end of the age in which he lived did not make him idle,

impracticable, speculative, or despairing; it roused him rather to preach with power and labour with diligence, and it separated him in spirit from the wickedness, the worldliness, and the unbelief of his age. None of the wicked understood, believed, or heeded his warning words. As decade after decade of the last century of the old world rolled away, its millions remained as full as ever of carnal confidence and unbelieving indifference. They were occupied exclusively with earth and its interests—agricultural, commercial, social—right up to the hour when Noah and his family entered into the ark. The Divine Hand that shut him in, opened at the same time the windows of heaven and broke up the fountains of the great deep; and though its approach had been revealed by God more than a century previously, and though His righteous servant had not failed to proclaim to men the counsel and purpose of the Almighty, “they knew not until the flood came and took them all away.”

When Noah and his family emerged into the new world, they were wiser than our first parents in paradise. Adam, gazing around him in Eden, may well have inwardly exclaimed as to God, “He can create”; but Noah, doing the same from Ararat, must surely have added, “He can destroy.”

Sorely must the second father of the human race have needed the light of promise and of prophecy at the solemn crisis when he and his stood amid the wreck of the old world—the sole survivors of a perished race. Events had forced upon them a vivid realization of the solemn fact that the great Creator would actually destroy the works of His own hands, rather than permit the victory of moral evil. It was a terrible revelation, for did not they too belong to the sinful race? What was to be their future and that of their posterity? Must they anticipate a recurrence of the late awful catastrophe? Oh, how they needed the sure word of prophecy as a lamp to shine in the dark place where they stood! The wrath of God seemed to have recalled His gift of the earth to the sons of men. Dared they take possession of this new earth as Adam had done of the old? Evil might and probably would fill the world afresh, and what then was their tenure to be?

Never did trembling mariners launching on a stormy and unknown ocean more need the compass, pilot, and daylight, than did the prisoners of the ark when they first alighted on Ararat need the guidance of Divine promise. And hence, as might be expected, the grace that had saved speedily reassured their fearful hearts: God set His bow of promise in the cloud, and prophecy witnessed the reflection of her beams of light from the retiring waters. A covenant of mercy gave them a new charter of natural blessings, and a new grant of dominion in the earth. A second time was the human family commanded to multiply and replenish all its waste places. The word of promise soothed the fears of the rescued; no recurrence of a deluge was to be apprehended. Seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, were not again to be interrupted in their natural sequence; and four thousand years have proved God’s faithfulness to His promise. The Noahic covenant is our present lease of the earth. According to its terms, God legislates for the winds and waves, the sunbeams and the storm clouds, so as to secure to man the indispensable order of the seasons.¹

¹“The great circle of the heavens apparently described by the sun every year (owing to our revolution round that body) is called *the ecliptic*. . . The plane of the earth’s equator,

extended towards the stars, marks out the equator of the heavens, the plane of which is inclined to the ecliptic at an angle known as the obliquity of the ecliptic. It is this inclination which gives rise to the vicissitudes of the seasons during our annual journey round the sun. . . . The obliquity of the ecliptic is now slowly decreasing at the rate of about 48" in 100 years. 'It will not always, however, be on the decrease; for before it can have altered 1 and 1/2°, the cause which produces this diminution must act in a contrary direction, and thus tend to increase the obliquity. Consequently the change of obliquity is a phenomenon in which we are concerned only as astronomers, since it can never become sufficiently great to produce any sensible alteration of climate on the earth's surface. A consideration of this remarkable astronomical fact cannot but remind us of the promise made to man after the deluge, that "while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." That the perturbation of obliquity consisting merely of an oscillatory motion of the plane of the ecliptic will not permit of its inclination ever becoming very great or very small, is *an astronomical discovery* in perfect unison with the declaration made to Noah, and explains how effectually the Creator has ordained *the means* for carrying out His promise, though the way it was to be accomplished remained a hidden secret until the great discoveries of modern science placed it within human comprehension.'"—(Chambers' Handbook of Descriptive Astronomy," p. 73)

The promises and predictions that followed the flood were of a cheering and merciful nature, and exactly calculated to restore in the hearts of those who had witnessed the evil effects of the fall, and seen a guilty race whelmed in the darkness and death of the deluge, hope, courage, and confidence in God. No threats, no conditions were attached to the gracious covenant of which the rainbow is the beautiful and abiding token. It should be noted here that the promise of redemption was not renewed in the Noahic covenant, because nothing that had happened had in the slightest degree invalidated it. It stood as before; and Noah and his family evinced their acquaintance with it by offering sacrifice. They doubtless prized it in the new earth as they had ever done in the old, for the dark background of judgment and perdition must have made more precious than ever the hope of redemption and deliverance.

We must not pause to dwell at any length on these early Noahic predictions, the fulfilment of which has been a matter of experience to the human race for four thousand years. We must pass on rather to those given at a later point in the life of the patriarch Noah, which partake more of the nature of a *programme of the world's history*.

Just as it was subsequently granted to Jacob and to Moses to foresee and to foretell the future of the different tribes of Israel, so to Noah, the second father of the human race, it was given towards the close of his long life of nine hundred and fifty years, to foresee and foretell the future of *the races that should descend from him*, by whom the whole earth should in due time be overspread. We have no means of fixing the exact date of the very remarkable prophecy in which he does this. (Gen. 9:24-29) Owing to its position as the first recorded incident after the flood, it is often taken for granted that it followed closely upon that event; but there is really no ground for this assumption. It is the *only* incident mentioned in the subsequent life of the patriarch; indeed, with the exception of the death of Noah, the only incident recorded between the flood and the building of Babel—a period of many centuries. Its place in the narrative is therefore *no guide to its actual date, nor to its position in the life of Noah*. If it occurred as early as is generally supposed, then Noah's grandson Canaan is mentioned before he was born, or had done good or evil; which is most unlikely. On the other hand, if

it shortly preceded the event next following in the record—the death of Noah—then the parallel with the cases of Jacob and Moses is close, and an additional solemnity and importance attaches to the prediction.

Further, this memorable utterance of the great preacher of righteousness must never be regarded as the imprecation of a curse and the bestowal of blessings, much less as if the words had been prompted by any angry or vindictive feeling on Noah's part against his youngest son. A thoughtless reading of the narrative might produce such an impression on the mind, but reflection will show it to be an unworthy and wholly groundless one. The words were, as their fulfilment proves, an inspired prophecy, not an imprecation; the future of each race is not so much *assigned as foretold*, and the good or bad destiny in each case is connected not so much with the moral character of Shem, Ham, and Japheth personally, as with that of their descendants in distant ages, all whose deeds lay even then naked and open before the eyes of the revealing Spirit of God. The incident in connection with which the prophecy was given was not in any sense the cause of the destinies declared, though it gave *occasion* to the utterance of the prediction.

The prophet speaks of races, not of individuals, as Isaac spoke of the future of Jacob's and Esau's descendants, rather than of their own personal experience. The portion foreseen for each was not merited by the parents' conduct only or mainly, but by the character and conduct of their unborn posterity. Such oracles are far removed from the nature of private fortune-telling; they are utterances given by inspiration of God.

As Bishop Newton well observes on this passage: "Noah was not prompted by wine or by resentment, for neither the one nor the other could infuse the knowledge of futurity or inspire him with the prescience of events which happened hundreds, nay thousands, of years afterwards. But God, willing to manifest His superintendence and government of the world, endued Noah with the spirit of prophecy, and enabled him in some measure to disclose the purposes of His providence towards the future races of mankind."

The points emphasized in Noah's foreview of human history are few but important. The predictions are brief and clearly expressed. There is no indistinctness about them, no vague wording which might apply equally well to any course of events. Like the predictions in paradise, the sentences though simple contain a world of meaning, are all inclusive in their scope, and reach right on to the end. On the other hand, they differ from them widely in their subject-matter, dealing not with the moral issues, fundamental physical experiences, or final results of human history, but rather with the *great ethnological divisions of the race, with the distinctive fortunes of its three main sections, and with their relations to each other*.

The programme of Noah presents the future—not of the race of mankind as a whole—as did the Adamic foreview; nor that of individual kingdoms and nations—as do subsequent programmes—but that of the three main races into which mankind has been divided since the flood. The destiny foreseen for each race is sharply defined, and widely distinct from that foreseen for the other two. Thousands of years of human history have elapsed since this wonderful

prophetic utterance: if therefore the prophecy has been falsified by the event, it will be futile to deny it; and if, on the other hand, it has been fulfilled, there can be no mistake about the fact, which must be capable of full demonstration.

In our Authorised Version the prediction runs thus:—

“And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.

“And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.

“God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.” (Gen. 9:25,26,27)

Now the first question which arises in considering this prediction is, Why is Canaan, the fourth son of Ham, mentioned instead of his father, whose gross misconduct, evincing his depraved moral character, afforded the occasion for the prophecy? There is some ground to think that we have not here the true original reading of the passage, that a copyist's error has obscured it, and that the two words, “Ham abi” (Ham the father of), have been omitted. Some copies of the Septuagint and the Arabic Version give these words as the text. Their insertion would certainly give the passage far more internal consistency, as well as bring it into fuller harmony with other Scriptures. As it stands, it does not include all the posterity of Noah, but leaves entirely unmentioned nearly one-third of it—that of all the sons of Ham, with the exception of Canaan. Bishop Newton says, in speaking of this passage:—

“Hitherto we have explained the prophecy according to the present copies of our Bible; but if we were to correct the text, as we should that of any classic author in a like case, the whole might be made easier and plainer. ‘Ham, the father of Canaan.’ is mentioned in the preceding part of the story; and how then came the person of a sudden to be changed into Canaan? The Arabic version in these three verses hath ‘the father of Canaan,’ instead of ‘Canaan.’ Some copies of the Septuagint likewise have Ham instead of Canaan, as if Canaan were a corruption of the text. Vatablus and others by ‘Canaan’ understand ‘the father of Canaan,’ which was expressed twice before. And if we regard the metre, this line, ‘Cursed be Canaan,’ is much shorter than the rest, *as if something was deficient*. May we not suppose therefore that the copyist by mistake wrote only ‘Canaan, instead of ‘Ham the father of Canaan, and that the whole passage was originally thus: ‘And Ham the father of Canaan saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. . . . And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, Cursed be *Ham the father of Canaan*; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and *Ham the father of Canaan* shall be servant to them. God shall enlarge Japheth; and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Ham the father of Canaan shall be servant to them.’

Note from the webmaster: I don't consider the Septuagint a reliable resource. The Septuagint translation of a key Messianic prophecy of Daniel 9:27 is, unlike the KJV, totally unclear in that it's talking about the ministry and murder of the Messiah in the first half of the verse, and the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem in the second half of the verse. Most modern English translations get their text from the Septuagint which obscures the true meaning of Daniel 9:27. It's been said that the Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Old Testament that Jesus and the writers of the New Testament quoted from, but there is evidence to the contrary. Please see [The Truth About the LXX Septuagint](#). So Dr. Guinness may not be correct in everything he writes, but who is? He's such a prolific writer! Proverbs 10:19 says, "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin (error)".

"By this reading all the three sons of Noah are included in the prophecy, whereas otherwise Ham, who was the offender, is excluded, or is only punished in one of his children. Ham is characterized as 'the father of Canaan' particularly, for the greater encouragement of the Israelites, who were going to invade the land of Canaan; and when it is said, 'Cursed be Ham the father of Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren, it is implied that his whole race was devoted to servitude, but *particularly* the Canaanites. Not that this was to take effect immediately, but was to be fulfilled in process of time, when they should forfeit their liberties by their wickedness."

There is a possibility that Ham alone was mentioned in the original prophecy, and that the allusion to his being "the father of Canaan" was introduced by Moses in view of the approaching invasion of the land of Canaan by the Israelites, to encourage them hopefully to undertake the subjugation of its seven nations, by recalling the fact that it had long since been predicted that the descendants of Ham, including these wicked Canaanites, should be their servants. But that the prophecy spoke of the Canaanites exclusively is not likely, or even credible. As it correctly predicts the future of *all* the descendants of Ham, not that of those of his fourth son merely or mainly, it is most improbable that Canaan alone was mentioned.

It is true that in the parallel prophecy of Moses the name of Joseph does not occur, but those of his sons Ephraim and Manasseh do: so that the prophecy of Moses covered the entire posterity of Jacob. Moreover, it was Ham's misconduct, not Canaan's, that was the occasion—though not the cause—of the delivery of this oracle. How highly improbable then that his name should be omitted from it! The Jews have a tradition that it was the young Canaan who first saw his grandfather's exposed condition, and called his father to join him in ridiculing and mocking the aged patriarch. There is, however, nothing but traditional evidence for this story; and even if it were true, it would account only for a mention of both father and son, and not for the exclusive naming of the son, as in our text. Whichever view be taken as to the text, it makes however no difference as to the *fulfilment* of the prophecy. If the

original prediction was worded as in our version, it has been abundantly fulfilled, as we shall show; and if Ham was mentioned as well as, or instead of, his son, it has been fulfilled still more conspicuously on a wider sphere and through a longer period. We lean to the view that all the three sons of Noah were mentioned, and that thus the future of the entire human race was outlined in this second programme of the world's history.

It contains several distinct points. *First*, it implies that each of Noah's sons would become the father of a race. This might have been otherwise, as one of them might, like Abel, have been cut off and have left no issue.

Secondly, it states that the descendants of Ham were to be servants to their brethren. Servile subjection, including various forms of slavery, would be their specially characteristic portion, though there might, of course, be exceptions to the rule, which would only tend to prove its general prevalence; that the race would be servants of servants to their brethren is thrice over asserted.

Thirdly, it states that a peculiarly sacred character would be connected with the descendants of Shem, that Jehovah would be in some special sense the Lord God of Shem. The passage must not be read as an invocation, as it sometimes is, as if it were "Blessed of Jehovah my God be Shem." It is an ascription of praise, "Blessed be Jehovah-Elohim of Shem!" implying that the one living and true God would be the God of Shem's descendants, or, as Luther puts it, that Shem should enjoy "a most abundant blessing, reaching its highest point in the promised seed." The name Shem means "renown"; and the prophecy shows that the exaltation and renown of his seed would depend rather on spiritual and religious advancement than on mere political prosperity. That it is the *race* of Shem, and not he himself personally, that is contemplated by the prophecy, is intimated in the plural pronoun, "Canaan shall be their servant," not his servant. Ham's descendants would be in tributary subjection to Shem's descendants.

Fourthly, it is stated that the race of Japheth, Noah's eldest son, whose name means "the one that spreads abroad," should be the most widely diffused and, as regards material blessings, the most prosperous of the three; that God would greatly multiply it, and open to it vast spheres. The words have been rendered, "God will concede an ample space" to Japheth's posterity, or "make wide room" for them. So great was to be this enlargement of Japheth that his descendants would ultimately not only occupy all their own tents, or dwelling-places, but inhabit also some of those belonging to Shem; and though it is not distinctly stated in the prediction, yet there is nothing in the words to exclude the thought—that the enlargement of Japheth may include vast *intellectual* as well as material development, and that his descendants were to dwell in the tents of Shem in this sense also, i.e., to enter into their spiritual and religious inheritance. Japheth's race, like Shem's, was also to hold in subjection Hamitic races.

Thus the patriarch, gazing down the dim vista of ages then unborn, and extending his view even to our own day, beheld with eyes opened by the revealing Spirit, the future of his threefold family. He who in retrospect could recall the history of the first human race, with its tragic close, was

allowed in prospect to foresee the main outline of the fortunes of the second family of man—his own family. And what did he foresee? For the Semitic races *religious supremacy and sacred renown*; for Japheth's posterity *vast enlargement and political supremacy*; and for the descendants of Ham, the father of Canaan, *servile degradation*.¹

¹ We must not omit to note, in passing, the important practical lesson taught by the fact that the evil races for whom the doom of perpetual servitude is foreseen are the descendants of a bad man. A straw shows which way the stream runs; the incident here recorded of Ham is trivial in one sense, yet it clearly shows what manner of man he was—destitute of the fear of God, without natural affection, gratitude, reverence, compassion, self-respect, or decency; full of heartless levity, addicted to coarse amusement and brutal vulgarity; in short, a bad son who could never make a good father. It is a solemn thought for parents that they cannot help transmitting to their offspring of the most distant generations, their own moral character as well as their own physical features.

Note from the webmaster: I think it's unfortunate that H. Grattan Guinness uses the word "race" in his book. I would rather say, "ethnic group" instead. I believe the word "race" is connected to Darwinian Evolution. Darwin believed humanity descended from monkeys, and this therefore led him to believe that some ethnic groups are more highly evolved than others. The very subtitle of Darwin's book indicates that! "On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of **Favoured Races** in the Struggle for Life." If we are all descendants of Noah, that means there is only *one* race of humanity on earth. It's called the human race. I think many sons and daughters of Ham are doing very well in all fields of science, education, society, and government. Of course, there are still poor black people but there are also poor white people living homeless on the streets in what's supposed to be one of the wealthiest nations on earth, the USA. And there are poor people nearly everywhere throughout the world. "For the poor always ye have with you," Jesus said. What nation on earth has not been colonized at one time by a white nation? Thailand and Japan are the only two nations that come to mind, but some Japanese tell me they believe Japan is now a colony of America! Many of those formerly colonized nations are in Asia, the children of Shem.

Continued in [Chapter II. The Noahic Programme. – Part II.](#)

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