

Communion

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[0 : 0 0] The nineteenth-century Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon is always good value when looking for quotable quotes. Not very contemporary, I concede, but good value all the same. And on his approach to preaching, he is said to have summarized his method in the following way. I take my text and make a beeline to the cross, and it's not a bad strategy, as long as care is taken not to make text mean what they were never intended to mean, or perhaps leave the text behind in the rush to get to Calvary, honorable though that destination and intention is. Of course, you could say that all Spurgeon was doing was following the method of our Lord, or following our Lord's example, who, as he walked on the road to Emmaus, explained the Scriptures to his fellow travelers who were with him in the manner that we have recorded for us there in Luke chapter 24 and verse 27, and beginning with Moses and all the prophets. He, that is Jesus, explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. And if we take that in a very absolute way, then perhaps it is legitimate, whatever your text, to in some way take it as a starting point that would lead us to the cross. The reference there, of course, in Luke's gospel to Moses is a reference not simply to the person of Moses, where Jesus speaks of Moses and all the prophets, but a reference to the books of Moses, the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. And given that that is so, it includes the story of

Noah, of Noah and his ark that we were giving some thought to this morning. And given the way in which we've begun, you'll not be surprised that the question that I want to pose is, how can we get from Noah to Jesus? Or perhaps more specifically, how does Noah point us to Jesus? And this is the question that I want to answer. And as we answer that question, I trust it will serve as a useful preparation for us to lead us into participating in the Lord's Supper and our remembrance and celebration of the death of Jesus in our place. And I want to suggest three ways in which Noah points us to Jesus. Three ways. The first way in which he does so is that he points us to Jesus is that Noah points us to Jesus by his place in God's righteous line. Now, we made some mention of this this morning, but I just want to reemphasize that or mention it in this particular context of how Noah in this way points us to Jesus. Noah, like so many others, stands in God's righteous line in a manner that allows us to look back as he is identified as a descendant of the first Adam, but also to look forward as Noah is identified as an ancestor of the second Adam, that is, Jesus, the promised Messiah. If we begin in the direction of looking back from

Noah, we read part of the genealogy that we have in chapter 5 of Genesis, and that genealogy, even the way in which it's titled there in our Bibles in chapter 5 of Genesis, from Adam to Noah. And in this way, we're not going to read the whole genealogy, but in this way, Noah is explicitly identified as a descendant of Adam. Now, of course, that he's a descendant of Adam isn't particularly noteworthy.

After all, we're all descendants of Adam, but the manner in which he is explicitly identified as such is significant. Adam is the seed of the woman, not the seed, but he is seed of the woman and of the promise that we commented on just briefly this morning. So, looking back, we find how Adam, or rather Noah, is one identified as a descendant of the first Adam. But then, looking forward, he's also identified in a genealogy, so very explicitly, as one who is an ancestor of the second Adam, that is Jesus. And if we turn to the New Testament, to Luke chapter 3, we have the genealogy of Jesus in the line of Joseph. We're not going to enter into the discussions that there are about the different genealogies that were given and the significance of that, but simply limiting to ourselves to what we see there in Luke chapter 3, we'll read verse 23, because that's where it begins, and it kind of locates us, but then we'll jump to verse 36, where we have reference made to Noah, which is our particular concern. And so, we read, now Jesus himself was about 30 years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph. And then, jumping to the end from verse 36, the son of Kinnan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalalel, the son of Kenan, the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God. And so, there Noah, again, is explicitly identified as one who stands in that godly line that reached its ultimate point, if you wish, in the coming of Messiah Jesus. God, from the time of the fall, preserved a line, a righteous line, the line of the Messiah. And that line was punctuated at different points in history with servants of God who illustrated or highlighted, in a measure, aspects or characteristics of the coming Messiah. Not all in the line did that, but the line is, if we can use that language, punctuated by such characters or such individuals. And of course, Noah is very much one of those. Noah highlights or illustrates aspects of the coming Messiah, the seed of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent.

[7 : 30] the serpent. Noah was one such man. He was not the man, but he pointed forward to the man, the man Christ Jesus. So, in this way, Noah points us forward to Jesus. He points us to Jesus by his place in God's righteous line. But the second way in which Noah points us to Jesus is by the name he bears. We read in chapter 5 of Genesis and verse 29 how his father named him, and unlike any other of the men mentioned in the genealogy, we have, in the case of Noah, an explanation as to why he was so named. And we'll just remind ourselves what we're told there in Genesis 5 verse 29. He, that is Lamech, named him, named him Noah. He named his son Noah and said, he, that is Noah, will comfort us in the labor and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the Lord has cursed. So, he's given this name Noah, and then Lamech explains why he's chosen the name. And there seems to be some connection with the reference in the explanation to the rest that will be secured by Noah, the rest or the comfort that Noah would in some way secure or point to. Now, this is an intriguing reference, really, because the name Noah doesn't derive directly from the Hebrew word for comfort or rest. But it would seem that it's sufficiently similar to that word for his father to make this connection. I'm calling my son Noah. Why am I calling him Noah? Because I believe that in some way he will bring rest for us who are laboring under God's curse. The name Noah spoke of the comfort or rest that Noah would bring or that in some way Noah pointed to. Now, when we read that verse and we read of Lamech giving this name to Noah and giving an explanation for why he does so, it is difficult to know what Lamech had in mind as regards this prophetic word ingrained in the very name that he gives to his son. It's difficult to know how Lamech, as Noah's father, imagined that this prophetic word ingrained in the name would be fulfilled. And we simply don't know.

We're not told any further what Lamech had in mind as to how Noah would fulfill this role. But it's not just that we don't know how Lamech thought that it would be fulfilled. It's difficult to know ourselves how it was fulfilled. Now, it's possible that partial fulfillment of what Lamech anticipated in regard to his son is to be found in the promise made by God to Noah following the flood.

And we just need to jump forward a couple of chapters to chapter 8 and verse 20. And then we'll read through to verse 22. So, this is following the flood. Noah is offering a sacrifice on the altar.

And then we pick up the reading, Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart, Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures as I have done. As long as the earth endures, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.

And very particularly there how there is this promise given that never again would God curse the ground because of man. And that's something that Lamech makes specific reference to in naming Noah. So, it's possible that partial fulfillment of Lamech's hopes and expectations are to be found in what we read there following the flood. But it seems to me reasonable to conclude that the ultimate fulfillment of this prophetic word ingrained in the very name of Noah is to be found in the coming Messiah, is to be found in Messiah Jesus, the ultimate giver of comfort and rest to a sin-sick world. The rest prophesied by Lamech in the name given to his son was, in all probability, unbeknown to Lamech, a rest that, in the words of one commentator, was applicable to all the miseries of human life which proceed from the curse of God and are the fruits of sin. So, not just the ground that was cursed and the implications of that, but all the implications of the curse and the rest that we need in the light of that is spoken of even in the name of Noah and points forward to the one who would secure that rest for his people. We participate in the Lord's Supper this evening because we have found in Jesus our Noah, our comfort, or our rest. So, Noah points us to Jesus by the place he occupies in the godly line. He points us to Jesus by the very name he bears. But then thirdly, and finally, he points us to Jesus by the life he lived. As I have read the story of Noah over the years, there has always been one verse that has impressed and intrigued me. No doubt others would read the account and other verses would stand out, but for some reason there is one in particular that I've been drawn to more than others, and it's the verse that we read earlier on in the service at the end of chapter 6 where we have this summary statement of how Noah responded to God's instructions concerning the ark, and we're told, Noah did everything just as God commanded him. Noah did everything just as God commanded him. That's a very impressive summary statement of Noah's obedience, and we can take it legitimately at the level of a challenge to us along the lines of, well, Noah obeyed God in such a commendable way, in such a serious way, well, we too should obey God in like manner, and that's a legitimate challenge that we can take from this verse. But is it not also a verse that points beyond

[15:04] Noah to the only one of whom it can be fully said he did everything just as God commanded him? But before considering for a moment how this is wonderfully true of Jesus, we do need to try and understand in what sense or measure it is true of Noah. After all, the verse is speaking of Noah. In what sense is it true of Noah that he did everything just as God commanded him? I think the first thing we need to say is that it is true, and we're not questioning for a moment that it's true. It is true. We're told that that's the way it is, so that's the way it is. He did indeed do everything just as God commanded him. But it is reasonable to recognize that it is true with regard to the matter to hand. After all, this is a statement that is given to us immediately following the instructions that Noah received concerning the ark and Noah fulfilling those instructions. And so, what we're being told is that in the matter of constructing the ark, Noah did everything just as God commanded him.

We know, not only from the rest of Scripture, but indeed even from the very account of Noah as it proceeds, that throughout his life, Noah didn't do everything just as God commanded him. But in this matter, in this crucial matter, in this matter upon which depended his salvation, he did everything just as God commanded him. But the other thing we can say, even with regard to him doing everything just as God commanded him in this matter, we can also remind ourselves that he did so enabled by God, enabled by the grace of God. And so enabled, Noah did everything just as God commanded him. That of Noah. But let's move on to the way in which these words, and I think we can legitimately say point forward to Jesus. They're certainly true of Jesus, but I'm saying a little bit more than that. I'm suggesting that they point forward to Jesus, the one who fully did everything just as God commanded. Let's just notice some truths around that concerning Jesus as the one who did everything just as God commanded. The first thing

I want to say is that he did so. Everything that God commanded, he did so willingly. Jesus did everything God commanded willingly. One of the striking features of the gospel accounts of the life, and particularly the death of Jesus, is the manner that Jesus is always presented as the one in control of his own destiny. Paul speaks of how Jesus became obedient to death, even death on a cross. And his death is presented as the willing and deliberate obedience of the Son to his Father. He did everything just as God commanded, and he did so willingly. But he also did so perfectly. In a sense, that's implicit in the statement. If you do everything just as God commands, well, that means that you do so perfectly. This is a description of perfect obedience. And Jesus really did do everything perfectly just as God commanded him.

Peter, when he is discussing the worth of the sacrifice offered by Jesus of his own person, he speaks of the worth of that sacrifice on the grounds that Jesus was a lamb without blemish or defect, perfect in everything that he was and did, perfect in every way. The writer to the Hebrews in the fourth chapter of his letter speaks of how Jesus was tempted in all ways as we are, but was without sin. Jesus did everything just as God commanded him, and he did so perfectly. But also we can say that he did everything just as God commanded him to the Father's delight. We remember his baptism as he begins his ministry, and we remember the words from heaven, you are my Son whom I love, with you I am well pleased.

The Father was well pleased with his Son's perfect obedience. And of course, that continued throughout his life, and then he offered his life up to death, and that death and the victory of it vindicated by the resurrection, which at one level we can also see as an expression of the Father's delight in his Son's obedience. And then as we enter into the realm of speculation, I wonder as Jesus ascended to heaven, having completed his work, I wonder if words along the lines of, well done, my good and faithful Son, were spoken by the Father to his Son. Jesus did everything just as God commanded, and he did so to the Father to the Father's delight. But the final thing I want to say in regard to how these words, spoken of Noah, very fittingly and aptly describe Jesus. The last aspect of that that I want to mention is that he did so. He did everything just as God commanded to secure our rest. We've already touched on Noah and the meaning of his name, and how Noah in his very name promised rest for God's people. But Noah could not deliver rest, not in any absolute way. But Jesus, in doing everything, just as the Father commanded, secured our rest. And he did so preeminently on the cross. On the cross,

[21 : 15] Jesus died in our place and secured for us rest. Now, of what rest are we speaking? Well, rest from our sin and its consequences. Rest from every futile attempt to secure our own righteousness before God. Rest that is the experience and delight of those who know themselves to be shut in by and with the Lord, to make use of the language of the account of Noah that we commented on this morning.

Jesus did everything just as God commanded him. And in this way, and that truth is one that is pointed to for us in the words that are used to describe Noah. So, Noah points us to Jesus in a number of ways. He points us to Jesus by the place he occupies in the godly line. He points us to Jesus in the very name that he bears. And he points us to Jesus by the life that he lived or the obedience that he rendered in this matter of the ark, doing everything just as God commanded him. Well, as we participate in the Lord's Supper this evening, let us remember and enjoy the rest that Jesus has secured for us at Calvary. Let's pray.