

Lecture XVIII.

Of Creation

Heb. xi. 3.—“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”—Heb. i. 14.—“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”

There is nothing more generally known than this, that God at the beginning made the heaven and the earth, and all the host of them, the upper or the celestial, the lower or sublunary world. But yet there is nothing so little believed or laid to heart. “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed.” It is one of the first articles of the creed, indeed,—“Father, almighty Maker of heaven and earth.” But I fear that creed is not written in the tables of flesh, that is, the heart. There is a twofold mistake among men about the point of believing. Some, and the commoner sort, do think it is no other than simply to know such a thing, and not to question it, to hear it, and not to contradict it, or object against it, therefore they do flatter themselves in their own eyes, and do account themselves to have faith in God, because they can say over all the articles of their belief. They think the word is true, and they never doubted of it. But, I beseech you, consider how greatly you mistake a main matter of weighty concernment. If you will search it, as before the Lord, you will find you have no other belief of these things than children use to have, whom you teach to think or say any thing. There is no other ground of your not questioning these truths of the gospel, but because you never consider them, and so they pass for current. Do not deceive yourselves, “with the heart man believes.” It is a heart-business,

a soul matter, no light and useless opinion, or empty expression, which you have learned from a child. You say, you believe in God, the Maker of heaven and earth, and so say children, who doubt no more of it than you, and yet in sadness they do not retire within their own hearts, to think what an One he is. They do not remember him in the works of his hands. There is no more remembrance of that true God than if no such thing were known. So it is among you,—you would think we wronged you if we said, ye believed not that God made the world, and yet certainly, all men have not this faith, whereby they understand truly in their heart, the power and wisdom and goodness of God appearing in it, that is the gift of God, only given to them that shall be saved. If I should say, that you believe not the most common principles of religion, you will think it hard, and yet there is no doubt of it, that the most common truths are least believed. And the reason is plain, because men have learned them by tongue, and there is none that question them, and therefore, very few ever, in sadness and in earnest, consider of them. You say that God made heaven and earth, but how often do ye think on that God? And how often do you think on him with admiration? Do ye at all wonder at the glory of God when ye gaze on his works? Is not this volume always obversant before your eyes—every thing showing and declaring this glorious Maker? Yet who is it that taketh more notice of him than if he were not at all? Such is the general stupidity of men, that they never ponder and digest these things in their heart, till their soul receive the stamp of the glory and greatness of the invisible God, which shines most brightly in those things that are visible, and be in some measure transformed in their minds, and conformed to those glorious appearances of him, which are engraven in great characters in all that do at all appear. There is another mistake peculiar to some, especially the Lord's people, that they think faith is limited to some few particular and more unknown and hidden truths and mysteries of the gospel. Ye think that it is only true believing, to embrace

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some special gospel truths, which the multitude of people know nothing of, as the tenor of the covenants of grace and works, &c. And for other common principles of God's making and ruling the world, you think that a common thing to believe them. But, saith the apostle, "through faith we understand that the worlds were framed." It is that same faith spoken of in the end of the 10th chapter, by which the "just shall live." So then, here is a point of saving faith, to believe with the heart in God, the Creator and Father Almighty, to take a view of God's almighty power, and sufficient goodness and infinite wisdom, shining in the fabric of the world, and that with delight and admiration at such a glorious fountain being; to rise up to his majesty by the degrees of his creatures. This is the climbing and aspiring nature of faith. You see how much those saints in the Old Testament were in this and certainly they had more excellent and beseeming thoughts of God than we. It should make Christians ashamed, that both heathens, who had no other book opened to them but that of nature, did read it more diligently than we, and that the saints of old, who had not such a plain testimony of God as we now have, did yet learn more out of the book of the creature than we do both out of it and the scriptures. We look on all things with such a careless eye, and do not observe what may be found of God in them. I think, verily, there are many Christians, and ministers of the gospel, who do not ascend into those high and ravishing thoughts of God, in his being and working, as would become even mere naturalists. How little can they speak of his majesty, or think as it becomes his transcendent glory! There is little in sermons or discourses that holds out any singular admiring thoughts of a Deity, but in all these we are as common and careless as if he were an idol.

It is not in vain that it is expressed thus: "through faith we know that the worlds were framed." For certainly the firm believing and pondering of this one truth would be of great moment and use to a Christian in all his journey. You may observe in

what stead it is to the saints in scripture this raises up a soul to high thoughts, and suitable conceptions of his glorious name, and so conforms the worship of his majesty unto his excellency. It puts the stamp of divinity upon it, and spiritualizes the thoughts and affections, so as to put a true difference between the true God, and the gods that made not the heavens and the earth. Alas! the worship of many Christians speaks out no diviner or higher object than a creature, it is so cold, so formal and empty, so vain and wandering. There is no more respect testified unto him, than we would give unto some eminent person. You find in the scripture how the strain of the saints' affections and devotion rises, when they take up God in his absolute supremacy above the creatures, and look on him as the alone fountain of all that is worth the name of perfection in them. A soul in that consideration cannot choose but assign unto him the most eminent seat in the heart, and gather those affections which are scattered after the creatures, into one channel, to pour them out on him who is all in all, and hath all that which is lovely in the creatures in an eminent degree. Therefore know what you are formed for,—to show forth his praise, to gather and take up from the creatures all the fruits of his praise, and offer them up to his majesty. This was the end of man, and this is the end of a Christian. You are made for this, and you were redeemed for this, to read upon the volumes of his works and word, and from thence extract songs of praise to his majesty.

As this would be of great moment to the right worshipping of God, and to the exercise of true holiness, so it is most effectual to the establishing of a soul in the confidence of the promises of God. When a soul by faith understands the world was made by God, then it relies with confidence upon that same word of God, as a word of power, and hopes against hope. There are many things in the Christian's way betwixt him and glory, which look as insuperable. Thou art often emptied into nothing, and stripped naked of all encouragements, and there is nothing

remaining but the word of God's promises to thee and to the church, which seems contrary to sense and reason. Now, I say, if thou do indeed believe that the world was made by God, then out of all question thou mayest silence all thy fears with this one thought—God created this whole frame out of nothing, he commanded the light to shine out of darkness then certainly he can give a being to his own promises. Is not his word of promise as sure and effectual as his word of command? This is the grand encouragement of the church, both offered by God, from Isa. chap. xl., and made use of by his saints, as David, Hezekiah, &c. What is it would disquiet a soul if it were reposed on this rock of creating power and faithfulness? This would always sound in its ears,—“Faint not, weary not, Jacob, I am God, and none else. The portion of Jacob is not like others.” Be it inward or outward difficulties,—suppose hell and earth combined together,—let all the enemies of a soul, or of the church assemble,—here is one for all. The God that made the heaven and the earth can speak, and it is done, command, and it stands fast! He creates peace, and who then can make trouble, when he gives quietness to a nation, or to a person? Almighty power works in saints, and for saints. Let us trust in him.