

PART I - THE CREATION SERIES

NOTE: To receive the full benefit of the lesson, the reader is advised to look up the cited scriptures in his Bible before examining the explanatory material of the article.

GOD'S PLAN IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS

GENESIS CHAPTER ONE

Genesis 1:1,2

THE WORK OF Creation referred to in these opening verses of the Bible predates the seven days of creation outlined in the remainder of the chapter. How beautifully simple is this story told of the original Creation! It starts with the reasonable assumption that a Creator, an intelligent First Cause, already existed. It does not attempt to explain the origin of the Creator, nor to reveal the manner in which the universe was brought into existence by him.

While some scientists lack faith in the existence of a personal Creator, attributing all the works of Creation to the operation of natural law, there are many who admit their inability to explain the operation of natural law except from the standpoint that back of it is an intelligent Lawgiver, and no scientist has been able to prove that this is not true. Thus, the opening verses of the Bible stand without refutation in the light of the most modern scientific knowledge.

A moment's reflection upon the immensity and grandeur of the universe should suffice to convince us that behind all this display of intelligence and power must be the design of a great Being, who not only is the Creator, but one who is worthy of our reverence and worship as God. Well did the prophet write that only the foolish say in their hearts, "There is no God." -- Psalm 14:1; 53:1

Verse two explains that as originally created, the earth was "without form, and void" -- that is, its ultimate contour as God designed it, had not been developed, and it was empty of all forms of life. There were neither mountains nor valleys, trees nor shrubs, rivers nor oceans.

A recognition of the division made in Genesis between the original creation of the earth and its later preparation to be the home of man, eliminates all need for controversy between science and the Bible concerning the age of the earth or the length of time required for its creation. Science claims that millions of years elapsed during which this earth came into being as a shapeless, empty mass. The Scriptures neither deny nor affirm these guesses and near -- guesses of the scientist, but state simply that "in the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth."

It is also important to realize that the six 'days' of Genesis, chapter 1, during which the earth, already created, was undergoing stages of gradual preparation for human habitation, were not short periods of 24 hours. They were, rather, epochs of time sufficiently long to permit accomplishment of the work assigned to each.

Not only in the Bible, but apart from it as well, the term 'day' often relates to a period of time longer than twenty-four hours. That the creative days were not twenty-four hour periods, the length of which is controlled by the relationship of the earth to the sun, is apparent from the fact that the sun was not made to rule the day until the fourth creative epoch.

Genesis 1:3-5

"Let there be light: and there was light." Thus, briefly, is summed up the result of the first creative day. The nature and cause of light is as yet but imperfectly comprehended. This original light was not from the sun, because the sun did not appear until the fourth day, or epoch. It was probably light produced in some way by electrical or atomic energy, such as the Aurora Borealis.

As with the Hebrew lunar days, so also with these epoch days, the evening came first, and it marked the beginning of a gradual development of the Divine purpose, reaching its culmination in the morning of that day or epoch. Hence the statement, "The evening and the morning were the first day." This first period, or day, of Genesis, is scientifically described as azoic, or lifeless.

Genesis 1:6-8

The work of the second day was devoted to the production of an atmosphere. It was probably accomplished in a natural way, as are many of God's wonderful works, though nonetheless his devising. The separation of the waters above and below the 'firmament' would indicate that previous to the creation of atmosphere as it now surrounds the earth, the entire planet was virtually encased in a canopy or ring of moisture, that there was little difference between it and the waters which lay upon the earth's crust.

Genesis 1:9-13

The work of the third creative day was the dividing of land and water upon the earth, and the development of vegetation. Geology fully corroborates this record. As the earth's crust cooled, the weight of the waters would tend to make it kink and buckle. The depressed parts became ocean beds, while the elevations forced by the buckling constituted mountain ranges.

It is not necessary to assume that all changes of this kind occurred in the one epoch. It is more reasonable to conclude that the third 'day' witnessed merely the beginning of this work to a sufficient degree of progress to make possible the introduction of vegetation. Geology indicates that some changes in the earth's surface are of comparatively recent date. Still further changes may occur.

As the waters drained off into the seas, vegetation sprang forth, each after its kind, with seed in itself to reproduce its own species. This matter is so fixed by the laws of the

Creator that although horticulture can and does do much to give variety, it cannot change the actual nature of species. This shows design, which can be accounted for only by acknowledging the existence of a supreme and intelligent Creator.

In this early period vegetation was extremely rank in growth. Mosses, ferns, and vines grew immensely larger and more rapidly than now, because the atmosphere was laden with carbonic and nitrogenous gases. Plants which now grow only a few inches or a few feet high, even at the equator, then attained a growth of forty to eighty feet, sometimes with a diameter of two feet or more, as is demonstrated by fossil remains. It was during this period, geologists claim, that our coal beds were formed. In geology, this period is styled the Carboniferous era.

Genesis 1:14-19

It is unnecessary to suppose that the sun and the moon were created after our earth. We may as properly lay stress on the word 'rule' in this passage as on the word 'made'. The thought is that in this fourth epoch God caused the sun to rule the day, and the moon to rule the night. The sun and the moon existed long before this, but not until the waters above and below the firmament were separated, and other changes had occurred in preparation for life upon the earth, could the light from the sun and the moon penetrate sufficiently to divide the day from the night. Nor is it necessary to assume that the sun shone as brightly upon the earth then as now, but it was discernible, even though shining through heavy banks of fog and carbon-laden atmosphere.

Genesis 1:20-23

During the fifth epoch day, fish and birds were created. The extent to which warm oceans at that time swarmed with living creatures, from the jellyfish to the whale, may be judged by the profusion of life in the warm southern seas of the present time. Reptiles, living partly in the water and partly on the land -- amphibians -- belong also to this period.

In this connection it is well to note, for whatever significance may be attached to it, that the Bible does not assert that God created separately and individually all the myriad kinds of fish and reptiles. Divine energy, called the Spirit of God, brooded over the waters, and they brought forth living creatures according to God's design. The processes are not explained -- one species may, under Divinely arranged conditions, have developed into another. Or, from the same original protoplasm, different orders of creatures may have developed according to varying circumstances. No one really knows, and it is unwise to be dogmatic on this point.

We do know that it all came about as a result of Divine intention and arrangement, hence all the various forms of life were created by God, whatever may have been the channels and agencies used. When the Creator's intention concerning each order of existing life had been reached, no further change was possible.

Genesis 1:24,25

By the beginning, or 'evening', of the sixth day, conditions on the earth were becoming more settled. The earth's crust was thicker by hundreds of feet of sand, clay, and coal, and various other minerals. The earth's surface was sufficiently above the sea, and well enough drained by mountain ranges and valleys to be ready for the lower animals. These the Scriptures divide into three general kinds: first, earth reptiles, cold-blooded breathing lizards, snakes, etc.; second, beasts of the earth, or wild beasts; third, domestic animals especially suited to be useful to man, and referred to here as 'cattle'.

Genesis 1:26-31

It was at the close of the sixth day that man was created. In describing his creation the Scriptures use a very different expression from that employed to explain the previous creative processes. It is not, "let the earth bring forth," as in the case of the lower animals; but, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Whatever may be said in favor of a possible limited evolutionary process in the creation of the lower animals, this language permits no such interpretation concerning the creation of man.

Man is said to have been created in the image of God, and to have been fitted to rule over the beasts of the field. He was endowed with the gift of speech, and was able to reason rather than to be guided merely by instinct. He was given ability to discern between right and wrong. Man was also given a capacity to enjoy harmony of sound, as in music. He was also endowed with a faculty for worship, which, perhaps more than any other thing, separates him from the lower animals. His being made in the moral image of God enabled him to appreciate the attributes of divine wisdom, justice, love, and power.

It is well to notice at this point that the Creator's commission to man was to multiply and fill the earth, and have dominion over all things earthly. That man was created in the image of God does not, as some erroneously suppose, mean that he was a spiritual being, destined to spend eternity in a heavenly realm. Man was created an earthly being, adapted to earthly conditions, and provision was made for him to live on the earth forever. This was his destiny.

GENESIS CHAPTER TWO

Genesis 2:1-3

That God rested on the seventh day does not mean that he became weary, for the Scriptures declare, "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?" -- Isaiah 40:28

The Scriptures do not say, "The evening and the morning were the seventh day," which is strong circumstantial evidence that at no time previous to the completion of the inspired record of the Scriptures has this seventh epoch come to an end. The plan of God for man during this long period of the seventh epoch is being completed by Christ, the Creator having entrusted to him this great responsibility. It is in this sense that God rests from his works. The Scriptures imply that this seventh period of time is one of seven thousand years in length, and this may well suggest the length of the other six creative days.

Genesis 2:2-4

The word 'generations' in this passage translates a Hebrew word which in a figurative sense could be translated "historical records." It is worthy of note that in this text all six days of Creation are referred to as one "day." This is strong confirmatory evidence that the 'days' of the preceding chapter are not twenty-four hour periods.

Genesis 2:5,6

The fact that it had not rained up to this time, and that the ground was watered merely by a mist which went up from the earth, indicates that there was still a ring of vapor surrounding the planet which equalized the temperature and prevented rain. The first rain mentioned in the Scriptures is in connection with the Flood of Noah's day. -- Genesis 7:4

Genesis 2:7

Here we have a detailed account of the manner in which the first man was created. The first chapter of Genesis presents a general summary of the entire Creative work, including man. The second chapter does not tell us of the creation of another man, but presents the details of how the man of the first chapter was made. The remainder of the Bible deals with God's purpose in the creation of man, and the details of his creation are necessary to the revealment of this purpose.

In this text the word 'soul' appears for the first time in the Bible. Man is said to have become a "living soul." (vs. 7) This human soul was formed by the union of man's organism, created from the elements of the earth, and the "breath of life." The soul was not a separate entity which the Creator implanted in man.

The term 'living soul' simply means a soul that is alive. It does not mean immortal soul. The expression 'immortal soul', or any equivalent thereof, is not to be found anywhere in the Bible. It is in this text that God tells us what constitutes a human soul, and this should be a guide in the understanding of every other reference to human souls that we find in the Bible.

Genesis 2:8,9

Man's life was to be sustained by the food of the Garden, including that from the "tree of life." (vs. 9) This indicates that he did not have inherent life, but rather a life which needed to be sustained in order to be lasting. Had man been obedient to God he could have remained in the Garden of Eden and would never have died. The word Eden means 'pleasure' or 'pleasantness'.

Genesis 2:10-14

It is generally believed by scholars that the Hiddekel River is the modern Tigris, and that the Euphrates is the same as the modern Euphrates. With regard to the location of the rivers Pison and Gihon, a great variety of opinions exist, but the best authorities are divided between (1) Eden as in northeast Arabia, at the junction of the Euphrates and Tigris, and their separation again, making the four rivers of the different channels of these two; or (2), and -- most probable -- Eden as situated in Armenia, near the origin of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, and in this same region rise the Araxes (Pison) and the Oxus (Gihon).

Genesis 2:15-17

The care of the Garden of Eden by the perfect man Adam was a pleasurable task, and in no sense of the word laborious. In verse nine we are told that God caused everything to grow in that beautiful garden home that was "pleasant to the sight, and good for food." (vs. 9) The fact that the things pleasant to the sight are mentioned first might indicate a relative importance between those things which are in the nature of necessities, and the blessings of God which are on a higher plane of enjoyment. We do not have to see beautiful flowers in order to keep alive, but seeing them helps to make life more worthwhile.

Adam's liberty to enjoy the bounties of the Garden was only relative. There was one restriction placed upon him -- he was not to partake of "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." (vs. 17) There has been much speculation concerning the nature of this tree. Traditionally it is supposed by many to have been an apple tree, but there is no hint of this in the Bible. Actually, it makes little difference what kind of fruit was borne by this forbidden tree. The important lesson to us is that a test of obedience was placed upon Adam -- obedience to his Creator, to whom he owed his existence and all the blessings of his life.

Adam had been created in the image of God, and was capable of knowing right from wrong, and there was no way for him to exercise that ability except by placing this test upon him. It was also just and proper that the extreme penalty of death should be exacted in the event of Adam's disobedience, for to permit willfully disobedient creatures to continue living would ultimately lead to general rebellion, chaos, and ruin among God's creatures.

It is well to note at this point, however, that the penalty for sin was no more than death. It was not eternal torment in a fiery hell, as traditional theology teaches. "The wages of sin is death," declares the apostle in the New Testament. (Romans 6:23) It is physical, mental, and moral death. When God warned Adam what the result of disobedience would be he gave him no intimation that he would ever be released from it. While Adam was not directly promised everlasting life as a reward for obedience, the thought is implied by the fact that he would experience death only if he disobeyed God's law.

Genesis 2:18-20

The desire for companionship seems to be inherent in all of God's creatures, and God saw that it was not good for man to be alone. Doubtless God knew this when he first created Adam, but in his wisdom he made an arrangement by which Adam would be caused not only to long for companionship, but would appreciate his companion the more when given to him by the Creator. That arrangement was the undertaking assigned to him of naming all the lower animals. As one after another he studied their characteristics, it would be impressed upon him that among them all there was no real companion for him. What a natural and effective method this was of causing Adam to become conscious of his great need! God still deals with his people along this line. Often he permits the deepest shades of sorrow to encompass us in order to teach us our great need of the light.

Genesis 2:21-25

There is no reason to suppose that this description of the method by which Eve was created is not a literal statement of fact. It relates to the work of an all-powerful Creator, and should be viewed in this light. The fact that a part of Adam's body was used in the creation of Eve implies that certain qualities were taken from him and placed in Eve so that neither one was wholly complete without the other.

Doubtless God could have chosen other methods to create Eve, but his choosing of this particular one may indicate that he was making an illustration of an important feature of his plan for the recovery of the lost race from sin and death. Jesus is spoken of by the Apostle Paul as the "last Adam." (1 Corinthians 15:45) As Adam generated the race in sin and death, Jesus will regenerate it and give all an opportunity to live forever.

And just as God gave Eve to the first Adam that through her the race might be generated, so the last Adam, Jesus, is given the church, which becomes his "bride" and associate in the work of restoring and blessing the people. (Revelation 19:7; 22:17) As Adam was put into a deep sleep in order for Eve to be formed from him, so Jesus went into the sleep of

death, and it is the merit of his shed blood which makes possible the development of those who will become his 'bride'.

In Ephesians 5:22,23, the Apostle Paul draws a comparison between Christ's love for his church and a husband's love for his wife. From the divine standpoint they are looked upon as one in both cases. Paul explains that Christ gave his life for the church, and the Creator may well have designed an illustration of this in the method he chose to bring forth Eve. And it is a blessed thought to realize that the work of the last Adam and his bride will assure an opportunity of everlasting life for all mankind.

The nakedness of our first parents prior to their transgression did not cause them any feeling of shame. They were, symbolically speaking, clothed in righteousness -- that is, they had not sinned. This, too, may well be illustrative of the position of Christ and the church. Jesus himself was holy, harmless and separate from sinners. Because he loved righteousness and hated iniquity he was highly exalted to the right hand of the throne of God. (Philippians 2:9; Psalm 110:1) Members of his church are, of course, sinners by heredity, but they are represented in the Scriptures as being covered by a robe of righteousness, hence they are guiltless before God and have no cause to be ashamed.

Surely God's ways are wonderful, and as we become better acquainted with them through the study of his Word, it should cause our hearts to rejoice. And as our rejoicing increases, may we be more than ever determined to serve him faithfully and to show forth his praises more zealously as the days go by.

GOD'S PLAN IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS

GENESIS, CHAPTER THREE

Genesis 3:1

There has been a great deal of speculation concerning the identity of the "serpent" mentioned for the first time in the opening verse of this chapter. The term is a translation of the Hebrew word *nachash*, meaning to hiss, mutter, or whisper, as do enchanters. The explanation that the "serpent" was more subtle than any beast of the field is not altogether true of serpents as we know them today. The Hebrew word here translated beast could as well be rendered living creature, and some contend that the "serpent" was in reality the fallen Lucifer, and is so referred to in Revelation 20:2.

There is perhaps something to be said in favor of this view, for it would mean that Eve was confronted with the enticing influence of a glorious, though fallen, spirit being rather than the repelling presence of a snake, hence the difficulty she experienced in resisting his suggestions. But regardless of the medium by which the temptation was presented to mother Eve, the Scriptures are explicit on the point that Satan was, indeed, the real tempter -- and this is the important consideration.

Satan's method of attack in the case of Eve was the same as it has been throughout the ages; namely, an attempt to cast doubt upon the Word of God. "Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Satan was acquainted with the Word of God then, even as he displayed familiarity with it 4,000 years later, when tempting Jesus. While Satan is doubtless agreeable to the immorality and crime that have resulted from the fall of man, his principal activity is that of attacking the confidence of God's people in the veracity of his Word.

Genesis 3:2,3

In answering the "serpent," Eve revealed that she had a thorough knowledge of God's requirements. This information was obviously communicated to her by Adam, as she was created after the command was given to him. The clause, "neither shall ye touch it," was added by Eve, and may be expressive of her desire to comply with God's directions, even to the finest detail -- that she would not so much as go near the tree which had been forbidden.

Genesis 3:4

Having succeeded in engaging Eve in conversation, in having her state the law of God and the penalty for violating it, that "old serpent" was quick to follow up with a flat denial that God meant what he said when he declared that the penalty for disobeying his instructions would be death when he said, 'Thou shalt surely die'. But in denying this, Satan insisted, 'Ye shall not surely die'. Stemming from this denial of the Word of God have come all the false doctrines that have deceived the dying world throughout all the ages.

Satan's lie, 'Ye shall not surely die', finds expression today in the unscriptural theory that there is no death. All philosophies tending to show that death is not a reality have their origin in this lie of Satan's. Among these are the claims of inherent immortality; the immortality of the soul; the transmigrations of souls; reincarnation, and others.

Genesis 3:5

In this text we have an example of Satan's method of deceiving by the admixture of truth and error. It was true that partaking of the forbidden fruit would result in the human race obtaining a knowledge of good and evil, but it was not true that human beings would become gods. We cannot be sure what Satan meant by his use of the term 'gods' or mighty ones, but this is probably the origin of the idea that at death human beings enter a higher existence, similar to the angels. It was essential that Satan introduce some such view as this into the minds of the people in order to divert their attention from the reality of death.

Genesis 3:6,7

From the reading of this passage it is apparent that Satan had presented a most desirable picture of the advantages that would accrue from disobeying God's law. Eve was assured that the tree was "good for food," "pleasant to the eyes," and "to be desired to make one wise." With all these reasons for breaking God's command, plus the doubt as to whether death would actually follow as a result, Eve succumbed to the temptation, and Adam joined her in the transgression.

Eve was deceived, but the Apostle Paul informs us that Adam was not. (1 Timothy 2:14) It was to Adam that the Creator gave his law directly, and his communion with his God had evidently resulted in giving him confidence in his Word. He knew that death would result from his disobedience, but he chose to go along with his wife in a course which he knew would lead to certain disaster. He may have recalled his loneliness prior to her creation and felt that life would not be worthwhile without her.

The sudden realization that they were naked is in keeping with the symbolism which is used throughout the Scriptures indicating that those who are guilty before God are represented as being in need of a covering. This symbolism finds its most important application in connection with the 'robe' of Christ's righteousness which covers the imperfections of all who come to God through him.

Genesis 3:8-10

"They heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden." While Adam and Eve had transgressed God's law, they were still close to the perfection they possessed before sinning, and apparently God created them in such a manner that they could communicate with him more directly than is possible for imperfect human beings. It is not necessary to suppose, of course, that the Creator himself spoke personally and audibly to them; but

whatever method he used, it must have been with a directness and definiteness that there could be no mistaking the meaning of the message.

They were afraid. Fear is one of the inevitable results of sin. This principle has been borne out in the experiences of the entire human race. Because the race has continued in sin, all mankind continues to be blighted with fear.

A knowledge of both good and evil was to result from partaking of the forbidden tree. They began to acquire their knowledge of evil almost immediately; but their full knowledge of both good and evil will not be attained until the close of the Millennial Age. The entire human race will then possess that knowledge through experience, and thus equipped, will be able to decide whether or not they will obey God and live, or disobey him and die.

Genesis 3:11-13

One of the traits of fallen human nature is that of blaming others for our own wrongdoing. This tendency manifested itself very early in human experience, and we find Adam blaming Eve -- and implying that the Creator himself was somewhat to blame, for he had given Eve to him -- and Eve blaming the "old serpent." When one does wrong, the most satisfactory thing to do is to accept the blame, and as far as possible, make amends.

Genesis 3:14,15

In this condemnation of the "serpent" is clear evidence that more than a snake was involved in the temptation of our first parents. The "seed" of the serpent referred to here is the seed of Satan, made up of all who come under his influence and lend themselves to the furthering of his sinful purposes. The "enmity" placed between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman has been manifested throughout the ages in the persecution of those upon whom God has manifested his favor.

The assertion that the seed of the serpent would bruise the "heel" of the seed of the woman suggests opposition, but not of a sort that would prove fatal. The bruising of the serpent's head by the seed of the woman indicates the destruction of that great enemy of God and men represented by the serpent; namely, Satan, the Devil. The seed of the woman is the Christ, made up of Jesus, the Head, and the church his body; and one of the New Testament promises is that Satan shall be bruised under the feet of the church. (Romans 16:20) We are also told that all the wicked will the LORD destroy. -- Psalm 145:20

Genesis 3:16

In this text we have important evidences of the inspiration of the Bible. From a physical standpoint there is no reason why human mothers should suffer in giving birth to their children more than do the lower animals, but they do. No scientific reason has ever been

advanced for this, and no explanation given, except this one which we find in the Book of Genesis. It is part of the curse which resulted from Eve's transgression of God's law.

Genesis 3:17-19

The punishment upon Adam -- and upon the entire human race of which he was the representative head -- was twofold. He was to die -- dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return -- and the earth was cursed, making it difficult to obtain the necessary food. There seems to be special significance in the expression, "cursed is the ground for thy sake." In the Creator's wisdom, the earth was left in an unfinished state, making it necessary for fallen man to subsist by hard toil. This was for the benefit of man since it has prevented the human race from sinking even deeper into debauchery and sin.

Genesis 3:20

The meaning of names plays an important part in the revelation of God's plan. Mary, for example, was told that she should call her son Jesus, meaning "savior," because he would save his people from their sins. The name, Eve is from a Hebrew word meaning "life-giver." While the life principle originates with the father it could not develop into maturity without the aid of the mother, hence the importance of this fact is emphasized by the name that was given to the original mother of the human race.

Genesis 3:21

In God's provision of clothing for our first parents which required the sacrifice of life, there is a pointing forward to the provision of Christ's righteousness to cover the imperfections of those who return to God's favor through him. While God did not reveal his plan of salvation with much detail in his dealing with Adam and Eve, he did not leave them altogether without hope. His statement concerning the seed of the woman is very significant in the light of subsequent promises, and in the coats provided for the sinful pair there is a picture of a future provision of Divine love.

Genesis 3:22-24

God said, "Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." Adam and Eve did not become 'gods' in any other sense than in their knowledge of good and evil, and now they were to experience both. They had experienced a great deal of 'good' before they transgressed the Divine law, and life was not to be entirely void of blessings even now.

The LORD said that man had become as "one of us." The 'us' in this statement is evidently a reference to himself and the *Logos*, who cooperated with him in the great Creative work. (John 1:1-3) God's knowledge of good and evil was intuitive, and the *Logos* had received it by information from his Heavenly Father. But now man was in the way to obtain it by experience. Although a deep sense of guilt came over our first parents because of their sin, and they immediately suffered from the loss of sweet communion

with their Creator, the knowledge of the terrible consequences of their disobedience was to be a growing one.

In carrying out the death sentence, God expelled Adam and Eve from their paradise home. Cherubim and a flaming sword were placed at the east of the garden to prevent our first parents from returning. It is quite possible that this is symbolic language. Prof. Strong defines the Hebrew word here translated cherubim as an 'imaginary figure'. It is reasonable to conclude that both the cherubim and the flaming sword are symbolic of Divine providences which made it impossible for fallen man to continue enjoying the blessings of the garden which God had planted for him. Possibly a great disaster of nature made the garden uninhabitable.

Being expelled from their paradise home, this first human pair began to die -- began to realize from actual experience that Satan had lied when he said, 'Ye shall not surely die'.

CHAPTER FOUR

Genesis 4:1,2

This passage indicates that Adam and Eve did not exercise their powers of procreation until after they were expelled from Eden, which proves that this was not the "forbidden fruit." God had commanded them to multiply and fill the earth, but, in his providence, this commission did not begin to be carried out until after they sinned.

Now they were under condemnation to death. They had lost a measure of their original perfection, and of necessity their children would inherit their imperfections. Thus it was that original sin resulted in the entire human race losing life. Paul expresses the thought clearly, saying, "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." -- Romans 5:12

Genesis 4:3-8

Little detail is furnished concerning the domestic life of the earth's first family. Cain and Abel had by now grown to young manhood. One became a tiller of the soil and the other a keeper of sheep. Doubtless much occurred during their childhood and maturing years which would have been well worth recording, but for the LORD'S purpose he selected just this one incident.

True, it was a tragic incident, ending in the murder of Abel, but it is not recorded in the sacred Word simply as a murder story, nor even because it was the first murder -- and the first death. It is used, rather, because in it is an illustration of a fundamental feature of God's plan of salvation.

We doubt if all the details even of this experience of these two young men are given. What is written simply tells us that God had respect unto the sacrifice brought to him by Abel, and that he did not so view Cain's offering. The account gives us no special reason for this seeming partiality. In verse seven the LORD says to Cain, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door."

This, however, seems to refer to what Cain's attitude might be subsequent to the acceptance of Abel's sacrifice, meaning that if he took this experience in the proper spirit, the LORD would compensate him in some way later.

The Apostle Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, throws important light on this narrative, saying that "by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." (Hebrews 11:4) This would indicate that Abel brought his offering to the LORD as a work of faith, knowing that it was the kind of sacrifice that would be acceptable to him.

Previously God had said that the 'seed' of the woman would bruise the 'serpent's' head. This implied a deliverance from the result of the tragedy which occurred in Eden. Sin

entered into the world, and for the human race to be delivered from its result there would have to be a remission of sin. The apostle informs us that without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sin. -- Hebrews 9:22

Thus, having made this promise of future deliverance, God began to illustrate the manner in which it would be fulfilled, indicating that it would be upon the basis of a sacrifice involving the shedding of blood. As the plan of God for human redemption and deliverance unfolds through the Word, we learn that Jesus is the "Lamb" that is "slain," and that it is his blood that atones for the sin of Adam and the entire human race. -- Revelation 5:12

Genesis 4:9,10

Selfishness, manifesting itself in the form of jealousy, had taken a firm hold upon Cain, and his attitude was well expressed in his question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Selfishness ultimately leads to a viewpoint of this sort, whereas love prompts in the opposite direction. Those in whose hearts the love of God reigns, feel a genuine concern for the well-being of others, particularly those who are near -- and should be dear -- to them according to the flesh.

Adam was a son of God (Luke 3:38), and from this standpoint the entire human race is God's family, although, since the fall, alienated from him. But God loves this family, and has made a plan through Jesus for the recovery of all who will accept the provision of his love. If we appreciate what God has done for us and for the world, and are endeavoring to be like him, we too will take a self-sacrificing interest in all whom he loves. Unlike Cain's attitude of selfishness, we will gladly assume whatever responsibility we can toward others, and will seek to do them good.

The Hebrew word translated "blood" in verse ten is plural, and should be rendered "bloods." This may denote that God considered the murder of Abel as a figure of the experiences which would come to all those throughout the ages who, through their works, would manifest their faith in him and in his Word. From this standpoint all the righteous blood that was shed would be like the righteous blood of Abel. See Matthew 23:35

Genesis 4:11-15

Cain's punishment was severe. The word "punishment," in verse thirteen, however, should be translated iniquity, or sin. The Septuagint, Vulgate, and other versions render this passage, "Is my iniquity too great to be forgiven?" This translation harmonizes well with the LORD's reply, which assured Cain that although he would be a marked man, he could expect a certain amount of protection. While this was no indication that God had forgiven him, it was a partial answer to his question, and one from which he could obtain a certain degree of comfort.

Genesis 4:16-17

Cain's going out from the presence of the LORD means that no longer did the LORD deal with him, and that from thenceforth he no longer looked to the LORD for favors. He dwelt in the land of Nod, which is mentioned as being east of Eden. The exact geographical setting of Nod cannot be determined today.

The mention of Cain's wife has raised that age-old question, Where did Cain get his wife? Up to this point in the narrative, no mention is made of members of the race other than Cain and Abel. However, this does not mean that there were no other children. In chapter 5, verse four, we learn that Adam begat sons and daughters throughout his long lifetime, and it is reasonable to conclude that daughters had been born and had become mature by the time Cain was ready for marriage. As the race had not deteriorated physically by then, as it has since, intermarrying would not result disastrously to their offspring, as is liable to be the case today.

Genesis 4:18-24

Enoch, the son of Cain, should not be confused with Enoch, "the seventh from Adam," and a descendant of Seth. The genealogy of Cain's descendants indicates quite clearly the nature of their social life. Cain founded the first city; Lamech instituted polygamy; Jabal instituted the nomadic life; Jubal invented musical instruments; and Tubal-cain was the first blacksmith.

Genesis 4:25,26

The name "Seth" means appointed, or placed. Eve gave the name to this particular boy because she believed that God had given him to her to take the place of Abel. Evidently she had great respect for the promise of a coming 'seed', and noting, in God's providences, that his favor had been upon Abel, she felt there must be someone especially appointed by the LORD to take his place if that original promise was to be fulfilled.

We cannot be too certain of the meaning of the expression, "Then began men to call upon the name of the LORD." It does not mean that worship of God first began in the days of Enos, for as we have seen, years before this both Cain and Abel worshipped Jehovah, and brought offerings to him. The marginal translation states, "to call themselves by the name of the LORD."

There are a number of Hebrew scholars who take the view that this text is giving us the origin of the worship of false gods, and of taking the name of the true God in vain. It seems reasonable that since these chapters tell us of the fall of man into sin, they should complete the story by informing us that man's worship also became corrupted.

PART III - THE CREATION SERIES
**GOD'S PLAN IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS:
THE DESTRUCTION OF A WORLD**

CHAPTER FIVE

Genesis 5:1,2 "This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created."

Upon the basis of evidence supplied by thousands of tablets unearthed by archaeologists, the expression in this opening verse of chapter five might well be Adam's signature to the record of the preceding four chapters of Genesis. The Hebrew text would allow a paraphrase, 'This is the record of Adam and his descendants from the day that God created him in his image and after his likeness'. Inasmuch as there is now abundant evidence to show that the art of writing on clay tablets was practiced before the Flood, it is not unreasonable to suppose that Adam wrote the 'book' referred to in this verse. When tablets were used as historical records of families they were carefully kept together, and the last in the series bore the signature of the compiler. Each tablet was as a page in a book.

There is an erroneous theory which has found quite wide acceptance to the effect that the man who was created in the image of God, as recorded in the first chapter of Genesis, was not the man named Adam in the second chapter.

These two verses in chapter 5, however, disprove this theory, for they speak of the man created in the image of God and Adam as the same person. Some fail to see that the first chapter of the book is merely a brief summary of the entire Creative work of God as it pertains to this Earth, and that beginning with the second chapter the Scriptures present in detail, not only the manner of man's creation, but his fall into sin and death, and his final recovery during the "times of restitution of all things." -- Acts 3:21

'He called their name Adam'. This statement emphasizes the fact that Eve was in reality a part of Adam, that the separation was made for the propagation of the human race to fulfill God's purpose concerning the Earth -- that it was "formed ... to be inhabited." -- Isaiah 45:18

Genesis 5:3-32 *"And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth:*

"And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters:

"And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died.

"And Seth lived an hundred and five years, and begat Enos:

"And Seth lived after he begat Enos eight hundred and seven years, and begat sons and daughters:

*"And all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years: and he died.
 "And Enos lived ninety years, and begat Cainan: And Enos lived after he begat Cainan eight hundred and fifteen years, and begat sons and daughters:
 "And all the days of Enos were nine hundred and five years: and he died.
 "And Cainan lived seventy years, and begat Mahalaleel:
 "And Cainan lived after he begat Mahalaleel eight hundred and forty years, and begat sons and daughters:
 "And all the days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten years: and he died.
 "And Mahalaleel lived sixty and five years, and begat Jared:
 "And Mahalaleel lived after he begat Jared eight hundred and thirty years, and begat sons and daughters:
 "And all the days of Mahalaleel were eight hundred ninety and five years: and he died.
 "And Jared lived an hundred sixty and two years, and he begat Enoch:
 "And Jared lived after he begat Enoch eight hundred years, and begat sons and daughters:
 "And all the days of Jared were nine hundred sixty and two years: and he died.
 "And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah:
 "And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years:
 "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him. And Methuselah lived an hundred eighty and seven years, and begat Lamech:
 "And Methuselah lived after he begat Lamech seven hundred eighty and two years, and begat sons and daughters:
 "And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty and nine years: and he died.
 "And Lamech lived an hundred eighty and two years, and begat a son:
 "And he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed.
 "And Lamech lived after he begat Noah five hundred ninety and five years, and begat sons and daughters:
 "And all the days of Lamech were seven hundred seventy and seven years: and he died.
 "And Noah was five hundred years old: and Noah begat Shem, Ham, and Japheth."*

The chief purpose served by the remainder of this chapter is to furnish the chronology giving the length of time from Creation to the Flood. This is shown in the table following, which lists the ten generations from Adam to Noah, and the number of years between generations -- which gives us precisely the number of years from Noah to Adam:

"Adam lived 130 years, and begat a son and called his name Seth." -- vs. 3	130 years
"Seth lived 105 years, and begat Enos." -- vs. 6	105 years
"Enos lived 90 years, and begat Cainan." -- vs. 9	90 years
"Cainan lived 70 years, and begat Mahalaleel." -- vs. 12	70 years
"Mahalaleel lived 65 years, and begat Jared." -- vs. 15	65 years
"Jared lived 162 years, and he begat Enoch." -- vs. 18	162 years
"Enoch lived 65 years, and begat Methuselah." -- vs. 21	65 years
"Methuselah lived 187 years, and begat Lamech" -- vs. 25	187 years
"Lamech lived 182 years, and begat a son: and he called his name Noah." - - vs. 28	182 years
"Noah was 600 years old when the Flood of waters was upon the earth." -- Genesis 7:6	600 years
TOTAL: From Creation to the drying up of the Flood:	1656 years

Enoch and Lamech are the only ones mentioned in this list concerning whom any information is given other than their age and their children. Of Enoch it is written that he 'walked with God'. (Genesis 5:22) Jude tells us that Enoch prophesied the coming of the Lord with myriads of his saints to execute his judgment. (Jude 14,15) This would indicate that he understood something of the Divine plan of salvation, and that his walking with God was in the fact that he had confidence in God and in his purposes, and was faithful in bearing witness thereto.

Enoch 'was not; for God took him', the account states. (Genesis 5:24) In the New Testament we read that Enoch was "translated that he should not see death." (Hebrews 11:5) On the other hand, he is mentioned in the Book of Hebrews along with many other faithful characters of the Old Testament concerning whom the statement is made, "These all died in faith." -- Hebrews 11:13,39,40

These various statements leave a measure of uncertainty as to just what is meant by the expression that Enoch 'was not; for God took him'. An expression similar to this is found in Jeremiah 31:15, and here the reference is to death. Concerning the inhabitants of the wicked city of Sodom, which the LORD destroyed, the Scriptures declare that he "took them away" as he saw good. (Ezekiel 16:50) So the fact that Enoch 'was not', and that God 'took him', could very well refer to death. The New Testament statement that he did not 'see death' might well mean that in his experience he had not come in contact with the dying, or perhaps that he did not 'see death' in the sense of anticipating it in any way, either by decrepitude or any lasting sickness.

Lamech, in naming his son Noah, observed, 'This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed'.

(Genesis 5:29) This statement indicates that the people of Lamech's day were familiar with the account of Creation, and the fact that for man's sake the Earth had been cursed. -
- Genesis 3:17

CHAPTER SIX

Genesis 6:1,2 *"And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose."*

Adam, when created, is spoken of in the Scriptures as a "son of God." (Luke 3:38) Through sin, however, he lost this standing, and so did his entire progeny. (Romans 5:12) At the time referred to by this record there were no human beings having a standing as sons of God. Who, then, is referred to by the expression in verse two as the 'sons of God?' In Job 1:6, 2:1, and 38:7 we have references to "sons of God" who evidently were spirit or angelic beings, and when we consider the testimony of 1 Peter 3:19,20; 2 Peter 2:4,5; and Jude 6, we are led to the conclusion that it was some of these angelic sons of God who, materializing, intermarried with the human race.

Jude tells us that these angels "kept not their first estate," and Peter relates that they "were disobedient." God had commanded human beings to marry and bring forth children, but for the angels to leave their natural habitation to do this was an act of disobedience, yet it was within their power if unhindered by Divine providence.

In Genesis 18:2-8, and Hebrews 13:1, the account is given of three angels who materialized and appeared to Abraham, and while visiting with him partook of the meal which he provided. If a materialized angel could partake of food, there is no reason to suppose that other functions of the human body would not be possible.

Peter and Jude explain that the punishment of these angels who thus sinned was that of being restrained in 'chains of darkness'. These are the spirits responsible for the deception of so many concerning the matter of talking with the dead.

Genesis 6:3 *"And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years."*

The wording of this text is very peculiar. In the sense that this expression would ordinarily be understood, God's Spirit was not 'striving' with man during that antediluvian world. It seems reasonable to conclude that this period was included in Paul's statement on Mars' Hill: "The times of this ignorance God winked at." He did not undertake at that time to bring about the repentance of the world. (Acts 17:30) When our first parents were cast off from Divine favor, God ceased dealing with the human race, with the exception of the few whom he selected to be his special representatives to carry forward his plan for a future recovery of the race.

What, then, is meant by the expression, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man'? The Hebrew word here translated 'Spirit' is the same one translated 'spirits' in Psalm 104:4, which reads, "Who maketh his angels spirits." The root meaning of the Hebrew word translated 'strive' is 'rule', or 'execute'. It is quite possible, therefore, that the verse is a reference to the fact that God had given his angels the opportunity to rule over that

antediluvian world, and that he is here saying he would not permit them to continue for more than 120 years longer. The expression, 'for that he also is flesh', or had become flesh, may be a reference to the fact that the angels overstepped their bounds in materializing. This suggestion would be in harmony with the general testimony of the Scriptures concerning God's arrangements for that world.

Genesis 6:4 *"There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown."*

The offspring of the illicit union between the fallen angels and the daughters of men were evidently outstanding personalities, both from the standpoint of physical strength and mentality.

Genesis 6:5 *"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."*

High mentality did not lead to righteousness, but under the influence of the great Adversary these superior beings used their abilities to lead the people into greater depths of sin.

Genesis 6:6,7 *"And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.
"And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them."*

Many have wondered how God could 'repent'. *Webster's Dictionary* defines repentance to mean a 'change of mind or course of conduct, on account of regret or dissatisfaction'.

The thought emphasized is that God changed his method of dealing with the human race because he was dissatisfied with the conduct of the people. He brought to an end the rulership of the angels. It does not mean that God suddenly discovered that he had made a mistake. In the Scriptures, two viewpoints of God are presented. One is that of his omniscience, his ability to know all things, even before they happen. Thus we read that "known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." -- Acts 15:18

On the other hand, the LORD often speaks to us through his Word as though he were one of us, coming down to our level of understanding when explaining the outworking of his plans and purposes. We have a good example of this in the text under consideration. God became grieved over the sinful conduct of the human race, and took steps toward destroying the world that then was; this in no sense means he did not know in advance how that world would end. God knows the course of events in advance without the necessity of exercising arbitrary control over them.

Genesis 6:8-13 *"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.*

"These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.

"And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

"The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.

"And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

"And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth."

From among that wicked generation, Noah was chosen by God to represent him as a witness and to do what was necessary in order to save a nucleus of the race from the coming Flood. Even in the darkest periods of the world's downward course into sin and death, God has not been without his witnesses in the earth; and happy are they -- and highly honored -- who are selected by him to serve in this manner.

Of Noah it is written that he was 'perfect in his generations', and that he 'walked with God'. Undoubtedly nearly all of the human race at that time had become corrupted through intermarrying with the disobedient 'sons of God'. But Noah was one of the exceptions. As the *Marginal Translation* states, he was "upright" before God, having ordered his life in keeping with the Divine principles of righteousness.

Not only was the earth corrupt before God, but it 'was filled with violence' -- a general breakdown of law and order. This condition existed just prior to the Flood, and during the time referred to by Jesus as the "days of Noah." (Matthew 24:37-39; Luke 17:26) It is interesting to note that Jesus used this condition as illustrative of the present time the -- time of his second presence -- when it is due time for the "present evil world" to come to an end. -- Galatians 1:4

The violence of Noah's day was evidently caused somewhat by the 'giants' which lived at that time -- the offspring of the fallen angels. It has been suggested that we also have 'giants' in our day who are filling the earth with violence -- giant corporations of both capital and labor -- and that these, because of their conflicting ideologies, are helping to destroy the present order of things, the present world.

Genesis 6:14-16 *"Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.*

"And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits.

"A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it."

Here, briefly stated, we have the specifications for building the ark. It is generally agreed that the cubit here mentioned was about eighteen inches in length. If this be correct, it would mean that the ark was approximately 450 feet long, seventy-five feet wide, and

forty-five feet high. It had three decks, or 'stories'. As no space was needed for a power plant or fuel supply, there would seem to be all the room that was needed.

Genesis 6:17-22 *"And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die.*

"But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

"And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female.

"Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive.

"And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them.

"Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he."

An important point to notice in this passage is the emphasized statement by the LORD that he was taking the responsibility for destroying that world. God may permit evil to continue for a time, but when, in keeping with his plans and purposes, it is time to intervene, he does so; and he wants us to realize that this is true regardless of the agency he might use.

The covenant which the LORD promised to establish with Noah was actually made after the Flood and after Noah had fully obeyed the LORD's instructions with respect to building the ark, and the manner in which it was to be used. No more eloquent testimony could be given concerning a man than the one recorded in this passage: 'Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he'. It was this full obedience on the part of Noah that constituted his walk with God.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Genesis 7:1-6 *"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.*

"Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female.

"Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth.

"For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.

"And Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him.

"And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth."

Noah's faith must have been under test during the entire time he was building the ark, but it was a victorious faith which enabled him to continue the task and to keep separated from the unrighteousness of the world around him. God took notice of this, and when the time came for Noah to enter the ark, encouraged him by a reference to his righteousness. The way of the righteous in a wicked world is always a difficult one, but the LORD never leaves them without encouragement and strength.

In the previous chapter, the reference to two of each of the animals being taken into the ark apparently applies only to those which were 'not clean', for in this chapter Noah is told to take seven males and seven females of all the 'clean' animals. The reason for this may be that they were to be used for food.

In Jesus' reference to the conditions which prevailed in the "days of Noah," he tells us that the people were ignorant of the coming flood, and that they knew not "until the day that Noah entered into the ark." (Matthew 24:39; Luke 17:27) But this was not true of Noah, the servant of God. He knew many years in advance that the Flood was coming, and now that it was near he was told the exact day: 'It is yet seven days', the LORD said, when telling him that it was time to enter the ark. This was enough time to assemble the animals and to get them into the ark.

Noah did according to all that the LORD commanded him'. Not only did the LORD let Noah know that he appreciated his faithfulness, but caused this fact to be recorded in order that all of the LORD's people might later be encouraged by his example. God does not hesitate to speak of the faithfulness of his people. He wants them to know that he appreciates their loyalty, and he wants others to be blessed by their example.

The statement of Noah's age, in verse six, might seem unimportant, but actually it is found to be a material aid in computing the time measurement of the world before the Flood, hence the total length of time from Creation to the present.

Genesis 7:7-24 *"And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood.*

"Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the earth,

"There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah.

"And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth.

"In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

"And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

"In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark;

"They, and every beast after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, every bird of every sort.

"And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life. And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in.

"And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth.

"And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters.

"And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered.

"Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered.

"And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man:

"All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died.

"And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.

"And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days."

Here we have the story of the Flood itself, which was caused, the account states, by the fact that the 'fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened'. The 'great deep' was apparently a vast canopy, or ring of vapor that continuously surrounded the earth prior to the Flood. The fact that the rainbow did not appear until after the Flood would indicate that this ring of vapor, or 'fountain of the great deep', was thick enough and dense enough to prevent the direct rays of the sun from reaching the earth. The breaking up of this ring would, of necessity, cause a flood of waters -- a flood so ample that it would easily prevail for twelve months. -- Genesis 7:11; Genesis 8:13,14

A NEW WORLD BEGINS

CHAPTER EIGHT

GENESIS 8:1-4 *"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 asswaged;*

"The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained;

"And the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated.

"And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat."

Much is said in the Scriptures to indicate that God's interest in his covenant people, and his care for them has often been the reason for important decisions and moves on his part. Because God "remembered Abraham" (Genesis 19:29), he made provision for Lot to escape from the cities of the plain which were destroyed. "God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob" (Exodus 2:24), and delivered the Hebrew children from Egyptian bondage.

From a scientific standpoint, the waters of the Flood would doubtless have abated in any event, but God honored his servant, Noah, by this beautiful token of his remembrance of him.

We have in these verses a very colorful description of how the 'fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped', followed by the gradual receding of the Flood waters until the ark rested 'upon the mountains of Ararat'. It would be difficult to analyze the meaning of this language accurately, and with sufficient detail to know exactly all that is involved in the narrative. It is enough for us to know that in the New Testament, both Jesus and Peter confirm the record; and Peter tells us that with the drying up of the Deluge there began a new world, referred to by Paul as "this present evil world." -- Galatians 1:4

The name Ararat means 'holy ground'. It is well to note that the word 'mountains' is used in the plural, and it is believed by scholars that the reference is to a mountainous district of Asia, and that it was the ancient name for a portion of Armenia. In its Biblical sense it is descriptive of the Armenian highlands -- the lofty plateau which overlooks the plain of the Araxes on the north, and of Mesopotamia on the south.

It is probable that the ark rested on one of the lower portions of the range, rather than on the lofty peak to which Europeans have given the name Ararat. This latter in reality has two peaks, the higher of which is more than 17,000 feet. The lower is about 4,000 feet

less. The higher peak is covered perpetually with snow for a distance of 3,000 feet down from the summit.

Many sensational and highly speculative stories recur from time to time about the ark having been discovered, buried -- and thus preserved -- in this snow and ice. It is quite unlikely, however, that the ark landed at so high an elevation. Great climatic changes occurred at the time of the Flood which probably left these lofty peaks embedded in ice and snow as the Flood waters receded, hence if the ark had remained on either one of them it would have been impossible for Noah and his family and the animals to have escaped.

It has been suggested that God has probably preserved the ark, and in due time will display it as a testimony to unbelievers. This hardly seems necessary in view of his plan to raise the dead, which will include Noah and his family. A testimony from them should, and will, convince all 'doubting Thomases'; not only because they were on the scene when it occurred, but because they themselves will be living testimonies of a still greater miracle, even the resurrection of the dead!

Genesis 8:5-12 *"And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen.*

"And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made:

"And he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth.

"Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground;

"But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth: then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.

"And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark;

"And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf plucked off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.

"And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again unto him any more."

Noah's method of determining the degree to which the waters of the Flood had receded from time to time, was unique. A close study of this narrative is quite revealing. Verse four tells us that on the seventeenth day of the seventh month the ark rested -- meaning, evidently, that the water was not deep enough over that territory to keep it afloat. But, according to the fifth verse, it was more than two months after this before the tops of the mountains were seen.

Forty days after this, Noah sent forth a raven, which did not return; then a dove, which did return. He waited another seven days, and sent forth the dove again, and it returned with an olive twig. In other words, it took five months for the waters to recede sufficiently for the ark to rest on the ground and four months after this the dove found an

olive tree. This would indicate that the ark did not rest on either of the high peaks now known as Ararat, for the speed with which the waters were receding would not, in that case, have left the earth dry in so short a time thereafter.

Genesis 8:13,14 *"And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth: and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry. "And in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dried."*

Here again we have a very accurate statement of a date -- Noah's six hundredth and first year, the first month, and the first day of the month. This is an example of the exactness with which chronological records are kept in the Bible. It is on the basis of this sort of time keeping that we have confidence in Biblical chronology, a chronology which reveals that Adam and Eve were created more than six thousand years ago.

Genesis 8:15-19 *"And God spake unto Noah, saying, "Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee. "Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee, of all flesh, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth. "And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him: "Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark."*

In these verses we have a completion of the narrative of the manner in which Noah and his family, as well as a nucleus of the lower animals, were transferred from the "world that then was" to this "present evil world." -- 2 Peter 3:6; Galatians 1:4

Genesis 8:20-22 *"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 savour; 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 every thing living, as I have done. "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."*

This is the second mention in the Scriptures of God's servants offering sacrifice to him. The first was the case of Abel. God was pleased with Abel's sacrifice, and he was also pleased with Noah's. It may have been partly in anticipation of this that God commanded Noah to take more than two of all clean animals into the ark.

God's promise that he would not again curse the earth evidently means that he would not curse it additionally. Certainly the original curse was not removed by the Flood. God's promise not to again smite every living thing can be depended upon. When Jesus described the great tribulation with which the present world is coming to an end, he said

that those days would be shortened in order to prevent the destruction of all flesh. --
Matthew 24:21,22

'While the earth remaineth ...' Other scriptures assure us that "the earth abideth forever," and that God "created it not in vain," but "he formed it to be inhabited." (Ecclesiastes 1:4; Isaiah 45:18) God's promise to maintain human life on the earth is made in this passage, (as the *Marginal Translation* indicates) even though the imaginations of men's hearts are evil continually. God loves his human creatures, and has made provision for them through the redemptive work of Christ to live forever on the earth if obedient, but in the world to come "wherein dwelleth righteousness." -- 2 Peter 3:13

CHAPTER NINE

Genesis 9:1 *"And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth."*

Noah and his family had demonstrated their faith in God by their obedience to him, and now God's blessing was upon them, and through them a new world was established. God commanded Noah and his sons to be fruitful and multiply and replenish -- fill -- the earth. This command is very similar to the one given to Adam at the beginning of 'the world that was' -- the world that came to an end as a result of the Deluge. Just as that world became wicked and was destroyed, so the world which began with Noah and his family also became corrupt, and is designated by the Apostle Paul as "this present evil world." (Galatians 1:4) This world is even now coming to an end in a "time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation." -- Daniel 12:1

Genesis 9:2 *"And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered."*

When God created man he gave him dominion over all the lower animals, and dominion was exercised in a peaceful manner without instilling fear into the animals. The animals, for example, were brought before Adam to be named, indicating that they were obedient to him. How different is the statement found in this verse: 'the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth'. The reason for this change is the fact that man had fallen from perfection, and now could control the animal kingdom only through coercion.

Genesis 9:3 *"Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things."*

Probably another reason the lower animals, from this time onward, would be fearful of man was because they were to be slaughtered to provide him with food. This text indicates that meat was not eaten before the Flood. The herbs of the field had previously been given to man for food, but now the LORD also gave him meat for food.

Genesis 9:4-7 *"But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.*

"Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.

"And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein."

In these verses is given one of the early hints of the Scriptures concerning the importance of blood in God's provision of life for man. "The life of the flesh is in the blood"

(Leviticus 17:11), and that is the reason the LORD emphasizes that "without shedding of blood is no remission" for sin. (Hebrews 9:22) When the Scriptures speak of Jesus shedding his blood for the life of the world, the thought is that he gave his life, that he "poured out his soul unto death." -- Isaiah 53:12

Genesis 9:8-17 *"And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying,
"And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you;
"And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every
beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth.
"And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by
the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.
"And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and
every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:
"I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and
the earth.
"And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen
in the cloud:
"And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living
creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.
"And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the
everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the
earth.
"And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established
between me and all flesh that is upon the earth."*

The word 'covenant' is used seven times in these verses, indicating the great importance God attached to the promise he made never again to destroy all flesh with a flood of waters. According to the Scriptures, all flesh will not again be destroyed by any other means. Even in the great 'time of trouble' which brings this 'present evil world' to an end, we have the LORD's promise that it will be shortened before all flesh is destroyed. (Matthew 24:22) This is another proof that the prophetic end of the world is not the destruction of the earth, but merely the end of an order of things existing on the earth. "The earth abideth forever" and is to be man's everlasting home. -- Ecclesiastes 1:4; Isaiah 45:18; Psalm 115:16

This is the first mention in the Scriptures of the rainbow. No rainbow had appeared before the Flood because of the unusual atmospheric conditions which then existed. It had not rained, the Scriptures tell us, but instead a mist went up to water the earth. (Genesis 2:5,6) This indicates that dense clouds hovered over the earth continually, and this, of course, would preclude the possibility of there being a rainbow.

The sudden precipitation of the 'waters above the firmament' not only caused the Flood, but also cleared the atmosphere, making possible the appearance of the rainbow. The rainbow was, therefore, an evidence that the dense canopy of vapors which previously had encircled the earth no longer existed, hence was a proof, a 'token', that there would never be another Flood to destroy all flesh.

Genesis 9:18,19 *"And the sons of Noah, that went forth of the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth: and Ham is the father of Canaan.*

"These are the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread."

Nearly all names used in the Bible have a special significance attached to them. Shem means 'name', Ham means 'hot', or 'sunburnt', while Japheth means 'enlargement'. The following chapter indicates the different portions of the earth occupied by the descendants of these three sons of Noah.

Genesis 9:20-27 *"And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard:*

"And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.

"And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.

"And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness.

"And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him.

"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."

One reason we can have confidence in the Bible is because of its frankness in relating historical facts, even though they may not always be complimentary to those involved. It tells us that Noah 'walked with God' (Genesis 6:9), yet does not hesitate to relate the fact of his becoming intoxicated with wine made from his own vineyard. This is the first time wine is mentioned in the Bible, and evidently because prior to the Flood the atmospheric conditions surrounding the earth were not conducive to fermentation; which might well explain why Noah became intoxicated -- that is, through lack of experience. If fruit juices did not ferment prior to the Flood, Noah could not be blamed for not realizing what effect the fermented grape juice would have upon him. This narrative is furnished apparently because of its bearing on the curse placed upon Ham. We cannot determine with certainty the nature of the curse except that it involved servitude.

Genesis 9:28,29 *"And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years.*

"And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years: and he died."

Noah lived to be twenty years older than Adam, who died when he was 930 years of age. Methuselah was the oldest of the ancients, living to the ripe old age of 969 years. The average length of human life decreased rapidly after the Flood. The change of atmospheric conditions may, again, have had much to do with this. There was also the fact that each succeeding generation was getting farther away from man's original perfection. Later the general expectancy of life for fallen man was declared to be "threescore years and ten." -- Psalm 90:10

CHAPTER TEN

Genesis 10:1-5 *"Now these are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth: and unto them were sons born after the Flood.*

"The sons of Japheth; Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras.

"And the sons of Gomer; Ashkenaz, and Riphath, and Togarmah.

"And the sons of Javan; Elishah, and Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim.

"By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations."

The descendants of Japheth, meaning 'enlargement', occupied the 'isles of the Gentiles', generally supposed to be the coastlands of the Mediterranean Sea in Europe and Asia Minor. From whence they spread northward over the whole continent of Europe and a considerable portion of Asia.

Genesis 10:6,7 *"And the sons of Ham; Cush, and Mizraim, and Phut, and Canaan.*

"And the sons of Cush; Seba, and Havilah, and Sabtah, and Raamah, and Sabtechah: and the sons of Raamah; Sheba, and Dedan."

In the Scriptures, Egypt is identified as being the land of Ham. See Psalms 78:51; 105:23; and 106:22. Cush, a son of Ham, and his descendants, the Cushites, appear to have spread along tracts extending from the higher Nile to the Euphrates and Tigris. History traces some of these descendants to Babylonia, and Ethiopia.

The name Mizraim, given to another of Ham's sons, is a term frequently used in the Old Testament to denote Egypt. It is the plural, or dual, of Mazar, and its dual meaning probably refers to Upper and Lower Egypt. The use of this name is a further confirmation as to the territory occupied by the Hamites.

Phut was another son of Ham. The few mentions of this name in the Bible clearly indicate a country, or people of Africa, and probably not far from Egypt. -- Nahum 3:9

Canaan was the fourth son of Ham, and the progenitor of the Phoenicians (Zidon), and of the various nations who, before the Israelites' conquest, peopled the seacoast of Palestine, and generally the whole country west of the Jordan. The inhabitants of this whole area were called Canaanites.

Genesis 10:8-10 *"And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth.*

"He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD.

"And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar."

The name Nimrod means 'upstart' or 'rebellion', and evidently indicates his rebellious attitude toward God. The statement that he was a 'mighty hunter before the LORD' might

well mean that through his skill and strength in hunting he put himself ahead of the LORD in the eyes of the people. The Jewish historian, Josephus, says of him: "Nimrod persuaded mankind not to ascribe their happiness to God, but to think that his own excellency was the source of it. And he soon changed things into a tyranny, thinking there was no other way to wean men from the fear of God than by making them rely upon his own power."

Nimrod was the founder of Babylon, and Babylon became typical of the great counterfeit system of Christianity which developed during the present Gospel Age, referred to in the Book of Revelation as "that great city which ruleth over the kings of the earth." (Revelation 17:18) It seems evident, therefore, that even in those early days shortly after the Flood, Satan again began his efforts to oppose God and righteousness.

Genesis 10:11-14 *"Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah,*

"And Resen between Nineveh and Calah: the same is a great city.

"And Mizraim begat Ludim, and Anamim, and Lehabim, and Naphtuhim,

"And Pathrusim, and Casluhim, (out of whom came Philistim,) and Caphtorim."

The Hebrew form of the name Asshur is Assyria. Through this son Nimrod extended his kingdom, and Nineveh became the capital of Assyria. It is believed that Lehabim was the progenitor of the Libyans, who later inhabited the northern part of Africa.

Genesis 10:15-20 *"And Canaan begat Sidon his firstborn, and Heth,*

"And the Jebusite, and the Amorite, and the Girgasite,

"And the Hivite, and the Arkite, and the Sinite,

"And the Arvadite, and the Zemarite, and the Hamathite: and afterward were the families of the Canaanites spread abroad.

"And the border of the Canaanites was from Sidon, as thou comest to Gerar, unto Gaza; as thou goest, unto Sodom, and Gomorrah, and Admah, and Zeboim, even unto Lasha.

These are the sons of Ham, after their families, after their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations."

The name Heth mentioned in this genealogical list, means 'terror', and he is thought to be the forefather of the Hittites. While all the names mentioned in these verses recur elsewhere in the Scriptures, and the places mentioned can be identified, they are relatively unimportant insofar as the plan of God is concerned. The detail with which Moses records this information, however, is impressive, and indicates the accuracy with which historical records of that time were kept.

Genesis 10:21-32 *"Unto Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the brother of Japheth the elder, even to him were children born.*

"The children of Shem; Elam, and Asshur, and Arphaxad, and Lud, and Aram.

"And the children of Aram; Uz, and Hul, and Gether, and Mash.

"And Arphaxad begat Salah; and Salah begat Eber.

"And unto Eber were born two sons: the name of one was Peleg; for in his days was the

earth divided; and his brother's name was Joktan.

"And Joktan begat Almodad, and Sheleph, and Hazarmaveth, and Jerah,

"And Hadoram, and Uzal, and Diklah,

"And Obal, and Abimael, and Sheba,

"And Ophir, and Havilah, and Jobab: all these were the sons of Joktan.

"And their dwelling was from Mesha, as thou goest unto Sephar a mount of the east.

"These are the sons of Shem, after their families, after their tongues, in their lands, after their nations.

"These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations: and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the Flood."

The portion of the earth occupied by the descendants of Shem begins at its northwestern extremity with Lydia, and includes Syria (Asshur), Chaldea (Arphaxad), parts of Assyria (Asshur), Persia (Elam), and of the Arabian peninsula (Joktan). Modern scholars have given the name of Shemite or Semitic to the languages spoken by his real or supposed descendants.

'By these were the nations divided in the earth after the Flood', wrote Moses. (vs. 32) Thus does he sum up his outline of the manner in which the descendants of Noah spread out and began to fill the earth. The remarkable part of this is that no authentic historical records apart from the one thus given in the Bible furnish this information. We hear much, for instance, about the Semitic races, but no book except the Bible gives any indication of their origin, at least not in the concise manner in which it is presented in the Bible. And every archeological discovery in this ancient cradle of the race helps to substantiate the accuracy of the Biblical record.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Genesis 11:1-9 *"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.*

"And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

"And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

"And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

"And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

"And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

"Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

"So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

"Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth."

This is one of the most interesting chapters of the Bible. It begins with the story of men's attempt to unite and protect themselves within the shadow of a great tower, which they were to use as a symbol of their unity. Then it tells us how God frustrated this effort, and it ends by introducing Abram (Abraham), the one through whose seed God purposed to bless all nations by uniting them under Christ, when, in the "dispensation of the fullness of times" he will "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him." -- Ephesians 1:10

Shinar is believed to be Babylonia. It was a plains country where brick had to be used for stone, and slime for mortar. It has been suggested that Shinar was the name by which the Hebrews knew the country, and that it was probably first given to the territory by Abraham, when he went there from Ur of the Chaldees.

The motive for building the Tower of Babel is said to be that of a desire for unity: 'Let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth'. The thought we get from this is that the name, together with the tower, were to serve as a symbol of unity and strength. It was a form of worship calculated to divert the mind from God, the only true source of oneness and protection.

God's interference with this plan illustrates the truth elsewhere taught in the Scriptures, that while he has permitted sin to reign in the earth, it has not been without restrictions. He permits selfish man to go only so far. God is able to make the wrath of man to praise him when he so wills, otherwise he may restrain it. -- Psalm 76:10

It was here that the language barriers of earth were first set up, and how effectively they have prevented all nations from forming a giant combine apart from God, and in defiance of him! It is not God's will, however, that the nations of earth shall always be scattered and at odds with one another, for later, through Jacob he promised the coming of "Shiloh," and said that unto him there would be a genuine gathering of the people. (Genesis 49:10) It will be then, also, that the LORD will turn to the people a pure language, and they will all call upon him, and serve him with one consent. (Zeph. 3:8,9) His glorious name, not the name of a tower, or a city, will then be the bond that will unite them in peace and in righteousness.

Here was the origin of the name Babel, meaning 'confusion'. This later became Babylon; and the significance of the name, derived from the circumstances of its origin, is undoubtedly one of the reasons the LORD uses it in the Book of Revelation to symbolize that false system of Christianity which has so greatly confused the worship of the true God with the worship of men and of devils, and promoted conflicting, God-dishonoring creeds which blaspheme his name.

Genesis 11:10-32 *"These are the generations of Shem: Shem was an hundred years old, and begat Arphaxad two years after the flood:*

"And Shem lived after he begat Arphaxad five hundred years, and begat sons and daughters.

"And Arphaxad lived five and thirty years, and begat Salah:

"And Arphaxad lived after he begat Salah four hundred and three years, and begat sons and daughters.

"And Salah lived thirty years, and begat Eber:

"And Salah lived after he begat Eber four hundred and three years, and begat sons and daughters.

"And Eber lived four and thirty years, and begat Peleg:

"And Eber lived after he begat Peleg four hundred and thirty years, and begat sons and daughters.

"And Peleg lived thirty years, and begat Reu:

"And Peleg lived after he begat Reu two hundred and nine years, and begat sons and daughters.

"And Reu lived two and thirty years, and begat Serug:

"And Reu lived after he begat Serug two hundred and seven years, and begat sons and daughters.

"And Serug lived thirty years, and begat Nahor:

"And Serug lived after he begat Nahor two hundred years, and begat sons and daughters.

"And Nahor lived nine and twenty years, and begat Terah:

"And Nahor lived after he begat Terah an hundred and nineteen years, and begat sons and daughters.

"And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

"Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot.

"And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees.

"And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah.

"But Sarai was barren; she had no child.

"And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.

"And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran."

Here we have another link in the Bible's chronological chain. It furnishes us with the number of years from the Flood to the time when God entered into a covenant with Abraham. It was a total of 427 years.

THE COVENANT AND THE LAND

CHAPTER TWELVE

Genesis 12:1-5 *"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:

"And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

"So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

"And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came."

'Now the LORD had said unto Abram. ...' Here we have a reference to instructions which previously had been given to Abram, and to a promise made to him, which are not recorded. It was this communication from God that caused Abram to leave Ur of the Chaldees and to start the journey toward Canaan, as recorded in the closing verses of the preceding chapter. They traveled along the river Euphrates until they reached Haran. Abram remained there until the death of his father, Terah. This was necessary, for the LORD's instructions were that he was to leave his own people and his father's house. While he did take some of his relatives to Canaan with him, he dwelt at Haran until his father died.

'I will bless thee, ... and thou shalt be a blessing'. Here are stated in brief the two main features of the covenant God made with Abram: Abram himself was to be blessed -- richly blessed. He was to become the father of a great nation. Besides this, he was to become a blessing to others -- his seed was to bless 'all the families of the earth'. Later we shall see that the principal application of this latter promise is to his spiritual seed, even to Christ and to those who become Christ's body members. -- Galatians 3:8,16,27-29

God's statement, 'I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee', has, throughout the ages, often worked out in a very literal way with respect to the natural descendants of Abram. Probably this principle will be still further manifested during the thousand-year reign of Christ, when there will be a general time of reckoning for both Jews and Gentiles. It is only as we take into consideration the entire plan of God that we can understand the manner in which many of his promises will be completely fulfilled.

Genesis 12:6-9 *"And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.*

"And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and

there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.

"And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.

"And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south."

The 'Sichem' here referred to is Shechem, the place later referred to so many times in the Old Testament. The present name of the city is Nablus, and it is situated about thirty-four miles north of Jerusalem. The 'plain of Moreh', is more properly rendered the 'oak' or 'oaks' of Moreh. This location was close to the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim. -- Deuteronomy 11:29,30

When Abram entered Canaan, the LORD identified it as being the land which he had previously promised, saying to him. 'Unto thy seed will I give this land'. (vs. 7) There is an accuracy about this promise which is striking. The account states that the Canaanites were already in the land when Abram entered, and in the patriarch's lifetime he never did become the real owner of the land. He found it necessary to purchase a small parcel of it in order to have a place in which to bury his wife, Sarah. (Genesis, chapter 23; Acts 7:5) Perhaps this was the reason that the LORD did not include Abram in this particular statement of the promise.

It is true that later the land was also promised to Abraham and to his seed as an everlasting possession, but the fulfillment of this promise will come only by the establishment of God's kingdom. During the time God was dealing with him and making promises to him, he was not the owner of the Promised Land, but merely a sojourner in it.

From his first stopping place, Abram journeyed south, which brought him nearer to the present site of Jerusalem. He built an altar in a mountain situated between Bethel and Hai -- or Ai, as it was later called. It would appear that the town of Bethel was in existence when Abram first entered Canaan. Its original name was Luz. (Judges 1:22,23) Ai was the second city to be captured and destroyed by the Israelites when they entered the land under the leadership of Joshua. Both Bethel and Ai have long since been laid waste; although the ruins of Bethel still exist, being located on the right-hand side of the road between Jerusalem and Nablus, or ancient Shechem.

The name Bethel means 'the house of God', and it was appropriate that Abram should build an altar near the town, and there call 'upon the name of the LORD'. This is a very brief statement of Abram's worship, but we may safely assume that, having entered the Promised Land, and the promise having been confirmed to him, the patriarch would naturally desire to show his appreciation by presenting a thank-offering to his God.

Genesis 12:10-20 *"And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.*

"And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon:

"Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say,

This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive.

"Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.

"And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair.

"The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.

"And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels.

"And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife.

"And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife?

"Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way.

"And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.

As we learned in a previous lesson about Noah, so again with Abram, the Scriptures do not conceal the weakness of the flesh of its heroes. There seems to have been little excuse for Abram to misrepresent Sarah's relationship to him. It was simply a misguided effort, born of fear to save his own life. The fact that it might lead to the mistreatment of his wife did not seem to occur to him. It must have been very humiliating for him to realize that the heathen Pharaoh displayed more nobility of character than did he, the servant of God.

There is another viewpoint to be considered in connection with this episode. While the account does not say so, it may be that the LORD caused it to be recorded as one of the illustrations of how, time after time, attempts were made to interfere with God's program to develop a 'seed'. Without realizing it, Abram might well have been induced by Satan to conceal the fact that she was his wife -- the Adversary's motive being to thwart God's purpose concerning the promised seed. He probably knew that the seed was in some way to come through Sarah, and if he could defile or destroy her, it would be a masterstroke of cunning in his determination to oppose the outworking of the plan of God.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Genesis 13:1-4 *"And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south.*

"And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.

"And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai;

"Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD."

When we read that Abram went up out of Egypt and 'into the south', the evident meaning is that he went into the south of the land which was known as Palestine, but which is now occupied by Israel, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

He did not remain there, however, but continued his journey until he got back to Bethel, where he had previously called upon the name of the LORD. Arriving at this sacred landmark, 'the place of the altar', again he 'called on the name of the LORD'. By now he would have still more for which to be thankful, for the LORD had overruled his great mistake, and he was safely back from Egypt and 'was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold'.

Genesis 13:5-13 *"And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together.*

"And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.

"And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; 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.

"And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.

"Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.

"Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.

"But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly."

In this narrative is revealed a noble side of Abram's character. Two points are emphasized -- one, his unselfishness; the other, that his chief interest in entering Canaan was not the land, but the promise God had made concerning the seed of blessing. Abram undoubtedly thought a great deal of his nephew, Lot, and it was not an easy decision to separate from him; but when he considered all the circumstances involved, he realized it was the best

thing to do. He was willing to make a real sacrifice in the interest of peace -- not a sacrifice of principle, but of material wealth.

Having told his nephew that he could have first choice of the land, Abram did not hesitate to carry through with his offer, even though Lot did choose the best of the land from the standpoint of productivity.

Lot 'pitched his tent toward Sodom', and 'the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly'. Lot, as the world would say, got the best of the bargain from the standpoint of rich agricultural land, but he placed himself in an environment which proved to be very detrimental to his moral well-being, and led to a grievous tragedy in his home life.

Genesis 13:14-18 *"And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:*

"For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

"And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.

"Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.

"Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD."

Here the LORD renews his promise to Abram, and goes into greater detail than on previous occasions. The account emphasizes that this affirmation of the covenant was made after Lot and Abram had separated. This seems to indicate that Lot's association with Abram was to some extent standing in the way of Abram's receiving God's full blessing in connection with the promise.

The call to the patriarch was to leave his own people, and his father's house. Lot and his family were at least part of Abram's people, and not until he was willing to make a great sacrifice of material advantage in order to be separated from them, did the LORD assure him in such great detail what the fulfillment of the promise would mean.

Abram was told to look in all directions, and was assured that all the land he saw was to be his, and his descendants' forever. It is true of the LORD's people today that frequently the willingness to sacrifice earthly advantages leads to the richest of spiritual blessings. If we find ourselves spiritually poverty-stricken, it may be that we are holding on too firmly to the material things of life.

THE COVENANT AND THE SEED

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Genesis 14:1-12 *"And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations;*

"That these made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela, which is Zoar.

"All these were joined together in the vale of Siddim, which is the salt sea.

"Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled.

"And in the fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer, and the kings that were with him, and smote the Rephaims in Ashteroth Karnaim, and the Zuzims in Ham, and the Emims in Shaveh Kiriathaim,

"And the Horites in their mount Seir, unto Elparan, which is by the wilderness.

"And they returned, and came to Enmishpat, which is Kadesh, and smote all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, that dwelt in Hazezontamar.

"And there went out the king of Sodom, and the king of Gomorrah, and the king of Admah, and the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (the same is Zoar;) and they joined battle with them in the vale of Siddim;

"With Chedorlaomer the king of Elam, and with Tidal king of nations, and Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar; four kings with five.

"And the vale of Siddim was full of slimepits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountain.

"And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way.

"And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed."

Critics have scoffed repeatedly at this account, which tells how Abram and his servants rescued Lot and his family from the combined armies of four powerful allied kings. Historians had said that the story was fiction, that no such kings as these mentioned in the Bible were reigning in the days of Abram.

Archeological research has thrown entirely new light upon this ancient period of human history, and this record emerges as absolutely authentic. The kings mentioned in this passage are now identified as true historical characters, and contemporary tablets show that they were reigning at the very time when, according to Bible chronology, Abram was living in Canaan.

Furthermore, archeologists have discovered that these four kings were actually confederated, and at this time were dominating most of the land known in recent times as Palestine, just as this account indicates. Kudor, or Chedor-laomer, as expressed in the

Hebrew language, was apparently the chieftain in this alliance of kings. His three allies were Hammur-abi (or Ammur-aphel) of Babylon, which was the land of 'Shinar'; Eriaku (or Arioch) of El-lasar, or Larsa, which was a district in southern Mesopotamia between Babylon and Elam; and that his third ally was the ruler of the Hittite empire, whose capital was at Boghazkeui, in Asia Minor.

This ancient Hittite empire was really a confederacy of several tribal nations, and the excavations show that the Hittite kings always called themselves "king of the nations," or "king of countries." Clearly, therefore, 'Tidal, king of nations', mentioned in this account was one of the Hittite confederated kings of Abram's day.

The archeological records reveal that King Kudar, Chedor-laomer, the Elamite monarch, was nearly eighty years old when he directed this allied raid against Palestine to put down the rebellion against him. He had conquered Ellasar forty-three years before, and had placed his son, Warad-Sin, upon its throne. That son died a few years later; but his second son, Eriaku (also called Rim-Sin), was king of Ellasar at the time of this Palestinian revolt. Chedor, it is now known, conquered Palestine about twelve years before this revolt occurred, exactly as the Genesis story declares.

Genesis 14:13-17 *"And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram.*

"And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Daniel

"And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus.

"And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.

"And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale."

These four allied kings probably did not need a force of more than a few hundred men to put down this rebellion of petty tribal chiefs of the valley people around the Dead Sea. They conquered them easily, and proceeded to loot the rebellious towns, notably Sodom and Gomorrah. When they sacked Sodom, and captured Lot, and his family and his goods, Abram was aroused.

Abram was very wealthy, employing hundreds of servants; and he quickly mobilized 318 of them and went in hot pursuit. Overtaking the remnant of the satiated and exhausted troops that night, he proved his prowess by making a successful surprise attack from two sides and quickly rescued the prisoners and their goods.

Some have hastily concluded that Abram and his servants actually slew these four powerful monarchs. But manifestly this is not the case, for the archeological records

reveal that they lived for many years thereafter. This account of the raid merely mentions that Abram rescued the prisoners and goods, and says nothing about his killing any kings. The seventeenth verse speaks of his returning from the slaughter of Chedor-laomer and the kings which were with him, but the Hebrew word *nakah*, translated 'slaughter', means merely 'to smite', and is so translated many times throughout the Old Testament, and, indeed, is translated , 'smote' in the fifteenth verse of this narrative. 'Smiting' the armies of these kings would properly be referred to as a smiting of the kings themselves.

Genesis 14:18-20 *"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.*

"And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:

"And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all."

When Abram returned from his successful smiting of the four kings he was heralded as a hero by the afflicted survivors around the Dead Sea, whose cities these monarchs had just ravished, and the 'king' or 'mayor' of Sodom went out to meet him. Melchizedek, who not only was ruler of the city of Salem (Jeru-salem) but also its high priest, likewise met Abram, and blessed him, and Abram paid him tithes of all that he had captured.

This Melchizedek is said to have been a "priest of the most high God," and not a director of idol worship. This seems to suggest that he may have been a Semitic kinsman of Abram, rather than a member of some idolatrous Canaanite tribe. Although Abram had been in Canaan only twenty-five years when this incident occurred, there were probably many hundreds of Semites there at that time. Abram's household alone contained hundreds of persons, and possibly Melchizedek had become a ruler over a Semitic settlement at a peaceful place west of the Jordan which later came to be known as Jebu-salem, or Jerusalem, and there directed his kinsmen in the worship of the true God.

Melchizedek's identity has been made mysterious by a statement in Hebrews 7:1-3, which says that he was "without father,... without descent." This has been explained to mean that he was without father or mother in the priesthood, and we do not know his genealogy. Recently deciphered tablets unearthed at Tel Amarna, in Egypt, substantiate this thought. They indicate that the portion of Palestine in which Jerusalem was located was claimed by Egypt in Abram's day, and that the pharaohs appointed all the kings or chieftains of that particular district.

Although no tablet has yet been found that mentions the name of Melchizedek, yet the Tel Amarna records of this period do declare that Palestinian appointees of the pharaohs in those days were obliged to forswear all hereditary rights before being enthroned, and were made to take the following oath: "It was not my father, and it was not my mother, who established me in this place; but it was the mighty arm of the king [pharaoh] himself who hath made me a ruler."

This was a very unusual regal arrangement, not only for those days but since then as well. Probably Melchizedek's priestly office had been given to him by Divine appointment, hence the statement in Hebrews would also be true of him as a priest. He is used in the Scriptures as a picture of Christ Jesus in his official role as King and Priest over the whole earth during his kingdom reign. The psalmist says of Jesus, "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." -- Psalm 110:4

Not only are we glad to see even the historic portions of the Bible substantiated by the research of modern science, but we are especially glad to learn from its pages that the antitypical Melchizedek, the great King of Peace and Priest of the Most High God, is soon, together with his church, to manifest himself to all mankind, extending blessings of joy, health and life to all the willing and obedient.

Genesis 14:21-24 *"And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.*

"And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth,

"That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich:

"Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion."

In these closing verses of the story of Abram's encounter with the four kings we have another example of his generosity, and his lack of self-seeking in material things. He had risked a great deal to rescue Lot and his family, but he wanted no reward for it. No doubt he felt that the satisfaction of having done something for his relatives was reward enough. Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre cooperated with him, and he was quite willing that they share in the spoils of the victorious battle; but, as for himself, he would take nothing. Abram's purpose in moving into Canaan was a higher one than that of material gain -- especially the spoils of battle.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Genesis 15:1-7 *"After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.*

"And Abram said, LORD God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?"

"And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.

"And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.

"And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

"And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

"And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it."

'After these things' -- that is, after the rescue of Lot, the paying tithes to Melchizedek, and Abram's refusal to share in the spoils of battle, the LORD spoke to him and said, 'Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward'. One cannot but think that the LORD took particular notice of Abram's refusal to accept any of the goods offered to him by the King of Sodom, and was pleased, and that now he is assuring him of a much better portion -- 'I am thy shield, and exceeding great reward'. This was God's promise to protect the patriarch, and to supply all his needs.

Before Abram left Ur of Chaldees, God had made a promise to him involving a 'seed', a child. Sarah, his wife, was barren, and it would seem that Abram was beginning to wonder just how that promise would be fulfilled, so he said to the LORD, 'Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir'. This appears to be Abram's way of asking the LORD if this is the arrangement he had in mind when he made the promise of the 'seed'.

The LORD explained to Abram that the one he referred to was not to be his heir, that he would have a child born of his 'own bowels'. Abram had great faith, yet it was being tested by his long wait for the birth of the promised heir. But the LORD strengthened his faith by reaffirming the promise. He told Abram to look at the stars, and then assured Abram, 'So shall thy seed be'.

'He believed in the LORD', the account states, 'and he [the LORD] counted it to him for righteousness'. Here was the exercise of a faith that justified, a faith that trusted implicitly in the promises of God. It was upon the basis of this confidence in the Word of the LORD that Abram became a friend of God. All true friendship is based on confidence -- mutual confidence. Abram believed God, and God had confidence that Abram would do his will.

Genesis 15:8-21 *"And he said, LORD God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?
 "And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.
 "And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not.
 "And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.
 "And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.
 "And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;
 "And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.
 "And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good age.
 "But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.
 "And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.
 "In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:
 "The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites,
 "And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims,
 "And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."*

The remainder of this chapter is chiefly concerned with the LORD's answer to Abram's question: 'LORD God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?' -- that is, the land. The term 'whereby', rather than 'when', makes the question pertain to how the patriarch would know for certain that he would inherit the land, not when he would know. We should expect, then, that the LORD's answer would be in keeping with this.

The LORD instructed Abram to prepare a sacrifice, which he did, and the pieces were cut and separated to make it possible for one to pass between them. This seemed to be a custom of ancient times in connection with the making of a covenant. See Jeremiah 34:18-20. When the evening came Abram fell into a deep sleep. It was then, and apparently as in a vision, that the LORD said to him, 'Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs -- and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them -- four hundred years. And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance'.

In brief, God's answer to Abram's question as to how he might know that he would surely inherit the Land of Promise, was this combined prophecy and covenant pertaining to the experiences of the 'seed', virtually from Abram's day to the time they left Egypt en route for Canaan. Instead of passing between the pieces of the sacrifice himself in order to confirm the covenant, the LORD caused the furnace and the lamp -- symbolic of the experiences outlined in the prophecy just given -- to pass between them. See Deuteronomy 4:20; 1 Kings 8:5; 11:36; and 2 Samuel 21:17.

This would be another way of saying that the fulfillment of the prophecy as here given would substantiate the LORD's Word, and would thus be a guarantee that both Abram and his 'seed' ultimately would inherit the land, and dwell therein forever.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Genesis 16:1-3 *"Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar.*

"And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram heartened to the voice of Sarai.

"And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife."

When studying God's dealings with Abram it is important to keep in mind the Divine promise concerning a 'seed'. Abram was to have an offspring, a progeny, that would occupy an important place in the plan of God. When this promise was first made to the patriarch, his wife Sarai was childless. Nevertheless, they both believed God's promise, and waited patiently for a child to be born. But no child came.

It was a long wait. To begin with, there was the time that elapsed from the making of the promise until the death of Abram's father Terah, just before they entered the Promised Land. Now another ten years had passed, and still no child. Sarai, in addition to being barren, was well along in years, and her faith that she would become the mother of the promised seed began to wane. Apparently she still believed God's plan concerning a seed, but began to wonder if it were his will that she should be the mother.

Meditating along this line, and desiring to Cooperate with the LORD, if possible, she suggested to Abram that Hagar, their bondmaid, mother a child for him. According to Christian standards today this was a very unethical procedure, but apparently it was not considered improper at that time. In any event, neither Sarai nor Abram were rebuked for it by the LORD, although he did not acknowledge the child of this union as being the promised seed.

An interesting sidelight on this incident is the discovery in 1901 by archeologists of the Code of Amraphel (Khammurabi) -- a code of laws which apparently served as a standard of living at that time for the people in Canaan and surrounding territory. According to this code Sarai's giving Hagar to Abram for a wife was quite proper.

Genesis 16:4-6 *"And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.*

"And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee.

"But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face."

Even from a natural standpoint, however, it did not turn out to be a satisfactory solution to the matter. Quite unexpectedly to Sarai, as soon as Hagar learned that she would bear a child, she became insolent to her mistress. In those days the ability to have children was

prized very highly, and evidently Hagar began to feel that she was quite superior to Sarai, and acted accordingly.

Sarai reported the situation to Abram, exclaiming, 'My wrong be upon thee'. *Leeser's Translation* reads, "I suffer wrong through thee." It is quite possible that Sarai expected that in the event Hagar had a child, she would in some way become its foster mother, and Hagar would step aside, not claiming the rights of motherhood. But now Sarai realized from Hagar's attitude that there was no hope for an arrangement of this sort, so she knew that she had done wrong in suggesting this method to obtain a seed for Abram and the LORD -- that it would not solve the problem.

Abram also realized that matters were not working out as they had hoped, so in loyalty to Sarai he permitted her to deal with Hagar in any way she saw fit. According to the Hebrew text, Sarai afflicted Hagar, probably by increasing her duties and tasks. Her burdens were increased, perhaps with the hope that she might desert the household and run away, which is exactly what she did.

Genesis 16:7-16 *"And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur.*

"And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai.

"And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.

"And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.

"And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction.

"And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.

"And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?

"Wherefore the well was called Beer-la-hai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

"And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael.

"And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram."

At this juncture, the LORD took a hand in the matter. His angel, or messenger, found Hagar 'by the fountain in the way to Shur'. Shur was the name of the great fortified wall shutting Egypt off from Israel. Evidently Hagar was endeavoring to make her way back to her own people in Egypt; but the LORD interfered, and through his angel, instructed her to return and be subject to her mistress.

Then the angel uttered a remarkable prophecy (vss. 10-12), one which many now see fulfilled in the experiences of the Arabic race. Today, many Arabs trace their ancestry directly back to Hagar's son, Ishmael. Hagar was greatly impressed by the visit of the angel of the LORD, and the well where the angel found her was called Beer-la-hai-roi,

which according to the *Marginal Translation* means 'the well of him that liveth and seeth me'. Hagar seemed to realize that the LORD had been watching over her, and that although she had escaped from Abram and Sarai, she had not been able to escape from the God of Abram. She returned to her mistress, and in due time Ishmael was born.

There was a lesson in this for Sarai, also, and indeed for all who are endeavoring to serve the LORD. The lesson is that nothing is accomplished by endeavoring to run away from our trials, or to force them away from us. Sarai's lack of faith had brought a severe trial into her life, and she thought to get rid of it by forcing Hagar to run away; but the LORD brought the trial right back to her. Probably the experience softened Hagar's attitude also; but in any event, the two women lived together after this for sixteen years.

THE PROMISE AFFIRMED

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Genesis 17:1-8 *"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. "And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. "And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, "As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. "Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. "And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. "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."*

According to the *Marginal Translation*, God's statement to Abram that he should be 'perfect', more properly should read 'upright' or 'sincere'. Abram was a member of the fallen and dying race, and perfection of conduct was quite beyond his ability. But he could be upright and sincere before the LORD. This is possible for all of God's people, and nothing short of this is acceptable to the LORD.

God's reference in this chapter to the making of a covenant with Abram was a reiteration of the covenant he had already made, and an enlarging on some of its features.

In keeping with the importance of meanings attached to names in connection with the unfolding of the Divine plan, the LORD changed Abram's name to Abraham, meaning the 'father of many nations'. The original statement of the covenant assured blessings to all nations through the promised seed, but here the LORD amplifies that thought by promising that Abraham would be the father of the nations who thus would be blessed. The term father means life-giver, and this would seem to be God's way of explaining that the "blessing" the nations would receive through Abraham's seed was to be that of life.

The Apostle Paul quotes this promise (Romans 4:16-18) and indicates that all who exercise the faith of Abraham in the promises God made to him, thereby qualify to be his 'seed'. Some of this seed will be earthly, and some spiritual, but the important truth which Paul stresses is that one does not have to be a natural descendant of Abraham in order to be part of his seed.

"Kings shall come out of thee," God promised Abraham. The principal fulfillment of this promise is in connection with the spiritual seed of Abraham -- Jesus the Head and the

church, his body. (Galatians 3:16,27-29) Jesus will be the King of kings, and his church will reign with him as kings for a thousand years. -- Revelation 5:10; 20:4

Abraham, although living in Canaan at this time, was a stranger in the land, or as the *Marginal Translation* expresses it, 'a sojourner'. Abraham died without possessing the land which God promised to him -- as did Isaac and Jacob. But they will, nevertheless, possess the land when they are restored to life in the resurrection. It is most important to keep God's viewpoint in mind in our study of his Word lest we fall into serious error in our endeavors to determine how some of his promises are fulfilled.

Genesis 17:9-14 *"And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.*

"This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.

"And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.

"And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.

"He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

"And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant."

Circumcision was a 'token' of the Abrahamic Covenant. Paul speaks of it as a 'sign' of the faith which Abraham already exercised toward God and his promises. God stressed the importance of this token of the covenant by decreeing that any of the household of Abraham thenceforth who did not comply with it were to be destroyed.

In passing, it is well to note that the importance God attached to this token of the covenant rules out all possibility that any of the natural descendants of Abraham who have strayed away from the LORD, and have ceased to observe the sign of circumcision, could be especially used or honored by him.

When the LORD said that any soul that was not circumcised should 'be cut off from his people', the least we could understand from it is that such a one would cease to be considered by God as a child of Abraham, or in any sense of the word an heir to the rich promises made to him.

In the New Testament, circumcision is used to symbolize singleness of heart and purity of purpose. It is much the same thought as is contained in the LORD's statement to Abraham that he should be 'upright and sincere'. While the spiritual seed of Abraham are not called upon to practice the literal rite of circumcision, they are admonished to circumcise their hearts, and to put away all filthiness of the flesh.

It is appropriate that the token of the all-comprehensive Abrahamic Covenant should be circumcision, for when we take into consideration the New Testament explanation of what circumcision signifies, it means that none will receive the blessings promised under the Abrahamic Covenant except upon the basis of purity of heart and motive before the LORD and an abiding faith in his promises and the righteousness of his laws.

Genesis 17:15, 16 *"And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be.*

"And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her."

Here the LORD reveals to Abraham that Sarai's name was to be changed to Sarah -- signifying 'princess' -- inasmuch as she was to be the mother of kings. The apostle explains the manner in which Sarah is considered by the LORD as being the mother of kings, stating that it is because she symbolizes the covenant by which the spiritual seed of Abraham is developed. Thus Sarah is the mother of the same kings of whom Abraham is the typical father, that is, the kings who are to reign for a thousand years for the blessing of all the families of the earth. -- Galatians 4:22-31

Genesis 17:17-22 *"Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?*

"And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!

"And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

"And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.

"But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

"And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham."

Abraham had great faith in the promises of God, but it was not a perfect faith. At times it wavered, and one of those times is recorded in this passage. Despite Sarah's barrenness, Abraham had faith to believe, when God first made the promise to him, that she would bear him a son, because she was then much younger. But now, in addition to her barrenness, she was ninety years old; so when the LORD told him this time that Sarah would bear a son, Abraham fell down on his face and laughed.

In his heart, the passage indicates, Abraham doubted that such a thing could come to pass, and arising from the ground, he pleaded before the LORD, "O that Ishmael might live before thee?" -- to be the seed of promise, seems to be the thought of this petition. God assured Abraham that Ishmael would live, and would become the father of a great nation, but as far as the promised seed was concerned, Sarah was to have a child, his name was to be Isaac, and Isaac would be heir to the promise.

'At this set time in the next year' -- here was a time prophecy of considerable importance to Abraham. He had waited many long years for God to fulfill his promise, yet during all that time, no indication had been given as to how long that wait would need to continue. God has tested the faith of most of his people along this same line of waiting. The disciples asked Jesus, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" and Jesus replied, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." -- Acts 1:6,7

Often when the time nears for expected events to occur, the LORD reveals the secret to his servants. Noah labored long years in building the ark, with probably no definite idea of when the Flood would come, but finally the LORD said, "Yet seven days." (Genesis 7:4) So now with Abraham the LORD said, 'At this set time in the next year'. In view of what Abraham was thinking in his heart concerning the unlikelihood of Sarah bearing him a son, perhaps the LORD gave him this definite information as a means of strengthening his faith.

Genesis 17:23-27 *"And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him.*

"And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

"And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

"In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son.

"And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him."

These verses simply relate the fact that Abraham was quick to obey the instructions of the LORD regarding the token of the covenant. 'In that selfsame day', the account reads, he proceeded to have all the males in his household circumcised, including himself and his son, Ishmael. There is much evidence in the Scriptures that the LORD appreciates prompt obedience. In the case of Abraham his promptness would indicate also that his faith in God's promise concerning Sarah had been fully restored and that he desired to carry out every detail pertaining to his part in the covenant.

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DOCTRINE

THE PLAN OF GOD IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS -- PART 8

A VISIT BY ANGELS

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Genesis 18:1-5 *"And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day;*

"And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground,

"And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant:

"Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree:

"And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said."

Mamre was a confederate of Abraham on the occasion when he rescued Lot. (Genesis 14:13) The expression, "plains of Mamre" evidently means the plains which belonged to Mamre, for Abraham was merely a sojourner in the land. However, he was on friendly terms with many of the Canaanites.

'The LORD appeared' unto Abraham, the text states, yet later this appearance turns out to be the visit of three 'men' who served as messengers of the LORD. This manner of expression is employed quite frequently in the Bible when it speaks of the LORD's dealings with members of the human race. Actually no human being could see God and live. (Exodus 33:20) However, when he sends his messengers he expects those visited to treat them with dignity, and to give consideration to the message they deliver.

These 'men' who visited Abraham were actually angels; that is, spirit beings. They had materialized in order to be able to converse freely with the patriarch. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul refers to them as such, and tacitly cites Abraham's hospitality as an example worthy of emulation: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers," he writes, "for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." -- Hebrews 13:2

Genesis 18:6-8 *"And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth.*

"And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hastened to dress it.

"And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat."

It is necessary to put ourselves in Abraham's position in order to understand his great desire to make his unexpected visitors 'feel at home'. It was not as though he lived on a

busy city thoroughfare where thousands of people would be passing every day. Instead he was living on the plains, and in a tent. It is quite possible that days might go by when not a single stranger passed his tent, and here were three of them who gave every indication that they were men of considerable importance.

As Abraham saw it, this was to be a special event and he was desirous of making as much as possible out of it. Abraham was an important man in that part of the world, and was accustomed to giving orders when he wanted things done. He did not ask Sarah if it would be convenient for her to help prepare a meal for these exceptional visitors. He simply gave directions that it should be done. The same is true with respect to the young man whom he directed to dress a young calf and prepare it for a meal.

Abraham revealed just a bit of excitement over the visit of the three men, for the account says that he "ran unto the herd" and made a personal selection of a calf which he knew would be tender for eating. Visits from the LORD through his accredited messengers were not new to Abraham. While the Apostle Paul explains that he entertained angels unawares, it is quite possible that he perceived that these three men were something more than they were disclosing. In any event, he proved himself to be a kind and gracious host; and Sarah seems to have cooperated very willingly with him.

Genesis 18:9-15 *"And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent.*

"And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him.

"Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.

"Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?

"And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?

"Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.

"Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh."

Abraham stood while his guests ate, thus assuming the role of a servant, and as they ate, they inquired concerning the whereabouts of Sarah. While Sarah had helped with the preparation of the meal, up to this point she had evidently kept herself out of sight. Then the spokesman for these visitors said to Abraham, 'I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son'.

Evidently the tent was not very far from where the trio was eating, for Sarah heard this announcement and, like Abraham, she laughed -- the text says, 'within herself', or we might say 'laughed to herself'. But the angel knew it, and when he referred to it later Sarah denied that she had laughed, and the angel said, 'Nay; but thou didst laugh'.

'Is anything too hard for the LORD?' -- this is the practical lesson in the account for us. This is of great importance with respect to the outworking of the plan of God. Perhaps one reason the LORD permitted Abraham and Sarah to get so old before Isaac was born was for the very purpose of demonstrating that he is responsible for the fulfillment of all his promises.

Many sincere Christians today, and for centuries past, have erroneously imagined that the success of God's purposes in the earth depends upon the efforts of puny man. We should all be glad that this is not so, and that his plan to bless all the families of the earth through the seed of Abraham is sure to be accomplished -- sure, despite all the circumstances which seem to be to the contrary.

Genesis 18:16-22 *"And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way.*

"And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do;

"Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?"

"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

"And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous;

"I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.

"And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD."

The LORD takes his servants into his confidence in matters which pertain to them and to those in whom they are particularly interested. Broadly speaking, the truth -- enlightened people of God should be interested in all mankind. They should have the spirit of Abraham and manifest enthusiasm for the plan of God which was revealed to him, the plan that through the seed of Abraham all the families of the earth are to be blessed.

The LORD had decided to destroy Sodom because of the gross wickedness of the city, but he used the occasion to test Abraham's interest in the people of the city, and particularly his concern for his own kinsmen -- Lot and his family, who dwelt there. 'Shall I hide from Abraham', the LORD inquired, 'that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?'

In this passage we are furnished with an interesting example of how God makes allowance for the mental limitations of his servants in order that they might understand his viewpoint. To paraphrase God's statement to Abraham it implies that he had heard a report that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were very wicked, so he had come down to investigate, and if they were as wicked as the report indicated, he would surely destroy them. Actually, the Creator of the universe and God of heaven and earth did not need to

visit the earth personally to obtain information he needed. This was his way of speaking on Abraham's level of understanding.

Genesis 18:23-33 *"And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?"*

"Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?"

"That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

"And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

"And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the LORD, which am but dust and ashes:

"Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it.

"And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake.

"And he said unto him, Oh let not the LORD be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there.

"And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the LORD: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake.

"And he said, Oh let not the LORD be angry, and I will speak yet but this once:

Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake.

"And the LORD went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place."

Abraham petitioned the LORD earnestly to save the city, especially if there proved to be a few righteous souls therein. Abraham at first asked whether the city would be spared if there were fifty souls found to be righteous. When he continued to lower the number it is possible that he had Lot and his family in mind.

The LORD displayed both his patience with Abraham and his willingness to show mercy by complying with his entreaty so many times, as he kept lowering the number. As it turned out, there were not even the required ten who were righteous; so the city was destroyed.

This raises an interesting question in view of God's promise to bless all the nations of the earth, for Jesus indicates that no particular effort was put forth to bring about the repentance of Sodom and Gomorrah. If there had been, Jesus explained, they would have remained and not been destroyed. (Matthew 11:23,24) Jesus also explained, however that in the Judgment Day, they will be given an opportunity; so we see that, after all, they will be remembered, in keeping with the promise made to Abraham that through his seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

SODOM AND GOMORRAH DESTROYED

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Genesis 19:1-3 *"And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground;*

"And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night.

"And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat."

Chapter eighteen tells of Abraham's efforts to have the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah saved from destruction, evidently because of his interest in Lot and his family. These efforts failed, and now two angels of the LORD visit Sodom, not to save the city, but to warn Lot and thus give him an opportunity to escape. While the LORD was not willing to spare the cities for Lot's sake, he did favor Abraham to the extent of showing mercy toward his nephew and his family.

'Lot sat in the gate of Sodom', and this is where the angels found him when they entered the city. By comparing this statement with Genesis 23:10,18; 34:20,24; and Ruth 4:1, it becomes apparent that it has reference to the fact that Lot had a prominent position in Sodom.

Exercising discernment which one in such a position should possess, he recognized that these were no ordinary visitors, and quickly bowed himself humbly and addressed them as 'lords', inviting them to spend the night in his home. They at first demurred, indicating that they were planning to spend the night in the street. But Lot pressed his invitation and they accepted, whereupon a feast was prepared for his guests, including unleavened bread. Evidently Lot recognized that his visitors were righteous persons, hence the use of unleavened bread.

Genesis 19:4-11 *"But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter:*

"And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came

in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them.

"And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him,

"And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly.

"Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof.

"And they said, Stand back. And they said again, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee, than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door.

"But the men put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door.

"And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door."

These two angels -- who appeared as human beings, and were probably two of the three who just previously had visited Abraham -- must have been outstanding in appearance, for they attracted the attention of many in the city as they entered. Some had doubtless seen them enter Lot's home, and being wicked of heart may have surmised that these strangers were not particularly friendly toward the city.

Before the two distinguished visitors had retired for the night a mob gathered in front of Lot's residence demanding that he produce his guests. Sensing that they meant to harm them in some way, Lot stepped outside of his door and closed it behind him -- which was a brave thing to do under the circumstances -- and sought to appease the rioters by offering them his daughters in return for not molesting his guests.

It is difficult for us today to understand how a father could have so little regard for his daughters, but apparently ethical standards of that time must have been quite different from what they are now. It would seem that civilized codes of conduct governing human behavior in those ancient days greatly favored men above women, to the extent that in any circumstance where it seemed necessary to sacrifice one or the other, men and their interests were protected.

The crowd of Sodomites who gathered in front of Lot's house were not to be appeased. They accused Lot of wanting to act as judge over them, and probably would have done him harm but for the fact that the two angels -- his visitors -- intervened. They reached out of the door and snatched Lot away from the angry

mob, and then, by the use of supernatural powers, smote the would-be intruders with blindness, rendering them impotent to do anybody harm.

Genesis 19:12-16 *"And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place:*

"For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it.

"And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.

"And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city.

"And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city."

This demonstration of the Sodomites' wickedness ended in a manner to give Lot great confidence in his visitors. Then they revealed to him the real purpose of their visit. For Abraham's sake they gave Lot every opportunity possible to save not only himself, but all of his family as well.

Lot cooperated by warning his two daughters and his sons-in-law to be, "who were to marry his daughters." (Genesis 19:14, *Revised Standard Version*), but apparently the only ones who left the city were Lot and his wife, and his two daughters. And even these seemed reluctant to leave, being pulled out by the angels by the hand.

Genesis 19:17-22 *"And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.*

"And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord:

"Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast showed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die:

"Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live.

"And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken.

"Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar."

After leading Lot out of the city, the angel who acted as spokesman counseled him to flee to the mountain for his life, and not to look back. Apparently the cities were to be destroyed in such a manner that the entire territory of the plain was to be affected, hence it was necessary to be farther away than merely outside of the city.

For some reason Lot seems to have been attracted to city life, for he hesitated to obey the command to flee to the mountain. Instead, he requested the privilege of entering another, although a much smaller, city. The angel who spoke for the LORD granted this request, so Lot and his two daughters entered Zoar -- meaning 'little' -- and probably so named because of this circumstance.

Genesis 19:23-25 *"The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar.*

"Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven;

"And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground."

When Lot reached Zoar the sun had risen. It was evidently the morning following the angels' visit to Sodom. They had all feasted together at Lot's home in Sodom, but no one had an opportunity to retire because the commotion caused by the men of Sodom made it impossible for anyone to sleep.

Morning had come, and with Lot safe in Zoar, 'the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven'.

Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, and 'all the plain'. No attempt was made to convert the people of these cities before destroying them. They were not called upon to repent. This fact is confirmed by Jesus, who said that if the same mighty works had been done in these cities of the plains as had been done in certain Jewish cities of his day, they would have repented. Why, then, did God not bring about their repentance?

Jesus furnishes the answer by telling us that God will deal with them in the future Day of Judgment, when it will be more favorable for them than it will be for those who rejected him despite the mighty miracles which they saw him perform. While God promised Abraham that he would bless all the families of the earth through his seed, it was not then the due time to bless them. Under the circumstances it was better for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah to be cut off in death to await the resurrection and future day of trial, than it was for them to

continue in sin, drifting further and further away from God, and entering ever deeper into debauchery and wickedness.

Genesis 19:26 *"But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt."*

The angel had given instructions not to look back. Probably this expression denotes more than merely to turn one's head to look behind. It seems to imply a hesitance to go forward, if not an actual turning back. Jesus compared Lot's wife with one who puts his hand to the plow and turns back. Jesus used the illustration as a warning to his followers not to turn back into the world from which they had separated themselves when they obeyed his call to forsake the world and follow him.

It is not necessary to suppose that Lot's wife turned into a solid pillar of salt. The account indicates that the entire area was affected by the fire and brimstone which destroyed the cities. It is probable that when she looked, or turned, back she still was in the region where the atmosphere had become impregnated with sulfur and possibly other gases. According to some who have been in this region, it contains numerous salt pits and rocks. One explanation is that bituminous gases exploded into flames and caused an eruption of molten salt which rained down upon her and she became covered by molten salt. So it is with the Christian who turns back into the world. It is not that the LORD specially punishes such a one, but the environment and circumstances are such that his spiritual life is destroyed.

Genesis 19:27-29 *"And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD:*

"And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.

"And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt."

Abraham realized from conversing with his three visitors that Sodom and Gomorrah were not to be saved, so he arose early in the morning and witnessed what he could of the destruction. While God did not spare the cities on his account, nevertheless, he 'remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow'. Abraham's prayer on behalf of his nephew had great influence with the LORD, for the angel said to Lot, 'Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither'. If the LORD would not

destroy Sodom until Lot had made his escape because of Abraham's prayer, is it any wonder that the "time of trouble" (Daniel 12: 1) at this end of the age is shortened "for the elect's sake"? -- Matthew 24:22

Genesis 19:30-38 *"And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters.*

"And the firstborn said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth:

"Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father.

"And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose.

"And it came to pass on the morrow, that the firstborn said unto the younger, Behold, I lay yesternight with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, and lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father.

"And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger arose, and lay with him; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose.

"Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father.

"And the firstborn bare a son, and called his name Moab: the same is the father of the Moabites unto this day.

"And the younger, she also bare a son, and called his name Benammi: the same is the father of the children of Ammon unto this day."

We have another example of the vast difference between the moral code of ancient times and what is considered proper today. Here, the concern of Lot's daughters over the matter of keeping the family name alive seems to have outweighed all other considerations. Failure to bear children was considered a calamity, and this, too, may have entered into the planning of Lot's daughters.

The LORD's purpose in permitting this action on the part of Lot's daughters to be recorded was in order to establish the origin of the Moabites and the Ammonites. These figure somewhat in the experiences of the natural descendants of Abraham. Even more important is the fact that Ruth, one of the mothers in the genealogy leading down to Jesus, was a Moabitess.

THE PROMISED SEED COMES

CHAPTER TWENTY

Genesis 20:1-18 *"And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar.*

"And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah.

"But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife.

"But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation?"

"Said he not unto me, She is my sister? and she, even she herself said, He is my brother: in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this.

"And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her.

"Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine.

"Therefore Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants, and told all these things in their ears: and the men were sore afraid.

"Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said unto him, What hast thou done unto us? and what have I offended thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done.

"And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing?"

"And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake.

"And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife.

"And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou shalt show unto me; at every place whither we shall come, say of me, He is my brother.

"And Abimelech took sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and women servants, and gave them unto Abraham, and restored him Sarah his wife.

"And Abimelech said, Behold, my land is before thee: dwell where it pleaseth thee.

"And unto Sarah he said, Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver: behold, he is to thee a covering of the eyes, unto all that are with thee, and with all other: thus she was reproved.

"So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare children.

"For the LORD had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah Abraham's wife."

In this chapter we have another interesting narrative revealing the LORD's interest in preventing anything from happening that would interfere with his purpose that Sarah should be the mother of Isaac, the typical seed of promise. The chapter also emphasizes what we have previously mentioned; namely, that codes of honor in those days seem to have greatly favored the men.

It is said that Eastern princes claimed the right to gather all the beautiful women of their domain into their harems. It was apparently in keeping with this 'right' that Abimelech 'sent and took Sarah'. Sarah must have been a remarkable woman, especially in appearance, for at this time she was getting well along in years, yet her beauty was such that she appealed to this heathen king as desirable for his harem.

The ethical code of the time was quite different from ours in many respects. Apparently the only 'legitimate' way a king or prince could requisition another man's wife was to have the husband killed. Abraham was aware of this, hence his partial deception in representing Sarah to be his sister. This tended to serve as a protection for him, but could have ended in serious consequences for Sarah.

Had Abimelech learned through the ordinary course of events that Sarah was Abraham's wife instead of merely his half sister, he might well have sought the death of the patriarch in order lawfully to keep Sarah in his harem. But something extraordinary occurred -- "God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife."

Now the tables were turned. It was Abimelech's life that was in danger, and he was very willing to return Sarah to Abraham. God had intervened before Sarah had been defiled, and this was the important consideration. But Abimelech was concerned, nevertheless, and asked if the LORD would slay "innocent people." -- vs. 4, *RSV*

His claim of innocency, and the acknowledgment of that claim by God, must be understood as pertaining to the general heading of what God "winked at" (Acts 17:30) because of the ignorance of the people. It was not his time to enlighten the world. What he was chiefly concerned about in this instance was the protection of Sarah in order that his purpose pertaining to the seed of promise should not be hindered. It was not the time to regulate the moral codes of the heathen.

While Abimelech's standards were quite unlike those of Christianity, he was apparently sincere in his efforts to live up to that which he believed to be right -- either this, or else he was thoroughly frightened by the threat of death which came to him from the LORD in his dream. In any case, he accused Abraham of causing him to bring a great sin upon his kingdom.

The whole affair turned out to the satisfaction of all concerned, but meanwhile the LORD employed harsh measures to make sure that Abimelech lived up to his professions. The account says that 'Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife,

and his maidservants; and they bare children: for the LORD had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah Abraham's wife'.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Genesis 21:1-5 *"And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken.*

"For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.

"And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac.

"And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him.

"And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him."

'And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said'. One of the great lessons the LORD taught in connection with the birth of Isaac was that he was a child of promise, and born as a result of a special dispensation of Divine grace. He was not born by the will of the flesh, in the ordinary sense of the word; for Sarah, in addition to being barren all her life, was now well past the normal age when she could expect to become a mother.

It is important to take into account the fact that Isaac was a miracle child, for the circumstance was a token from the LORD that all his promises toward the human race will be fulfilled because of his infinite wisdom, grace, and power. Throughout all the ages man has failed to rescue himself from the result of his own sin, and would continue to be impotent in his efforts to save himself, but this does not hinder the outworking of God's loving purposes toward the dying race.

It seems appropriate, therefore, that in fulfilling his promise concerning the seed of blessing, the LORD should make it plain that he alone was responsible for making it possible. God asks his people to cooperate with him in his work, but it is always well to remember that their efforts are quite fruitless except as he bestows his blessing upon them.

Abraham had great confidence in the promises of God, and a great deal of respect for his instructions in connection with their fulfillment. When this child of promise was born, he was named Isaac, in keeping with the LORD's instructions. (Genesis 17:19) Isaac was also circumcised in obedience to the LORD's command.

'Abraham was an hundred years old' when Isaac was born. He had waited a long time for the birth of this "seed" of promise, and during that long waiting period his faith was severely tested many times. (Hebrews 11:11) But now his faith was at least partially rewarded -- not wholly so, for the Apostle explains that, even as with the remainder of the faithful of Old Testament times, Abraham 'died in faith, not having received the promise'; that is, the fulfillment of the promise. -- vss. 13,39,40

Many of the LORD's people have been tested by their long wait for the fulfillment of God's promises. The vision has seemed to tarry; the Bridegroom tarried; and many have been disposed to cry out, 'How long, O LORD, how long?'

But the LORD has a due time for the accomplishment of all his purposes. And while he does not reveal all the time features of his plan, we can take comfort in the thought that there is never actually any delay. There was a 'due time' for Isaac to be born, but because Abraham did not know it far in advance, his faith was tested.

Genesis 21:6-8 *"And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me.*

"And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born him a son in his old age.

"And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned."

Sarah also exercised a great deal of faith in connection with the birth of Isaac. (Hebrews 11:11) Evidently God's 'visit' to her in this connection brought about a renewal of her youth; for she not only gave birth to Isaac, but nursed him as well, indicating that her whole system had undergone a change which was contrary to nature for one of her age.

Genesis 21:9,10 *"And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking.*

"Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac."

Evidently Sarah possessed a sensitive disposition, for when Ishmael was born she was somewhat disturbed by the attitude of Hagar, his mother. And now that she had a son of her own and Ishmael was mocking him, or 'persecuting him' (Galatians 4:29), it was more than she could endure, so she directed Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away from the household. It would be unfair, though, to blame Sarah's attitude entirely upon her sensitive nature. Doubtless the promises of God pertaining to her seed had much to do with it, and probably she was merely acting in a manner which she believed would be pleasing to the LORD -- 'the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac'.

Genesis 21:11-21 *"And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son.*

"And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

"And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.

"And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.

"And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs.

"And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept.

"And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is.

"Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation.

"And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink.

"And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer.

"And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt."

Sarah's directive to Abraham concerning the casting out of Hagar and Ishmael was 'grievous in his sight because of his son'. Ishmael was Abraham's own son, and because of his fatherly love for his boy, it was not an easy thing for him to comply with the insistence of his wife. Perhaps he hesitated to do it, wondering if the demand might be merely an emotional outburst of Sarah, and not expressive of what would be the proper thing to do under the circumstances.

But Abraham was not left long in doubt, for the LORD spoke to him and told him that he should obey Sarah's demand -- 'hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called'. The LORD never causes any unnecessary anxiety, or grief. While he made it plain to Abraham that Isaac was the one in whom his seed should be called, nevertheless he revealed that Ishmael was to become the father of a great nation, or people.

Abraham made what provision he could to preserve the lives of mother and child as he sent them away. While Sarah had lost interest in them, the same could not be said of Abraham; for Ishmael was his own son, and Hagar, for a time, had been to him a wife. Their lot for a while was a difficult one, and seemingly hopeless. Hagar gave up in despair, and then the LORD intervened; for although Ishmael was not the promised seed, there was a certain typical purpose he was carrying out through him.

This is brought to our attention in Galatians 4:21-31. Here the apostle speaks of two great covenants, and of a "seed" that is produced by each. God's original covenant with Abraham called for a "seed" for the blessing of mankind through that seed. Paul explains that Sarah pictures that part of the Abrahamic Covenant which brings forth the seed of promise.

Four hundred and thirty years after this original covenant was made, God entered into a covenant with the natural descendants of Abraham at Mount Sinai -- the Law Covenant. Because of the inability of the Israelites to keep this perfect Law of God, they were brought into bondage by its requirements. This covenant, Paul explains, was prefigured by Hagar, the bondmaid, and the Israelites in bondage under that covenant, by Ishmael.

Paul speaks of this as an allegory. Actually, of course, Ishmael was not the father of the Israelitish nation, for they were and are the natural descendants of Abraham through Isaac. Ishmael, on the other hand, is accredited as being the father of a godly portion of

the Arab race. Ishmael however is used by Paul as a type of Israel under the Law Covenant.

Genesis 21:22-34 *"And it came to pass at that time, that Abimelech and Phichol the chief captain of his host spake unto Abraham, saying, God is with thee in all that thou doest: "Now therefore swear unto me here by God that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son: but according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned.*

"And Abraham said, I will swear.

"And Abraham reproved Abimelech because of a well of water, which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away.

"And Abimelech said, I wot not who hath done this thing: neither didst thou tell me, neither yet heard I of it, but to day.

"And Abraham took sheep and oxen, and gave them unto Abimelech; and both of them made a covenant.

"And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves.

"And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What mean these seven ewe lambs which thou hast set by themselves?

"And he said, For these seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand, that they may be a witness unto me, that I have digged this well.

"Wherefore he called that place Beersheba; because there they sware both of them.

"Thus they made a covenant at Beersheba: then Abimelech rose up, and Phichol the chief captain of his host, and they returned into the land of the Philistines.

"And Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the LORD, the everlasting God.

"And Abraham sojourned in the Philistines' land many days."

Abraham reproved Abimelech in connection with a well of water which he supposed Abimelech had taken away, but the latter's explanation was satisfactory and the covenant was made. The presenting of a token of covenants made, seemed to be the custom of the time, and that part of the covenant which Abraham wished particularly to be made secure pertained to a certain well which he had digged. Apparently water was not too plentiful, and Abraham wisely safeguarded this much of a supply. Abraham did not lose sight of the source of all his blessings, and his faith in God was now stronger than it had ever been.

"TAKE NOW THY SON"

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Genesis 22:1,2 *"And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. "And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."*

'It came to pass after these things'. Evidently this statement refers to the experiences of Abraham following the weaning of Isaac, as related in the preceding chapter. These accounts indicate that some time had elapsed -- sufficient for Ishmael to grow up and marry; and, in addition, for what may have been somewhat protracted dealings with Abimelech.

While the period between the weaning of Isaac and the time when the LORD asked Abraham to offer him as a burnt offering is not clearly defined, it is safe to assume that the boy was well past twenty when the LORD spoke to Abraham on this occasion. To appreciate the full value of the lesson set forth in this chapter it is essential to remember that Isaac was a grown man, not a young boy, when his father was called upon to offer him up as a sacrifice.

The Hebrew word translated 'tempt' in verse one signifies 'to prove'. The apostle tells us of God, "neither tempteth he any man," and explains that one is tempted when he is drawn away by "his own lust." (James 1:13-15) Temptation is usually associated with sin. God 'tests' his people by holding before them the opportunity to cooperate with him -- sometimes at great cost -- but he does not 'tempt' them to do wrong.

'Take now thy Son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest' -- Abraham certainly must have loved Isaac very dearly, and it is reasonable to conclude that this fact is especially mentioned here because the LORD was making an illustration of a much more important sacrifice which, in the Divine plan, was to be made later -- the sacrifice of his own beloved Son, Christ Jesus.

God had promised Abraham that his seed was to be the channel of blessing for all the families of the earth. But before this blessing could flow to the people, a loving father must give up in sacrifice his beloved son. In the outworking of this arrangement it was the Heavenly Father who gave his own beloved Son to be this sacrifice, and here the LORD is making an illustration of this by having Abraham offer his son in sacrifice -- his 'beloved' son.

Genesis 22:3-6 *"And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together."*

Abraham met this test of faith with courage and determination. He had waited a long while for Isaac to be born; and the child was born under such circumstances that there could be no doubt about the LORD's hand in the matter. This increased Abraham's faith so that now, even though the LORD had asked him to do something that might seem out of harmony with his promises, he had faith to believe that it would in some way be overruled. The Apostle Paul tells us that Abraham had sufficient faith to believe that if it were necessary God would raise Isaac from the dead. -- Hebrews 11:19

It was a three days' journey to the land of Moriah, where Isaac was to be offered, and this afforded plenty of time for Abraham to think the matter over and change his mind, had he been disposed to do so, but he did not. His was no halfhearted obedience. Having received the request from God to offer his son as a burnt offering he 'rose up early in the morning' to be on his way to the place where the LORD had directed him to go. And the same spirit of faith and obedience enabled him to endure the suspense of those three days which it took him to reach the specified destination.

Genesis 22:7-10 *"And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"*

"And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together."

"And they came to the place which God had told him of, and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood."

"And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son."

When Abraham and his party came within sight of the mountain on which the sacrifice was to be offered, he told his servants to remain behind while he and Isaac proceeded alone. By this time Isaac was getting curious. He was carrying the wood for the burnt offering, and his father had the fire, and also a knife with which to kill the lamb; but they did not have a lamb, so he asked Abraham, 'Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?'

This question must have pierced the heart of Abraham, but he continued to spare Isaac from knowing the real truth, and replied, 'My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering'. Abraham, of course, did not realize how literally true this would turn out to be, either in the type, or in the antitype. In the antitype, Jesus was the Lamb which God provided, to take "away the sin of the world." -- John 1:29

Arriving on the mountain on which the LORD had directed that Isaac was to be offered, Abraham built the altar, placed the wood upon it, and then laid Isaac upon the wood ready to be slain. Here it is well to remember that Isaac was a mature man, and could not have been placed upon the altar against his will by his aged father. By this time Isaac must have known what the LORD had asked his father to do, and the fact that he was willing voluntarily to cooperate helps to make the type accurate; for Jesus, the antitypical Isaac, also willingly laid down his life because it was his Heavenly Father's will for him.

Genesis 22:11-14 *"And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.*

"And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

"And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

"And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen."

Up to that time, evidently Abraham believed that he was actually to slay his son. He poised his knife ready to strike the fatal blow when, by means of an angel, the LORD intervened and called his attention to a ram in the nearby bushes. Abraham was directed to use this ram as a substitute for Isaac on the altar. Thus is pictured the fact that the antitypical Isaac, even Jesus, would become identified throughout the scriptures as a 'lamb' -- the lamb which God provided to be the Redeemer and Savior of the world; the seed of Abraham through whom, upon the basis of his sacrifice, all the families the earth are to be blessed with an opportunity to gain everlasting life.

The angel who intervened to prevent the slaying of Isaac said to Abraham, 'Now I know that thou fearest God'. This angel was speaking for the LORD, and we get the thought from this statement that God was allowing Abraham to demonstrate his faith and obedience before reaching a decision as to his true attitude of heart and mind. Certainly God could have known this without putting Abraham to such a severe test. God has the ability to know by intuition, but we are not to conclude because he has this ability, that he is limited to this method alone, or that he cannot -- if he so wills -- choose, by observation, to find out things he desires to know.

Genesis 22:15-19 *"And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,*

"And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:

"That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

"And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed

my voice.

"So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba."

When Abraham had fully demonstrated his faith by his works, God confirmed the original promise he made to him, by his oath. Thus it became the 'oath-bound covenant'. Paul refers to this in Hebrews 6:13-19, and speaks of God's promise, and the oath by which he bound the promise, as "two immutable things." In the first place it was impossible for God to lie, so his promise apart from the oath was immutable; and his oath was also immutable, and by virtue of these two unshakable testimonies, we "have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

The church is vitally concerned with this oathbound covenant because as members of the body of Christ they are the spiritual seed of Abraham, and will be the channel of Divine blessings to all nations. (Galatians 3:27-29) Abraham's seed was to be as the 'stars' of heaven, and also as the 'sand upon the seashore'; that is, there will be a spiritual seed and also an earthly seed. -- Acts 7:1-7

The spiritual seed is Christ and the church; and the earthly seed, beginning with the resurrected ancient prophets, will eventually include all the restored world of mankind. The oath-bound covenant, then, embraces God's promise to develop a 'seed' which would be the channel of his blessings; and also the actual pouring out of his blessings of life, purchased by the antitypical Isaac, even Jesus, the Redeemer and Savior of the world.

Genesis 22:20-24 *"And it came to pass after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, Behold, Milcah, she hath also born children unto thy brother Nahor; "Huz his firstborn, and Buz his brother, and Kemuel the father of Aram, "And Chesed, and Hazo, and Pildash, and Jidlaph, and Bethuel. "And Bethuel begat Rebekah: these eight Milcah did bear to Nahor, Abraham's brother. "And his concubine, whose name was Reumah, she bare also Tebah, and Gaham, and Thahash, and Maachah."*

Having proved his faith and obedience, the story of Abraham now begins to enter another phase; and these closing verses of chapter twenty-two introduce the patriarch's brother and his family. This is in preparation for the account which is later given of Abraham's servant seeking a bride for Isaac from these kinsfolk of Abraham. This family of the patriarch's relatives apparently has no great importance in the Divine arrangements except that it provided Rebekah to be Isaac's wife.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Genesis 23:1,2 *"And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: these were the years of the life of Sarah.*

"And Sarah died in Kirjath-arba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her."

Sarah died at the age of 127 years. She was ten years younger than Abraham, who was 100 years old when Isaac was born. (Genesis 17:17; 21:5) Therefore Sarah lived to see Isaac grow into manhood, and no doubt knew that he was presented as a lamb for a burnt offering to the LORD, and had been received back from the dead 'in a figure', a ram having been substituted for him on the altar. Sarah is the only woman whose age at death is given in the Bible.

Sarah died at Hebron, the more ancient name of which was Kirjath-arba. Some archeologists cite this method of identifying a city as an indication that Moses, in compiling these chapters of Genesis, simply followed records that had been inscribed by contemporaries of the incidents recorded; and that, when coming upon the name of a city which he knew would be unfamiliar to the Hebrew people of his day, simply added a parenthetical explanation of the current name of the city. Moses added explanatory notes where he thought it was necessary.

Genesis 23:3-20 *"And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying,*

"I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a buryingplace with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.

"And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him,

"Hear us, my lord: thou art a mighty prince among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead.

"And Abraham stood up, and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth.

"And he communed with them, saying, If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight; hear me, and entreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar,

"That he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of his field; for as much money as it is worth he shall give it me for a possession of a buryingplace amongst you.

"And Ephron dwelt among the children of Heth: and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying,

"Nay, my lord, hear me: the field give I thee, and the cave that is therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee: bury thy dead.

"And Abraham bowed down himself before the people of the land.

"And he spake unto Ephron in the audience of the people of the land, saying, But if thou wilt give it, I pray thee, hear me: I will give thee money for the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there.

*"And Ephron answered Abraham, saying unto him,
"My lord, hearken unto me: the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver; what is that
betwixt me and thee? bury therefore thy dead.*

*"And Abraham hearkened unto Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver,
which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver,
current money with the merchant.*

*"And the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field,
and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all
the borders round about, were made sure*

*"Unto Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that
went in at the gate of his city.*

*"And 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.*

*"And the field, and the cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a
possession of a buryingplace by the sons of Heth."*

The remainder of this chapter simply deals with Abraham's arrangements for the burial of Sarah. The sons of Heth were those otherwise known as Hittites. Ephron, the one from whom he bought the field containing the sepulchre in which Sarah was buried, was a Hittite. These Hittites seemed to be very friendly toward Abraham, speaking of him as a prince who dwelt among them.

Ephron wanted to give his sepulchre to Abraham, but Abraham countered with a suggestion that he buy the entire field in which the sepulchre was located. Abraham seems to have been a prudent business man, and probably reasoned that it would be much better to establish a legal ownership of the field and sepulchre through purchase, than to accept it as a gift. Perhaps the customs of the times were such that that which was given away could be taken back if the giver changed his mind. Abraham had bought the field, however, and the account says that 'the field, and the cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a burying place by the sons of Heth'. This particular spot of the land was known as the 'field of Machpelah'.

SEEKING A BRIDE FOR ISAAC

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Genesis 24:1 *"And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things."*

Two points are revealed in this verse: Abraham was now old -- 'well stricken in age'; and the LORD had blessed him 'in all things'. At this time Abraham was 140 years old: his wife, Sarah, had been dead for three years; and Isaac was now forty years of age. While he had made mistakes, it was still true that the LORD had blessed him in all things, for, because of the covenant the LORD had made with Abraham, his providences overshadowed him continually. No testimony more worthwhile could be given of any servant of God than that which is here stated concerning Abraham. What life could be more rich and more satisfactory than one which the LORD blesses 'in all things'!

Genesis 24:2-6 *"And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh:*

"And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell:

"But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.

"And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?

"And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again."

The 'eldest servant' of Abraham's house was Eliezer (Genesis 15:2), although his name is not mentioned in this chapter. He was not only his chief servant, but before the birth of Isaac, Abraham had decided to make him his chief heir. But the LORD corrected him in this and gave instructions that one of his own children must be his heir. -- Genesis 15:4

Abraham was very solicitous that Isaac should not marry one of the Canaanites, but that a bride should be secured for him from among his own people. At the same time, for some reason not explained in the chapter, he did not want Isaac to go personally to his kinsfolk in Mesopotamia to find a wife, so he decided upon the course here outlined: namely, that of sending his chief servant to seek a bride for his son.

The fact that Abraham occupied such an important position in connection with the outworking of God's plan, and that Isaac was the seed of promise, justifies the student in the assumption that the manner in which a bride was secured for the promised seed is intended to be illustrative of a still more important feature of the plan of God; namely, the

manner in which a 'bride' is found for Christ, the antitypical Isaac and the true spiritual seed of Abraham.

In this beautiful picture it seems reasonable to conclude that Abraham represented the Heavenly Father; Isaac, the Lord Jesus; and Eliezer, the Holy Spirit. It is through the work of the Holy Spirit of God, as it operates through the truth -- which is the calling agency -- that the church, the bride of Christ, is sought out and enabled to make the journey over the narrow way to her Heavenly Bridegroom, Christ Jesus.

Genesis 24:7-9 *"The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence.*

"And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again.

"And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and sware to him concerning that matter."

Abraham had great faith that Eliezer's mission would be successful. God had blessed him, and he was sure that the same God would send his angel before Eliezer to direct in this important undertaking. And how true it is that, in the exercise of his influence, his power (the Holy Spirit), the LORD can and does make use of every necessary agency, or messenger, to accomplish his good purposes.

Abraham assured his servant that if he followed instruction and failed in his mission he would be released from the covenant that he had made to find a bride for Isaac from among his master's own people. All of the LORD's people during the Gospel Age cooperate with the Holy Spirit in seeking and finding a bride for Christ: and Abraham's willingness to release his servant from responsibility for lack of success if he did the best he could, might suggest to us that we are responsible only for our best efforts to carry out the LORD's commission of service, not for the results we might or might not achieve.

Genesis 24:10-14 *"And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor.*

"And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water.

"And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham.

"Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water:

"And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master."

In these verses is revealed what was probably one of the principal reasons that Eliezer had been made the chief servant in his Master's household, for they reveal that he believed in Abraham's God and was glad to look to him for guidance and blessing in the undertaking assigned him by his master. Doubtless Eliezer sensed that this mission was one which had further to do with the covenant God had made with Abraham; and having witnessed the marvelous manner in which God had blessed his master up to this point, he believed that he would continue to do so. Hence he looked to Abraham's God in confidence that he would guide him to the proper maiden to be Isaac's bride.

Genesis 24:15-28 *"And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder.*

"And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up.

"And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher.

"And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hastened, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink.

"And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking.

"And she hastened, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels.

"And the man wondering at her held his peace, to wit whether the LORD had made his journey prosperous or not.

"And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold;

"And said, Whose daughter art thou? tell me, I pray thee: is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in?

"And she said unto him, I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, which she bare unto Nahor.

"She said moreover unto him, we have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in.

"And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the LORD.

"And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren.

"And the damsel ran, and told them of her mother's house these things."

Abraham's servant outlined a plan in his mind by which he would be able to determine the LORD's leading. Arriving in Mesopotamia, he halted by a well just outside the city of Nahor. It was apparently the custom of maidens to secure water for their households and Eliezer reasoned that here he would have a good opportunity to meet the one for whom he was looking.

It was at this well of water that Abraham's servant found Rebekah -- found her drawing water, and glad to serve those in need. The spirit of service is one of the chief characteristics of those called by the Holy Spirit to be members of the antitypical Isaac's bride. They are not only found near the great fountain of truth -- as represented by the well -- but are on the alert to use every opportunity possible to refresh others with its sparkling waters -- the exceeding great and precious promises of God which make up the Divine plan of the ages.

Upon inquiry Eliezer learned that Rebekah was indeed one of his master's own people. Also, in addition to being glad to serve him with water, she manifested further her desire to serve through her gracious hospitality. Like Abraham, who entertained angels unawares, Rebekah, unknown to her then, urged a messenger of the LORD to take lodging with them, saying, "We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in'.

Receiving this cordial invitation, Eliezer bowed down and worshiped the LORD. How appropriate! Too often, perhaps, we think more of the means the LORD uses to bless us than we do of him. Nor did Eliezer overlook the fact that God was blessing his mission because of Abraham, and in addressing him in prayer said, 'Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and truth: I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren'.

James tells us that Abraham was called a "friend of God" (James 2:23), and what a wonderful testimony Eliezer gave to the effect that God does not leave his friends destitute of mercy and truth! Quite apart from his earthly possessions, Abraham was the richest man of his day simply because God had entered into a covenant with him and had revealed to him that portion of his plan which was then due to be understood. And how rich are we today whose eyes of understanding have been opened to see and appreciate the length and breadth and height and depth of the Divine plan to bless all the families of earth, in keeping with the promise made to Abraham.

Eliezer gave Rebekah a 'jewel for the forehead' (*Margin*), and bracelets. These might symbolize spiritual blessings which all receive when they begin to respond to the influences of the Holy Spirit through the truth. Rebekah displayed enthusiasm over what was occurring, and ran to inform her family. Enthusiasm for the LORD and for the truth is another trait essential to all those who will eventually become members of the antitypical bride class.

Genesis 24:29-31 *"And Rebekah had a brother and his name was Laban: and Laban ran out unto the man unto the well.*

"And it came to pass, when he saw the earring and bracelets upon his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, Thus spake the man unto me; that he came unto the man; and, behold, he stood by the camels at the well.

"And he said, Come in, thou blessed of the LORD; wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels."

Laban, Rebekah's brother, displayed great interest in the one she had invited into the home. Before he confirmed his sister's invitation, however, he seemingly made sure that Eliezer was not an impostor. He noted the jewelry he had given to Rebekah, and listened to her testimony of what the visitor had said, and was convinced.

Evidently Abraham was not the only one in his family who trusted in the true God; and it would seem also that Eliezer's manner of expression in connection with the God of Abraham, was familiar to Rebekah and Laban, for he said to their visitor, 'Come in, thou blessed of the LORD'.

Genesis 24:32-54 *"And the man came into the house: and he ungirded his camels, and gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet, and the men's feet that were with him.*

"And there was set meat before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat, until I have told mine errand. And he said, Speak on.

"And he said, I am Abraham's servant.

"And the LORD hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses.

"And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old: and unto him hath he given all that he hath.

"And my master made me swear, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife to my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell:

"But thou shalt go unto my father's house, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son.

"And I said unto my master, Peradventure the woman will not follow me.

"And he said unto me, The LORD, before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and prosper thy way; and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father's house:

"Then shalt thou be clear from this my oath when thou comest to my kindred; and if they give not thee one, thou shalt be clear from my oath.

"And I came this day unto the well, and said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, if now thou do prosper my way which I go:

"Behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass, that when the virgin cometh forth to draw water, and I say to her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to drink;

"And she say to me, Both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels: let the same be the woman whom the LORD hath appointed out for my master's son.

"And before I had done speaking in mine heart, behold, Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down unto the well, and drew water: and I said unto her, Let me drink, I pray thee.

"And she made haste, and let down her pitcher from her shoulder, and said, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: so I drank, and she made the camels drink also.

"And I asked her, and said, Whose daughter art thou? And she said, The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bare unto him: and I put the earring upon her face, and the bracelets upon her hands.

"And I bowed down my head, and worshipped the LORD, and blessed the LORD God of my master Abraham, which had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter unto his son.

"And now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left.

"Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from the LORD: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good.

"Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the LORD hath spoken.

"And it came to pass, that, when Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshipped the LORD, bowing himself to the earth.

"And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things.

"And they did eat and drink, he and the men that were with him, and tarried all night; and they rose up in the morning, and he said, Send me away unto my master."

Eliezer was extended every courtesy in the home of Rebekah's people. Food was at once set before him, but for the moment he had more important things on his mind than satisfying his hunger. The LORD had blessed him so wonderfully in leading him to this home that now he wanted to settle the matter at once as to whether or not the arrangements could be consummated. This show of hospitality and desire to serve by Rebekah and Laban might quickly change when they learned the real purpose of his mission.

So, before he would eat, he insisted on telling his story. He started in by identifying himself as Abraham's servant. It had been many years since they had seen or heard from Abraham, and when they learned that his chief servant was now under their roof, they were overjoyed and anxious for Eliezer to proceed with his story. Then he explained the real purpose of his mission, going into great detail as to the exact manner in which the LORD'S providences had guided him up to this point.

Having set the facts before the family, Eliezer put the matter right up to them as to whether or not they were willing to cooperate. In telling them the story, he stressed the thought of the LORD's directing hand in the matter, and when Laban answered his pointed question concerning their willingness for Rebekah to accompany him back to Canaan and to Isaac, he said, 'The thing proceedeth from the LORD: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the LORD hath spoken'.

Hearing this reply, Eliezer again 'worshipped the LORD'. Then he gave further gifts of jewelry to Rebekah, as well as clothing; bestowing gifts also on Laban and their mother. This seems to represent the additional blessings which come to the prospective members of the bride class when they come to the point of decision to walk in the narrow way; and also the blessings which come even to members of their families who cooperate with rather than oppose, those who make a consecration of their all to follow the leadings of the Holy Spirit.

Genesis 24:55-60 *"And her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten; after that she shall go.*

"And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the LORD hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master.

"And they said, We will call the damsel, and enquire at her mouth.

"And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.

"And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men.

"And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them."

Eliezer remained but the one night in this hospitable home. He arose early the next morning, and asked that he be permitted to leave at once for the return journey. But when Rebekah's mother and brother were faced with her actual and sudden departure, it was seemingly more of a shock to them than they had expected, for they pleaded with Eliezer that she remain with them for a while -- at least ten days. The *Margin* indicates "a full year, or ten months." The betrothal of a year was customary in those days. But Eliezer insisted on the importance of being on his way.

Then they said to their visitor that they would call Rebekah, and let her decide the matter. If she was willing to start right away, they would not hinder her. This was done, and when the matter was put before her, she said, 'I will go'.

How beautifully this represents the attitude of those who become members of the antitypical bride class! It is the spirit of true and prompt consecration. Through the truth, these learn about the love of God and the love of Christ. They learn that Christ is the One "altogether lovely" (Song of Sol. 5:16), full of grace and truth. They learn of their privilege of following the leadings of the Holy Spirit and eventually reaching the heavenly Canaan to be forever with the LORD. They hear the Holy Spirit, through the truth, saying to them, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty." (Psalm 45:10,11), and, like Rebekah, they respond, 'I will go'.

While it was apparently the custom of the day for the family to have some say in the matter of who the daughters would marry, the final decision, apparently, was left up to them. At least it was so in the case of Rebekah. And, having made the decision favorable to Isaac, the mother and brother blessed Rebekah, and said to her: 'Be thou the mother of thousands of millions.' (vs. 60) This, in reality, is a prophecy. The antitypical Rebekah class, the bride of Christ, will, in association with him, be the channel of blessing through which life will come to the entire race -- easily, 'thousands of millions'!

Genesis 24:61-67 *"And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.*

"And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahairoi; for he dwelt in the south country.

"And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming.

"And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel.

"For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us?

And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a vail, and covered herself.

"And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done.

"And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death."

Rebekah and her maidens -- servants -- made the journey to Isaac on camels. These might well represent the Word of God, or the various doctrines of his Word, which support the prospective members of the antitypical bride-to-be, as they make their journey to him. Only a wholehearted love for the LORD and a well-grounded faith in the "exceeding great and precious promises" (2 Peter 1:4) of his Word will carry us through to the end of the journey, joyful in our anticipation of being finally accepted into glory with our Beloved, the King of Glory.

In the antitype, it is not an individual who becomes the bride of Christ, but the entire church class, beginning with those accepted at Pentecost, and continuing even until now. Rebekah's journey would, therefore, represent the journey of the church throughout the entire Gospel Age.

As Eliezer brought Rebekah safely to the end of her journey, and to the presence of Isaac at Lahai-roi, so the Holy Spirit guides the church to the end of her journey, even to the presence (the *parousia*) of Christ. How stimulating it is to realize that now we are in the time of his presence -- that already the majority of the bride class no longer needs its camels, and that those still this side the veil have the assurance that their deliverance draweth near, and that they, too, soon will be with their Lord, the Heavenly Bridegroom, in glory! -- Luke 21:28

ABRAHAM DIES IN FAITH

(Jacob and Esau Are Born)

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Genesis 25:1-4 *"Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah.*

"And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah.

"And Jokshan begat Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, and Letushim, and Leummim.

"And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Epher, and Hanoch, and Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah."

These four verses present all that the Bible says about Abraham's marriage to Keturah. Inasmuch as the Apostle Paul speaks of Hagar, Sarah's bondmaid whom she gave to Abraham for a wife, as picturing the Law Covenant to which the nation of Israel was in bondage, Sarah as a symbol of the covenant under which the followers of Jesus are developed and enjoy freedom, it has been suggested that Keturah represents the New Covenant under which natural Israel and the world will be blessed during the reign of Christ. -- Jeremiah 31:31-34; Galatians 4:21-31

In a prophecy of Isaiah concerning the glory of the Christ, the spiritual seed of Abraham, three of the offspring of Keturah are mentioned, as though to indicate the far-reaching blessings of the LORD which are yet to be available for all mankind. See Isaiah 60:1-7. Under the New Covenant arrangements, all the obedient of mankind -- Jews and Gentiles -- will receive blessings of life -- human life -- through the spiritual seed of Abraham, the Isaac class.

Genesis 25:5,6 *"And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac.*

"But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country."

In verse one, Keturah is designated a 'wife', so it is not clear whether or not the 'concubines' referred to in these verses include her, but they probably do. (I Chron. 1:32) Emphasis is given to the fact that Isaac was Abraham's real heir, thus a type of Jesus and also those who are "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." (Romans 8:17) Jesus was made heir of all things, and the hope of the church is to share that inheritance with him.

The sons of Abraham's concubines, however, received 'gifts' which suggests that in the Divine plan God has blessings also for those who are not partakers of the "High Calling" of joint-heirship with Jesus. (Philippians 3:14) Even fallen mankind throughout the ages has received many blessings from the Creator. He has caused the sun to shine and the rain to fall upon both the just and the unjust. Later, when the kingdom is established in the

hands of the Divine Christ, everlasting life will be offered to all as a 'gift' from God through the world's Redeemer.

Genesis 25:7-10 *"And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years.*

"Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people.

"And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre;

"The field which Abraham purchased of the sons of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife."

Abraham died at the age of one hundred and seventy-five -- 'a good old age, an old man, and full of years'. His was a wonderful life, for the LORD had blessed him. His faith in God and in his promises continued strong to the end. While he had seen many evidences of the power of God working in connection with the fulfillment of his promises, yet so far as the blessing of all the families of the earth through his seed was concerned, he 'died in faith, not having received [the fulfillment of] the promises'. -- Hebrews 11:13,39

Because it was not God's due time to reveal the fullness of his plan, and because there was no necessity for Abraham knowing it, he did not understand that Isaac was merely a type of the faith 'seed' that was to be the instrument of blessing for all mankind. He was given all the truth pertaining to the Divine plan that was essential for him to know in order to cooperate with God in that which he wanted done at that time. Abraham demonstrated his faith in God's plan by his obedience in all that the LORD required of him. This is all that any of the LORD's people can do; and in doing it, they rejoice in the blessings which he so abundantly showers upon them.

Abraham was 'gathered to his people'. In the Scriptures expressions similar to this are used with respect to the death of a number of God's servants. In the case of Abraham, many of his people were heathen who did not believe in Jehovah, the true God, yet in death they were all together. This is in harmony with the general teachings of the Bible that both the wicked and the righteous are unconscious in death, and that the hope of a future life is in the promises of God to restore the dead to life. Abraham will be restored to be one of the "princes in all the earth" (Psalm 45:16), while the heathen members of his family with whom he is resting in death, will come forth "to the resurrection of judgment" -- that is, to be put on trial for life. -- John 5:29, RSV

Ishmael, together with his mother Hagar, was sent away from Abraham's household at the time Isaac was weaned because he persecuted Isaac. However, when Abraham died they cooperated in the burial of Abraham. Abraham was buried in the cave of Machpelah, the site which he had previously purchased as a burial place for his wife, Sarah.

Genesis 25:11-18 *"And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac dwelt by the well Lahairoi.*

"Now these are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian,

Sarah's handmaid, bare unto Abraham:

"And these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: the firstborn of Ishmael, Nebajoth; and Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam, "And Mishma, and Dumah, and Massa,

"Hadar, and Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah:

"These are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names, by their towns, and by their castles; twelve princes according to their nations.

"And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died; and was gathered unto his people.

"And they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that is before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria: and he died in the presence of all his brethren."

Verse 11 contains a simple statement of fact indicating the closing of the historical record of Abraham's life, and notifying the reader that now Isaac and his experiences, and the manner in which God blessed him, will be the principal subject matter under consideration. Verses 12,13 present a brief record of the generations of Ishmael, but inasmuch as he was not to be dealt with particularly by the LORD, no more than this scant information is provided, and even this is relatively unimportant in connection with the outworking of the Divine plan.

Genesis 25:19-23 *"And these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham begat Isaac:*

"And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padanaram, the sister to Laban the Syrian.

"And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

"And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD.

"And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger."

The expression, 'generations of Isaac', signifies the historical record of his life, beginning with his birth, as the son of Abraham. While his life was not as long, nor as filled with important incidents relating to the plan of God as was that of his father, nevertheless he was blessed by God as the heir of the promises made to Abraham.

In some respects, Isaac's experiences paralleled those of his father: for example, the barrenness of his wife. We have already studied the account of the wonderful manner in which a wife was secured for him, and here we learn that he was forty years old when he married Rebekah. It was not until twenty years passed that his first sons were born. (vs. 26) The reason for this long delay was that Rebekah was barren.

Isaac prayed to the LORD about the failure of his wife to have children, and the LORD answered his prayers. Probably in this case, as with Abraham and Sarah, God wanted to impress the fact of his providence in connection with the development of the promised

seed, and that no matter what difficulties stood in the way, nothing could interfere with the fulfillment of his promises.

In connection with the bearing of her twin children, Rebekah sensed that something unusual was occurring and displayed a measure of anxiety over it, making it a matter of prayer. In answer to her prayer, the LORD gave a prophecy pertaining to the descendants of her sons, that both would become heads of nations, but that the one which would be born first would serve the one that was born last.

Genesis 25:24-34 *"And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb.*

"And the first came out red, all over like an hairy garment; and they called his name Esau.

"And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them.

"And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents.

"And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.

"And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint:

"And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom.

"And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright.

"And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?

"And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.

"Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright."

In these verses we have the well-known story of the birth of Esau and Jacob, and of the different characteristics of the two boys. Esau was the firstborn, hence, in keeping with the customs of those times, to him belonged the heritage of his father.

Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac, which meant that Isaac was rich in the material things of life. But more important than this, to him belonged the promises of God pertaining to the 'seed'. These also he inherited from his father, and later they were confirmed to him by God. All of this, including the promises, belonged to Esau by right of birth. However, Esau's readiness to sell his birthright to Jacob for so small a consideration as a mess of pottage indicates that he did not appreciate it as he should have. The account says that he despised it.

On the other hand, Jacob, born a few moments later than Esau and thus by legal right deprived of the birthright, apparently longed to possess it, particularly as it pertained to the promises God made to his grandfather, Abraham. Because of this, when the first favorable opportunity came, he offered to purchase it from his brother. Esau seemed quite willing to accept Jacob's offer and the transfer of the birthright was made, at least as far

as Jacob and Esau were concerned. Later developments indicate that it still had to be confirmed by the parental blessing.

THE PROMISE INHERITED BY ISAAC AND JACOB

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Genesis 26:1-5 *"And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar. And the LORD appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of:*

"Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father;

"And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;

"Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws."

Isaac's experiences were in many respects like those of his father, and that is true with respect to his contact with Abimelech, king of the Philistines. Another famine developed in Canaan, and Isaac, like his father, moved to Gerar where food could be obtained. It was there that the LORD appeared to him with instructions not to go into Egypt, but to 'sojourn' where he was: and the LORD assured him of his presence and blessing.

On this occasion the LORD reiterated the promise he had made to Abraham concerning his seed and assured Isaac that now this promise belonged to him. The promise that Isaac's seed would multiply as the 'stars of heaven' may be intended as a special reference to the fact that the faith seed of Abraham -- of whom Isaac was a type -- would be spiritual: partakers of the "heavenly calling." -- Hebrews 3:1

Genesis 26:6-11 *"And Isaac dwelt in Gerar:*

"And the men of the place asked him of his wife; and he said, She is my sister: for he feared to say, She is my wife; lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she was fair to look upon.

"And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife.

"And Abimelech called Isaac, and said, Behold, of a surety she is thy wife: and how saidst thou, She is my sister? And Isaac said unto him, Because I said, Lest I die for her.

"And Abimelech said, What is this thou hast done unto us? one of the people might lightly have lien with thy wife, and thou shouldest have brought guiltiness upon us.

"And Abimelech charged all his people, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife shall surely be put to death."

Like Abraham, again, when Isaac went into the land of the Philistines he claimed that his wife, Rebekah, was his sister: and for the same reason; namely, his own protection. It probably reflects the general attitude of that day toward women; but in any event it discloses that Isaac was willing that his wife run certain risks rather than chance some greater harm coming to himself. Perhaps, however, he reasoned that if he was killed in order that Rebekah might be taken by another, she would suffer anyway.

Abimelech discovered that Rebekah was more to Isaac than a sister, and rebuked him for misrepresenting the facts, even as Abraham had previously been rebuked. Through his knowledge of Abraham, and witnessing the manner in which the providences of God had overshadowed him, this king of the Philistines was anxious that no harm come either to Isaac or Rebekah, so he charged all his people saying, 'He that toucheth this man or his wife shall surely be put to death'.

Genesis 26:12-16 *"Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the LORD blessed him.*

"And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great: For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him.

"For all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth.

"And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we."

God blessed Isaac along material lines even as he had previously blessed Abraham. He became so prosperous in Gerar that the Philistines envied him. To avoid an open clash, Abimelech said to Isaac, 'Go from us: for thou art much mightier than we'.

Genesis 26:17-25 *"And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there.*

"And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.

"And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water.

"And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, The water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek; because they strove with him.

"And they digged another well, and strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah.

"And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.

"And he went up from thence to Beersheba.

"And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake.

"And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well."

Isaac heeded the request of Abimelech, but apparently did not move a great distance, pitching his tent in the 'valley of Gerar'. This seems to have been the same territory previously occupied by Abraham, for the account speaks of the wells dug by Abraham's servants, filled by the Philistines, now being reopened by the servants of Isaac.

Then Isaac's servants continued to dig wells, and they opened one which they called 'springing water'. (*Margin*, 'living water') This was apparently an artesian well. They continued digging wells, and as each new one was opened, the herdsmen of Gerar strove with the servants of Isaac for possession of it. On account of this, one was called Esek, meaning 'contention', and another Sitnah, meaning 'hatred'.

Finally they opened a well and the herdsmen did not contest its ownership, so Isaac named it Rehoboth, meaning 'room', for he said, 'Now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land'.

'And he went up from thence to Beersheba. And the LORD appeared unto him the same night'. God was ever directing and overruling in the affairs of Isaac even as he had done previously in the experiences of Abraham. At appropriate times he spoke to him to reassure him of this, and also to confirm the covenant he had made concerning the 'seed'. While this promise was passed on to Isaac, and later to Jacob, it was with the reminder, as here stated, that its fulfillment would be for Abraham's sake and because Abraham had been his faithful servant and friend. Thus it is not Isaac's seed, but the seed of Abraham, which is to bless all the families of the earth.

Having received the reaffirmation of the promise, Isaac built an altar in commemoration of the event, and had his servants dig yet another well. Water was probably at a premium in that section of the country and the ability to dig wells and obtain a supply was doubtless looked upon by Isaac and his servants as one of the evidences of God's blessing upon them.

Genesis 26:26-33 *"Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahuzzath one of his friends, and Phichol the chief captain of his army.*

"And Isaac said unto them, Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you?"

"And they said, We saw certainly that the LORD was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee;

"That thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace: thou art now the blessed of the LORD.

"And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink.

"And they rose up betimes in the morning, and sware one to another: and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace.

"And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servants came, and told him concerning

*the well which they had digged, and said unto him, We have found water.
"And he called it Shebah: therefore the name of the city is Beersheba unto this day."*

This passage records another incident similar to an experience which Abraham had had with the Abimelech of his day; namely, the request of the Philistine king to enter into a covenant of peace. This heathen king must have been greatly impressed with the manner in which both Abraham and Isaac prospered, and believed that the God whom they worshiped doubtless had something to do with it, so he felt that his own safety and the safety of his people depended upon being on peaceful terms with them. Isaac had no aggressive intentions, and was glad to enter into a covenant of peace with Abimelech.

Genesis 26:33,34 *"And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite:
"Which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah."*

In these two verses we are given a sidelight on a serious domestic problem which arose in Isaac's household. Esau, seemingly without the consent of his parents, married two wives, both of them of heathen families. Although briefly stated, we can imagine the turmoil that was created in the family, for the account says that they were 'a grief of mind unto Isaac and Rebekah'.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

Genesis 27:1-5 *"And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, here am I.*

"And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death:

"Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison;

"And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die.

"And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it."

Many years had now passed since Esau sold his birthright to Jacob, yet there is no indication that their father, Isaac, had been advised of the transaction. It was natural, therefore, when he felt that he would soon die, that he should want to bestow his parental blessing upon his firstborn son, Esau. Being fond of venison, and knowing of Esau's skill as a hunter, he thought it fitting to make the matter of bestowing his blessing a sort of banquet.

Genesis 27:6-17 *"And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying,*

"Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD before my death.

"Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee.

"Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth:

"And thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death.

"And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man:

"My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing.

"And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them.

"And he went, and fetched, and brought them to his mother: and his mother made savoury meat, such as his father loved.

"And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son:

"And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck:

"And she gave the savoury meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob."

Perhaps Jacob had confided in his mother, Rebekah, the fact that he had bought the birthright. Noting Esau's unwillingness to explain the situation to his father, and his

readiness to accept the blessing which went with the birthright, Rebekah decided to take matters into her own hands and see to it that the blessing was bestowed upon the son to whom it now, by right of purchase, properly belonged. She might also have been influenced in this decision by the information given to her by the LORD before the twins were born: namely, that the elder was to serve the younger. Certainly this would tend to give her confidence that the LORD would bless her efforts to have Isaac's blessing bestowed upon Jacob.

Jacob hesitated to attempt the deception which appeared necessary in order to obtain the blessing, fearing that he would bring a curse upon himself instead. But his mother insisted, explaining that she would take the responsibility, and that if any curse resulted it would be upon her. So Jacob went ahead with the preparations as his mother directed.

Genesis 27:18-29 *"And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son?"*

"And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy firstborn; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me.

"And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the LORD thy God brought it to me.

"And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not.

"And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.

"And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him.

"And he said, Art thou my very son Esau? And he said, I am.

"And he said, Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee. And he brought it near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine, and he drank.

"And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son.

"And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the LORD hath blessed:

"Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine:

"Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee."

The preparations complete, Jacob entered into the presence of his father, and in response to a direct question by him, openly lied, declaring that he was Esau. The account is related in the Scriptures without comment as to the right or wrong of Jacob's action.

As we have noted in tracing the experiences of both Abraham and Isaac, the standards of righteousness of that day were somewhat different from the manner in which they were later set forth in the Mosaic Law, and by Jesus and the apostles. Both Rebekah and Jacob

may have reasoned that since the birthright had been legitimately purchased, any means used to assure a confirmation of the transfer was justifiable -- that the end justified the means. In any event, it was God's plan that Jacob should be the heir, and there is no indication in the Scriptures that he condemned the course either of them took in the matter.

Isaac phrased his blessing in keeping with the promise made to Abraham, saying to Jacob, 'Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee'. Christ is the true inheritor of this blessing, and of him it is declared that "all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him." -- Psalm72:11

Genesis 27:30-40 *"And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting.*

"And he also had made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me.

"And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art thou? And he said, I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau.

"And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed.

"And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father.

"And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing.

"And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?

"And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son?

"And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.

"And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above;

"And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck."

Naturally it was a shock to Isaac to discover that he had bestowed his blessing upon Jacob rather than Esau. Seemingly, however, once given it could not be recalled, so he was reconciled to let the matter stand. But Esau, we read, 'cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father'. In Hebrews 12:16,17, we have a reference to this, with the explanation that Esau was a "profane person." According to the *Marginal Translation* in this New Testament reference, Esau sought in vain for a way to change.

Asked by Esau if there were some sort of blessing that could be bestowed upon him, Isaac replied, 'Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son?' The thought is that the real blessing having gone to Jacob, there was nothing really worthwhile for Esau.

However, more in the nature of a prophecy than a blessing, Isaac told Esau that he would live by the sword, and that although he would have to serve Jacob, he would eventually become powerful and throw off his yoke. It is well to remember that the promises made to Abraham and passed on to Isaac and Jacob, embrace the development of a spiritual seed, and also the development of a natural seed. This prophecy by Isaac that Esau would throw off the yoke of Jacob pertains to the experiences of the natural seed. Esau became the head of the Edomites, and the record of 2 Kings 8:20-22 shows the fulfillment of Isaac's 'blessing' pertaining to Esau's servitude.

Genesis 27:41-46 *"And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.*

"And these words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah: and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee.

"Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran;

"And tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away;

"Until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget that which thou hast done to him: then I will send, and fetch thee from thence: why should I be deprived also of you both in one day?"

"And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?"

'And Esau hated Jacob'. This is understandable, although he failed to realize his own wrongdoing in the sale of the birthright -- a thing which revealed his lack of respect for the promises of God. This is probably the reason that the Apostle Paul speaks of him as a 'profane person'. Nor did Esau realize the overruling providences of the LORD in the loss of his birthright. His only reaction was that of hatred -- a hatred so intense that he purposed in his heart to kill Jacob when the appropriate time came.

In this respect we are reminded of the attitude of Cain over the fact that God showed his favor toward his brother, Abel. It is well for all the LORD's people to look for the meaning of their experiences beyond what appears to be the immediate cause -- to learn, if possible, what purpose the LORD is working out in connection therewith.

Rebekah learned of Esau's intentions, and her motherly instinct directed measures for the safety of Jacob. Now we learn why the account of the trouble caused in the household by Esau's heathen wives was recorded, for it helps to explain Rebekah's decision -- a

decision quite in keeping with Isaac's own wishes in the matter -- that Jacob should not take a wife from the same source that Esau had taken his. It was God's will that Jacob, even as his father, Isaac, should take a wife from among Abraham's own people, and, in the Divine providence, this was brought about in a seemingly natural way.

Truly, 'God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform'.

THE PLAN OF GOD IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS -- PART 15

JACOB'S LADDER DREAM

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Genesis 28:1-5 *"And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan.*

"Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother.

"And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people;

"And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham.

"And Isaac sent away Jacob: and he went to Padan-aram unto Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother."

Isaac seemed quite agreeable with Rebekah's insistence that Jacob should journey to Padan-aram thence to take a wife from among the daughters of his uncle Laban. Padan-aram is identified by scholars as the plains of Syria, or, in the Greek language, Mesopotamia. It was clearly the LORD's will that Jacob should not take a wife from among the Canaanites. Hundreds of years later, when the descendants of Jacob returned to Canaan from their long bondage in Egypt, they were forbidden by the LORD to take wives from among the Canaanites.

When instructing Jacob to go to Padan-aram for a wife, Isaac reiterated the blessing which had previously been bestowed upon him and identified it as the 'blessing of Abraham'. The LORD was undoubtedly overruling in all this, and here we see exemplified his almost universal custom of associating his promises with the instructions he gives to his people concerning what he wants them to do. In leaving home and starting out for Padan-aram, Jacob was faced with hardships unknown, so for his encouragement he was reminded of the great and eternal purpose of God concerning himself -- that he was the one chosen to inherit the promises made to his grandfather, Abraham.

We see this principle exemplified in many instances. When God asked Abram to leave his own country and his father's house, the promise was made that his seed would bless all the families of the earth. When Jesus was here on earth, having left the glory he had with the Heavenly Father and having come here on a mission of sacrifice which would entail suffering and death, God's promises also sustained him. Paul tells us that "for the joy that was set before him [he] endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." -- Hebrews 12:2

Genesis 28:6-9 *"When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob, and sent him away to Padan-aram, to take him a wife from thence; and that as he blessed him he gave him a*

*charge, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan;
"And that Jacob obeyed his father and his mother, and was gone to Padan-aram;
"And Esau seeing that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father;
"Then went Esau unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had Mahalath the
daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife."*

In Hebrews 12:16,17, the apostle informs us that Esau sought repentance. The *Marginal Translation* is that he sought a change; that is, having discovered his great loss in the sale of his birthright, and that this transfer had been ratified by his father's blessing upon Jacob, he endeavored to have the matter changed. But it was too late.

In these few verses we have what seems to be one of Esau's efforts to get back into the good graces of his parents, and perhaps thereby recover the blessing. He had overheard Isaac's instructions to Jacob concerning not taking a wife from among the Canaanites, and observing also that his parents were not pleased with his choice of wives he decided to take a wife from among his own people, so he chose a daughter of Ishmael. The account indicates clearly that he did this to please his parents.

What his parents thought of Esau's decision to please them is not recorded, but it did not result in his securing the blessings which had gone irrevocably to Jacob. The daughter of Ishmael was not, of course, of pure stock, for her grandmother was an Egyptian. Perhaps in the illustration of Jacob and Esau this might serve to remind us that some during this Gospel Age are willing to make a real sacrifice and to endure much hardship in their obedience to the LORD; while others are glad to please him if they can do it without too much effort, and are willing to compromise.

Ishmael's daughter probably lived nearby, and since she was nominally of Abraham's family, that 'profane person' Esau was willing to take her for a wife, hoping it would meet with his parent's approval. Thus it is with compromising and worldly Christians, who, in noting the faithful course of truly sacrificing followers of the Master, seek to imitate them, but only to the point where it does not cost them too much.

Genesis 28:10-22 *"And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran.
"And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep.
"And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.
"And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;
"And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.
"And, 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.

"And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not.

"And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

"And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.

"And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first.

"And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,

"So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God:

"And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

Jacob's first night away from home found him still in the land of Canaan. His journey to Padan-aram was not to be an easy one. It was slow and tedious, and doubtless oftentimes accompanied by dangers. At the close of the first day's journey he was faced with the necessity of preparing a place to spend the night. The account is brief, emphasizing merely that he used a stone for a pillow.

When Jacob fell asleep, he had a wonderful dream. He saw a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, and angels ascending and descending upon it. The angels said nothing, but the LORD stood above the whole scene and identified himself as the God of Abraham and Isaac.

What could have been more reassuring to Jacob than this! He had risked much to secure the birthright to the promise God had made to Abraham, and now the God of Abraham was assuring him that the birthright was indeed his. The promise, both of the land and that all the families of the earth were to be blessed through the 'seed', was here repeated to Jacob, who was assured that he would be the channel through which the seed would come.

At the moment, and in keeping with the LORD's will, Jacob was fleeing from the land of promise, but the LORD assured him that he would return -- 'I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of'. This is a promise which the LORD has given to all his faithful people. And with each one of us how often we would become discouraged and give up the struggle but for the promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." -- Josh. 1:5; Hebrews 13:5

Inasmuch as the LORD, in connection with this dream, reiterated his promise to bless all the families of the earth, it seems reasonable to conclude that the ladder stretched from earth to heaven, and, serving as a means of communication was intended to represent the fact that when God's covenant with Abraham is fulfilled, oneness and harmony between God and men will be restored. On account of sin man has been alienated from God. There

has been no communication between earth and heaven except in relation to the faithful few.

Of that faithful few during the Gospel Age, the Master said, "Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 18:10) May it not be that the angels will also serve as messengers of communication for the entire restored human race when God's promise to bless all the families of the earth is fulfilled through the faith seed of Abraham, the Christ, Head and body?

When Jacob awoke from his dream he said, 'Surely ... this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven'. This suggests that the house of God is where he meets and communes with his people. It is essentially the same thought as expressed by Jesus, when, in explaining the change from the typical age of the Jews to the new age of the Gospel, he said that the time had come when those who worship the LORD must do so "in spirit and in truth." -- John 4:23,24

Jacob 'vowed a vow'. As a member of Abraham's family he had already evinced great interest in the God of Abraham, and in the promise that had been made to his grandfather and renewed to his father. Thus far, however, it had apparently been more or less a family affair. But now that God had spoken to him personally with respect to the blessing which was to come through the 'seed', Jacob was moved to make it an individual matter by entering into a covenant with the LORD on his own initiative, making his connection with the promises of God a personal responsibility.

This is a good lesson for all the LORD's people. Let us never suppose that we can be pleasing to the LORD simply because we belong to a group of people whom the LORD has blessed with his truth. True, the LORD wants us to feel a closeness of relationship with all in the church, but he wants us also to realize that we must be individually faithful to him in order to remain in the church and later to have that abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. -- 2 Peter 1:11

The wording of the *King James Version* suggests that Jacob made a bargain with the LORD, but this is not the case. God had just promised to care for Jacob and to bring him back to the land of Canaan. The fulfillment of this promise was to be irrefutable proof to Jacob that the one who had spoken to him was the true God, and surely Jacob wanted him to be his God.

Jacob promised to serve the LORD and to give him a tenth part of all that the LORD gave to him. The law of the tithe was first mentioned in Genesis 14:20. Apparently the LORD had given some laws to his people prior to Sinai, and this was one of them. This law is expanded in the case of spiritual Israelites so that they covenant to give all they have, including themselves, to the LORD. He, in turn, makes them stewards of what they have given to him, and they are expected to be faithful in discharging their stewardship, directly or indirectly using all they have given to him in his service.

JACOB SERVES FOR RACHEL

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Genesis 29:1-14 *"Then Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east.*

"And he looked, and behold a well in the field, and, lo, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks: and a great stone was upon the well's mouth.

"And thither were all the flocks gathered: and they rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep, and put the stone again upon the well's mouth in his place.

"And Jacob said unto them, My brethren, whence be ye? And they said, Of Haran are we.

"And he said unto them, Know ye Laban the son of Nahor? And they said, We know him.

"And he said unto them, Is he well? And they said, He is well: and, behold, Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep.

"And he said, Lo, it is yet high day, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together: water ye the sheep, and go and feed them.

"And they said, We cannot, until all the flocks be gathered together, and till they roll the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep.

"And while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep: for she kept them.

"And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother.

"And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept.

"And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's brother, and that he was Rebekah's son: and she ran and told her father.

"And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house. And he told Laban all these things.

"And Laban said to him, Surely thou art my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him the space of a month."

'Then Jacob went on his journey'. Thus in a few words is epitomized what was probably a very wearisome trek from Canaan to Padan-aram. But finally he arrived; and, like Eliezer when seeking a bride for Isaac, he first met his beloved at a well. Water evidently was not plentiful in the district, and several landowners and their shepherds were compelled to depend upon the same source of supply, the same well.

Evidently there was a degree of order in connection with the use of the well, for those in charge of the three flocks already gathered were waiting for Rachel to appear before the well could be uncovered. Unlike the case of Eliezer when he met Rebekah at the well,

Jacob was informed of the identity of Rachel and promptly made himself known to her, greeting her with the customary kiss. Her father was informed of Jacob's arrival, and he too was happy.

Genesis 29:15-20 *"And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou art my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought? tell me, what shall thy wages be?"*

"And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel.

"Leah was tender eyed; but Rachel was beautiful and well favoured.

"And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter.

"And Laban said, It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man: abide with me.

"And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her."

Jacob was taken into Laban's home and apparently made himself useful in doing whatever he could. Then Laban, satisfied that Jacob would be an asset on the place, suggested that they enter into some sort of agreement as to the compensation for service rendered. This gave Jacob the opportunity to broach the matter which was on his heart, so he offered to serve seven years in return for Rachel, whom he wanted for his wife.

This seemed fair enough to Laban, and he agreed to the suggestion, saying that he preferred to give Rachel to Jacob rather than to another man. Because of Jacob's great love for Rachel, his seven years of service for her seemed but a few days. Apparently the hope of having her for his wife kept him encouraged and happy during those seven years, making the time pass quickly.

Genesis 29:21-30 *"And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her.*

"And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast.

"And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her.

"And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah Zilpah his maid for an handmaid.

"And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah: and he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?"

"And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn.

"Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years.

"And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also.

"And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her maid.

"And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years."

The custom of the time, or of the family, made it necessary that the elder daughter be married first. When Laban made the bargain with Jacob concerning Rachel, he probably thought Leah would be married to another before the seven years were up, but she was not, so it became necessary for Leah to be given first to Jacob as a wife.

Laban knew of Jacob's great love for Rachel so he did not attempt to reason the matter out with him, but instead practiced a deception by seeing to it that it was Leah that Jacob found in the bridal chamber instead of Rachel. When Jacob demanded to know the reason for this deception, Laban explained, and apparently Jacob bowed willingly to the inevitable and agreed to serve another seven years for Rachel.

A careful study of the account, however, seems to contradict the popular idea that Jacob served the second seven years before Rachel was given to him. Verses 26-30 seem to indicate that Jacob dwelt with Leah exclusively only for a period of seven days, and that then Rachel was given to him, and that he had Rachel as his wife during his second seven years of service.

Genesis 29:31-35 *"And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren.*

"And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben: for she said, Surely the LORD hath looked upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me.

"And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Because the LORD hath heard that I was hated, he hath therefore given me this son also: and she called his name Simeon.

"And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have born him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi.

"And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, Now will I praise the LORD: therefore she called his name Judah; and left bearing."

The chief lesson for us in the narrative of these verses is the fact that the LORD overruled in connection with Jacob's children. It is to be remembered that the twelve sons of Jacob became the tribal heads of the nation of Israel, a nation of whom the LORD said, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." (Amos 3:2) It is reasonable to suppose that his overruling providence had much to do with the birth of these sons.

CHAPTER THIRTY

Genesis 30:1-13 *"And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die."*

"And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?"

"And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her.

"And she gave him Bilhah her handmaid to wife: and Jacob went in unto her.

"And Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son.

"And Rachel said, God hath judged me, and hath also heard my voice, and hath given me a son: therefore called she his name Daniel

"And Bilhah Rachel's maid conceived again, and bare Jacob a second son.

"And Rachel said, With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed: and she called his name Naphtali.

"When Leah saw that she had left bearing, she took Zilpah her maid, and gave her Jacob to wife.

"And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a son.

"And Leah said, A troop cometh: and she called his name Gad.

"And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a second son.

"And Leah said, Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed: and she called his name Asher."

Both Rachel and Leah gave their maids to Jacob in order that children might be born to them which they could claim as their own. This is what Sarah did in the case of Hagar. This was in harmony with the custom of the times; and so far as the account indicates, the LORD did not especially condemn it. In any case, he accepted the sons born from these arranged unions as among the heads of the nation. Apparently if the wife made the arrangement it was considered to be all right.

Genesis 30:14-21 *"And Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest, and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them unto his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, Give me, I pray thee, of thy son's mandrakes.*

"And she said unto her, Is it a small matter that thou hast taken my husband? and wouldest thou take away my son's mandrakes also? And Rachel said, Therefore he shall lie with thee to night for thy son's mandrakes.

"And Jacob came out of the field in the evening, and Leah went out to meet him, and said, Thou must come in unto me; for surely I have hired thee with my son's mandrakes. And he lay with her that night.

"And God hearkened unto Leah, and she conceived, and bare Jacob the fifth son.

"And Leah said, God hath given me my hire, because I have given my maiden to my husband: and she called his name Issachar.

"And Leah conceived again, and bare Jacob the sixth son.

"And Leah said, God hath endued me with a good dowry; now will my husband dwell with me, because I have born him six sons: and she called his name Zebulun.

"And afterwards she bare a daughter, and called her name Dinah."

In this narrative Leah charges Rachel with having taken away her husband. This may be related to the statement in the last verse of the preceding chapter, where we are told that after Judah was born she ceased to bear children. However, in the LORD's providence, other children were born to her later, in addition to the two sons which were born to her maid and which she counted as her own. She also gave birth to a daughter who was given the name Dinah.

Genesis 30:22-24 *"And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb.*

"And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, God hath taken away my reproach:

"And she called his name Joseph; and said, The LORD shall add to me another son."

It is proper to say that Rachel was Jacob's real wife. With this thought in mind, it is interesting to note the fact of her barrenness, for it was the same with Sarah, and also with Rebekah. In all three cases it required a miracle before they could give birth to children.

It was Joseph who was born to Rachel as a result of a miracle -- the Joseph who later was to serve so prominently in the saving of his people from death by famine. While it was from the tribe of Judah that Jesus was born, yet the marvelous manner in which the LORD used Joseph clearly indicates that he prefigured Christ, the Savior of the world; and Jesus also was born into the world by a miracle.

Genesis 30:25-36 *"And it came to pass, when Rachel had born Joseph, that Jacob said unto Laban, Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country.*

"Give me my wives and my children, for whom I have served thee, and let me go: for thou knowest my service which I have done thee.

"And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry: for I have learned by experience that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake.

"And he said, Appoint me thy wages, and I will give it.

"And he said unto him, Thou knowest how I have served thee, and how thy cattle was with me.

"For it was little which thou hadst before I came, and it is now increased unto a multitude; and the LORD hath blessed thee since my coming: and now when shall I provide for mine own house also?

"And he said, What shall I give thee? And Jacob said, Thou shalt not give me any thing: if thou wilt do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep thy flock.

"I will pass through all thy flock to day, removing from thence all the speckled and spotted cattle, and all the brown cattle among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats: and of such shall be my hire.

"So shall my righteousness answer for me in time to come, when it shall come for my hire before thy face: every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the sheep, that shall be counted stolen with me.

"And Laban said, Behold, I would it might be according to thy word.

"And he removed that day the he goats that were ringstraked and spotted, and all the she

goats that were speckled and spotted, and every one that had some white in it, and all the brown among the sheep, and gave them into the hand of his sons.

"And he set three days' journey betwixt himself and Jacob: and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks."

God had blessed Jacob in the land of Padan-aram and on the property of his father-in-law, Laban. He had been taken into the family and now he had two of Laban's daughters for wives. Under ordinary circumstances, one in that situation would have been content to remain with the thought of enjoying with the household whatever of security or wealth he was helping to create.

But Jacob did not go to Padan-aram with the idea of remaining. His heart was still in the land which God had promised to Abraham, and to Isaac and to him. The birth of Joseph may have had some bearing on Jacob's decision that the time had come to begin making preparations for the return journey to Canaan. Jacob had no understanding with Laban except that which pertained to Leah and Rachel, and he knew that to return to Canaan with his wives and children it would be essential to have some way of providing for them.

With these thoughts going through his mind, he approached Laban and expressed his desire to be sent away that he might return to the land of his fathers. From this request Laban realized Jacob had no intention of considering himself a permanent member of the family, that despite all the years he had been with them he was still as a hired servant. This, naturally, raised the question of wages in Laban's mind.

This was as Jacob wanted it to be. Laban admitted that he had prospered while Jacob had been in the family. He was even willing to ascribe this to the overruling providence of Jacob's God. Jacob was quick to follow through with this idea by emphasizing how much more Laban now possessed than before he arrived. Then came the proposition by Jacob as to a method of dividing the cattle, offering to take as his share the 'ringstraked, speckled, and spotted'. -- vs. 39

Genesis 30:37-43 *"And Jacob took him rods of green poplar, and of the hazel and chesnut tree; and pilled white strakes in them, and made the white appear which was in the rods.*

"And he set the rods which he had pilled before the flocks in the gutters in the watering troughs when the flocks came to drink, that they should conceive when they came to drink.

"And the flocks conceived before the rods, and brought forth cattle ringstraked, speckled, and spotted.

"And Jacob did separate the lambs, and set the faces of the flocks toward the ringstraked, and all the brown in the flock of Laban; and he put his own flocks by themselves, and put them not unto Laban's cattle.

"And it came to pass, whensoever the stronger cattle did conceive, that Jacob laid the rods before the eyes of the cattle in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods.

"But when the cattle were feeble, he put them not in: so the feebler were Laban's, and the

stronger Jacob's.

"And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels, and asses."

Jacob's method of increasing the number of spotted and speckled cattle in Laban's flocks in order that he might have more to claim for himself, would probably not, genetically speaking, be considered scientific today. It was apparently the LORD's provision that Jacob acquire large holdings of cattle before he returned to Canaan, so we would be inclined to think that it was his overruling that increased the number of ringstraked and speckled, rather than the method which Jacob used to accomplish it.

The methods employed by the LORD's people often accomplish that which they think should be done although they may be, in themselves, futile. But if the LORD wants the thing done he overrules our lack of knowledge and accomplishes that which he designs.

JACOB'S SEPARATION FROM LABAN

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

Genesis 31:1-13 *"And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's; and of that which was our father's hath he gotten all this glory.*

"And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it was not toward him as before.

"And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee.

"And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field unto his flock,

"And said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it is not toward me as before; but the God of my father hath been with me.

"And ye know that with all my power I have served your father.

"And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me.

"If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages; then all the cattle bare speckled: and if he said thus, The ringstraked shall be thy hire; then bare all the cattle ringstraked.

"Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me.

"And it came to pass at the time that the cattle conceived, that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream, and, behold, the rams which leaped upon the cattle were ringstraked, speckled, and grisled.

"And the angel of God spake unto me in a dream, saying, Jacob: And I said, Here am I.

"And he said, Lift up now thine eyes, and see, all the rams which leap upon the cattle are ringstraked, speckled, and grisled: for I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee.

"I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred."

God's providences continued to overshadow Jacob. Just as the LORD led him to Padan-aram and to the home of Laban, the son of Nahor, twenty years before, now that the Divine purpose in this sojourn had been accomplished it was made clear to Jacob that he was to return to his own country. Happy are those servants of God who can recognize his leadings in all their affairs and who are ready and willing to make great changes in their lives whenever the LORD indicates it to be his will. During this age every consecrated follower of Jesus should bear in mind that he is but a sojourner in the land, and that here he has no continuing city.

When God reveals his will to his people he shapes the circumstances of their lives to coincide therewith. As a result of the Divine blessing in connection with the tremendous increase of his flocks and herds, Jacob noticed that Laban's attitude toward him began to change -- that he was no longer as friendly as he previously had been. From the natural standpoint this was quite understandable. We could hardly expect Laban to rejoice over

the providence of God which, as he viewed it, had robbed him of much of his wealth. Nevertheless, his attitude must have given Jacob cause for concern.

Jacob doubtless saw a problem developing which easily could become serious, yet the LORD's hand was in it, for it helped to prepare the patriarch to receive the LORD's instructions to return to the land of his fathers. Laban's changed attitude toward his son-in-law prepared him to receive and act upon the instructions of the LORD, and in obeying them Jacob found a way of escape from a trial which might have been too difficult to bear.

After the LORD asked him to return to his own country, Jacob called Rachel and Leah, and explained the matter to them, linking their father's growing unfriendliness with the proposed return to Canaan. This was quite a proper thing to do because they would of necessity be vitally concerned with the move. And, besides, their favorable reaction to the move served Jacob as a further confirmation of the LORD's will in the matter.

Genesis 31:14-16 *"And Rachel and Leah answered and said unto him, Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house?
"Are we not counted of him strangers? for he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money.
"For all the riches which God hath taken from our father, that is ours, and our children's: now then, whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do."*

The decision of Rachel and Leah was quickly reached. Their association with Jacob over a period of twenty years and their observations of the LORD's providences in connection with his affairs -- and theirs also as his wives -- made them realize that they had nothing to lose by leaving their father's house, but much to gain. Their reply to Jacob indicates clearly that they had become somewhat acquainted with his God, and had learned to trust him. They said, 'Whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do'.

In this respect, Rachel and Leah were more reconciled to the LORD's will for one whom they loved than some others of his people have been. When, in doing his Heavenly Father's bidding, Jesus announced that he was going to Jerusalem where he would suffer and die, Peter said, "Be it far from thee, Lord." (Matthew 16:22) When Paul likewise was going to Jerusalem, the brethren advised against it. Let us be watchful lest we set ourselves against the providences of the LORD in the lives of others as well as our own.

Genesis 31:17-24 *"Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon camels;
"And he carried away all his cattle, and all his goods which he had gotten, the cattle of his getting, which he had gotten in Padan-aram, for to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan.
"And Laban went to shear his sheep: and Rachel had stolen the images that were her father's.
"And Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian, in that he told him not that he fled.
"So he fled with all that he had; and he rose up, and passed over the river, and set his face toward the mount Gilead."*

"And it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob was fled.

"And he took his brethren with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey; and they overtook him in the mount Gilead.

"And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad."

When it was definitely decided to start back to Canaan, Jacob lost no time. He began at once to prepare for the journey, timing his movements so as to get away while Laban was busily engaged shearing his sheep. Jacob was a man of God, but many circumstances of his life indicate that he was more timid than a fighter. He loved the God of his fathers, and had great faith in his promises. He was quick to purchase the birthright from Esau when he had an opportunity: and was glad to get the blessing of the birthright from Isaac, but he fled from home, fearing the wrath of his brother.

So now, although God's providences had overshadowed him during all the time he was in Padan-aram, and the LORD had made it clear to him that the time had come to leave, yet through fear he slipped away quietly without telling Laban of his plans. However, in God's dealings with Jacob we have wonderful examples of how he can overrule the weaknesses and mistakes of his people, and care for them despite their fears. In this case, after Laban learned of Jacob's flight -- which he was sure to do sooner or later -- God spoke to him in a dream and warned him not to harm his son-in-law. The margin of verse 24 states that Laban was not to speak to Jacob 'from good to bad'.

It was probably fortunate for Jacob that God did intervene on his behalf in this way. It would have been difficult enough for Laban to be reconciled to the move had Jacob reasoned it out with him before leaving, but to have run away unannounced doubtless made Laban very angry. Thus by attempting to flee from trouble, Jacob actually made matters worse for himself, and only by Divine intervention was a tragedy prevented.

Genesis 31:25-35 *"Then Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mount: and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mount of Gilead.*

"And Laban said to Jacob, What hast thou done, that thou hast stolen away unawares to me, and carried away my daughters, as captives taken with the sword?

"Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me; and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp?

"And hast not suffered me to kiss my sons and my daughters? thou hast now done foolishly in so doing.

"It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

"And now, though thou wouldest needs be gone, because thou sore longedst after thy father's house, yet wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?"

"And Jacob answered and said to Laban, Because I was afraid: for I said, Peradventure thou wouldest take by force thy daughters from me.

"With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live: before our brethren discern thou what is thine with me, and take it to thee. For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them.

"And Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the two maidservants' tents; but he found them not. Then went he out of Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent.

"Now Rachel had taken the images, and put them in the camel's furniture, and sat upon them. And Laban searched all the tent, but found them not.

"And she said to her father, Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise up before thee; for the custom of women is upon me. And he searched, but found not the images."

Leaving Padan-aram, Jacob crossed the river Euphrates, and pitched his tents in Mount Gilead. Laban pursued him there, and after a great deal of discussion they separated on outwardly peaceful terms. The precarious position in which Jacob had placed himself by fleeing as he did is revealed in verse 39, where Laban tells him that it is in his power to hurt him, but that the God of Jacob spoke to him saying that he should take heed to speak neither 'good or bad' to Jacob.

Laban realized, of course, that according to the various agreements he had made with Jacob, all that he was taking with him was justly his, including Rachel and Leah for whom he had served fourteen years. But Laban knew he had not bargained away his idols, yet they had been taken, and he was insistent that Jacob was responsible for the theft. Rachel had stolen these without Jacob's knowledge of what she had done. Jacob was, therefore, very sure that Laban would not find the images among his goods.

It is not clear just why Rachel stole the images. It would seem that although she had learned much about Jacob's God, and had a great deal of confidence in him, she was not entirely weaned from the worship of the gods of her father. She probably thought that these images would be something tangible to which she could cling in the event that the God of Jacob was unable to care for them in this new venture. Her reverence for the images was not unlike that of millions today who imagine that images of 'saints' can help them in time of need.

Genesis 31:36-42 *"And Jacob was wroth, and chode with Laban: and Jacob answered and said to Laban, What is my trespass? what is my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me?*

"Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household stuff? set it here before my brethren and thy brethren, that they may judge betwixt us both.

"This twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten.

"That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night.

"Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes.

"Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle: and thou hast changed my wages ten times.

"Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight."

Although Jacob gave Laban permission to search his goods in an effort to find the stolen images, the thoroughness with which it was done, and Laban's continued insistence, began to irritate him. Laban had revealed that God warned him not to harm his son-in-law, and perhaps this gave Jacob courage. In any event he took occasion to remind his father-in-law that he had not brought anything with him that was not properly his; that he had worked hard for it all, and frequently under very trying circumstances.

Properly, however, even in this outburst of righteous anger, Jacob gave credit to God for caring for him, and in an eloquent testimony to Laban, told him that if it had not been for the LORD he would have been leaving Padan-aram empty handed. From this, Laban would know that it would be futile for him to oppose Jacob. Thus the way was prepared for a reconciliation between the two.

It is well always to realize that our victories and our successes are due to the LORD's care and overruling providences. God's chief blessings upon his people in this age are spiritual, and as New Creatures we have many enemies. Let us ever realize that we cannot cope with these in our own strength, and that our victories over them are by the LORD's grace. Let us remember that greater is he who is for us than all who are against us.

Genesis 31:43-55 *"And Laban answered and said unto Jacob, These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and these cattle are my cattle, and all that thou seest is mine: and what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children which they have born?"*

"Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee.

"And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar.

"And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones; and they took stones, and made an heap: and they did eat there upon the heap.

"And Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha: but Jacob called it Galeed.

"And Laban said, This heap is a witness between me and thee this day. Therefore was the name of it called Galeed;

"And Mizpah; for he said, The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.

"If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives beside my daughters, no man is with us; see, God is witness betwixt me and thee.

"And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee;

"This heap be witness, and this pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm.

"The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob sware by the fear of his father Isaac.

"Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount.

"And early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them: and Laban departed, and returned unto his place."

There was no real answer to Jacob's reasoning concerning his rightful ownership of his wives and of the flocks which he had acquired by bargain from Laban. And no one could deny that the LORD had blessed him in acquiring them. But Laban insisted that they were his. Like the proverb, 'He was convinced against his will; hence of the same opinion still'.

Laban realized, however, that there was nothing he could do about it, so he suggested entering into a covenant with Jacob, to which the latter agreed. A pillar of stones was erected as a token of this covenant and as a marker for the boundary line between them. Three names are given to this pillar: Jegar-sahadutha, Galeed, and Mizpah.

Mizpah means 'watchtower', hence Laban's statement in connection with it, 'The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another'. (vs. 49) While this is frequently thought of as a symbol of unity, it is actually that of separation. The pillar was to mark the separation between Jacob and Laban. They were to go different ways; and the suggestion that the LORD watch between them evidently was intended not only to act as a safeguard over Laban's children, but also would stand between them to keep them separated, that they would not come near to each other, especially to do injury. See verses 51-53.

Jacob expressed his appreciation to the LORD for this happy conclusion to a situation which could have been disastrous, by offering a sacrifice -- a thank offering. The next morning Laban bade farewell to all concerned and returned to his home, leaving Jacob free to go on his way toward Canaan.

JACOB PREPARES TO MEET ESAU

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

Genesis 32:1-5 *"And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.*

"And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

"And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom.

"And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now:

"And I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and womenservants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight."

Leaving Mount Gilead, Jacob and his company continued their journey toward Canaan, 'and the angels of God met him', the record states. 'This is God's host', the patriarch said. He then named the place of meeting, 'Mahanaim' which means 'two hosts', or 'two camps'. In Joshua 5:14 we read about the LORD's host, and the successor of Moses sees them as an army which the LORD had sent to fight for Israel. This may well be the meaning which Joshua attached to this appearance of heavenly messengers.

The record gives us no information as to the message, if any, that the angels of God delivered to Jacob. The fact that seemingly he at once dispatched messengers to confer with Esau, and to let his brother know of the rich manner in which the LORD had blessed him since he fled from home, might indicate that the LORD's hosts had given him instructions as to the proper method of seeking a reconciliation with his brother.

It had been twenty years since Jacob had fled from the wrath of Esau, yet he had no way of knowing whether or not his brother now felt any differently toward him. Some might reason that Esau's jealousy would be stirred the more upon learning that Jacob had become rich in material things. Either Jacob did not reason this way, or else he was following a strategy given to him by the angels. In any case, later events proved that it was the proper course. It was evidently very reassuring to Esau to learn that Jacob had all the possessions he needed, and that he was not returning to seize his wealth based on the claim that he had purchased the birthright.

Genesis 32:6-8 *"And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him.*

"Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands;

"And said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape."

The messengers brought back rather an ambiguous report concerning Esau. They had apparently met him and he had told them that he would come and meet Jacob and that he would bring four hundred men with him. As the report was given to Jacob, he had no way of determining whether these men were to be used against him or whether it was Esau's idea of a royal welcome, so he was frightened.

As we have previously noted, Jacob was a timid man. Few of God's servants throughout all the ages have had more evidences of God's favor and protection than were given to him, yet when the least uncertainty arose he usually became fearful. Only a little while before, he had been fearful of Laban. He had just witnessed the wonderful manner in which the LORD rescued him from a precarious situation into which his fears had led him, yet now, although he had just communed with the angels of the LORD, he again became fearful.

Prompted by fear, and thinking to save at least a part of his possessions, he divided the people who were with him, and his flocks, into two companies; the idea being that if Esau attacked one of these, the other group could escape. There were apparently two companies of angels which appeared to Jacob, and they possibly suggested the idea of dividing his own strength in the manner noted.

Genesis 32:9-12 *"And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee:*

"I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands.

"Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children.

"And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude."

Jacob prayed earnestly to God, admitting that he feared his brother. His mind doubtless went back to the time when he had to flee from Esau to save his life. The LORD had cooperated with him in this; and in that wonderful ladder dream, assured Jacob that he would go with him and bless him. That promise had been faithfully kept. Now the LORD had indicated to Jacob that he wanted him to return to Canaan and to his brother, but all the intervening years of Divine protection and blessing were not sufficient to assure Jacob that the LORD would be with him in returning even as he had been with him in his flight.

We should not, however, chide Jacob in this. He did trust in the LORD, and this is why he prayed to him so earnestly. Perhaps his fear is impressed upon us simply because the Scriptures openly reveal it. A certain kind of fear is quite proper on the part of all the LORD's people. We should tremble when we think of self, and perhaps Jacob's trembling was of this nature. It is when the LORD's people look to the LORD and depend upon his strength that they are strong, and certainly Jacob earnestly looked to the LORD for guidance and strength.

Prayer, among other things, is the claiming of God's promises and this is what Jacob did. God had directed Jacob to return to his own country and to his own people and had promised that in doing this all would be well with him. And now the patriarch reminded the LORD of this, and laid claim to the promise. He recognized that he was not worthy of being so richly blessed by God, that everything which the LORD had done for him represented Divine mercy and grace, and he told the LORD so. This reveals a proper attitude of heart, and when a servant of God goes to the throne of grace in this attitude, and asks for the fulfillment of the promises God has made to him, he is certain to be heard.

The LORD had said to Jacob, 'I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude'. (vs. 12) This was a promise which Jacob especially appreciated, for it had to do not only with his personal safety, but also with the eternal purpose of God as centered in his covenant with Abraham. This was the main feature of the birthright which Jacob had purchased from Esau, and it was for the protection of his rights under that purchase that he was seeking Divine help.

Genesis 32:13-23 *"And he lodged there that same night; and took of that which came to his hand a present for Esau his brother;*

"Two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams,

"Thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foals.

"And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt drove and drove.

"And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, Whose art thou? and whither goest thou? and whose are these before thee?

"Then thou shalt say, They be thy servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he is behind us.

"And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall ye speak unto Esau, when ye find him.

"And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me.

"So went the present over before him: and himself lodged that night in the company.

"And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his

eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok.

"And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had."

Jacob's sending of presents ahead in order to appease his brother need not be construed as a lack of faith that God would hear and answer his prayer for protection. All of the LORD's people should work as well as pray. If we pray for heavenly wisdom, we should search the Scriptures to find it. If we pray for opportunities of service, we should look around us to see what there is that we can do. Jacob had asked the LORD to deliver him from the hand of his brother, so he used the best judgment he possessed in preparing the way for that deliverance.

Genesis 32:24-32 *"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.*

"And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

"And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

"And he said unto him, What is thy name? and he said, Jacob.

"And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

"And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? and he blessed him there.

"And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

"And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.

"Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank."

After making what he considered proper arrangements for appeasing his brother, Jacob, when alone for the night, resumed his communion with the LORD. The account says that a man wrestled with him. This same personality is referred to in Hosea 12:3,4 as an 'angel'. We are to assume then that an angel materialized and appeared to Jacob as a man, a man whom he recognized as being a direct representative of the LORD. This viewpoint was so real to Jacob that he declares he had seen the LORD 'face to face'. -- vs. 30

The story of Jacob's wrestling all night with the LORD in prayer is a familiar one, and many false conclusions have been drawn from it as to the purpose and power of prayer. Prayer is the claiming of God's promises, and this is all that Jacob was doing. He was not trying to secure from the LORD something which had not been promised. Prayer is not designed to change the will of God concerning his people.

God had promised to deliver Jacob from the hand of Esau and to see that all went well with him in returning to his own country. Now he was simply seeking an assurance that it would be so. The LORD withheld this assurance from Jacob for a time in order that he might come to appreciate it more keenly when it was given.

Finally the much sought for blessing was given. The angel told Jacob that his name would be changed to Israel, meaning a 'prince with God', or one who had prevailed with God. Jacob understood this to mean that God had honored his request, and that he would be cared for when he went forth to meet Esau. There are other instances in the Scriptures when the names of individuals have been changed to denote special Divine favor upon them. Simon's name was changed to Peter; and Saul's to Paul. -- Mark 3:16; Acts 13:9

The angel that served as the LORD's mouthpiece in connection with Jacob's prayer manifested his humility in not divulging his name when requested by the patriarch. It was better that Jacob remember the experience as one in which he talked with the LORD, and to have learned the name of the angel whom the LORD used could have detracted from this viewpoint. While the LORD uses servants to speak for him, it is always best that they keep themselves out of sight as far as possible so that those served will have their minds and hearts fixed more closely upon the LORD rather than upon those whom he uses.

Two Brothers Meet

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

Genesis 33:1-7 *"And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids.*

"And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost.

"And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

"And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.

"And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children; and said, Who are those with thee? And he said, The children which God hath graciously given thy servant.

"Then the handmaidens came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves.

"And Leah also with her children came near, and bowed themselves: and after came Joseph near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves."

Regardless of what Esau originally had in mind by journeying with four hundred men to meet Jacob, by the time they actually did meet he displayed no anger, nor did he so much as refer to what had occurred twenty years before. All of this was in the LORD's providence, and who can say that the sending of presents to Esau, and Jacob's earnest praying did not have much to do with this kindly reception.

It is possible that the 'angels of God' who met Jacob soon after he parted from Laban at Mount Gilead, may have given him detailed instructions as to how to prepare Esau for this meeting. This may have been the LORD's way of answering Jacob's prayer for deliverance from the hand of Esau. Esau was not destroyed, but reformed.

Ways of escape for God's people are usually outlined in advance of their prayers as seems to have been the case with Jacob. When we seek special blessings of wisdom and strength from the LORD we usually find the answers to our prayers already recorded in his Word, indicating that the LORD knew our needs in advance, and made provision for them.

Genesis 33:8-18 *"And he said, What meanest thou by all this drove which I met? And he said, These are to find grace in the sight of my lord.*

"And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself.

"And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand: for therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me.

"Take, I pray thee, my blessing that is brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough. And he urged him, and he took it.

"And he said, Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee.

"And he said unto him, My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me: and if men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die.

"Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant: and I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth before me and the children be able to endure, until I come unto my lord unto Seir.

"And Esau said, Let me now leave with thee some of the folk that are with me. And he said, What needeth it? let me find grace in the sight of my lord.

"So Esau returned that day on his way unto Seir.

"And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him an house, and made booths for his cattle: therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.

"And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan-arem; and pitched his tent before the city."

For the time being, Shalem, a city of Shechem, marked the end of Jacob's journey from Padan-aram, the home of Laban, his father-in-law. It was a distance of approximately 500 miles. He pitched his tent in front of Shalem, and bought there a field and erected an altar. Apparently he felt that another important episode in his life had reached a successful conclusion, so he commemorated it by the erection of an altar.

Genesis 33:19,20 *"And he bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for a hundred pieces of money.*

"And he erected there an altar, and called it El-elohe-Israel."

He called the altar El-elohe-Israel, that is, "God, the God of Israel." Thus again we find the patriarch acknowledging his faith in God, and expressing particularly his appreciation for the deliverance from the hand of Esau which had just been wrought. Recognition of this is suggested by the use of his new name, Israel, in connection with the altar. He had prevailed with God, and God had prevailed for him, and this great victory which God had given to him was something worthy of being commemorated.

The Seed Protected

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

Genesis 34:1-31 *"And Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land.*

"And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her.

"And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto the damsel.

"And Shechem spake unto his father Hamor, saying, Get me this damsel to wife.

"And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter: now his sons were with his cattle in the field: and Jacob held his peace until they were come.

"And Hamor the father of Shechem went out unto Jacob to commune with him.

"And the sons of Jacob came out of the field when they heard it: and the men were grieved, and they were very wroth, because he had wrought folly in Israel in lying with Jacob's daughter; which thing ought not to be done.

"And Hamor communed with them, saying, The soul of my son Shechem longeth for your daughter: I pray you give her him to wife.

"And make ye marriages with us, and give your daughters unto us, and take our daughters unto you.

"And ye shall dwell with us: and the land shall be before you; dwell and trade ye therein, and get you possessions therein.

"And Shechem said unto her father and unto her brethren, Let me find grace in your eyes, and what ye shall say unto me I will give.

"Ask me never so much dowry and gift, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me: but give me the damsel to wife.

"And the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father deceitfully, and said, because he had defiled Dinah their sister:

"And they said unto them, We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised; for that were a reproach unto us:

"But in this will we consent unto you: If ye will be as we be, that every male of you be circumcised;

"Then will we give our daughters unto you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people.

"But if ye will not hearken unto us, to be circumcised; then will we take our daughter, and we will be gone.

"And their words pleased Hamor, and Shechem Hamor's son.

"And the young man deferred not to do the thing, because he had delight in Jacob's daughter: and he was more honourable than all the house of his father.

"And Hamor and Shechem his son came unto the gate of their city, and communed with the men of their city, saying,

"These men are peaceable with us; therefore let them dwell in the land, and trade therein; for the land, behold, it is large enough for them; let us take their daughters to us for wives, and let us give them our daughters.

"Only herein will the men consent unto us for to dwell with us, to be one people, if every male among us be circumcised, as they are circumcised.

"Shall not their cattle and their substance and every beast of theirs be ours? only let us consent unto them, and they will dwell with us.

"And unto Hamor and unto Shechem his son hearkened all that went out of the gate of his city; and every male was circumcised, all that went out of the gate of his city.

"And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males.

"And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went out.

"The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and spoiled the city, because they had defiled their sister.

"They took their sheep, and their oxen, and their asses, and that which was in the city, and that which was in the field.

"And all their wealth, and of their little ones, and their wives took they captive, and spoiled even all that was in the house.

"And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house.

"And they said, Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot?"

This chapter records an episode in the life of Jacob and his sons which reveals the overruling providence of God in preventing his chosen people from intermarrying with others. To have done so would have prevented the fulfillment of the Divine promise pertaining to the seed through which all the families of the earth were to be blessed.

In this circumstance both virtue and deceit are manifested. Shechem, the son of Hamor, the Hivite, saw Dinah, daughter of Jacob, fell in love with her, and defiled her. We can understand the animosity this incident created in the minds of her brothers.

Hamor, Shechem's father, made overtures to Jacob concerning the matter, suggesting a general practice of intermarrying, since, as he supposed, they were all to dwell in the land together.

The account does not indicate what Jacob's reaction to this may have been. His sons took the matter in hand to settle it their own way. Seemingly they consented to Hamor's proposal, but on condition that all the males among his people be circumcised. Since Hamor made a definite proposal that his son take their sister as his legal wife in keeping with the customs of the day, her brothers' conception of defilement was evidently based on the idea that Shechem was uncircumcised, hence their pro-position that the Hivites be circumcised.

While this proposal was accepted, and acted upon in good faith, it was not carried out, and this certainly must go down to the discredit of Jacob's sons. It was their strategy in rendering the males of the tribe incapable of self-defense in order that they might be able to destroy them.

Jacob was greatly agitated over the incident, for he realized that it would bring down upon them the wrath of the people throughout that whole area. Perhaps he recalled his own experience with Esau, and of how he felt the necessity at that time of fleeing from the wrath of his brother. Jacob was not a warrior, and now again his fears were aroused, and not without justification.

The Promise Repeated

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

Genesis 35:1-7 *"And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.*

"Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments:

"And let us arise, and go up to Beth-el; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.

"And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem.

"And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.

"So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan, that is, Beth-el, he, and all the people that were with him.

"And he built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el: because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother."

God was again able to overrule the mistakes of his people for a further outworking of his plans. Before the incident recorded in the previous chapter, Jacob seemed content to remain in Shechem, but this was not the LORD's will; so in view of the hostile attitude of the neighboring people which he was sure would result from his sons' treacherous dealings with the Hivites, he was willing to follow the LORD's request to move on to Bethel.

The LORD commanded Jacob to build an altar at Bethel, to honor Him who appeared to him when he first fled from his brother, Esau. Seemingly Jacob took from this command a gentle reminder that he had been too lenient in permitting his family to worship the gods of his father-in-law, Laban, for he instructed all in his household to put away their strange gods in order that there be nothing to interfere with his worship of the true God who, as Jacob says, 'answered me in the day of my distress'. The family complied with Jacob's instructions, turning in all their idols, and these were buried under an oak tree by Shechem.

This matter taken care of, Jacob began his journey to Bethel. In case we might wonder how it was possible to escape from their hostile neighbors without being attacked or pursued, the record tells us that the 'terror of God' was upon the cities in the district so that the people feared to molest Jacob and his sons. There is no indication of what

brought about this condition, but we know that God always has a way of accomplishing his purposes as they are being worked out through his chosen people.

Finally, they arrived at Bethel, also called "Luz." Here, in keeping with the LORD's direction, Jacob built an altar and renamed the city El-Bethel, 'because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother'. On that occasion, God promised to go with Jacob, and to bless and keep him, and he had fulfilled his promise. Now he was back where he started his flight from Esau, and the LORD was still with him. How Jacob must have praised the LORD for all that he had done for him!

Genesis 35:8-15 *"But Deborah Rebekah's nurse died, and she was buried beneath Beth-el under an oak: and the name of it was called Allon-bachuth.*

"And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padan-aram, and blessed him.

"And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel.

"And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins;

"And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land.

"And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him.

"And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon.

"And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Beth-el."

On this occasion God took the opportunity to renew to Jacob that wonderful promise he had made to Abraham, of blessing all the families of earth. It is well to keep in mind that the entire narrative of these chapters is related to the manner in which God proposes to fulfil this oathbound covenant with Abraham. The individual incidents recorded are of little value except as they are related to this principal Biblical theme.

God told Jacob that a nation, and a company of nations, would issue from him, and that kings would come out of his loins. Paul shows that the fulfillment of this and similar promises is in the development of the faith seed of Abraham, and that this faith seed shall reign as kings with Christ. -- Romans 8:17; 11:15,25,26

Genesis 35:16-20 *"And they journeyed from Beth-el; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour.*

"And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also.

"And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Ben-oni: but his father called him Benjamin.

"And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Beth-lehem.

"And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day."

In these few verses we have a touching account of the death of Rachel, the wife for whom Jacob served Laban, her father, fourteen years. She died giving birth to Benjamin. Verse 18 speaks of her soul departing. The word soul here is a translation of the Hebrew word *nephesh*, meaning 'life'. It does not denote that Rachel had some mysterious entity within her which escaped when she died. The account means simply that her life left her.

Genesis 35:21-26 *"And Israel journeyed, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Edar.*

"And it came to pass, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine: and Israel heard it. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve:

"The sons of Leah; Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, and Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Zebulun; "The sons of Rachel; Joseph, and Benjamin:

"And the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid; Dan, and Naphtali:

"And the sons of Zilpah, Leah's handmaid; Gad, and Asher: these are the sons of Jacob, which were born to him in Padan-aram."

Edar is mentioned only this once in the Bible. According to St. Jerome's commentary, it was 1,000 paces outside of Bethlehem. Aside from a reference to the sin of Reuben, the remainder of these verses are concerned merely with a brief statement identifying the twelve sons of Jacob, the heads of the twelve tribes of the Israelitish nation.

Genesis 35:27-29 *"And Jacob came unto Isaac his father unto Mamre, unto the city of Arbah, which is Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac sojourned.*

"And the days of Isaac were an hundred and fourscore years.

"And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him."

'Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people'. This does not mean that an immortal soul escaped from Isaac's body. The term 'ghost' is a poor translation. It should be 'life', and the statement simply means that Isaac gave up his life. He was gathered to his fathers; that is, they were all together in the state of death, and awaiting the resurrection.

It is interesting to note that Jacob and Esau cooperated in the burial of their father. Following their reconciliation, they apparently remained on friendly terms.

The Generations of Esau

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

Genesis 36:1-43 *"Now these are the generations of Esau, who is Edom.*

"Esau took his wives of the daughters of Canaan; Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Aholibamah the daughter of Anah the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite;

"And Bashemath Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebajoth.

"And Adah bare to Esau Eliphaz; and Bashemath bare Reuel;

"And Aholibamah bare Jeush, and Jaalam, and Korah: these are the sons of Esau, which were born unto him in the land of Canaan.

"And Esau took his wives, and his sons, and his daughters, and all the persons of his house, and his cattle, and all his beasts, and all his substance, which he had got in the land of Canaan; and went into the country from the face of his brother Jacob.

"For their riches were more than that they might dwell together; and the land wherein they were strangers could not bear them because of their cattle.

"Thus dwelt Esau in mount Seir: Esau is Edom.

"And these are the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in mount Seir:

"These are the names of Esau's sons; Eliphaz the son of Adah the wife of Esau, Reuel the son of Bashemath the wife of Esau.

"And the sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, and Gatam, and Kenaz.

"And Timna was concubine to Eliphaz Esau's son; and she bare to Eliphaz Amalek: these were the sons of Adah Esau's wife.

"And these are the sons of Reuel; Nahath, and Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah: these were the sons of Bashemath Esau's wife.

"And these were the sons of Aholibamah, the daughter of Anah the daughter of Zibeon, Esau's wife: and she bare to Esau Jeush, and Jaalam, and Korah.

"These were dukes of the sons of Esau: the sons of Eliphaz the firstborn son of Esau; duke Teman, duke Omar, duke Zepho, duke Kenaz,

"Duke Korah, duke Gatam, and duke Amalek; these are the dukes that came of Eliphaz in the land of Edom; these were the sons of Adah.

"And these are the sons of Reuel Esau's son; duke Nahath, duke Zerah, duke Shammah, duke Mizzah: these are the dukes that came of Reuel in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Bashemath Esau's wife.

"And these are the sons of Aholibamah Esau's wife; duke Jeush, duke Jaalam, duke Korah: these were the dukes that came of Aholibamah the daughter of Anah, Esau's wife.

"These are the sons of Esau, who is Edom, and these are their dukes.

"These are the sons of Sier the Horite, who inhabited the land; Lotan, and Shobal, and Zibeon, and Anah,

"And Dishon, and Ezer, and Dishan: these are the dukes of the Horites, the children of Seir in the land of Edom.

"And the children of Lotan were Hori and Hemam; and Lotan's sister was Timna.

"And the children of Shobal were these; Alvan, and Manahath, and Ebal, Shepho, and Onam.

"And these are the children of Zibeon; both Ajah, and Anah: this was that Anah that found the mules in the wilderness, as he fed the asses of Zibeon his father.

"And the children of Anah were these; Dishon, and Aholibamah the daughter of Anah.

"And these are the children of Dishon; Hemdan, and Eshban, and Ithran, and Cheran.

"The children of Ezer are these; Bilhan, and Zaavan, and Akan.

"The children of Dishan are these; Uz, and Aran.

"These are the dukes that came of the Horites; duke Lotan, duke Shobal, duke Zibeon, duke Anah,

"Duke Dishon, duke Ezer, duke Dishan: these are the dukes that came of Hori, among their dukes in the land of Seir.

"And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel.

"And Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom: and the name of his city was Dinhabah.

"And Bela died, and Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his stead.

"And Jobab died, and Husham of the land of Temani reigned in his stead.

"And Husham died, and Hadad the son of Bedad, who smote Midian in the field of Moab, reigned in his stead: and the name of his city was Avith.

"And Hadad died, and Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his stead.

"And Samlah died, and Saul of Rehoboth by the river reigned in his stead.

"And Saul died, and Baalhanan the son of Achbor reigned in his stead.

"And Baalhanan the son of Achbor died, and Hadar reigned in his stead: and the name of his city was Pau; and his wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezahab.

"And these are the names of the dukes that came of Esau, according to their families, after their places, by their names; duke Timnah, duke Alvah, duke Jetheth,

"Duke Aholibamah, duke Elah, duke Pinon,

"Duke Kenaz, duke Teman, duke Mibzar,

"Duke Magdiel, duke Iram: these be the dukes of Edom, according to their habitations in the land of their possession: he is Esau the father of the Edomites."

These are the generations of Esau, who is Edom.' Thus are summed up the principal contents of this chapter. Perhaps the most significant point in the chapter is the definite identification of Esau with Edom, and that he settled finally in Seir. Esau is referred to in the New Testament as that "profane person" who sold his birthright. (Hebrews 12:16) And the Edomites as a whole seem to be used in Old Testament prophecies as symbolic of those religious people who sold their birthright -- their hope of joint-heirship with Jesus as the spiritual seed of Abraham through which all the families of the earth are to be blessed.

Verse 6 presents an interesting sidelight on the life of Esau and his family. His sons were all born in the land of Canaan, yet together with their father, they all forsook the land. This apparently was because they did not cherish the promises God had made concerning the land -- a further 'despising,' as it were, of the birthright which he had sold to Jacob for a mess of pottage.

On the other hand, all of Jacob's sons were born outside of Canaan, yet under the influence and leadership of their father, they came into the land and became the inheritors of the promises God had made concerning it. In this way the LORD honors those who have respect to his promises, regardless of where they may be born.

A parallel of these experiences may be seen in God's dealings with the Israelitish nation, and his later blessings upon believing gentiles. The Messianic kingdom promises were all made to the natural seed of Abraham, but because they did not appreciate these promises, and did not qualify to inherit their fulfillment, God turned to the gentiles, and from them has been selecting a people for his name. Thus, gentiles, born outside of the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the promises, become fellow heirs with that small remnant of Israelites who accepted Jesus, while the nation as a whole wandered farther away from God and his promises.

The reason given for Esau and his family moving out of the land which God promised to Abraham is that their riches of cattle were so great that the land could not provide for them and for Jacob's flocks as well. Apparently his riches meant more to him than the promises of God pertaining to the land. And besides, it is quite possible that Divine providences over Jacob had made Esau realize that his sale of the birthright had been ratified by God, and hence he could not claim any share in the promises and might as well move to where he could further increase his riches.

The way of the ungodly leads ever further from God and from his covenants.

Joseph's Dreams

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

Genesis 37:1-4 *"And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan.*

"These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.

"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 colours.

"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."

'Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father [Isaac] was a stranger.' This was the 'Promised Land,' but so far as the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were concerned they were merely sojourners in it at that time. Their actual possession of the land will not be until they are raised from the dead and take their places among the other Ancient Worthies as "princes in all the earth." -- Psalm 45:16

Beginning with the second verse of this chapter is the unfolding of one of the most interesting stories ever written, the story of Joseph and his brethren. It possesses all the elements usually found in fictional dramas, yet it is a true account. In it are displayed the fallen human passions of jealousy and lust manifested in cruel intrigue of brother against brother, of mistress against servant, and friend against friend.

Also there are exhibited in the narrative those noble qualities of mercy and understanding, manifesting themselves in a willingness to forgive past injuries and to give glory to God for overruling the harm that was intended, to the great good of all concerned. And it is more than merely a true story of Joseph and his brethren, for in it are to be found striking similarities to the experiences of another favorite Son, even to Jesus, the beloved Son of God and Redeemer of the church and of the world.

'Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, ... and he made him a coat of many colors.' Thus do we have the setting of the narrative, the reason for the jealousy of Joseph's brethren. "Jealousy is cruel as the grave" (Song of Sol. 8:6), the Scriptures tell us, and this 'green-eyed monster' soon was able to stir up Joseph's brethren to take action against him. At first it was merely a passive hatred they held toward Joseph, but nevertheless a hatred so intense that they found it difficult to even speak to him in a friendly manner.

Genesis 37:5-8 *"And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.*

"And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed:

"For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.

"And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words."

When Joseph's brethren heard about his dream in which they were seen as bowing down to him, they hated him even more. Under the circumstances perhaps Joseph was indiscreet in relating his dream to his brethren, but he was a mere lad and certainly innocent of any desire to impress his brethren with his greatness. But his brethren were quick to grasp the meaning of the dream and their jealousy increased.

Genesis 37:9-11 *"And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.*

"And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?

"And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying."

Joseph's second dream carried more sweeping implications than his first, for it signified that even his parents would bow down to him. It was a true forecast of coming events, but his father rebuked him for relating it. Probably Jacob sensed the jealousy of his other sons and realized that the telling of this second dream would but fan the flame of hatred and make it even more difficult to find a peaceable solution.

But Jacob was not jealous, hence his reaction to the forecast of Joseph's rulership over the rest of the family was quite different. He rebuked him merely for telling the dream. As for what it might portend, 'he observed the saying' -- that is, he took note of it with the idea of watching the LORD's providences in connection therewith.

Genesis 37:12-22 *"And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem.*

"And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I.

"And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

"And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou?

"And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks.

"And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan.

"And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired

against him to slay him.

"And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh.

"Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams.

"And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him.

"And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again."

The hatred which Joseph's brethren bore toward him was not reciprocated. He loved them, and had nothing but their best interests at heart. While apparently for some time they had not spoken to him peaceably, he was quite willing, when his father requested it, to look them up in distant fields for the purpose of seeking their welfare and to report back to his and their father. This Godlike characteristic of Joseph continued to manifest itself throughout his entire life.

Those who are pure of heart and who desire only good for others, even for those who may be opposed to them, seem often to be incapable of imagining the evil plotting which goes on in the minds of those whose hearts are filled with hatred. A thief always suspects that others are thieves; but the innocent and pure are quite likely to be trustful of others. This seems to have been Joseph's attitude. Perhaps, if he had been warned, it still would have been difficult for him to believe that his brethren would take advantage of his insecurity in the open field, and lay hands on him for evil as they did.

It seemed to be the desire of all Joseph's brethren, with the exception of Reuben, to kill the 'dreamer,' but Reuben persuaded them to modify their plans and to cast him into a nearby pit. His thought was that when he had the opportunity, and unknown to the others, he would restore Joseph to his father. This was to Reuben's credit, although his effort was not wholly successful.

Genesis 37:23-28 *"And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him;*

"And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it.

"And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.

"And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood?

"Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content.

"Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt."

In agreeing to cast Joseph into a pit, Reuben's brothers had no other thought, apparently, than that of leaving him there to die. But having left him in the pit, Judah's intentions softened toward Joseph, and seeing an opportunity to dispose of him short of murder, he proposed that they do so by selling him to the Ishmaelites to be taken to Egypt as a slave. The others agreed to this, and it might be said on the part of all of them that this change of plans indicates that none of them were hardened criminals. They had been caught in a snare of jealousy and hatred, but when it came to the test they proved not to really be of the ignoble type who think nothing of committing cold-blooded murder.

Genesis 37:29-36 *"And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes.*

"And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?

"And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood;

"And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no.

"And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.

"And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.

"And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him.

"And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard."

Reuben had not counted on his brothers changing their minds about Joseph, and was evidently not with them when he was sold to be taken to Egypt. He returned to the pit with the evident intent of freeing his younger brother, and returning him to Jacob. But he found the pit empty. He reported the matter to his brothers, and asked where he should go, evidently for the purpose of finding Joseph.

Bible stories seldom give all the details involved, and there is nothing said here of how Reuben was reconciled to the sale of Joseph, for the report that was prepared for their father would have the same tragic consequences as though his beloved son had actually been killed. Perhaps Reuben decided that it was useless to continue opposing the plans of his brethren, so he joined in the plot to deceive their father; and they did deceive Jacob.

When he saw Joseph's coat of many colors smeared with blood, he reached exactly the conclusion his sons had reasoned he would. No doubt was left in his mind that the boy had been slain by a wild beast. Jacob was heartbroken. It was almost more than the aged parent could bear. He wept bitterly, and rent his clothes and put sackcloth upon his loins, 'and mourned for his son many days.'

His family tried in vain to comfort him. He explained that he would continue to mourn for Joseph as long as he lived. But he did not express the thought in just this way. Instead,

he said, 'I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning.' This is one of the very important texts of the Bible, although seldom recognized as such. This is because the translators have used the word 'grave' to translate the Hebrew word *sheol* used by Jacob in his statement, which reveals that he expected to continue mourning until he joined Joseph in *sheol* -- believing, of course, that his son was dead.

This is the first time the word *sheol* appears in the Bible, but it is used many times in later books of the Old Testament. However, it is not always translated 'grave.' Thirty-one times this same word is translated by the English word 'hell.' The word *sheol* is descriptive of the only hell that is mentioned in the Old Testament; and in Jacob's use of it, he reveals that, according to his understanding, Joseph -- whom he thought to be dead -- was in hell, or *sheol*, and that he expected to join him there when he died.

We find that this expression of sorrow on the part of Jacob is most revealing, for it shows that the righteous as well as the wicked go to the Bible hell when they die. The Bible hell, however, is not a place of torment, but merely the state of death -- a condition which the Scriptures liken to sleep, and from which there will be an awakening in the morning of the resurrection. In Ecclesiastes 9:10, where the Hebrew word is again used and translated 'grave,' we are told that in this condition "there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom" -- in other words, it is a state of unconsciousness.

In Genesis 37:36 we are informed that Joseph was sold to Potiphar in Egypt by the 'Midianites,' whereas in verse 28 it is stated that his brethren had sold him to the 'Ishmaelites.' In Genesis 39:1 we read that it was the Ishmaelites who sold him to Potiphar. This might seem to be contradictory, but is not actually so. The Ishmaelites were Arab descendants of Abraham through Hagar, whereas the Midianites were Arab descendants through Keturah. Apparently they were more or less associated, and sometimes were called by one name and sometimes by the other.

The army of Midianite Arabs defeated by Gideon and his little army of 300 had Ishmaelites among them, as revealed by Judges 8:24. Apparently they were distinguished from the Midianites only by the fact that they wore golden earrings. It is possible that the band of traders to whom Joseph was sold by his brethren was made up of both Midianites and Ishmaelites, hence as a group they are referred to first by one name, and then by the other.

A Link in Jesus' Genealogy

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

Genesis 38:1-11 *"And it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down from his brethren, and turned in to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah.*

"And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite, whose name was Shuah; and he took her, and went in unto her.

"And she conceived, and bare a son; and he called his name Er.

"And she conceived again, and bare a son; and she called his name Onan.

"And she yet again conceived, and bare a son; and called his name Shelah; and he was at Chezib, when she bare him.

"And Judah took a wife for Er, his firstborn, whose name was Tamar.

"And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD slew him.

"And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother.

"And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother.

"And the thing which he did displeased the LORD: wherefore he slew him also.

"Then said Judah to Tamar his daughter in law, Remain a widow at thy father's house, till Shelah my son be grown: for he said, Lest peradventure he die also, as his brethren did. And Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house."

A prophecy concerning Judah had not been made at the time of these incidents. Later Jacob, on his deathbed, gathered his sons and told each what would happen to him. Judah was told, "Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." (Genesis 49:8-10) Jesus is called "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Revelation 5:5), and Jesus was to be the promised seed descended from Judah and David.

The reason Judah left his brethren to go to a town southwest of Jerusalem is speculative. But he married a woman of Canaan and had three sons with her: Er, Onan, and Selah. Er married Tamar, and being wicked, the LORD slew him. In those times a 'levirate marriage' -- levirate means 'brother-in-law' -- was practiced to perpetuate the seed of the deceased. So the next son was supposed to take Tamar for a wife and carry out this provision, but he did not do so. He also was slain of the LORD for his wickedness. The

youngest son was to be given to Tamar when he had grown into manhood. But Judah was fearful of losing this son as he had the first two, and ignored the levirate rule.

Genesis 38:12-26 *"And in process of time the daughter of Shuah Judah's wife, died; and Judah was comforted, and went up unto his sheepshearers to Timnath, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite.*

"And it was told Tamar, saying, Behold thy father in law goeth up to Timnath to shear his sheep.

"And she put her widow's garments off from her, and covered her with a vail, and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place, which is by the way to Timnath; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given unto him to wife.

"When Judah saw her, he thought her to be an harlot; because she had covered her face.

"And he turned unto her by the way, and said, Go to, I pray thee, let me come in unto thee; (for he knew not that she was his daughter in law.) And she said, What wilt thou give me that thou mayest come in unto me?

"And he said, I will send thee a kid from the flock. And she said, Wilt thou give me a pledge, till thou send it?

"And he said What pledge shall I give thee? And she said, Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that is in thine hand. And he gave it her, and came in unto her, and she conceived by him.

"And she arose, and went away, and laid by her vail from her, and put on the garments of her widowhood.

"And Judah sent the kid in the hand of his friend the Adullamite, to receive his pledge from the woman's hand: but he found her not.

"Then he asked the men of that place, saying, Where is the harlot, that was openly by the way side? And they said, that there was no harlot in this place.

"And he returned to Judah, and said, I cannot find her; and also the men of the place said, that there was no harlot in this place.

"And Judah said, Let her take it to her, lest we be shamed: behold, I sent this kid, and thou hast not found her.

"And it came to pass about three months after, that it was told Judah, saying, Tamar thy daughter in law hath played the harlot; and also, behold, she is with child by whoredom. And Judah said, Bring her forth, and let her be burnt.

"When she was brought forth, she sent to her father in law, saying, By the man, whose these are, am I with child: and she said, Discern, I pray thee, whose are these, the signet, and bracelets, and staff.

"And Judah acknowledged them, and said, She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son. And he knew her again no more."

This led to a peculiar set of circumstances in which Tamar bore twin sons to Judah -- Pharez and Zarah. Thus, eventually, seed was raised in the name of Er, Judah's eldest son. Er, as the eldest son, would have been the heir of Judah's estate. Instead, he died because of wickedness, as did Onan, the next in line. That left Shelah, who was not given to Tamar to raise seed to the eldest son. He built his own house, which is mentioned in I Chronicles 4:21,22, and is the last of Judah's descendants in Judah's genealogy recorded in I Chronicles 4:1-23.

Genesis 38:27-30 *"And it came to pass in the time of her travail, that, behold, twins were in her womb.*

"And it came to pass, when she travailed, that the one put out his hand: and the midwife took and bound upon his hand a scarlet thread, saying, This came out first.

"And it came to pass, as he drew back his hand, that, behold, his brother came out: and she said, How hast thou broken forth? this breach be upon thee: therefore his name was called Pharez.

"And afterward came out his brother, that had the scarlet thread upon his hand: and his name was called Zarah."

Er, however, finally did have a son, but not through his brothers, but rather through his father. When Tamar was giving birth to twin sons, one stuck his hand out, and the midwife put a scarlet thread around his wrist. This was Zarah. Instead of Zarah being born first, his brother, Pharez, was first, and automatically became the heir to Judah's estate. Even though Shelah was older than Pharez and a son of Judah, the levirate ruling made Pharez a son of Er and he preempted Shelah.

The nation of Israel was like the older twin, who, in the matter of 'time' had the first opportunity to become members of the Christ. Being only partially successful in their endeavors, God had to turn to the gentiles, who, as the 'second twin' are to be delivered first, and share with Jesus in the "first resurrection." -- Revelation 20:5,6; 1 Corinthians 15:23

In this chapter we have a detailed account leading up to the birth of Pharez, a son of Judah. The narrative breaks into the sequence of the story relating to Joseph, and we might wonder what useful purpose it serves since not even a good moral lesson is suggested by it. However, the purpose of the narrative is apparent when it is discovered that Pharez is one of the links in the genealogical chain from Abraham to the birth of Jesus. See Matthew 1:3.

In this connection, some interesting sidelights might be mentioned. For example, in the Book of Ruth we have an entire book of the Bible devoted to a story, the evident and chief purpose of which is to identify another link in the line of genealogy leading down to Jesus, namely, Obed. See Matthew 1:5.

In this narrative we also have an illustration of what is evidently the LORD's choice, that is Pharez, although an attempt was made to establish his twin brother as the firstborn. (vss. 28-30) We have something similar to this in connection with the birth of Jacob and Esau. God works in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform.

Joseph Honored and Imprisoned

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

Genesis 39:1-6 *"Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither.*

"And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

"And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.

"And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.

"And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.

"And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not aught he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured."

'The LORD was with Joseph' -- this is the explanation of how it was possible for one who was brought into a country as a slave, ultimately to become its ruler, second only in authority to the powerful Pharaoh, who ruled as a dictator. Not for Joseph's sake alone did the LORD bless him, but also, and principally, because of his family, the nucleus of the Hebrew nation -- the natural seed of Abraham, the chosen people of God.

Arriving in Egypt, Joseph was sold as a slave to Potiphar, 'captain of the guard,' or, as we would say today, the 'Chief of Police.' This officer of Pharaoh was evidently a wealthy man and had many servants, probably all of them slaves. Three times in this brief account it is emphasized that Potiphar was an Egyptian. Why should this be, since the whole scene is set in Egypt? Within recent years, discoveries in Egypt indicate that at the time of Potiphar, Egypt had come under the rulership of a new dynasty which apparently had ousted many of the former Egyptian officers, hence emphasis is laid on the fact that here was one who had gained favor with the new rulers and was permitted to retain his position. Thus is the authenticity of the Bible further verified.

Joseph found favor in the sight of Potiphar, and the LORD blessed him and blessed the household of Potiphar because of him. Joseph's humility in giving all the credit for his success to the LORD was one of the chief reasons the LORD could use him so wonderfully in the outworking of his purposes. He undoubtedly also possessed ability as a manager and organizer -- ability which was quickly recognized by Potiphar. But regardless of his talents, God could not have used him had he lacked the quality of humility.

Nor did the honor which came to Joseph 'go to his head' or cause him to forget the LORD. This sometimes occurs with those who are suddenly honored with weightier responsibilities in the LORD's service. While youth might be more subject to temptation along the lines of pride than those who are older, those long in the service of God have been known to stumble and fall when they found themselves occupying more prominent positions in the LORD's vineyard. All who serve the LORD can with profit observe the example of Joseph.

'Joseph was a goodly person, and well favored.' There is much meaning in the expression, 'goodly person.' It implies that Joseph was polite and kind, sympathetic, and just. We take it that he was the sort of person who got along well with everybody, that he did not stir up animosity among those with whom he associated, but created good feelings among all. He was also trustworthy. These qualities made him the sort of person Potiphar could use as a supervisor over his household, but Joseph gave the credit to the LORD. He was also 'well favored,' which suggests that he was good looking, perhaps even a handsome man.

Genesis 39:7-20 *"And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me.*

"But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand;

"There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

"And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her.

"And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within.

"And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

"And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth,

"That she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice:

"And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out.

"And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home.

"And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou has brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me:

"And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out.

"And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled.

"And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison."

His being 'well favored' led to a great trial for Joseph through the indiscretion and anger of Potiphar's wife. But in this trial Joseph's goodness and chastity were victorious. In this experience, no doubt, as in all his ways, Joseph looked to the LORD for guidance and strength, and the LORD did not fail him.

God permits evil, but always for a wise purpose. He permitted Joseph to be misrepresented by Potiphar's wife, and as a result to be put into prison. Here again Joseph's humility before the LORD is manifested. He did not complain nor charge the LORD with being unjust.

It is so easy to praise the LORD when everything is going pleasantly with us, yet we so often wonder why he permits this trial, or that calamity. We should learn to realize, as Joseph did, that all our ways are being directed by the LORD and that he sees the ultimate purpose he is accomplishing in us. Therefore he knows what is best to permit in our day-by-day experiences, while we can see but one day at a time, hence are often unable to understand what possible benefit could be derived from the trials of today.

Genesis 39:21-23 *"But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.*

"And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it.

"The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper."

Joseph was unjustly put into prison, but the LORD was with him. The LORD is with his people for their good, giving them strength to endure every hardship which his wisdom permits to come upon them, delivering them from trial when the needed lessons have been learned.

God does not deal with all of his people in the same way. He was with Jesus and blessed him during his trial and crucifixion, yet permitted him to die the cruel death of the cross. This was because the Divine purpose for Jesus was that he should be the Redeemer of the world. God could have prevented Joseph from being imprisoned. Indeed, he could have intervened and prevented him from being sold into Egypt, but he did not. God blessed Joseph in these experiences because he was working out a larger purpose through him.

The *Marginal Translation* of verse 21 states that God showed kindness to Joseph so he found favor in the sight of the prison keeper. Without this favor the life of a prisoner was not pleasant. We can surmise that when Joseph was made an overseer in the jail, his fellow prisoners were treated with much more consideration than before because of his understanding nature. Joseph's inherent goodness would cause him to be gentle and understanding even with prisoners, especially when they were his companions in trouble.

The Dreams of Two Prisoners

CHAPTER FORTY

Genesis 40:1-4 *"And it came to pass after these things, that the butler of the king of Egypt and his baker had offended their lord the king of Egypt.*

"And Pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers.

"And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound.

"And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them: and they continued a season in ward."

Two others were added to the list of those over whom Joseph was made guardian -- two officers from the household of the king: the chief butler and the chief baker. They had offended the king, and, justly or unjustly, were thrown into prison. The account says that they were placed in 'ward' in the house of the 'captain of the guard,' where Joseph was bound. The captain of the guard gave Joseph charge of these two new prisoners.

By this time, apparently, Joseph had been in prison a number of years, and it seems reasonable that a new captain of the guard, or chief of police, had been installed; for it is hardly likely that Potiphar would have recognized Joseph to this extent, in view of the circumstances under which he had been imprisoned. The fact that Potiphar's name is not mentioned in this connection also indicates that he had been replaced by another.

Genesis 40:5-23 *"And they dreamed a dream both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream, the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, which were bound in the prison.*

"And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and, behold, they were sad.

"And he asked Pharaoh's officers that were with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, Wherefore look ye so sadly to day?

"And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you.

"And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, In my dream, behold, a vine was before me;

"And in the vine were three branches: and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes:

"And Pharaoh's cup was in my hand: and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand.

"And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days:

"Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place: and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler.

"But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house:

"For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon.

"When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said unto Joseph, I also was in my dream, and, behold, I had three white baskets on my head:

"And in the uppermost basket there was of all manner of bakemeats for Pharaoh; and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head.

"And Joseph answered and said, This is the interpretation thereof: The three baskets are three days:

"Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.

"And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants.

"And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand:

"But he hanged the chief baker: as Joseph had interpreted to them.

"Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him."

When Pharaoh's chief butler and chief baker, now prisoners and under the supervision of Joseph, both had dreams, Joseph again honored God by assuring these two that only God can interpret dreams, and would do so through him. (vs. 8) How easy it would have been, under the circumstances, for Joseph to have taken the honor to himself of being able to interpret dreams, but he did not. His long imprisonment had not lessened his confidence in God, nor his desire to glorify him at every possible opportunity.

In Joseph's God-given interpretation of both dreams, he sees objects as representing days -- three branches of a vine, three days; and three baskets, three days. His interpretation of the other details of these two dreams indicated good fortune for the butler and death for the baker; but Joseph revealed the truth, nevertheless. His prophecies came true in both instances, and thus his reputation as an interpreter of dreams became well established.

Joseph saw, in the case of the butler, what seemed to him a good opportunity to bring his own case before the king in a favorable manner. So he asked the butler to speak a good word for him. Apparently, the butler promised to do this, but straightway forgot his promise, and Joseph languished in prison for another two years.

But the LORD had not forgotten Joseph. He knew that these additional two years of hardship would further prepare him for the position of honor he was yet to occupy. He knew also, that a time would come in the experience of Pharaoh which would be much more favorable for Joseph's name to be brought before him.

We often think that we know how to accomplish certain ends, and we try to do so without taking the LORD into consideration. Time and again, however, all of his people have learned that not until the LORD's due time, and only in His way, can worthwhile ends be attained.

Joseph Made Ruler

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

Genesis 41:1-8 *"And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river.*

"And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine and fatfleshed; and they fed in a meadow.

"And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and leanfleshed; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river.

"And the ill favoured and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke.

"And he slept and dreamed the second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good.

"And, behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them.

"And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, it was a dream.

"And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh."

We are not to suppose that dreams are always revelations from the LORD of things to come to pass, particularly the dreams of those who are not in covenant relationship with the LORD. As a matter of fact, since the completion of the inspired Word of God, the Bible, the LORD has not guided even his own people by means of dreams, for it has not been necessary. We now have the inspired Scriptures which are all-sufficient for every time of need. -- 2 Timothy 3:16,17

In ancient times, when God gave dreams to others than his own people, it was not for their benefit particularly, but in order to influence their course in life as it related to those whom he was guiding and blessing. Thus, the 'Wise Men' were warned by a dream not to return to Herod as they had planned, for to do so would have endangered the life of the boy Jesus. And so with Pharaoh. God was not so much interested in preserving his life and the lives of the Egyptians in general, as he was in making a provision for the children of Israel. For this reason he caused Pharaoh to have dreams which served his purpose.

Genesis 41:9-13 *"Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day:*

"Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the captain of the guard's house, both me and the chief baker:

"And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream.

"And there was there with us a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams; to each man according to his dream he did interpret.

"And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged."

In the forgetfulness of the 'chief butler' to speak a good word for Joseph as soon as he was released from prison we can see the overruling providence of the LORD. Had he spoken immediately, perhaps Pharaoh would not have been in a receptive attitude of mind, and nothing would have been accomplished. Indeed, he might have made Joseph's prison life even more difficult.

The LORD's people should endeavor to view all of their experiences in the light of being the providences of God. We may be inclined to blame what seems to be the immediate cause of trial -- the unfriendly attitude of those around us, perhaps -- but this is a mistake. God is able to shield us from all such unfavorable circumstances, and if he does not, it is because his wisdom sees that there is a needed lesson for us to learn, or some larger purpose of his which he is working out through us. Thus Jesus did not blame his accusers and persecutors, but said, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" -- John 18:11

Genesis 41:14-24 *"Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh.*

"And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it.

"And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.

"And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river: and behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fatfleshed and well favoured; and they fed in a meadow:

"And, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill favoured and leanfleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness:

"And the lean and the ill favoured kine did eat up the first seven fat kine:

"And when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them; but they were still ill favoured, as at the beginning. So I awoke.

"And I saw in my dream, and, behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good:

"And, behold, seven ears, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them:

"And the thin ears devoured the seven good ears: and I told this unto the magicians; but there was none that could declare it to me."

When Pharaoh discovered that his trusted wise men and magicians were unable to interpret his dreams for him, he was greatly distressed. The circumstances reminded the chief butler of Joseph and of the promise he had made to him. Here, then, was an ideal

opportunity, not only to do a good turn for Joseph, but also to solve a problem for Pharaoh, so he related to the king the experience he had with the prisoner Joseph.

Pharaoh was impressed and had Joseph 'brought hastily out of the dungeon.' Although some authority had been given to Joseph over the other prisoners, apparently he still had to suffer the hardships of prison life, which at that time were often cruel. That he was in the dungeon when sent for by Pharaoh indicates that life was not made easy for him in prison.

When Pharaoh told Joseph why he had sent for him, that he had been told he was an interpreter of dreams, Joseph was quick to deny any special ability of his own; but, as on former occasions, gave the credit to the LORD. He said to the king, 'It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.' The additional two years Joseph had languished in prison, after the chief butler had been released and had promised to speak a good word for him, had not embittered Joseph. He still trusted in the LORD and was quick to give the glory to him for any ability he might possess in the way of interpreting dreams.

Genesis 41:25-36 *"And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do.*

"The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one.

"And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them are seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine.

"This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh.

"Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt:

"And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land;

"And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous.

"And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

"Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

"Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.

"And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities.

"And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt, that the land perish not through the famine."

Pharaoh related his dreams to Joseph, telling him of the seven fat kine (cows) and the seven lean kine; also the seven full ears of corn and the seven thin ears. Seemingly with the thought of impressing upon Joseph what truly difficult dreams these were to interpret, he explained that the magicians had failed to reveal what they meant.

Joseph's approach to the problem was direct, and in a single sentence he simplified his answer by explaining that both dreams meant the same thing, that they were 'one.' 'The seven good kine are seven years,' he said, 'and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one.' In the dreams of his fellow prisoners, the chief baker and the chief butler, the things they saw represented days, but in Pharaoh's dreams things represented years.

The dream foreshadowed a period of fourteen years -- seven years of plenty -- represented by the fat kine and the full ears -- and seven years of famine -- represented by the lean kine and the thin ears. The dream was doubled, explained Joseph, because the thing was assured by God, and he would shortly bring it to pass. This method of establishing a truth was in keeping with the LORD's arrangement that every great truth must be confirmed by the mouth of two or three witnesses. So both the kine and the ears testified concerning the seven years of plenty to be followed by seven years of famine. Thus there could be no doubt about the coming fourteen years in the land of Egypt.

Joseph not only interpreted Pharaoh's dreams for him, but added some excellent advice. This also was timely. When Pharaoh learned what was about to occur in the land over which he was king, he was no doubt greatly disturbed. Joseph, noting this, offered his well-timed and wise counsel concerning the appointment of a food administrator, one who would see to it that during the fat years surpluses were stored and preserved, that there would be a large enough provision to see the nation through the seven years of famine.

Genesis 41:37-45 *"And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants.*

"And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the spirit of God is?"

"And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:

"Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

"And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.

"And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck;

"And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.

"And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.

"And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-paaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt."

Pharaoh listened to Joseph's advice, and was impressed. It was obvious to him that if Joseph could interpret his dreams, and then frame a plan so quickly to meet the emergency they portended, he would be the best choice to fill the position of food administrator. So Joseph was given the position, with dictatorial powers to act in accord with what he thought would be best.

Nor was this assignment of power to Joseph made privately, for Pharaoh arranged that this new ruler in the realm should be paraded before the people, and that they should be made to bow to him. This was doubtless quite an embarrassing experience for Joseph. Those with less love for the LORD, and less desirous to give glory to him, might have had their perspective of life distorted by such sudden exaltation, but it did not thus affect Joseph.

Joseph was made a virtual dictator, but it was for the good of the nation. It illustrates that the form of government is often not so important as the personnel that governs. There is no form of government which will prevent evils from being inflicted upon the people if its laws are administered by selfish and corrupt men. On the other hand, when rulers are wise, just, and benevolent, the people under them will be blessed regardless of the form of government involved. No one could move in Egypt without Joseph's consent, yet there is no record that the people ever complained of oppression under his rulership.

Genesis 41:46-57 *"And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.*

"And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls.

"And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same.

"And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number.

"And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him.

"And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house

"And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.

"And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended.

"And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.

"And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do.

"And the famine was over all the face of the earth: and Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt.

"And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands."

Joseph was still a young man when he became ruler in Egypt, being only thirty years of age. At this age he embarked upon a mission that was to preserve the life, not only of his own people, but of the Egyptians as well. Jesus was thirty years of age when he entered

upon his ministry, a ministry which also was destined to give life to God's people, and to the whole world -- not a temporary extension of the present life, but life everlasting.

Leaving the presence of Pharaoh, the young ruler immediately entered upon his duties. Apparently he made a personal survey of the whole land. While doing this, he probably made a record of possible storage houses and made the necessary arrangements to have the surpluses put in them. It was a gigantic undertaking for those days, and Joseph did not have much time for preparation, as the first year of plenty was already upon them.

We read that during those seven years of plenty the earth brought forth by 'handfuls.' Apparently this was an expression used in ancient times to denote an abundance, an overflowing supply. One of the promises of the bounteous blessings which will be provided for the people during the thousand years of Christ's kingdom uses this expression, saying: "There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth." -- Psalm 72:16

While Joseph was made dictator in Egypt, seemingly he had little choice as to the selection of his wife, Pharaoh giving him Asenath, daughter of Potipherah, priest or prince of On. 'On' means 'City of the Sun'; and in Hebrew is called 'Own,' and 'Bethshemesh'; and in Greek, 'Heliopolis.' It was the university city of Old Egypt.

During the seven years of plenty, two sons were born to Joseph -- Manasseh and Ephraim. Manasseh means 'forgetting.' Joseph gave this name to his firstborn, for, said he, God 'hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house.' Ephraim means 'fruitful,' and Joseph gave this name to his second son because, as he explained, 'God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.' These sidelights on Joseph's attitude toward his experiences emphasize that with him the LORD came first in everything. Manasseh and Ephraim were later adopted by Jacob into his family and made heads of tribes in Israel. For some unexplainable reason, Jacob named Ephraim first, although actually Manasseh was Joseph's firstborn.

When the seven years of famine came upon Egypt, the people soon began to clamor for food. Their appeal to Pharaoh was turned over to Joseph, who was prepared for the emergency. The famine affected not only Egypt, but all the surrounding countries, and before it was over, people were coming to Egypt from all those areas seeking for food.

The foreknowledge of God in the care of his people anticipated this situation. The LORD had in mind the care of the children of Israel when he permitted Joseph to be sold into Egypt. There is a wonderful lesson in this for all who put their trust in the LORD. We should not lose faith because of the difficulties which may confront us today, for in the experiences which the LORD is permitting, circumstances are being shaped for a larger, more suitable purpose. If faithful here, we will be exalted to reign with Christ, and in his kingdom have the privilege of giving health and life to all mankind.

Jacob Seeks Food in Egypt

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

Genesis 42:1,2 *"Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another?"*

"And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die."

The detailed story of the manner in which Joseph was made food administrator in Egypt is recorded in the Bible, not to inform us as to how the Egyptians were kept from starving during the seven years of drought, but rather that we may know of God's watch care over his own people -- his chosen people -- and the manner in which he preserved them. The account does not inform us how Jacob learned there was food in Egypt that could be bought. It simply says he 'saw that there was corn' there.

Jacob asked his sons a question, which reveals that in all the intervening centuries human nature has not changed. Usually when great trials come upon us we are at a loss to know what to do, or which way to turn. Jacob asked, 'Why do ye look one upon another?' How often it is that we look at one another as if hoping thus to find the solution to a problem with which we are confronted!

It is quite possible that Jacob was as much at a loss to know what to do as were his sons, until he learned that there was food in Egypt. But this was the answer. They need not starve if his sons were willing to make the necessary journey to buy food. Trials which come upon the LORD's people are seldom lightened without some effort on their part. The LORD provides our needs, but not without our cooperation. God had provided food in Egypt in order that Jacob and his family might be kept alive, and the seed of Abraham be preserved. It was necessary that the sons go and get the food. However, it was a long and hazardous trip in those days.

Genesis 42:3-24 *"And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt.*

"But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren; for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him.

"And the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those that came: for the famine was in the land of Canaan.

"And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth.

"And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said,

From the land of Canaan to buy food.

"And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him.

"And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.

"And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come.

"We are all one man's sons; we are true men, thy servants are no spies.

"And he said unto them, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.

"And they said, Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not.

"And Joseph said unto them, That is it that I spake unto you, saying, Ye are spies:

"Hereby ye shall be proved: By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither.

"Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you: or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye are spies.

"And he put them all together into ward three days.

"And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live; for I fear God:

"If ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison: go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses:

"But bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they did so.

"And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.

"And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required.

"And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter.

"And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes."

Jacob had never fully recovered from the shock he received when his sons brought Joseph's blood-smeared coat and spread it out before him with the implication that his boy had been slain by wild beasts. At that time he intimated that he would continue to mourn for Joseph until he himself died. His continued mourning is indicated in his decision not to let Benjamin accompany the other sons on their trip to Egypt, 'lest peradventure mischief befall him.' This shows clearly that Jacob had not forgotten the 'mischief' which had befallen Joseph, and that the incident was still a painful memory.

It may be significant that Jacob's new name, Israel, is used in the narrative when it states that 'the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those that came.' The previous chapter shows that the famine was upon all the lands surrounding Egypt, and it seems possible that despite Joseph's conservation program, Egypt could not supply food for all who needed it. This would mean that perhaps not all who sought food from Joseph would be successful. The name Israel means, 'The prince that prevails with God.' Israel's sons were

to secure food because their father had prevailed with God, and now God would favor him and his family in this, their great time of need.

The account indicates that Joseph decided personally who should be permitted to buy, and perhaps how much, of the precious food which he had stored during the seven years of plenty. Apparently he was not willing to trust these important decisions to his subordinates. And so it was that his brethren were brought directly into his presence. He recognized them, but they did not recognize him. He had been a mere lad when they sold him into Egypt, and doubtless had changed a great deal in his maturing years. Since they were more mature at the time, they would not have changed so much. Besides, he was dressed in keeping with his position of honor, and this would tend to disguise his identity.

Although Joseph spoke roughly to his brethren, and caused them many anxious hours of worry, it was not because he held any bitterness toward them. He wanted to bring them to a keen sense of the wrong they had committed and to cause them to confess their guilt. Joseph remembered his dreams, which were prophetic of a time when his brethren would bow down before him and be at his mercy, and now he knew that the time for the fulfillment of these dreams had come.

This strengthened Joseph's faith in God still more, and because his heart was pure and humble it would enable him to realize more than ever that God's hand was overruling in his affairs, and therefore there was no cause for him to harbor ill will toward his brethren. As he expressed it later, he saw that it was really God who had sent him to Egypt, and that at the most his brethren -- although they had aimed to do him harm -- were, in reality, only the agency used by the LORD to accomplish this purpose. All of the LORD's people should endeavor to take this viewpoint of their trials, for it would help them to be kindly disposed toward their enemies.

Joseph's method of dealing with his brethren was unique. In questioning their identity as he did, and insisting that they were spies, they could not help but be reminded of their long-lost brother, and of the sin they had committed in selling him as a slave. First, they became convinced as never before of the wrong they had done their brother, and confessed it to one another. This may have been the first time they had admitted their wrong so freely among themselves.

However, it was still somewhat of a secret guilt -- one which, as yet, they were willing to discuss only among themselves. Supposing Joseph to be an Egyptian and not able to understand their language, since he had purposely talked to them through an interpreter, they did not realize he understood what they were talking about. But he did; and he was moved deeply at this evidence that they recognized the wrong they had done to him. This caused Joseph to go into another room and to weep.

In the attitude displayed by Joseph in this matter we have an illustration of God's willingness and desire to forgive. The true spirit of forgiveness -- of Godlike forgiveness -- causes one to rejoice to know that a wrongdoer is beginning to realize his sin and is moving toward repentance. This is God's attitude toward the entire human family, as

shown in the Parable of the Lost Sheep. Here we learn of the joy in heaven over one sinner who repents -- that one sinner being Adam and his race, all of whom lost life through him.

Genesis 42:25-28 *"Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way: and thus did he unto them.*

"And they laded their asses with the corn, and departed thence.

"And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the inn, he espied his money; for, behold, it was in his sack's mouth.

"And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored; and, lo, it is even in my sack: and their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done unto us?"

One with a guilty conscience is prone to attribute evil motives even to the good deeds of others. Joseph, out of the goodness of his heart, returned the money his brethren had paid for the food they were taking back to Canaan. But, when one of them discovered it, they were afraid, and felt that God was in some way punishing them. It was an unusual experience, and since, as they believed, they were dealing with strangers who would not ordinarily be so benevolent, it would have been rather difficult for them to take any other view of the incident.

Genesis 42:29-34 *"And they came unto Jacob their father unto the land of Canaan, and told him all that befell unto them; saying,*

"The man, who is the lord of the land, spake roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country.

"And we said unto him, We are true men; we are no spies:

"We be twelve brethren, sons of our father; one is not, and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan.

"And the man, the lord of the country, said unto us, Hereby shall I know that ye are true men; leave one of your brethren here with me, and take food for the famine of your households, and be gone:

"And bring your youngest brother unto me: then shall I know that ye are no spies, but that ye are true men: so will I deliver you your brother, and ye shall traffick in the land."

The nine brethren made the return journey to Canaan safely, but when they reached home they had a real problem in explaining to their father why Simeon was not with them, and that it would be necessary to take Benjamin the next time if they expected to obtain more food. They related their experiences in detail, which reminded them once more of their sin in selling Joseph and letting their father believe he was dead.

Genesis 42:35-38 *"And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks, that, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack: and when both they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid.*

"And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.

"And Reuben spake unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again.

"And he said, My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave."

Previous to this, only one of the brethren had discovered that his money had been returned. But now they found that the purchase money for the sacks of food had been returned to all of them. Then they all became fearful, including Jacob. Jacob had never hinted that his sons had been directly responsible for his loss of Joseph, but on this occasion, nevertheless, he reminded them that both Joseph and Simeon had been with them, and that they returned to him without them. So, he said, 'Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away.'

Without realizing it, Jacob was here expressing a truth, particularly concerning Joseph, which must have been very unpleasant for his sons to hear. Reuben assumed a noble position in the matter, offering his own two sons in sacrifice should they fail to bring Benjamin back to his father. At the time his brethren first decided to do away with Joseph, Reuben had opposed the plan. Apparently he possessed a more tender conscience than the others.

Jacob, up to this point, was determined that Benjamin should not be taken to Egypt, for he could not bear the thought of losing him as he supposed he had lost Joseph. Such a calamity, he said, 'would bring down his gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.' The Hebrew word translated 'grave' in this text is '*sheol*.' It is the second time it appears in the Bible. Jacob also used it, on the first occasion, and in a similar connection.

'*Sheol*' is the only Hebrew word in the Old Testament that is translated 'hell,' but is usually translated in this way only when the text applies to a wicked person. Where the death of the righteous is indicated, the translators usually use the word 'grave.' This, of course, is misleading, for it gives the impression that the wicked go to a different place at death than do the righteous. It is especially unfortunate because to many minds the word 'hell' conveys the thought of torment in fire and brimstone.

It is interesting to note, however, that Jacob speaks of his gray hairs going down into '*sheol*' -- the death condition. It would be difficult to understand how this could be, if *sheol* is indeed a place of fire. Certainly, gray hair would not last long in such a place. Actually, of course, Jacob refers to his gray hair as symbolic of his old age. He was already mourning over the loss of Joseph, and would continue to do so; and now, if his sorrow was to be increased through the loss of Benjamin also, his death would be hastened, being already old. In death he would rest unconsciously until the resurrection.

Benjamin Goes to Egypt

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

Genesis 43:1-14 *"And the famine was sore in the land.*

"And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt, their father said unto them, Go again, buy us a little food.

"And Judah spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you.

"If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food:

"But if thou wilt not send him, we will not go down: for the man said unto us, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you.

"And Israel said, Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother?

"And they said, The man asked us straitly of our state, and of our kindred, saying, Is your father yet alive? have ye another brother? and we told him according to the tenor of these words: could we certainly know that he would say, Bring your brother down?

"And Judah said unto Israel his father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go; that we may live, and not die, both we, and thou, and also our little ones.

"I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever:

"For except we had lingered, surely now we had returned this second time.

"And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds:

"And take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight:

"Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man:

"And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."

Time was against Jacob's decision not to let Benjamin be taken to Egypt. The famine continued. The supply of corn which had been brought back from Egypt by his sons was rapidly dwindling and something had to be done, so he again asked them to make another trip into the land of the Pharaohs. In reply Judah was the spokesman, and he reminded his father that it simply could not be done unless they were permitted to take Benjamin with them. 'If thou wilt not send him, we will not go,' he said to his father.

Jacob was like most of us when faced with a difficult decision, for he was inclined to blame others. He asked his sons why they had dealt 'so ill' with him by revealing to Egypt's food administrator that they had a younger brother at home, who had stayed behind with his father. But Joseph had put his brothers in a difficult position by accusing

them of being spies, and they had been quite ready to tell the whole truth in order to clear themselves. They could not be blamed for telling the truth concerning their family. As they explained to their father, they were not aware of what the result would be. Jacob doubtless realized this, and after Judah offered himself as surety for the safe return of Benjamin, he yielded to the inevitable.

According to the custom of the time, he instructed that a present should be taken to the 'man' with whom they would have to deal in Egypt -- 'a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds.' This evidently was 'fruit' which had been stored before the famine, and possibly would be a rare treat in Egypt.

His instructions to take a double portion of money -- that is, the amount that had been returned to them on the occasion of their first journey, and a supply sufficient to make the second purchase -- is another evidence of Jacob's caution. He explained concerning the returned money, 'Perhaps it was an oversight.' They were to be prepared as far as possible for any emergency that might arise.

After using his best judgment in his instructions to his sons, Jacob fell back on his sure tower of strength, saying, 'God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin.' Having thus committed the whole expedition into the LORD's care, Jacob became resigned to whatever the Divine will might be in the matter. 'If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved,' he said. This should not be construed as a fatalistic attitude, but, as we have suggested, a humble resignation to whatever the LORD's will might be in the matter. How little he realized then what a wonderful blessing the LORD had in store for him and for the entire family.

Genesis 43:15-25 *"And the men took that present, and they took double money in their hand, and Benjamin; and rose up, and went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph. "And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the ruler of his house, Bring these men home, and slay, and make ready; for these men shall dine with me at noon. "And the man did as Joseph bade; and the man brought the men into Joseph's house. "And the men were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time are we brought in; that he may seek occasion against us, and fall upon us, and take us for bondmen, and our asses. "And they came near to the steward of Joseph's house, and they communed with him at the door of the house, "And said, O sir, we came indeed down at the first time to buy food: "And it came to pass, when we came to the inn, that we opened our sacks, and, behold, every man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight: and we have brought it again in our hand. "And other money have we brought down in our hands to buy food: we cannot tell who put our money in our sacks. "And he said, Peace be to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your money. And he brought Simeon out unto them. "And the man brought the men into Joseph's house, and gave them water, and they*

washed their feet; and he gave their asses provender.

"And they made ready the present against Joseph came at noon: for they heard that they should eat bread there."

Jacob's sons carried out his instructions, and when they arrived in Egypt they 'stood before Joseph.' When Joseph saw Benjamin with them he gave instructions to the 'ruler' of his house to take them into his home and to prepare dinner, explaining that he would be home to dine with them.

Again they became fearful, and little wonder. They had complied with the condition of bringing Benjamin back with them, and now the only thing they could think of to worry about was the money they had found in their sacks on the occasion of their former visit. Wishing to make sure that this would not be held against them, they made an opportunity to explain the situation to the steward of the house, hoping this would pave the way for a more favorable hearing in the matter.

They must have been greatly relieved when the steward said to them, 'Peace be to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your money.' Then he returned Simeon to them. Now they would know that they were not to be accused of stealing the money, that it had been put in their sacks because Joseph had ordered it so. But why he had done so remained unanswered.

The steward's reference to their God and to the God of their father, indicates that Joseph must have been 'witnessing' to his servants, and that this one, at least, had come to have a measure of faith in the God of Jacob. He had put the money in the sacks at the behest of Joseph, yet he explained that 'their God' had given them the treasure. This would indicate that Joseph had let it be known that Jacob's God was also his God, and that his action in this was on account of their worshiping the same God. He could make this point clear without telling his servants that Jacob was his father.

It was not a simple matter in those days to entertain a group of travelers, and yet when guests were welcome, they were taken care of well. The statement in verse 24 reminds us of how Abraham treated the three angels who appeared to him as he sat in the tent door on the plains of Mamre. See Genesis 18:4. It is also similar to the account given in Genesis 19:2 and 24:32. Providing water for feet washing, and feeding beasts of burden was evidently considered essential to proper entertainment of guests.

Joseph was a busy man. After granting his brethren a brief audience in the morning, he continued with his duties at the food administration headquarters, having arranged to meet them in his home for lunch. This gave them a little time. Being assured by the steward that the money incident would not be held against them, they then unpacked their 'present,' and prepared to give it to Joseph when he came in. They were leaving no stone unturned in their efforts to make a favorable impression on the one who literally held their lives in his hands.

Genesis 43:26-34 *"And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves to him to the earth.*

"And he asked them of their welfare, and said, Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive?"

"And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive. And they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance.

"And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son.

"And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there.

"And he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself, and said, Set on bread.

"And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians.

"And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marvelled one at another.

"And he took and sent messes unto them from before him: but Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of theirs. And they drank, and were merry with him."

When Joseph came home, they gave him the present, and bowed down before him. Little did they realize that in doing this they were fulfilling the dreams of Joseph which led to their jealousy of him and their determination to get rid of the 'daydreamer' lest he one day attempt to carry out his dream. Doubtless Joseph recalled his dreams, yet the realization of how they were being fulfilled did not arouse any feeling except sympathy and love for his brethren. Now he had an opportunity to serve his brethren, and like Jesus, of whom he was a type, he believed that the greatest among brethren should be the servant of all.

He inquired concerning the health of their father, and when he saw Benjamin he said, 'God be gracious unto thee, my son.' Suddenly he was overcome with emotion, and not wishing as yet to reveal his identity, he asked to be excused, and went off by himself to weep tears of joy in the realization that he was to be reunited with his family.

Joseph's conduct, however, was becoming more and more strange to his brethren; and no wonder! Why should they be treated so royally? When Joseph arranged them at the table, it was according to their ages. How did he know their ages? In apportioning the food, Benjamin was especially favored. Why? No wonder they 'marvelled one at another.' Nevertheless, they did not permit the strangeness of the situation to keep them from being properly friendly with their host. While they did not know what was behind this unusual treatment, they entered into the spirit of the occasion, evidently following the lead of Joseph and 'were merry with him.'

Perhaps by now, Joseph's brethren may have begun to think that this time they would procure a supply of food and return to Canaan without being placed in embarrassing circumstances. But God had further lessons for them to learn, as we shall see in our next study.

Joseph Tests His Brethren

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

Genesis 44:1-4 *"And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money in his sack's mouth.*

"And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn money. And he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken.

"As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they and their asses.

"And when they were gone out of the city, and not yet far off, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good?"

Joseph continued to shape circumstances for his brethren which were calculated to remind them of their great sin in selling him into Egypt, and at the same time to ascertain by their conduct if their heart condition and their outlook on life had undergone a change since that time. He wanted to be sure that they had reformed before making himself known to them -- not for his own sake, but for theirs. He realized that once they knew who he was, his high position in Egypt might tempt them to make apologies for their own protection even though by chance they were still bitter of heart.

The Hebrew word here translated 'cup' indicates that it was the large silver cup from which wine was poured into smaller ones from which guests drank. It was also a divining cup, and customarily used in much the same way as the fortune teller's crystal ball of today. Apparently this was quite a common practice in Egypt, and perhaps Joseph had his servant speak of the cup as the one in which he divined in order to strengthen their impression that he was a genuine Egyptian, thus insuring that his true identity should remain concealed until he decided the time was ripe to reveal it.

Had Joseph's brethren actually stolen his cup after being treated so royally, the case against them would certainly have condemned them; one which clearly would have been that of returning evil for good. It was a serious charge to enter against them, and we cannot imagine Joseph thus accusing his brethren, except for his knowledge that the situation would clarify itself later.

Genesis 44:5-13 *"Is not this it in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth? ye have done evil in so doing.*

"And he overtook them, and he spake unto them these same words.

"And they said unto him, Wherefore saith my lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing:

"Behold, the money, which we found in our sacks' mouths, we brought again unto thee

out of the land of Canaan: how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold?

"With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen.

"And he said, Now also let it be according unto your words: he with whom it is found shall be my servant; and ye shall be blameless.

"Then they speedily took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack.

"And he searched, and began at the eldest, and left at the youngest: and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.

"Then they rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city."

When Joseph's servant accused the men of robbery, indicating that one of them had taken Joseph's special divining cup, they vigorously denied the charge, and to prove that the accusation was unwarranted called attention to the fact that even the money which had been put in their sacks on the previous visit had been returned. It certainly seemed to them that this should be proof that they were not robbers.

They were very confident of their position in the matter, and willingly allowed their sacks to be searched, saying that the owner of the sack in which the cup might be found should be put to death. According to the Code of Khammurabi, effective as a law in Egypt at the time, and known to many in Canaan, death was the penalty for robbery. In other words, they were quite willing that the law take its course, for they were sure that the cup would not be found in their sacks.

The expression in verse 7: 'God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing,' is a poor translation. The word 'God' is not in the Hebrew text at all. The statement should read, "Far be it from thy servants," etc.

Great was their surprise when Joseph's cup was found in Benjamin's sack. They 'rent their clothes,' a symbol of sorrow and utter dejection. But they made no attempt to escape. They loaded their supplies back on their asses and returned to the city and to Joseph.

Genesis 44:14-34 *"And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house; for he was yet there: and they fell before him on the ground.*

"And Joseph said unto them, What deed is this that ye have done? wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?"

"And Judah said, What shall we say unto my lord? What shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found.

"And he said, God forbid that I should do so: but the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father.

"Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou art even as Pharaoh.

"My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother?"

"And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him.

"And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him.

"And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father: for if he should leave his father, his father would die.

"And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more.

"And it came to pass when we came up unto thy servant, my father, we told him the words of my lord.

"And our father said, Go again, and buy us a little food.

"And we said, We cannot go down: if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down: for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother be with us.

"And thy servant my father said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two sons:

"And the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces; and I saw him not since:

"And if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

"Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life;

"It shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die: and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave.

"For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever.

"Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren.

"For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father."

Joseph's brethren must have been greatly chagrined to be brought before him under such circumstances. Joseph, still posing as an Egyptian, and one who could 'divine,' that is, discover by magic if necessary, what they had done, asked them if they did not realize how futile it was for them to attempt such a robbery.

Judah's statement, 'God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants,' was a confession of guilt pertaining to their original sin of selling Joseph into Egypt, for they knew they were not really guilty of the robbery as had been charged, although they were unable to explain how Joseph's cup came to be in Benjamin's sack. Even though they might have suspected that it had been planted there in the same manner as their money was on the occasion of their first visit to Egypt to buy food, they knew it would be useless to say so under the circumstances.

Joseph also knew that his brethren were not guilty of robbery, and doubtless he understood Judah's confession of guilt as appertaining to their crime against him, and

how pleased he must have been to realize that they were experiencing a genuine change of heart. He continued to hold the advantage in dealing with them, for he knew all the circumstances and they did not. With a show of generosity, he said, "Far be it from me [the word God is also missing in the Hebrew in this text] to hold anyone except him in whose hand the cup is found."

He knew that this was just what his brethren did not want, for it would mean that they would have to return to their father without Benjamin, and this, Judah explained, would doubtless cause the death of their father. It would bring his gray hairs down in sorrow to the grave; that is, to *sheol*, the condition of death, or the Bible hell.

Judah acted as spokesman for the others, and related further details concerning their difficulty in getting their father's consent to bring Benjamin with them. Then he offered to take Benjamin's place as a bondman in Egypt so his young brother could return with the others to his father. Judah had already made a solemn promise to his father that he would be responsible for the safe return of Benjamin, and this offer he made to Joseph indicates that he was wholly sincere in his surety pledge.

Throughout the entire account of Joseph and his brethren, Judah reveals himself as being more cognizant of their former wrongdoing than the others. It was Judah who suggested that they sell Joseph as a slave rather than kill him. Now he stands out as the one most concerned for the safety of Benjamin. He loved his aged father, and could not bear to see him suffer further, so was willing to give up his own freedom to prevent it.

"I am Joseph"

CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

Genesis 45:1-15 *"Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.*

"And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.

"And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.

"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.

"For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest.

"And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

"So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

"Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not.

"And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast:

"And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.

"And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you.

"And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.

"And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck.

"Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him."

Joseph now knew that his brethren really had experienced a change of heart and that they were truly sorry for the crime they had committed against him many years before. With this knowledge, and realizing that he was about to be reunited with his family, he 'could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me.' Now alone with his brethren, he made himself known to them. We read that he 'wept aloud,' or as the Margin states, he 'gave forth his voice in weeping.' These,

however, were not tears of sorrow, but of joy. Great joy, when it comes as a climax to a long period of trial, often finds expression in weeping.

'I am Joseph,' he announced to his brethren, and at once asked, 'Doth my father yet live?' Joseph's brethren were terrified (*Marginal Translation*) when they realized that they were in the presence of their brother whom they had sold to be a slave in Egypt -- so disturbed that they could not, for the moment, reply to his inquiry concerning Jacob.

Sensing the situation, and wishing to assure them that he was harboring no ill will, Joseph said to his brethren, 'Come near to me, I pray you.' They accepted this invitation, and again Joseph told them who he was, that he was their brother 'whom ye sold into Egypt.' Probably Joseph referred to their crime, not to humiliate them, but to let them know that despite it he still loved them and had only kindness in his heart toward them.

This becomes apparent as we study the narrative, for Joseph assures his brethren that it was in the LORD's providence that he had come to Egypt, God having sent him before them 'to preserve life.' Here the reference is not to Egyptian life, but -- as he explained, 'to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.' The 'posterity' to be saved was the promised "seed" (Acts 3:25) of Abraham, that seed through which all the families of the earth were to be blessed. Through this 'seed' is to come a great deliverance of all mankind from the bondage of sin and death.

An interesting parallel may be drawn between the experiences of Joseph and his brethren, and Jesus and his brethren of natural Israel. Joseph was sent into the field by his father to seek the welfare of his brethren. They seized him and planned to put him to death, but compromised and sold him as a slave. Later, when they probably believed that he was dead, he revealed himself to them. By now he had become a ruler and savior of life.

Likewise, Jesus was sent into the field -- the world -- by his Heavenly Father, to seek the welfare of his brethren. Like Joseph, however, he came to his own, but "his own received him not." (John 1:11) Instead, they put him to death, not by their own hands, but by turning him over to the Roman authorities. Later, Jesus will reveal himself to his brethren of natural Israel as their Ruler and Savior. And, like Joseph, he will be glad to extend mercy to them.

Having proved his friendliness toward his brethren, Joseph at once instructed them to return to Canaan and bring his father and household to Egypt to remain there for the duration of the drought. He wanted his family near to him so the reunion would be complete. It seems that he had been making plans for this from the time he realized that he had found his family, for he announced at once that they were to 'dwell in the land of Goshen.' A decision of this importance was unlikely to have been made on the spur of the moment.

'And after that his brethren talked with him.' Apparently it took them some time to recover their poise, and it was during this period that Joseph told them of his plans to bring the entire household to Egypt and have them settle in the land of Goshen. Then he

embraced and kissed them all. His gracious plans for them and their father, together with this show of affectionate love, doubtless convinced the men that they had nothing to fear, and then they were ready to talk with their long-lost brother.

The spirit of forgiveness and mercy manifested by Joseph is a good example for Christians. Unfortunately, we do not always find it so easy to forgive those who have wronged us, but we should seek to attain to this goal of character development. Like Joseph, we are in the LORD's hands, and he does not permit experiences except as they are for our good. (Romans 8:28) So, if the injuries inflicted upon us by others are serving a good purpose in preparing us for joint-heirship with Christ in the kingdom, it should not be difficult to deal mercifully with those through whom the trials reach us. In this respect, our experiences are akin to those of both Joseph and Jesus, who through long periods of trial finally attained to positions of rulership. And so it will be with us if we are faithful, for "if we suffer [with him], we shall also reign with him." -- 2 Timothy 2:12

Genesis 45:16-24 *"And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come: and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants.*

"And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan;

"And take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat of the fat of the land.

"Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come.

"Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours.

"And the children of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way.

"To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment.

"And to his father he sent after this manner; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way.

"So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way."

The news soon spread that Joseph's brethren had come to Egypt and the spirit of rejoicing seemed to be general. Pharaoh outdid even Joseph in offering assistance to the family. This was a tribute to Joseph, for it reveals the great confidence the supreme ruler of the land had in this young Hebrew.

Pharaoh ordered 'wagons' to be dispatched to Canaan to bring Jacob and his belongings back to Egypt. This is the first time wagons are mentioned in the Bible. They were probably invented in Egypt, and are believed to have had but two wheels. They were seemingly not known in Canaan at the time. The invention of the wagon wheel was fundamental in the world of mechanics and travel.

Genesis 45:25-28 *"And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father,
"And told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not.
"And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived:
"And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die."*

Certainly Joseph's brethren had a joyous report for their father when they got back to Canaan. At first, when they told him that Joseph was alive, his 'heart fainted, for he believed them not.' This was not surprising. He had probably been greatly concerned over Benjamin all the time they were gone, and for them to return with such unexpected news was more than he had anticipated.

But they continued to unfold the details of the wonderful news, and these, together with the gifts Joseph had sent and the wagons Pharaoh had dispatched to bring the household back to Egypt, finally convinced Jacob, and he said, 'It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.'

Jacob Moves to Egypt

CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

Genesis 46:1-7 *"And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac.*

"And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I.

"And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation:

"I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.

"And Jacob rose up from Beersheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him.

"And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him:

"His sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt."

Jacob was now at an advanced age, but was ready to see his long lost son, and to venture the difficult journey to Egypt. He stopped at Beersheba, which was on the southernmost border of Canaan, to offer sacrifices to the LORD, the God of his fathers. He doubtless felt the need of establishing this contact with his God before venturing too far into an experience of which the outcome was so veiled and uncertain.

Now, even as when he fled from Esau, the LORD assured him of his guidance and blessing. God had warned Abraham of the dangers of going down into Egypt (Genesis 15:13,14), and had forbidden Isaac to go there. (Genesis 26:2) However, the LORD assured Jacob that he wanted him to go into the land of the Pharaohs, that he would go with him, and that in Egypt he would make of him a great nation. Under the circumstances, this assurance must have meant a great deal to Jacob.

Prior to the death of Jacob, God dealt with him, with his father Isaac, and his grandfather Abraham, as individuals; but in Egypt, as this promise indicates, the twelve sons of Jacob together with their families were to be recognized by God as a nation, and thenceforth to be dealt with on a national basis. This promise of the LORD, therefore, establishes the transition in the plan of God from the Patriarchal Age to the Jewish Age.

Jacob's great age made it necessary for him to ride in one of the wagons furnished by Pharaoh, in company with the women and children.

Genesis 46:8-27 *"And these are the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn.*

"And the sons of Reuben; Hanoch, and Phallu, and Hezron, and Carmi.

"And the sons of Simeon; Jemuel, and Jamin, and Ohad, and Jachin, and Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanitish woman.

"And the sons of Levi; Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

"And the sons of Judah; Er, and Onan, and Shelah, and Pharez, and Zerah: but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. And the sons of Pharez were Hezron and Hamul.

"And the sons of Issachar; Tola, and Phuvah, and Job, and Shimron.

"And the sons of Zebulun; Sered, and Elon, and Jahleel.

"These be the sons of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob in Padanaram, with his daughter Dinah: all the souls of his sons and his daughters were thirty and three.

"And the sons of Gad; Ziphion, and Haggi, Shuni, and Ezbon, Eri, and Arodi, and Areli.

"And the sons of Asher; Jimnah, and Ishuah, and Isui, and Beriah, and Serah their sister; and the sons of Beriah; Heber, and Malchiel.

"These are the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter, and these she bare unto Jacob, even sixteen souls.

"The sons of Rachel Jacob's wife; Joseph, and Benjamin.

"And unto Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him.

"And the sons of Benjamin were Belah, and Becher, and Ashbel, Gera, and Naaman, Ehi, and Rosh, Muppim, and Huppim, and Ard.

"These are the sons of Rachel, which were born to Jacob: all of the souls were fourteen.

"And the sons of Dan; Hushim.

"And the sons of Naphtali; Jahzeel, and Guni, and Jezer, and Shillem.

"These are the sons of Bilhah, which Laban gave unto Rachel his daughter, and she bare these unto Jacob: all the souls were seven.

"All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls were threescore and six;

"And the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, were two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten."

So far as God's plan is concerned this is a relatively unimportant listing of the children and grandchildren of Jacob. The total is made significant by its comparison with the great number of Israelites who left Egypt at the time of the Exodus. By that time the 'three score and ten souls' had increased to the point where they were referred to "as the stars of heaven for multitude." -- Deuteronomy 10:22

That these children and grandchildren should be designated 'souls' which came out of the loins of Jacob is quite in keeping with the scriptural understanding of what constitutes a soul, but out of harmony with the generally accepted idea that when each human being is born an 'immortal soul' is secretly and miraculously implanted somewhere in his body, and when that body dies, this 'soul' escapes.

Here we learn, on the contrary, that the 'souls' of Jacob's children were in his loins, the term soul, as elsewhere, simply denoting a living, sentient being. These beings are symbolically represented as being in the loins of Jacob because he was their progenitor.

Genesis 46:28-34 *"And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to direct his face unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen.*

"And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while.

"And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive.

"And Joseph said unto his brethren, and unto his father's house, I will go up, and shew Pharaoh, and say unto him, My brethren, and my father's house, which were in the land of Canaan, are come unto me;

"And the men are shepherds, for their trade hath been to feed cattle; and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have.

"And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What is your occupation?

"That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, and also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians."

Probably there have been few happier meetings of father and son than that experienced by Jacob and Joseph. After so many years of separation from his father, Joseph literally 'wept for joy' when they met, and Jacob said to his son, 'Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive.' Jacob expected to mourn over the loss of Joseph until he died, but now he could cease mourning and die in peace.

Joseph continued to show his wisdom in dealing with difficult problems. He instructed his father and brethren how to answer Pharaoh's questions as to their occupation, when they were presented to him -- that they were herdsmen. Joseph knew that if the Egyptians learned this, it would tend to keep his people separate from them, which was what he desired. Besides, the land of Goshen, although within Egyptian territory, seems to have been inhabited largely by non-Egyptians. Since it was a rich section and desired by Joseph for his people, this too may have had a bearing on his strategy.

Presentation to Pharaoh

CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

Genesis 47:1-6 *"Then Joseph came and told Pharaoh, and said, My father and my brethren, and their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have, are come out of the land of Canaan; and behold they are in the land of Goshen.*

"And he took some of his brethren, even five men, and presented them unto Pharaoh.

"And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, What is your occupation? And they said unto Pharaoh, Thy servants are shepherds, both we, and also our fathers.

"They said moreover unto Pharaoh, For to sojourn in the land are we come; for thy servants have no pasture for their flocks; for the famine is sore in the land of Canaan: now therefore, we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen.

"And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee:

"The land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle."

Inasmuch as Pharaoh had previously instructed Joseph to send for his father and family, and had even provided wagons in which to help make the journey from Canaan to Egypt, it was fitting that representatives of his people be presented to Pharaoh that he might have an opportunity to make them officially welcome in the land. Having previously instructed his brethren in what to say when questioned by the king, this meeting turned out very satisfactorily.

The "best of the land" was officially assigned to the Hebrew children by Pharaoh, and he requested that if any of Joseph's family were qualified they should be made rulers over his cattle. In this Pharaoh also acted wisely, for if Joseph's people were experienced herdsmen, his own cattle would be much better off in their care than in the care of Egyptians, especially when by nature they despised such an occupation.

Genesis 47:7-12 *"And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.*

"And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou?"

"And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.

"And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh.

"And Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded.

"And Joseph nourished his father, and his brethren, and all his father's household, with bread, according to their families."

Joseph then presented his beloved father, Jacob, to Pharaoh and according to the record, Pharaoh asked Jacob but one question; namely, his age. The patriarch was somewhat apologetic, for while he was then 130 years of age, he evidently felt that he appeared much older. As an explanation he said that his life had been filled with evil: a reference, no doubt, to his many sorrows, beginning when he fled from Esau and including his loss of Joseph over a period of so many years. Yet, in spite of these sorrows, the LORD had blessed him, and now particularly at the end, by permitting him to be reunited with his beloved son, Joseph. While Jacob lived for seventeen years after this, he still came short by twenty-eight years, of living to Abraham's age.

Jacob "blessed" Pharaoh. We are not to suppose from this that the patriarch performed any special ceremony over Pharaoh. Probably the thought merely is that he wished him well, perhaps even going so far as to express the equivalent of what we have in mind today when we say, "God bless you." Certainly, under the circumstances, Jacob would feel most kindly toward Pharaoh, and naturally would like to see him prosper, for the patriarch's own welfare and that of his family were now dependent upon the peace and prosperity of Egypt and her king -- at least for the time being.

This might be comparable to the instructions given in the New Testament that we should pray for kings and those in authority that we, as the LORD's people, might prosper spiritually and be at peace. (1 Timothy 2:1,2) Throughout all the ages during which the preparatory features of God's plan have been developing, his people have been his special care; and the lives of others have been overruled by him only as they may have had a bearing on the lives of his own people, or in the outworking of his plan. However, this has not always been in order that they might have a tranquil and prosperous life; for the LORD in his wisdom often permits his people, for their testing and development, to have severe trials. Nevertheless he cares for them, both in joy and in sorrow, as was abundantly demonstrated in the experiences he permitted to come to Jacob.

Doubtless, the last years of Jacob and his family in Canaan were rather lean ones, and this may be the reason special emphasis is given to the fact that when they finally were settled in Goshen, it is said that "Joseph nourished his father, and his brethren." When Jacob arrived in Goshen he evidently was quite weak, and, as he thought, ready to die. Actually, however, he lived seventeen years after this, and perhaps it was due partly to the fact that being properly nourished, his ebbing strength was temporarily renewed.

Genesis 47:13-26 *"And there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very sore, so that the land of Egypt and all the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine. "And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house.*

"And when money failed in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread: for why should we die in thy

presence? for the money faileth.

"And Joseph said, Give your cattle; and I will give you for your cattle, if money fail.

"And they brought their cattle unto Joseph: and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for horses, and for the flocks, and for the cattle of the herds, and for the asses: and he fed them with bread for all their cattle for that year.

"When that year was ended, they came unto him the second year, and said unto him, We will not hide it from my lord, how that our money is spent; my lord also hath our herds of cattle; there is not aught left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies, and our lands:

"Wherefore shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land? buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh: and give us seed, that we may live, and not die, that the land be not desolate.

"And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them: so the land became Pharaoh's.

"And as for the people, he removed them to cities from one end of the borders of Egypt even to the other end thereof.

"Only the land of the priests bought he not; for the priests had a portion assigned them of Pharaoh, and did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave them: wherefore they sold not their lands.

"Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh: lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the land.

"And it shall come to pass in the increase, that ye shall give the fifth part unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones.

"And they said, Thou hast saved our lives: let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants.

"And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt unto this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth part; except the land of the priests only, which became not Pharaoh's."

Joseph, in addition to loving God and his own people, was also a loyal servant of Pharaoh, as displayed in this progressive method by which he virtually made slaves, that is, to the central government of Egypt in which Pharaoh ruled supreme. We cannot suppose, however, that Joseph acted with any other motive than was for the best interests of all concerned. Certainly, had it not been that the LORD had revealed to him the facts concerning the seven years of plenty to be followed by seven years of famine, and gave him wisdom to meet the situation, probably most of the Egyptians would have perished. Thus, in reality, they owed their lives to him.

From this standpoint, it may be that we can draw a lesson concerning the manner in which the antitypical Joseph, that is, Christ, will deal with all mankind during the millennium. But first of all, as with Joseph, Christ gives life to his own people, his brethren, the church, providing them with the best -- even the 'High Calling' of God.

Then, with the church cooperating, the whole world will be provided with the 'Bread of Life,' but not unconditionally. No, the world in the next age, even as the Egyptians in Joseph's time, will eventually have to give up everything and place themselves wholly at

the mercy of the Christ in order to secure the 'Bread of Life' which the antitypical Joseph will be able to give to them.

Genesis 47:27-31 *"And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly.*

"And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years: for the whole age of Jacob was an hundred forty and seven years.

"And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt:

"But I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their buryingplace. And he said, I will do as thou hast said.

"And he said, Swear unto me. And he sware unto him. And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head."

Jacob and his family prospered exceedingly in the land of Goshen, and increased rapidly in number. Later, this brought trouble upon them when a new Pharaoh "which knew not Joseph," came to the throne. (Exodus 1:8) Nevertheless, while Joseph lived, his people were protected, and the LORD's blessings upon them were manifested, for the most part, in ways of pleasantness.

When he had been in Egypt seventeen years, Jacob realized that he had about reached the end of his life, so he sent for Joseph and secured an oath from him that he would take his body back to Canaan to the burial ground purchased by his grandfather, Abraham. We may understand from this an evidence of Jacob's belief that his people were not to remain in Egypt forever, but that God would fulfill his promise and give them the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession -- a promise which soon will be fulfilled on a much more grand scale than Jacob probably realized.

Ephraim and Manasseh Blessed

CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

Genesis 48:1-4 *"And it came to pass after these things, that one told Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.*

"And one told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed.

"And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me,

"And said unto me, Behold I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession."

Jacob was now about to die, and a messenger sent word to Joseph, who quickly came to the bedside of his aged father and brought his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, with him. On this solemn occasion Jacob had the LORD uppermost in his mind and heart, and related to Joseph the covenant he made with him at Luz, or Bethel. This was when Jacob fled from Esau and he was favored with that wonderful vision of the ladder reaching from earth to heaven with the LORD standing at the top of the ladder and angels ascending and descending upon it. -- Genesis 28:10-13

This was a renewal of the covenant which God had made with Abraham, including the promise to bless all the families of the earth, although Jacob did not mention this feature of it to Joseph. Perhaps this was because Joseph's tribe was not to be the one from which the Messiah, the promised 'seed,' would come.

In this reminiscing of Jacob's wherein the LORD had given him a vision and renewed the Abrahamic covenant with him, the Genesis account of those events says that he journeyed on, "lifting up his feet." (Genesis 29:1, *Marginal Translation*) The thought evidently is that of renewed hope and confidence; and this assurance was still his, even though now he was about ready to die. He could no longer 'lift up his feet,' but his heart was light and full of faith.

Genesis 48:5-14 *"And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.*

"And thy issue, which thou begettest after them, shall be thine, and shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance.

"And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath; the same is Bethlehem.

"And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who are these?

"And Joseph said unto his father, They are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them.

"Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see. And he brought them near unto him; and he kissed them, and embraced them.

"And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed.

"And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth.

"And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near unto him.

"And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn."

Jacob blessed the two sons of Joseph and adopted them as his own sons and made them heads of tribes. Jacob indicates that in some way these two sons of Joseph were to take the places of his own sons Reuben and Simeon; although they are in the list of the spiritual tribes of Israel in Revelation 7, where Manasseh is substituted for Daniel Ephraim's chief blessing as the adopted son of Jacob seems to have been in the fact that his tribe received the largest and choicest portion of the land when Canaan was divided under the leadership of Joshua.

Jacob's blessing of his two grandsons reminds us in some ways of his own experience when receiving the parental blessing of Isaac, in that, as it turned out, the firstborn was given second place and his younger brother was put in the position of the firstborn. Joseph, realizing that his father's eyesight was failing, took precautions to place the boys before him in the proper positions according to their ages. But Jacob deliberately ignored this in giving them his blessing.

Genesis 48:15-20 *"And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, "The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.*

"And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head.

"And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head.

"And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.

"And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh."

When Joseph saw that Jacob was blessing Ephraim as the firstborn instead of Manasseh he endeavored to interfere, supposing it to be wrong, (or, according to the *Marginal Translation*, an 'evil.') However, Jacob explained vigorously that he knew what he was doing. He explained that while Manasseh would become the head of a great tribe, or people, the tribe of Ephraim would become much more numerous, and that in their relationship to each other the two would be known as Ephraim and Manasseh.

There is no indication in the Scriptures just why this change was made, and apparently the only reason was that Jacob, by prophetic vision, knew that the tribe of Ephraim would become the larger of the two; and when Canaan would be divided among the tribes, his would receive a large and choice portion.

Genesis 48:21,22 *"And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold I die: but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers.*

"Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow."

On his deathbed, nothing was more sure to Jacob than the fact that his people would be brought out of Egypt and into the Land of Promise. 'Behold I die: but the LORD shall be with you,' he said to Joseph, 'and bring you again unto the land of your fathers.' Although the covenant with Abraham emphasized God's purpose to bless all the families of the earth through his 'seed,' the land which God promised in that covenant seemed often to be the major consideration in the minds of the Israelites, although Jacob did not forget the other feature of the covenant, as we shall see later in connection with his blessing upon Judah.

Jacob did not attempt to assign portions of Canaan to all of his sons, but he did indicate an extra portion which he wished Joseph to have; and when, many long years later, the tribe of Joseph was given its portion, Jacob's bequest was honored. And not only so, but

appropriately enough, Joseph's bones were buried on this plot of ground. See Joshua 24:32 and John 4:5.

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DOCTRINE

The Plan of God in the Book of Genesis -- Part 35

Jacob Blesses His Sons

CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

Genesis 49:1,2 *"And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days.*

"Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father."

Having adopted his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh, sons of Joseph, into his family and pronounced a blessing upon them, Jacob then sent for his own twelve sons in order that he might impart a blessing to them before he died. What he said to them was also in the nature of two prophecies, for he explained that he wanted to reveal that which would befall them "in the last days." -- vs. 1

This is the first of fifteen references in prophecy to the 'last days,' or 'latter days,' as the same general period is also called. The other fourteen are as follows: Numbers 24:14; Deuteronomy 4:30; 31:29; Job 19:25; Isaiah 2:2; Jeremiah 23:20; 30:24; 48:47; 49:39; Ezekiel 38:16; Daniel 2:28; 10:14; Hosea 3:5; Micah 4:1. A study of these will show that Jacob's prophecy and blessing, as spoken to his sons, extends to and embraces the Messianic Age, having a relationship both to the First and Second Advents of Christ.

We are not to understand, however, that what he said with respect to every one of his sons was so all-embracing. So far as his words pertaining to the Messiah and his kingdom were concerned, these were contained only in his prophecy concerning Judah. In the case of the other sons, what promises he did make had to do particularly with comparatively minor things, such as their portion in the Promised Land.

Genesis 49:3,4 *"Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power:*

"Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch."

Reuben was Jacob's firstborn son, Leah being his mother. The scriptural references concerning him, on the whole, present a favorable view of his disposition. To him the preservation of Joseph's life appears to have been due. The sin which apparently caused him the loss of the high honor of being the head of the tribe from which the Messiah would be born is recorded in Genesis 35:22.

Jacob intimates that by nature Reuben should have been of excellent dignity and strength of character, but instead he was as 'unstable as water'; that is, easily stirred up emotionally, as water boils over a fire, but quickly cools off when the fuel is removed. Actually, no blessing at all was imparted to Reuben, and no prophecy given concerning him.

Genesis 49:5-7 *"Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations.*

"O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall.

"Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel."

Simeon and Levi were the second and third sons of Jacob by Leah. The mention of their cruelty is evidently a reference to the revengeful massacre which they perpetrated, as recorded in Genesis 34:25. This was evidently the sin which robbed them of the firstborn rights forfeited by Reuben. To them went a meagre blessing -- 'I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.' Apparently this is prophetic of the fact that in the division of the land following the Exodus, the tribe of Simeon was limited to a portion within the grant of land given to the tribe of Judah. The tribe of Levi was given no inheritance in the land, although they were honorably used in connection with the service of the LORD, evidently because of the noble stand they took in a time of crisis. See Exodus 32:1-29.

Genesis 49:8-12 *"Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee.*

"Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?

"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

"Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes.

"His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk."

Judah was the fourth of Jacob's sons by Leah, and because of the sins of the other three, he inherited the blessing of the firstborn, which in this instance was the honor of heading the tribe from which the "King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Timothy 6:15) was to be born. The name Judah means 'praise.' His mother praised the LORD when he was born, and his father said that Judah's brethren would praise him.

Remembering that this prophecy was given amid Egyptian surroundings, meaning is added to Jacob's reference to Judah being a 'lion's whelp,' and a 'couched lion.' In Egypt at that time a couched lion was symbolic of the right to rulership which was vested in the reigning Pharaohs. The seed promised to Abraham was to be a great ruler. Isaac and

Jacob in turn inherited this promise, and now Judah was also to be a 'lion's whelp,' that is, the one to inherit God's royal promise.

As Jacob explained, this 'sceptre' was not to depart from Judah, 'nor a lawgiver from between his feet.' This particular prophecy is given recognition in Revelation 5:5, where Jesus is referred to as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah." And Revelation 5:11-13 seems clearly to indicate the larger fulfillment of Jacob's prophecy pertaining to the praise that would come to Judah, or the tribe of Judah.

'Until Shiloh come.' (vs. 10) The word Shiloh means 'peaceable,' and one of the prophetic titles ascribed to Christ is "The Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6) 'Unto him shall the gathering of the people be.' Paul may have had this in mind when, in Ephesians 1:10, he wrote "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times" God will gather together "all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him."

Verses 11 and 12 appear to be symbolic descriptions of the great prosperity of the tribe of Judah in relationship to the other tribes when they became settled in the Promised Land. When the land was divided, Judah was assigned a choice portion.

Genesis 49:13 *"Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an haven of ships; and his border shall be unto Zidon."*

Zebulun was the sixth, and last, son born to Jacob by Leah. The tribe of Zebulun is very obscure in the Scriptures. Jacob's prophecy that the tribe would 'dwell at the haven of the sea' and be for 'an haven of ships,' is in keeping with a statement of Josephus, the Hebrew historian of the 1st century, to the effect that Zebulun's allotment in the land reached on the one side to Lake Gennesaret, and on the other to Carmel and the Mediterranean.

Genesis 49:14,15 *"Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens: And he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute."*

Issachar means 'reward.' The land allotted to this tribe was, historians claim, among the richest in Palestine. It is this aspect of the territory of Issachar which appears to be alluded to in Jacob's blessing. It would seem, however, that the tribe of Issachar was not overly ambitious. Comfortably located in fertile territory, the prophecy indicates that the tribe would prefer to pay tribute to the Canaanites rather than engage in the struggle to expel them.

Genesis 49:16-18 *"Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward. I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD."*

The prophecy that Dan would judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel was apparently fulfilled in the judgeship of Samson. See Judges 13:25 and 15:20.

The reference to Dan as a 'serpent' that bit the 'horse heels' reminds us of the serpent in the Garden of Eden. Mother Eve was beguiled by that 'serpent,' and the tribe of Dan helped to beguile others in Israel to worship heathen gods, being the first of the tribes to go into idolatry.

Having given a prophecy reminiscent of the influence of Satan in Eden, and of his continuing beguilement of the people, Jacob expresses his hope of ultimate salvation from evil and its results, a prophecy which originally was expressed as the seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head. All will be glad and rejoice in that salvation. -- Isaiah 25:9

Genesis 49:19 *"Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last."*

Little information is given in the Scriptures concerning Gad. When his mother (Zilpah, Leah's maid) gave birth to him, Leah said, "A troop cometh," and so she named him Gad, which has that meaning. (Genesis 30:11) His father said concerning him that a troop would overcome him, 'but he shall overcome at the last.' What we know about the tribe of Gad indicates that they were a warlike people.

Genesis 49:20 *"Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties."*

The tribe of Asher is another concerning which not much is said in the Scriptures. In the division of the Promised Land the Asherites were given the maritime portion of the rich plain of Esdraelon, probably for a distance of eight or ten miles from the shore. This territory contained some of the richest soil in Palestine, and it may be this fact that caused Jacob to prophesy concerning this tribe that 'his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties.'

Genesis 49:21 *"Naphtali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words."*

Naphtali means 'wrestling.' Jacob's prophecy concerning this tribe is rather obscure in meaning. The expression, 'he giveth goodly words,' may mean that he would give cause for goodly words. If this is the thought, its fulfillment may be in the fact that in Deborah's song of praise over the defeat of Sisera, she gives special praise to Naphtali and Zebulun for their heroism in the battle. -- Judges 4:10; 5:18

Genesis 49:22-26 *"Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall:*

"The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him:

"But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:)"

"Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb:

"The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto

the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren."

In bestowing his blessing upon Joseph, Jacob first of all recounted the wonderful manner in which God had already cared for this favorite son, that although his enemies had tried to destroy him, his 'hands were made strong' by the hands of the Almighty God of Jacob. The clause shown in parenthesis, 'from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel,' is evidently intended to impress the thought that from the God of Israel come all blessings, and that in preserving Joseph, the LORD through him had preserved all Israel, thus keeping alive the nation from which the great shepherd and stone of promise would come.

These two terms are among the many which refer to the promised Messiah. Surely God's providences over Joseph, that he might be the savior of all Israel, constitute a wonderful manifestation of God's ability to fulfill his promises concerning the 'seed' through which all the families of the earth will be blessed!

God's blessings upon Joseph's tribe, future from Jacob's day, were manifested chiefly in the prolific increase of their numbers -- 'blessings of the breasts, and of the womb.' Compare the "blessing" (Deuteronomy 33:1) of Moses upon the tribe of Joseph as recorded in Deuteronomy 33:13-17.

Genesis 49:27 *"Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil."*

According to this prophecy, one of the chief characteristics of the tribe of Benjamin was to be that of fierce cruelty. There are a number of references to Benjamites which bear this out; for example: Judges 3:15-30. King Saul was a Benjamite, and note his characteristics as revealed in 1 Samuel 11:6-11. Saul of Tarsus was a Benjamite, and before the Spirit of God began to mellow his heart he was a cruel persecutor of the church.

Genesis 49:28 *"All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them."*

The parental blessing of Jacob was bestowed upon all twelve of his sons in contrast with Isaac's blessing, which was limited to the firstborn alone -- or to Jacob who purchased the right to receive the blessing of the firstborn. True, the royal blessing bestowed by Jacob was limited to Judah, nevertheless the other tribes were not ignored -- Jacob had something to say to them all, although in some cases the blessings were limited.

This contrast, we think, helps to establish the difference in God's method of dealing with his people during the Patriarchal Age and the Jewish Age. During the former, he dealt with individuals only -- the patriarchs, each in turn. But beginning with the death of Jacob, God's dealings were with all twelve tribes as a nation. To them as a nation were his promises made. To them as a nation he gave his Law. When they sinned they were

punished as a nation; and when they continued to reject him, their iniquity coming to the full, they were rejected as a nation. This was one of the main characteristics of the Jewish Age.

Genesis 49:29-33 *"And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, "In the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a buryingplace.*

"There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah.

"The purchase of the field and of the cave that is therein was from the children of Heth.

"And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people."

Jacob had a strong faith in the promises God had made to his grandfather, Abraham -- so strong that he knew his people would not remain in Egypt, but would eventually be delivered and brought into Canaan. On the strength of this belief he desired that he be taken back there to be buried.

He gave specific instructions to his sons concerning his burial place, saying that he wished to be laid away with Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and with Leah, one of his own wives.

Having pronounced his blessings upon his sons, and having instructed them concerning his burial, Jacob 'gave up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.' Later, his sons carried him to "the field of Machpelah" for interment, but this was after he had been gathered to his fathers -- an expression which denotes merely that he joined his fathers in the state of death, where "the wicked cease from troubling; and ... the weary be at rest." (Job 3:17-19) The word ghost is a translation of a Hebrew word meaning 'breath.' No imaginary white-robed phantom escaped from Jacob when he died. He simply gave up his breath, or stopped breathing.

Jacob's Burial and Joseph's Death

CHAPTER FIFTY

Genesis 50:1-14 *"And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him.*

"And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father: and the physicians embalmed Israel.

"And forty days were fulfilled for him; for so are fulfilled the days of those which are embalmed: and the Egyptians mourned for him threescore and ten days.

"And when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spake unto the house of Pharaoh, saying, If now I have found grace in your eyes, speak, I pray you, in the ears of Pharaoh, saying,

"My father made me swear, saying, Lo, I die: in my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me. Now therefore let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again.

"And Pharaoh said, Go up, and bury thy father, according as he made thee swear.

"And Joseph went up to bury his father: and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt,

"And all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house: only their little ones, and their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen.

"And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen: and it was a very great company.

"And they came to the threshingfloor of Atad, which is beyond Jordan, and there they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation: and he made a mourning for his father seven days.

"And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians: wherefore the name of it was called Abel-mizraim, which is beyond Jordan.

"And his sons did unto him according as he commanded them:

"For his sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field for a possession of a buryingplace of Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre.

"And Joseph returned into Egypt, he, and his brethren, and all that went up with him to bury his father, after he had buried his father."

The account of Jacob's burial says, 'Only their little ones, and their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen' when they went back to Canaan to bury Jacob. This included, in addition to Jacob's sons and their grown children, 'all the servants of Pharaoh.' This was a wonderful tribute of respect and love for Jacob, and revealed the high esteem in which he was held by his family. Besides, it showed that they shared their father's faith in God's promises pertaining to Canaan.

Genesis 50:15-21 *"And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him.*

"And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying,

"So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him.

"And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants.

"And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God?

"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

"Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them."

Until the death of Jacob, Joseph's brethren had taken for granted he would not endeavor to inflict special punishment upon them for their attempt to do away with him in earlier life. But now they became fearful lest his leniency toward them had been on account of the great love he had for his father; and for the first time they formally and humbly asked his forgiveness, explaining that this was the deathbed request of their father.

Joseph was ever head and shoulders above his brethren in matters of righteousness, and he assured them that they had no cause to fear. 'Am I in the place of God?' he inquired, then explained that while they had sought to do him harm 'God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.' Since God's will had been manifested in what had taken place, why should he hold anything against them? Thus Joseph comforted his brethren, and 'spake kindly unto them.'

Genesis 50:22-26 *"And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's house: and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years.*

"And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation: the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were brought up upon Joseph's knees.

"And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

"And 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, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt."

Our account ends saying, 'So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old.' 'The dreamer,' as his brethren had called him, had lived to see his prophetic dreams come true -- his brethren had bowed down before him, yea, even his father had become dependent upon his mercy. He had not misused the authority and power which Divine providence

had entrusted to him; but rejoiced that God had given him the honor of being the savior of his people, the preserver of the 'seed' of promise.

It was his faith in God's promises that caused him to arrange that his body should be embalmed and ultimately taken to Canaan. In exacting an oath from his brethren that they would carry out his wish in this respect, Joseph said to them, 'God will surely visit you, ... and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.' Joseph's willingness to have his bones remain in Egypt until the Exodus might indicate his desire not to impose an unnecessary burden upon his brethren by asking that they make a special funeral trip to Canaan as they had done in the case of Jacob. Or possibly he realized that when he was dead his people would not enjoy the same degree of freedom to come and go as they did while he was alive and serving as deputy ruler.

So we come to the end of the first book of the Bible which shows the outworking of the Divine plan for human salvation. We also come to the end of the Patriarchal Age, the first age in this present evil world. With the Book of Exodus, the Jewish Age begins.

While historically the Book of Genesis covers the first world, or age, and the Patriarchal Age, prophetically it embraces all the ages, including the Millennium, when as promised to Abraham, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. The development of the spiritual 'seed' of promise has been the work of the present Gospel Age. The promises of the book applying to the deliverance of the natural seed of Abraham from Egypt, and planting them in the Land of Promise, were fulfilled during the Jewish Age.

In this wonderful book, we are told of the creation of man, and the Divine purpose concerning him -- that he was to 'multiply and fill the earth, and subdue it.' We are informed of the entry of sin and of its tragic results, man's loss of life and his earthly home. We are assured, nevertheless, of God's continued love, and that a provision would be made for the redemption and recovery of the human race from the result of its own transgression.

This provision is the seed, first referred to as the 'seed of the woman' and later as the seed of Abraham. With the aid of the New Testament, we learn that primarily this seed is Christ Jesus, the Redeemer and Savior of the world; also that his faithful followers of this Gospel Age, the church, as members of his mystical body, are a part of that seed, 'and heirs according to his promise.'

Thus does the opening book of the Bible introduce the main features of the plan of God, and wonderful is the harmony of the entire Bible as we trace the reiteration of these features throughout its sacred pages.