



THE NATIONAL PREACHER, And Village Pulpit.

Vol. III.—New Series.]

FEBRUARY, 1860.

[No. 2.—Whole No. 730.

SERMON IV.

BY REV. ALBERT BARNES,*

PASTOR OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA.

THE WISE RECKONING OF TIME.

“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”—
PSALM 90 : 12.

AT what time can this prayer be more appropriate than at the commencement of a new year? Another year of our probation has gone. Its joys and sorrows, its plans and purposes, have passed away, and live now only in the recollection, and in the influence which they have had in forming our character, and in determining our destiny in the great day of accounts. We enter now upon a new year, uncertain what joys or sorrows it has in reserve for us; what trials we shall pass through; who of us shall die; who shall see its close in the same circumstances of joyous-

* The appropriate place for this discourse was in the January number, but the sermons connected with the portrait left no room for it.—Ed.

ness with which we greet the first Sabbath of this year. How obviously proper, in these circumstances, as we stand thus upon its threshold, to lift up the voice of supplication and say to God: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

The meaning of the prayer it is not difficult to understand. It is, that God would teach us to take such an estimate of life that we may be led to act *AS IF* we saw its close—*AS IF* we saw the number of days that we are to live. We know not how long our lives are to continue. We have no intimation, no means of conjecturing, when they will close. For wise, and not unobvious reasons, God has concealed the end of life from us. He *could* have revealed to each one of us, as he did to Hezekiah, (Isa. 38,) the number of years that we shall live; or he could say to those of us whom he has appointed this year to death, as he did to Haniah: "This year thou shalt die." (Jer. 28 : 16.) But he has concealed the close of our lives from us probably for these reasons: either (1) because, if sinners knew the exact hour when they were to die, they would defer preparation to the last day or hour, knowing that they would have time then to attend to it; or (2) because, if men knew the exact time when they were to die, the world would be filled with gloom, and our houses become like the cells of condemned malefactors, for what would be the effect on the families that compose this congregation, to understand precisely the names of those among us, who are to die this year? What sadness would be in our dwellings as we looked upon the child dear to us destined to death, as the day drew near! Or (3) because the kind of uncertainty which now hangs over the awful subject, is best adapted to lead us without delay to prepare for our departure. The two settled things are all that is needful for us—first, the event is not far distant; and, second, it *may* occur at any year, any month, any hour. The Giver of Life, and the Closer of Life, knows when the hour will be. He, too, by the secret influence of his Spirit, can enable us to act *as if* we saw the close of life. He can enable us to take an account of our own days, and form plans in reference to our own lives, *as if* we saw the close. Such is the prayer in the text. Who will refuse to offer it sincerely this morning? Who among us can refuse to ask of God that our hearts may be applied to true wisdom? In secret silence, my hearers, breathe forth this prayer to God now, as we enter on the consideration of the subject before us.

What would be the answer to this prayer, if it were answered? What views of life would it enable us to take? What plans would it lead us to form? These questions will direct our meditations, and in a series of observations I shall aim to answer them.

I. We should obtain a practical view of life as exceedingly short.

Such a view was obtained by the author of this psalm, and it was in part the reason why he offered this prayer, that he might have a practical view of a fact of which he could not doubt. "In the morning," speaking of men, he says, "they are like grass which groweth up; in the evening it is cut down and withered. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow, for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." It is not difficult for us to come to the conclusion, intellectually, that life is not very long at best; and that our own lives are not likely to be an exception to the general law. We would state this fact in an argument with another man to convince *him* that it was proper to contemplate the probable close of life at no distant period, and to prepare for it; or we would admit it in conversation with a friend. Yet as a practical and *felt* matter, how rare is it that it secures a hold on the mind! All of us insensibly fall into the habit of forming our plans *as if* we had some security against death, and *as if* we were to escape the lot which befalls others. I suffer such a delusion to occupy *my* mind; you do yours. I, though I see ministers of my own age, or younger than myself, cut down in the midst of their way, and those who had as fair a prospect of long life as I have, suddenly laid in the grave, insensibly find myself supposing that I may be an exception, and forming plans that will require many years to fill them up. The merchant, too, though he sees another merchant taken away before his plans of life are executed, may insensibly find himself anticipating many years, and scarcely feel that it is possible that he should be called to leave his own plans unfinished. The youth, too, even when he follows a fellow-youth to the grave, may find himself insensibly forming plans that are to stretch on to an honored old age, as though no such casualty could happen to him. And even they who seem to us to be "very aged men," may be seen to be forming schemes that would require no inconsiderable part of the time allowed to the venerable Methusaleh to accomplish. Men build houses, and buy farms, and make investments, and plant orchards, and send their ships to distant lands; and draw around them in their dwellings all the comforts that this or other climes can furnish, *as if* life were wholly a different thing from what it is, and were made of far less perishable and frail "stuff" than it actually is. It is not against these things that I now reason or remonstrate, but against the illusion which insensibly comes over your mind and mine, in regard to the actual period to which we are likely to live. The prayer of our text, if answered, would dissipate this illusion; and it would be well for us if, at the commencement of the new year at least, this illusion were dissipated. Now we form our plans anew. We make an estimate of our profits and losses; of what others owe to us, or we to them; of the value of our funds,

and of our ability to extend our business, or of the necessity of contracting it, and of limiting our expenses; of the kind of hitherto untasted luxuries in which we may now safely indulge, or of the necessity of substituting economy in the place of extravagance. Let us to-day admit, as an important item, in forming our plans for this year, a just estimate of life, and see what influence that should have on our views of living, and our engagements for the year.

The simple matter of fact is, that life is short; that it is uncertain; that Death has his victims every day; that he comes into every place; that he shows no favoritism for any class; that he gives no indulgence to the young, the fair, the beautiful, the vigorous; and that he is wholly inexorable to all the pleadings which men make for a longer life who are not ready to die. It is short; it is a hand-breadth; it is a vapor; it is like a weaver's shuttle. Some may ask, *Why* it is so short? why, since so great interests are at stake, is it not longer? why does God make eternity depend on the conduct of a few hours? I would answer these questions now, only so far as they illustrate my text, and contribute to my object. You complain of its being so short as a part of probation. Let me say to such complainers: (1.) That you do not desire that life should be longer *in order* to prepare for eternity. That is not the object for which you wish to live. You wish to live to enjoy the pleasures of this world, not to prepare for the next. (2.) Life is long enough to prepare for eternity. "That life is long which answers life's great end." Ample time is given to each one to prepare to meet God. You feel that, for you are squandering large portions of life supposing that there is enough left to prepare to die. Can a man who has lived fifty years say that his life has been too short to repent of his sins, and believe in the Saviour? It requires little time to prepare for heaven. It requires much indeed to amass wealth, to obtain honor, to transmit the name to future times—but there is no one here who has not had ample time to prepare for heaven. (3.) It is merciful to *you* that time is thus short. Were it *not* so, you would defer the preparation for heaven as long as possible, and would live a life of sin, and harden yourself in impenitence, as you advanced in years. What would be the condition of the world if all men lived to be as old as they who lived before the flood? Just what theirs was—for among them who became penitent? See aged sinners now, hardening themselves as they advance in years. Who among them becomes converted? And should the race live on as it did then, the earth, as it was then, would be filled again with violence, and make it necessary to sweep it again by fire or flood for its crimes. (4.) It is in mercy to the race that life is short. Long enough to accomplish the work of salvation, and to allow much time, too, for social comforts, for the study of the

works and ways of God, it is too short for one man to accumulate the wealth of provinces, and place himself alone in the earth—for he is cut off and his property is placed in better hands; it is too short for such a man as Alexander, or Napoleon, to establish a universal iron despotism, and bind all the limbs of men with fetters, for before the giant evil is done, God calls him to his great account, and men breathe again and are free; and it is too short for men to combine and execute purposes of infidelity and sin, for death breaks up the circle and dissolves the confederacy; and it is in mercy now to you and me, to society, to truth, to virtue, to liberty and salvation, that life is a span. But it is not too short for one and all to secure their eternal salvation if they will. Let us take such an estimate of life as we enter on the new year.

II. Should this prayer be answered, we should obtain a view of our fast-fleeing days and years *as a precious part of probation*. Now we are incessantly prone to forget it, and to regard time as given to us for any other purpose than to prepare for eternity. It is regarded as given for gain, amusement, ease, pleasure, sensual gratification; for dress, for eating, and for securing the good opinion of our fellow-men.

When a man performs a single thing, no matter how unimportant in itself, with a distinct reference to eternity, and as a part of probation, it constitutes a new era in his life, and makes him a different being. It takes him out from the common mass of mankind, and the great and noble conception will diffuse an influence over all his conduct and life. For there are many—nay, it is the common condition of mankind—who have never spent one half-hour in their lives in acting with any direct reference to the world to come; nay, who have never given the subject a moment of practical thought. They have spent many hours in preparing for a ball-room or a fashionable party; in preparing for a profession or an office; in preparing to live in ease when the snows of age shall fall gently on their heads; but not one single half-hour in any distinct and direct purpose to prepare for eternity. Now, should this plan become the leading plan of their lives, or should it occupy their attention in any manner as they are occupied in preparing for future life in this world, it would produce a change that would show itself in all their purposes and actions. It would be the salient point of a new life in their souls, and would diffuse its influence over all their plans. Such a view would be obtained, if the prayer of my text were sincerely offered, and if an answer were imparted. Our passing years then would be seen to be an important part of the probation for eternity—a part of existence whose plans and actions would leave their impression on all the future being; given with reference to a coming world, and invaluable above all the worth of rubies as connected with our

escaping the woes of hell, and reaping the joys of heaven. They would be seen to be given, not for ease and enjoyment here, not for purposes of gain and ambition, but to be well filled up with reference to the world to come. That life is well spent where the steady aim is eternity; that is worse than wasted which falls short of that high and holy purpose.

I need not stay to demonstrate that this is a world of probation, and that he has no just view of life who does not thus regard it. The Bible has spoken unequivocally on that point, and leaves no room to doubt that it is so regarded by its great Author; and the whole train of events on earth leads us to the conclusion that God so designed it. Youth sends an influence forward to determine the condition of manhood, and the virtues and industry of youth are rewarded by the respectability and wealth of middle-age, as the vices of youth are recompensed by poverty and dishonor. Middle age sends an influence forward to advanced years, and one point of time is perpetually determining the destiny in that which is to come. The results of the transactions of yesterday travel over the night when we sleep and meet us to-day, just as the result of conduct in this world travels over the sleep of death with us, our solitary companion, and meets us in the regions beyond to determine our destiny there. I know no truth that more commends itself to the common-sense of mankind, and that more accords with the uniform course of events, than that we are on probation for eternity. If so, a year has a value which words can not estimate, and to us now it is an important inquiry: What has been the bearing of the past year on our eternal doom? what results of that year are to meet us when we shall emerge from the vale of death? And it is an inquiry not *less* important, What are to be the results of the year whose first Sabbath this day dawns upon us?

I am not satisfied, however, with this general statement of the doctrine of probation. The probation or trial on which we are placed here, is as peculiar as it is important. The question to be determined is a very simple one, and turns mainly on a single point, as probation always does. With man in Paradise, it was a simple question whether he would abstain from the forbidden tree. With a young man now, the whole trial often consists in the question, whether he will *once* resist the solicitations of appetite and of friends—so thought and so called—about the intoxicating cup; or the solicitations of curiosity or of friends, or a worse motive, to visit a gambling-room or a theater. So the trial for eternity is narrowed down to a single question, simple in its nature, but determining all the future doom. It is: Whether you will or will not accept of pardon and salvation through the merits of the Redeemer? That is the question before man: not whether he will abstain from the forbidden tree, for that is not now proposed; not whether we shall be saved by a life of perfect holiness, and go to

heaven because we have never sinned, for that is equally out of the question—but whether, conscious of guilt, humbled, rebuked in spirit, penitent that we are among the unhappy wanderers from God our Maker, we will return and seek forgiveness through the merits of Him who died for us. This is the great and important question that is to be determined. To determine this, God gives us life. To one he gives eighty years; to another three-score and ten; to others fifty, forty, thirty, twenty — to all enough, and yet to all, little enough; to all, the time is uncertain, and yet to all, the present is available and ample; and to all, this time is soon to pass away; for not one moment is to be allowed for *that* purpose beyond the grave. Permit me to add, my hearers, that much light is thrown on the solution of that question by the past year. That year is gone; and to you who are now impenitent, the purposes for which God gave you the year have been in no manner answered. It has been to you worse than a wasted year—a year of the positive rejection of the Son of God; and rather than have been doing that, a man had better have been in his grave.

III. Should the prayer in my text be offered and answered, we should be led to act as if life were soon to close. I have already intimated that few of us so act now. We delude ourselves with a vain expectation of long life, and we are glad to have this illusion play around the heart; for who is there that on some points does not like to be deceived? *Now*, we form our plans as if we had much time yet to live; could we see the truth, we should be led to act *as if* we saw that we were soon to die. This is true of all in a general sense; in respect to some here it would be found to be true in a peculiar and most affecting sense.

It is true of all. I bring it to you as not a new, but as a very weighty and important truth, that the period is not far distant when *all* that I now address—all in this city, rich and poor; all in this land, free and bond; all on earth, holy and unholy—will be in the graves—all gone, all silent, all returning to dust, all forgotten. Your seat in this house will be vacated, and a new comer will sit there; your seat at the table in your dwellings will be vacant; your well-known tread and voice will be heard there by your wife and children no more; and the chamber where you now sleep will be darkened, and still; for you, pale and speechless, will lie there dead. The man almost without feeling will thrust his spade in the earth, and ply his solitary task in the grave-yard to make another bed for you, and you will soon be forgotten. Few will weep over you; and soon their tears will be dried up, and they will all lay aside the badges of grief, and the footsteps of your being will be obliterated as the ebbing and flowing waves remove the footprint on the beach. I attend many funerals; and I endeavor

to be not an inattentive observer of what occurs there, and to derive from all such places lessons that may be of practical value. I have been a man of ambition, far more than my sober reflections can justify, and have had a desire that my name should be remembered when I am dead; yet, though I can not justify it, I know not that it has been a more ardent desire than is cherished by many other men. But I confess if there is any thing that serves effectually to rebuke and mortify this passion; to show me how little likely it is to be gratified, and to convince me how vain, and worthless, and foolish it is, it is what I see at funerals, and in the remembrances of the dead. How narrow is the circle that is affected at all! How little sense of *loss* is felt extensively when a man dies! How much is it regarded as a matter of course that *he should die*; and in what a cold *business manner* is he consigned to the grave! How soon is his place filled up, if a pastor, by another pastor equally or more beloved; if a judge on the bench, by another, perhaps long an aspirant for the office; if a physician or a lawyer, by one who enters without a tear into the large practice for which he has been waiting long; if a merchant, by one who stood at his elbow waiting that he might be removed. The world will have other things to do than to think much of us when we are dead; and when we have received the tribute of the small circle of personal friends that we have been able to draw around us, and perhaps the passing remark of the stranger on what he may have heard of our worth, we must content ourselves to be forgotten. Happy, then, they who, though destined to be soon forgotten on earth, will have the assurance that there is ONE who will remember them, even in the grave!

But the truth that life will soon close, is more *especially* true of some. There are individuals here, of which number perhaps I am one, who are particularly concerned in this remark. A year since I addressed some here who are not present to hear me to-day, and who will hear the voice of pastor or friend no more. To-day I address some who will not be where they may hear the Gospel at the close of this year; and of whom it is written by Him who changes not: "This year thou shalt die." I say, I address some such. This fact has all the certainty which any future event *can* have, and is nearly as certain as it is that the sun will rise to-morrow. If I live, I as certainly expect to be called on to attend funerals this year as I do that the months and weeks will roll round. Who are the victims, I know not; I do not wish to know. Two things I know with tolerable certainty, however. One is, that they will be very likely to be taken from those who are least expecting it, and that probably some of these dear youth will be the victims; and the other is, that so far as we can see, they are as likely to be taken from one of these pews as another. Suppose I begin on the right, and take the pew nearest to me, and then the next, and the

next, and the next; I would say to those sitting there that it is as likely that the breach will be made *there* as any where. To those that sit there to-day, then, how natural to ask the question: "Are you ready?" God can teach those of us who are thus destined to death to act as though *we* saw it; to apply our hearts to wisdom as though *we* saw the day and the hour of our departure.

IV. Were this prayer answered, it would lead to the change of many plans which we are now forming, and which are far from the wisdom which would be suggested by the proper numbering of our days. It is not unreasonable to suppose that many of the plans which are formed by those before me at the commencement of the year are not based on any supposition that death is near, or perhaps that he approaches at all. They would be essentially modified, perhaps wholly abandoned, were the truth of the whole matter clearly seen. Suppose you were to see the future just as God sees it; suppose you were able to calculate with certainty the months, the weeks, the hours, the moments, the very *seconds* that you are to live—it is fair to presume that such an estimate would lead many here essentially to modify their plans at the commencement of this year. He who has begun the year flushed with the hopes of gain, and with cheering prospects of better times, intent now more than ever on being rich, would perceive the propriety of paying attention to the concerns of the soul. He might remember the solemn address made to one man, "Thou fool! this night shall thy soul be required of thee," and feel it necessary greatly to modify his plans, and to make the preparation for that hour now the primary purpose. That professing Christian now mingling much more freely than the Saviour would have done, or would now approve, with the world of fashion and of levity—the world that knows not its God, and desires not a Redeemer—might feel that there would be a propriety in withdrawing from such scenes, and giving the heart to godliness, and seriousness, and prayer; and might see the propriety that one expecting soon to be with the redeemed above should have the heart better prepared than it is likely to be where God is forgotten. That young man that is full of the hope of distinction in this world, but without the prospect of honor in the world to come, and that has resolved to push forward his efforts with augmented ardor this year in pursuit of the prize, might feel that it was necessary to grasp a prize that is nearer and brighter—the crown of glory—and to make immediate preparation for the honors of heaven. And she who expects to devote herself to vanity might feel that there was some impropriety in dancing over the earth which is so soon to be opened to furnish her a grave, and that as she treads near the crumbling verge, a more careful and sedate step becomes her. What a change would be produced in our plans to-day if we saw the reality! Who is there

here who would not be likely to modify his schemes! How many are there who would feel it necessary to form them wholly anew! *God* can so influence the mind that we shall form our plans *as if* we saw all before us; and who *could* be injured by sincerely offering that prayer at the beginning of this new year?

V. Such an answer to the prayer would show the propriety of an immediate attention to whatever is necessary to prepare to die. *To die*—dreaded, repulsive, chilling word! I know you will think of it as little as you can; but I know also that the time is not far distant when it *must* be thought of; and I know too, that, by the help of the Almighty Spirit, I could show you how that word would lose almost all its terrors; perhaps become a subject of delightful contemplation. Pleasant or unpleasant, however, it is a word and a thing that pertains to you and me—and we are equally interested in knowing what is a proper preparation for it. I am drawing near to the close of my remarks, and I would finish what I have to say by pressing this point on your attention. What is to be done? How?

With some of you, my hearers, every thing is to be done. To this day, in some instances, in a life already somewhat protracted, you have done literally *nothing* to prepare for the eternity which is before you. The past year is now numbered with those that went before *it*, characterized in your case by the total neglect of the soul. In all that year, in all your past life, you can not fix the eye on one half-hour when you sat down to think soberly about eternity; when you read the Bible one half-hour to find out the way of salvation; when you prayed a half-hour that your soul might be saved. Momentary thoughts, dismissed as soon as they could be, you have had; perhaps hours of gloom, which you have been anxious to conceal from your friends, you have had; seriousness you have experienced on the death of a child, but your main anxiety then has not been how those thoughts might take a religious direction, and result in your conversion, but how they might *not*. Solemn feelings you may have had under the preaching of the Gospel, but the solicitude excited in your bosom has not been how they might result in your conversion, but how you could best get rid of the thoughts that troubled you. I have reasons which thoroughly convince me of the fact, to believe that I address some with whom this has become the settled plan of life—those of you, among others, who will listen to an argument that relates to a point in which you have no interest, but who, the moment the subject approaches the form of an earnest and anxious appeal to you directly, coolly turn away. Such have formed a very deliberate resolution *not* to do any thing with reference to a preparation to die, further than to provide a decent place of interment, and to make a will, and arrange their worldly affairs. Not

one step have you taken to prepare, in any proper sense, to enter the eternal world; not one thing have you left undone to crowd the whole subject from the mind.

At the beginning of another year, you present yourselves in this sanctuary, with this as the record of the past. You have gone through another entire year, and have kept the subject of religion from the mind. It is all the *permanent*, the *eternal* record which is likely to be made of you in relation to the past year. That record is made. You enter upon another year, intending still the same thing. Unpardoned, unrenewed, unsanctified, worldly, ambitious, vain, unreconciled to God, and designing to remain thus; in God's world, and yet determined not to acknowledge him; not far from his bar, and having made towards it the whole journey of another year, unprepared to meet him; you have come here to-day intending that this shall be a prayerless and a thoughtless year also—perchance a year of gayety, folly, sin. I admonish you, with the fidelity of a pastor, and the tenderness of a friend, that for such a purpose you must soon give account to God. Hitherto, you have done nothing to be prepared to meet him. On your own grave, before the snows of the next December may fall, the grass may wave, and the rose-bush may have been planted there by the trembling hand of a friend—and a year hence the winds of winter may howl around your tomb. Will you not offer this one prayer? "So teach me to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom." Ye who have spent the past year in the neglect of the Bible, will you not be persuaded to begin, and continue, and end this, if you live, in the search for heavenly wisdom? Ye who have spent the past year without prayer, shall this year be prayerless also? Will you not go to-day to the fountain of wisdom, and ask His guidance and direction in the way to life? You whose life has been a life of vanity and thoughtlessness and sin, and whose leading reflections to-day should be those of amazement at the forbearance and compassion of God—will you not remember that it is possible to weary-out that compassion and long-suffering, and that the message often goes forth: "Cut him down; why cumbereth he the ground?"

And ye Christians, friends of the Redeemer, heirs of glory, who have been taught by the Eternal Spirit that your days are like the weaver's shuttle, and who enter now, perhaps, on the last year of your life—certainly on a year whose journey of weeks and hours and moments is to be traveled over but once—will you not to-day in sincerity breathe forth this prayer, and open your bosom to the heavenly answer? So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom. Not to the ways of folly; not to schemes of life that thou wilt not approve; not to inordinate gain—to ambition, to the love of the pride, pomp, and vanity of life; not to the ways of gayety and sin—but to those paths and

plans on which wisdom is instamped; to sober views of life, of its shortness, of its value as a part of probation; to the nearness of its close, and the momentous consequences of the actions of this life. If in thy inscrutable Providence it shall be thy will that this year shall close our lives, help us to live as if *we* saw the coming of the day; if, in mercy, we are carried through this year also, that we may so live that its deeds shall shed light and glory on our future being, and salvation around us; but whether we live or die, that we may meet thine approbation, and walk beneath thy smiles. So let wisdom guide us; so let peace and the hope of heaven accompany us to the moment so eventful to us, when the angel shall lift his hand, and swear that in regard to us, "time shall be no longer." AMEN.

SERMON V.

BY REV. GEORGE N. BOARDMAN,

PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH BINGHAMTON, NEW-YORK.

THE TWO LAWS.

"TELL me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free."—GAL. 4: 21-31.

THIS passage, though obscure, very plainly expresses a two-fold method of divine government. There are two Jerusalems; one above and one below: there are two covenants; there is a two-fold line of descent—one that of bondage, the other, that of freedom. The former descent is by the flesh, the latter by promise.

It should be noticed that these two methods of the divine government, though they seem different, and that of the flesh seems the more ancient, are yet in reality one, and begin together. Isaac