Genesis - Commentaries by Henry Allan Ironside

Daily Sacrifice, January 6

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“And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savor; and the Lord said in His heart, 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 everything living, as I have done”— Genesis 8:20, 21.

“THE Lord smelled a savor of rest” (literal rendering) because it spoke to Him of the work of His beloved Son. It was not that God found any delight in the sacrifice of a lamb out of the flock, or, as some have blasphemously suggested, that Jehovah was supposed to enjoy the fragrance of roasting meat. But He looked forward with glad appreciation to what His Son was to accomplish on Calvary. In view of this, He made a covenant with Noah, declaring that He “would not again curse the ground for man’s sake.” He knew that man is unimprovable so far as his natural heart is concerned. It is only evil and that continually. But in the work of the cross all this was to be dealt with (Rom. 8:3, 4; 2 Cor. 5:21).

Daily Sacrifice, January 5

“God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged”— Genesis 8:1.

THE same God who in His righteousness had judged the “world that then was” and swept the ungodly away in His indignation, kept Noah and his family in mind and brought them in safety through the flood. Peter tells us they were saved through the water. Often, as the ark floated on the crest of the waves, doubts and fears may have beset the family within, as to what the final outcome would be. But their questionings, if there were such, could not change God’s love for them or alter His purpose to make Noah the head of a new race to inhabit the renewed earth.

The raven and the dove speak of the two natures in the believer. The one feeds on carrion, so never returned to the ark; but for the dove there was no rest save in the ark until the flood was assuaged. When the dove returned with the olive leaf Noah saw in it an evidence that the flood was receding. When it did not return at all he knew it was time to leave the ark.

—Helen Frazee Bower

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, January 4

“And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before Me in this generation” — Genesis 7:1.

IT is the desire of God to save the households of His people. Noah’s family found a place in the ark because of their father’s acceptance with God. Yet on their part there had to be obedience to the divine call. Invited by God, they entered the place of safety and so were “saved through water” from the judgment that overwhelmed the world of the ungodly.

It is still God’s desire that the families of believers should share in the blessing vouchsafed to any individual member of the household. To the Philippian jailer the word came, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house.” There was an evident response on the part of all the children, for we find him “rejoicing with all his house” in the knowledge of pardoning grace. So today the Christian parent is called to take hold of God in faith for all those linked with him by family ties, assured that it is the will of God to bring them into the ark, which is for us, Christ Himself.

—Carl J. P. Spitta.

Trans. by Mrs. C. F. Alexander.

Daily Sacrifice, January 4

IN the ark, built according to divine direction, we have a beautiful type of Christ. Pitched with pitch within and without, it went through the flood carrying its passengers safely over to the renewed earth—a picture of Christ bearing the judgment of God against sin and sang all who trust in Him. Note that Noah and his family did not have to hang onto spikes or some similar arrangement outside the ark. They were safe inside where the waters of judgment could not reach them. Blessed it is to be thus “in Christ Jesus,” where there is no condemnation (Rom. 8:1).

—Mary Bowley

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, January 3

“Enoch walked with God... and begat sons and daughters”— Genesis 5:22.

THE antediluvian patriarch, the seventh from Adam, who walked with God and prophesied of judgment to come and of the triumph of the Lord over all the forces of evil, as told so long afterward by Jude (14,15), was no recluse or ascetic. He was a family man, assuming all the responsibilities that are thereby implied. Yet in a difficult day he walked in fellowship with the Holy One as he sought to bring up his children in the fear of God and to keep them from the surrounding iniquity. In this he becomes an example for us. In order to walk with God it is not necessary to flee from the world to some monastic cell or to a convent’s gloomy shelter. Whatever we may be called to do, however heavy the burden that may rest upon our shoulders, it is possible to walk with God and to enjoy His blessed companionship. All that is needed is a yielded will, and subjection of heart to Him who has saved us by His grace.

—Selected.

Daily Sacrifice, January 16

“Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. So Joseph died,... and he was put in a coffin in Egypt”— Genesis 50:25, 26.

“A coffin in Egypt.” These are the words with which the Book of Genesis closes. It leaves Israel as a people developing into a nation, with Joseph their brother and protector now dead. Before his passing, he “gave commandment concerning his bones” (Heb. 11:22). His embalmed body was to remain in an Egyptian sarcophagus until the nation went up out of Goshen to take possession of Canaan, as promised by God to Abraham. When the day of deliverance arrived, they took the bones of Joseph with them (Ex. 13:19). All through the wilderness journey they guarded these sacred remains of their deliverer, until at last they were laid to rest in the land of Promise (Josh. 24:32). There is more than a hint here, easily understood by the spiritually-minded, of our present responsibility: “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus” (2 Cor. 4:10) until we enter the rest that remains eternally for the people of God (Heb. 4:9).

—R. E. Neighbor.

Daily Sacrifice, January 3

“Cain went out from the presence of the Lord... and he builded a city”— Genesis 4:16, 17.

“To Seth also... was born a son... then began men to call upon the name of the Lord”— Genesis 4:26.

IN these early chapters of Genesis, after the fall of Adam and Eve, two distinct lines of their descendants come before us: the line of Cain, the natural man, active, often brilliant and inventive, but existing without God, seeking to make the world a pleasant place in which to live, although manifesting increasing wickedness as the centuries went by. The line of Seth called upon the name of the Lord, and although never numbered among the great ones of the earth, sought, like Enoch, to walk with God, and, like Noah, to obey His voice in all things. Methuselah led right up to the year of the deluge. His grandson and household were the only ones to go through that time of judgment and through them God began a new world-order.

Daily Sacrifice, January 15

“And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life”— Genesis 45:4, 5.

IT is a great thing when one learns to look beyond all second causes to God Himself. David, when he recognized that God was dealing with him in permitting Shimei to curse him as he fled from Absalom (2 Sam. 16:5, 13), and Joseph, when he looked back over the unhappy experiences he had endured because of his brethren’s envy and hatred, are remarkable examples of this. Both alike realized the truthfulness of the declaration given so many years afterward, that, “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28).

Whatever suffering the faithful heart of Joseph had endured in the years following his rejection by his brothers and the bondage into which they had sold him, he had lived to see that in it all God had been working out a plan for the enrichment of his own soul and blessing of many people, yes, even of those unworthy brothers who had behaved so badly toward him.

—Bessie Patten Gilmore.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, January 7

“For except we had lingered, surely now we had returned this second time”— Genesis 43:10.

A FREE translation of these words of Judah’s would be: “If we had not put it off, we would certainly have been back by now.” He was referring to the contemplated second trip to Egypt, to get more corn, providing Benjamin was with them. Jacob could not bear the thought of permitting him to go, yet he and they knew it had to be. Procrastination only prolonged their exercises. When at last they acted as Joseph required of them, all went well. How often we lose much by putting off the inevitable! Many are risking the loss of their souls by waiting for a more convenient season. If you had not put it off, you might have been saved long ago. Or if already a Christian, you may be postponing obedience to some specific word of the Lord. If you had not put it off, what blessing might have been yours by now!

—Anon.

Daily Sacrifice, January 14

“Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colors. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.”— Genesis 37:3, 4.

In Joseph we see a very striking type of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was the beloved one of the father, but that very fact caused his brethren to look upon him with envy and hatred. Yet he was destined to become the saviour of the world.

Joseph’s dreams were divine revelations, and they told of the glory that was yet to be his. But as he made these things known they but added to the jealousy with which his brethren regarded him. Yet in due season all came to recognize him as their deliverer from death.

So our blessed Lord came into this scene, owned by God as His beloved Son, and appointed by Him to be heir of all things. He was despised and rejected by His own, but is now the Saviour of all who believe. Eventually the very nation that rejected Him as their King will own Him as their long-waited-for Messiah, and will “mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son.”

—Charles Wesley.

Daily Sacrifice, January 13

“Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.”—Genesis 28:15.

IN the life of Jacob we see exemplified a saint under the discipline of God, a man of conflicting emotions and often, unhappily, of mixed motives, He was, nevertheless, thought all the years of his maturity, one who valued the things of God and appreciated the covenanted blessings promised to Abraham and his seed. Named a “supplanter,” or “heel-catcher,” which is the literal meaning of “Jacob,” because of what took place at his birth (Gen. 25:25, 25; Hos. 12:3), he manifested the same traits of crafty self-interest in many things, and yet we see him a chastened man to the last, to whom the things of God were very real and precious. The truth of the two natures in the believer is evidenced in his experiences in a very definite manner: the old Jacob nature in conflict with the Israel nature, so that at times we see the former dominating his ways and at other times the new life is graciously manifested.

—Fanny J. Crosby.

Daily Sacrifice, January 12

“What good shall my life do me?”— Genesis 27:46.

IT was the querulous question of a troubled, dissatisfied mother who had been disappointed in her elder son’s marriage to two heathen women, and who felt that life would no longer be worth-while if her other son followed in the same way. But the question may well be taken up by everyone as we face the exigencies of our days. Life may indeed prove useless if Christ is ignored and God is neglected. The only life that is really worth-while is the life that is given to the Lord and lived to His glory.

—Barbara Cornet Ryberg.

Daily Sacrifice, January 11

“They called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.” —Genesis 24:58.

IT is thus the awakened soul decides for Christ. To each there comes the question, Wilt thou go with this Man? — the Man of whom Isaac was but a type, the Man Christ Jesus. He wishes to have us for Himself. The Holy Spirit has come down into this world to seek a Bride for the Son. It is He who wins our hearts for a Man we have never seen—the glorified Man at God’s right hand. Happy the soul who responds gladly, “I will go,” and so is betrothed to Him forever.

—Unidentified.

Daily Sacrifice, January 10

“After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre: the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan”— Genesis 23:19.

THAT grave in the land of Canaan was the only piece of ground that Abraham actually possessed, although God had given it all to him by promise. He buried Sarah there in the certainty of resurrection when all that God had pledged will be his. In the meantime he was content to remain as a stranger and a pilgrim, for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. Every time he gazed upon, or thought of that lonely grave in Machpelah, he must have recalled the words that God had spoken, and so he looked on in faith to their fulfillment in due time, and thus he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. He had dared to believe God when he was notified that in him and his seed all nations should be blessed. In the same faith he laid away the body of his beloved life-partner, assured that some day he would behold their children dwelling in peace in that land and enjoying all that God had promised. Later he himself was buried in the same tomb. They will rise together at the first resurrection.

—E. H. Bickerateth.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, January 6

“They went both of them together”— Genesis 22:8.

THERE is a great mystery illustrated here: the mystery of the cross. Twice in this chapter we are told that Abraham, the father, and Isaac, the son, went both of them together to the place of sacrifice, the place where the only-begotten son (Heb. 11:17) was to be offered up, though at the last, as one has well said, God spared that father’s heart a pang He would not spare His own. So throughout all the ages it might be said of the Eternal Father and the Eternal Son, that they went both of them together. The cross was ever before God. Christ was delivered to death by the foreknowledge of God. Redemption was planned and provided for, long ere sin lifted up its ugly head to mar God’s fair creation. All down the centuries the Father and the Son counseled together concerning the great redemption there to be wrought out.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, January 2

“And God said, Let there be light: and there was light”— Genesis 1:3.

PLATO said, “The radiant light is the shadow of God.” But David exclaims, “Thou clothest Thyself with light as with a garment.” The declaration of the New Testament is, “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.” It was His own brightness that, at His own command, illumined the darkness of that primeval earth. And the miracle of that first day of earth’s recall from chaos and gloom pictures His present grace to the sin-darkened souls of men. For we are told that “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus.” He is the vessel to display that light throughout all the ages to come. Of the heavenly city it is written, “The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.” It was from His face that the light shone of old, and He is still the light of the world.

—H. K. Burlingham.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, January 1

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth”— Genesis 1:1.

WHAT a sublime introduction to the inspired Scriptures! We know not when this universe came into existence. Scientists differ by millions, and even billions, of years when they attempt to fix the age of the world. But go back as far as the human mind can think and we come right up against God. The universe is not the result of blind chance or of certain unexplained laws of nature. It is the product of a Master mind. A personal God brought it into existence. “He spake and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast” (Psa. 33:9). And this God has been revealed in Christ Jesus, and is the Father of all who believe in His Son. His power is unlimited, His wisdom is infinite, and all His resources are at the disposal of His saints as they cry to Him in faith.

—F. W. Pitt.

Daily Sacrifice, January 2

“And God said, Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.”—Gen. 1:26, 27

APART from revelation, God must ever remain the Unknowable. It is true that in nature we see marvelous evidences of His power and wisdom, but it is only in the Son that He is told out in all His fullness (John 1:18). Jesus came to reveal the Father, for He alone knew Him in the reality

of His Being (Matt. 11:27; Luke 10:22), He and the Father are one in nature though distinct in person (John 14:9). In the Old Testament God is revealed as Creator. As such He is the Father of spirits (Heb. 12:9) because He is the God of the spirits of all flesh (Num. 16:22). So man, as created originally in the image and likeness of God, was a son of God (Luke 3:38). But that image was marred and the likeness lost through sin, so that now it is by regeneration, a new creation, or new birth, that man becomes a member of the family of God and can look up into His face and call Him Father (Gal. 3:26; 4:6).

Daily Sacrifice, January 1

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters”—Gen. 1:1, 2.

GOD, the Creator of the universe, brought all things into existence by the Word of His power. The direct agent in creation was the Son, the Word, as declared in John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16, 17; Hebrews 1:2, and other passages. That original creation was perfect.

Some believe that all was chaos in the beginning and that the earth slowly reached a habitable condition. But we read in Isaiah 45:18 that “He created it not in vain” (i.e., void). Many scholars agree that in place of “was” we should read “became.” The earth, through some terrible cataclysm (possibly connected with the fall of Lucifer) became waste and empty, enshrouded in darkness and covered with water. Over this chaotic swirling waste the energizing Spirit of God moved, or brooded, as a hen brooding over the nest from which new life is to come.

—Walter Bruce Grimes

Daily Sacrifice, January 9

“And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God”— Genesis 17:7, 8.

GOD’S covenants are of two kinds: some are conditional upon man’s response to His commandments; others are unconditional because He makes a promise in sovereign grace which He determines to carry out whatever the nature of the response on man’s part may be. His promise to give the land of Palestine to Abraham was of this latter character, also the promise to make of him a great nation. There can be no possibility of failure in regard to both of these parts of the covenant. Therefore it is called an everlasting covenant. It is sovereign grace acting for the blessing of those who have done nothing to earn such wondrous favor. In this respect, it is like God’s salvation, which is altogether by grace and made good to all who believe.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, January 5

“He believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness”— Genesis 15:6.

IN three different New Testament books our attention is directed to this pivotal experience in the life of Abraham. In the simplicity of faith, he laid hold of the promise regarding the Seed through whom all the world was to be blessed. That Seed, as we are told in Galatians, was Christ. So, believing in Christ, the patriarch Abraham was justified. And in exactly the same way believers are justified today. To be justified is to be reckoned righteous. Justification is the sentence of the judge in favor of the prisoner. God justifies the ungodly—freeing them from every charge of guilt—when they put their trust in the Saviour He has provided, who was delivered up to death for our offenses and was raised again for, or because of, our complete justification. When God imputes righteousness, He blots out forever the record of sin and gives the believer a completely new standing before His face. This is true of all who are accepted in the Beloved.

—Paul Gerhardt.

Daily Sacrifice, January 8

“And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdman; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left”— Genesis 13:8, 9.

ABRAHAM could afford to be generous with his earthly-minded nephew because his heart was set on that “city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God” (Heb. 11:10). Toward this he looked, and all earthly inheritance or temporal possessions seemed very insignificant in comparison with it.

Only as we see a better world above our heads, can we put this world beneath our feet. It was this which enabled Abraham to preserve the pilgrim character to the end and so to relinquish to Lot that which the younger man desired. Nothing so frees the soul from the bondage of covetousness as the knowledge of God and the appreciation of what He has prepared for those who love Him (1 Cor. 2:9). Abraham had a very real understanding of eternal verities and values, and so could appraise aright the passing things of time and sense.

—J. N. Darby.

“Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.”—Genesis 12:1, 2.

NOTE the expression “had said.” It was before, not after, he left Ur of the Chaldees that this word came to Abram. He was commanded to leave not only his country, but also all his kindred, to go to a land which God would show to him. It is evident that, in the beginning, there was not sufficient faith or understanding to enable him to act upon this, so he allowed his father, Terah, to take the lead, and as a family they left the land of their nativity and went on to Haran, where they remained until after Terah’s death, when the original instruction he had received was remembered and acted upon, and Abraham led the way to the land of Canaan.

My Prayer

—Mae Troy-Hawkins.

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