

# Genesis

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(Extracted from Scripture Truth Vol. 36, 1948-51.)

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## Genesis 1: 1-13.

The first book of the Bible has a place of very great importance in the whole scheme of God-given truth which the Book brings to us. This may be stated with special emphasis in regard to its opening chapters, for in them is revealed to us the origin of the visible creation that surrounds us, together with the true account of how has come to pass the conditions of sin and sorrow and toil and pain and disease and death which fill the earth today. If we fall into untruth and delusion as to these things, we shall be deluded as to all things. If we are in doubt as to them, we shall be in doubt as to all else that is revealed.

Genesis 1 puts on record facts which preceded the appearance of man on the earth, and which therefore cannot have been derived from any kind of historical record. If its statements are not the record in writing of a revelation from God to man, they can only be the guesses and brainy concoctions of men who lived some 4,000 years ago. Such guesses were of course plentiful enough in the ancient

world, and some of them have come down to us, grotesque in their deformity. We need not waste our time over them, or even mention them, save that they serve to throw into relief the calm certainty and sanity of the God-given record of Genesis 1.

The first four words of our English Bibles — "In the beginning God" — present to us the primordial germ from which springs all that is revealed to us in the entire book. Here is the great fact that comprehends every other fact within its all-embracing sweep. The Bible begins with God and not man, and we must do the same. If we begin with man rather than God confusion will reign in all our thoughts.

That God exists and that He originated all things is assumed and stated. Unbelieving men may demand that **proofs** of His existence be produced, but nowhere in Scripture does God condescend to furnish such proofs. Were He to do so they would not be intelligible to the feeble minds of puny men. Moreover they are no more really needed than proofs that the sun exists and shines. That fact could only be doubted by a man who had neither sight nor feeling, and it is just because unbelieving men have neither sight nor feeling of a spiritual sort, that they doubt, or even deny, the existence of God.

The heavenly bodies above us and the earth beneath our feet are realities too plain to be missed, even by the most unthinking and degraded of men. What are they? Whence came they? Have they always existed? The first verse supplies the answer. They are not eternal, but had a beginning. Both heavens and earth came into being by the creative act of the eternal God. Three times in the chapter do we read, "God **created**," and five times another verb is used, meaning to **make**. To make is to fashion out of existing matter, whereas when we read of God creating, then "through faith we understand . . . that things which are seen **were not made of things which do appear**" (Heb 11: 3).

But another thing confronts us in this first verse, though not apparent in our English Bibles. The Hebrew word for God is **Elohim**, a plural word, where the verb, created, is in the singular. This is the more remarkable in that Hebrew nouns can assume a dual form, meaning exactly two. Hence the plural form must mean **three**, or more. Reading this in the light of the New Testament, we at once see the Trinity in Unity. That great revelation of the Godhead is not explicitly stated, but the words, given by inspiration of God, are so framed as to be wholly consistent with it, when it is stated.

To sum up: verse 1 gives us the original creative act of God by which the whole material and visible universe came into being, long before such things as "days and years" (verse 14), were known. Its epoch may have been inconceivably remote, but that His work was perfect in its season, we firmly believe. In the New Testament, as we know this creative act is attributed to the Word and the Son, for creation was left in His hands, as also was redemption, and as judgment will be.

In verse 2 we move from that remote epoch to a time much nearer our own, and we descend, **as regards this earth**, to a state of very great imperfection. It is found "without form;" that is, a ruin, a waste: it is also "void:" that is, empty. Isaiah 45: 18 plainly says, "He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited." This is very striking, for here again the proper word for creation is used, as in our first verse, and "in vain" is a translation of the same word as "without form" in our verse. So we have a definite confirmation of the thought that the state of the earth as in verse 2, was one that supervened, long after the original creation, as the result of some catastrophic event which is not revealed to us.

Besides the ruin and the emptiness there was also darkness, not everywhere but "on the face of the deep." It looks as if at this stage the earth was covered with water, the face of which was swathed in darkness. God is light, and elsewhere in the universe light was shining, but something hindered light from reaching the earth. In this condition of things the Spirit of God acted. We believe it was Herbert Spencer, an atheist philosopher, who said that, to account for things visible, five things must be

predicated: viz., time, space, matter, force, motion. All five appear in our chapter. The Spirit of God is indeed **Force**, and He **moved** on the face of this watery **matter**.

But not apart from the Word of God. It is remarkable how in the New Testament the Spirit and the word are brought together, and specially so in connection with the new birth — see John 3: 5, 6, and 1 Peter 1: 25. Hence we cannot but see a striking analogy between God's work here in things material and His even greater work in things spiritual. When our spiritual condition was one of ruin and emptiness and darkness, light shined into our hearts by the moving of the Spirit of God and the power of the word of God. The first word recorded as proceeding from the mouth of God is "Light," for we understand that "Let there be light" is more literally, "Light be!" This is alluded to by Paul in 2 Corinthians 4: 6, only there he carries us beyond new birth in itself to its glorious result, in beholding "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." What a contrast between the glory of His face and the darkness that once was on the face of the deep!

Note those words, "And God said." As we travel through the chapter we shall find they occur ten times. "The worlds were framed by the word of God," as Hebrews 11: 3 has told us; or we may adopt the words of Psalm 33: 9, "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." How significant in this connection is the opening of John's Gospel, "In the beginning was the Word;" that is, He was pre-existent to the first beginnings of creation. Moreover He "was with God, and . . . was God . . . All things were made by Him." So it was the Word, who later, "was made flesh, and dwelt among us," that uttered the words of power that created and made all things. Hence creation contains very definite word as to the power and wisdom and glory of God, though the revelation falls far short of that which reached us when the Word became flesh.

Notice another thing. Six times in the chapter the words, "And God said," has the appropriate sequel, "and it was so." The word of God is seen at the very outset to be powerful, never failing of its effect. How encouraging to be assured of this fact in the first chapter of the Bible, for we may be sure it applies to every word that God has spoken. When the end of the story is reached we shall be able to say with triumph, "and it was so," in regard to every promise He has made, every prediction He has uttered.

As the result of God's first utterance light shone upon the face of the deep, and God saw that it was good. This indeed it must be since, "God is light." Do we ask — what is light? Scientists have their theories as to what it is, or how it comes to be, but no better answer can be given than that which Scripture furnishes, "Whatsoever doth make manifest is light" (Eph. 5: 13), or as another translation puts it, "That which makes everything manifest is light." In darkness unrealities may deceive us because realities are obscured, and that is not good. To have everything brought into manifestation is good indeed.

So God divided the light from the darkness. There was not to be a compromise, a mixture, a sort of indefinite twilight, but the darkness was for a season to give way completely to light, and thus there was a division between them. Hence there was evening and there was morning — a first day. For a long time great exception was taken by unbelievers to this statement of verse 5, because the sun does not appear until the fourth day. But the sun is not the only source of light.

The question is raised as to whether the days of Genesis 1 are to be understood in a literal sense or figuratively as indicating immense periods of time, and it has provoked much discussion, as neither interpretation of the word is free from difficulties. For ourselves, we believe it is to be understood literally. The figurative sense occurs in Scripture — "man's day," "the day of salvation," etc. But this sense is most evidently a secondary one and the literal sense is the primary. In our judgment this fact alone is pretty decisive. We must have the primary meaning established before we can arrive at any

secondary meaning at all, and Genesis 1 deals with primary things. When we reach Isaiah's prophecy we get "the day of the Lord," but even that, though not a day of 24 hours is not a long period of time. The repetition of "the evening and the morning" fits in with the primary meaning, and would have very little meaning in the secondary sense. Further, in verse 16, where the sun is made to rule the day and the moon to rule the night, we do not see how the primary sense can be avoided.

That these mighty works should be accomplished with extreme rapidity presents no difficulty to faith. Mighty works, though of another order, were done instantaneously by the Word, when He became flesh and took "the form of a servant." He was "in the form of God" when He acted in creation and everything displayed His unqualified omnipotence.

But we must carefully bear in mind that after verse 1 the verb "create" does not occur again till we come to verse 21. In between we have "God made," an expression which indicates His action in forming or re-forming already existing matter. In the days of Genesis 1, God was dealing with the earth that had been in a state of chaos, putting it into order with a view to the creation of man.

On the second day a "firmament," or "expanse," was called into being. As a result of this a further division took place; not now of light from darkness but of waters from waters. God called this expanse, Heaven. In verse 1 "the heaven" indicates what we should call the stellar heavens. In verse 8 the atmospheric heavens are indicated. There it is that immense quantities of water float above in the form of clouds, divided from the far greater quantities that lie on the earth beneath. As the result of the work of the second day the earth was surrounded with an atmosphere. It was accomplished by His word, "God said . . . and it was so."

Again on the third day there was division. The waters above the expanse were not affected but those beneath were gathered together into one place, and this permitted dry land to appear. In result that which was stable and fixed appeared, where previously all had been unstable and in motion. Other things followed before the third day closed, but this was the essential preliminary.

We have now had five things before us, the naming of which came from the lips of God. We observe this because in the next chapter we find God bringing to Adam the living creatures that He had made on the fifth and sixth days, that he might give them names; and in keeping with this the vast variety of creatures, indicated in verses 20-25, are only mentioned generically. The word "whales" in verse 21 might seem to be an exception, but the word so translated only means "sea monsters." So though Adam was permitted to display his powers of discernment in many a minor detail, these five things he had to accept as named by God — Day, Night, Heaven, Earth, Seas.

As we go through the Scriptures we find the five things become symbolic and have spiritual significance. Our true "Day" will be found in the light of the knowledge of God, and there is complete division between that and that alienation from God which is "night." The division between Heaven and earth we all recognize. It is clear too that in the world of men "earth" symbolizes that which is ordered and stable, separated from peoples restless and agitated under the powers of evil, like the seas. As before, in the division between light and darkness, so now in the division between earth and seas, we get the remark, "God saw that it was good." There are divisions that are good because Divinely made. It is only man-made divisions that are evil.

The third day did not close before the newly revealed earth had brought forth grass and seed-producing herbs and fruit-producing trees. Here we note another step forward in the work of making the earth a fit habitation for man. Vegetable life is perhaps the lowest form of life that is known to us. It has neither the instinct and limited intelligence that animals possess, nor has it their powers of movement, yet we all know the difference between the plant that is dead and the plant that lives. And

God saw that even this lowest form of life was good.

Here for the first time we meet with the idea of variety and of species, and consequently for the first time we meet with the significant words, "after his kind." They occur no less than ten times in this chapter, and always in connection with the appearance of some form of life, which had within itself power of reproduction. Here at the outset then is stated most emphatically a great law that is binding on all animate creation. However great and many the varieties which may occur, or be induced, within a species, there is no development into another species.

No idea has been more diligently propagated by unbelievers during the last century than that of evolution, and though Darwin's theories as to how evolution can have been brought about have been, we understand, largely abandoned, yet the idea itself is still clung to as affording an alternative to the disliked truth of creation. In Genesis 1, with Divine foreknowledge we have this ten times repeated fact, which flatly denies evolution, and in practice it is continually verified. No species ever has developed into another species. Every creature reproduces itself after its kind, and never into another kind.

Adam in his fallen condition and all his race are bound by this law. No fallen sinner can evolve into a child of God. Our only hope lies in a new creation, and this is what we have in Christ, as becomes manifest when we turn to the New Testament. The "man in Christ" is a man of an entirely new order. Such is the work of God by His Spirit and through the Gospel.

## Genesis 1: 14 — Genesis 2: 3.

God's work on the fourth day lay outside the earth, though in its effects a powerful influence on the earth was exerted. On the first day light had shone upon the earth, and day had been divided from night, but we are not told just how this result had been produced. The light-bearing matter may have been diffused; if so, it was now concentrated into one "great light," and the earth was set in relation to it. Also the "lesser light" was set in relation to the earth. They were now to give light not in a general way but specifically **on the earth**.

But more than this was included in God's purpose as to them. They were to be "for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years." We are well aware that the times — whether days or years — and the seasons are determined by them but the fact of their being **signs** is perhaps not so familiar to us. Yet there are illustrations of it in Scripture, such as Joshua 10: 12-14; 2 Kings 20: 8-11. There is also the Lord's prediction in Luke 21: 25. The beginning of Psalm 19 points in the same direction.

Then again, they were to rule the day and the night respectively. From the outset the earth was placed under the rule and control of heaven, even as regards the action of inanimate matter, so that in this these heavenly bodies become a sign that "the heavens do rule" (Dan. 4: 26), and a faint prophecy of "the kingdom of heaven," of which we read in the Gospel of Matthew. The sad fact confronts us that fallen man soon perverted all this, and began to worship these lights as though they were creator and not creature, thereby changing God's truth into a lie. Romans 1: 25 refers to this, we believe.

At the end of verse 16 we have three words — "the stars also" — and with this brief mention they are dismissed. The ancients were acquainted only with those visible to the unaided eye, but those they did see they misused in the attempt to foretell the future, and astrology aided many heathen practices. Here we are simply told that they are the creatures of God's hand.

It is worthy of note that here the two "lights" are not named. The word "sun" does not occur until Genesis 15: 12 is reached, and the first mention of "moon" is in Genesis 37: 9, where sun, moon and

stars appear together, and their symbolic meanings are fixed in connection with the family - the original and most primitive unit of government in the earth. Jacob, the patriarch was **supreme** in his family. The mother reflected his authority, and was **secondary**. The brethren were entirely **subordinate**. Sun, moon and stars symbolize authority, supreme, secondary and subordinate, and this right through Scripture.

Again we have the words, "and God saw that it was good." That creation should be under authority and control was good. We find, alas! that man, when created as the head of things, soon repudiated the Divine authority and plunged into lawlessness, which is sin. That emphatically is not good, but it should make every believer keenly realize how important it is to be subject in all things to the authority of the word of God.

The rule of heaven being thus established, God proceeded on the fifth day to bring into being an order of life much higher than the vegetable kingdom of the third day. Moving creatures that had life now appear, to fill the seas and the air immediately above the earth. The word translated "whales" simply means monsters that inhabit the waters, whether seas or rivers. All these too, like the herb and tree previously, are made after their kind, and are bidden to reproduce themselves and multiply.

In verse 21 we get the word "created" for the second time. It appeared in verse 1, the original creation of the heaven and the earth. The intervening verses have told us what God **made** out of His original creation. Why does the word occur again here? We believe, because here the waters were commanded to bring forth "the moving creature that hath life." We see nutrition growth and reproduction in the vegetable kingdom. Here we see another order of things altogether, creatures with powers of sensation and of voluntary motion. Indeed the word translated "creature" in verses 20 and 21 is really "soul." On this fifth day then there was the introduction of a higher form of life, involving soul, so this was distinctly and properly creation.

As the result then of God's work on the fifth day both the waters and the air were furnished with living souls, that would be fruitful and multiply until both were filled.

In the early part of the sixth day God similarly furnished the earth with living souls, both beast and cattle and also creeping things. We notice that God **made** them: it does not say that He **created** them. Though so different externally from the denizens of the waters and the air, they were still only "living souls," and hence the word **created** is only used when first "soul" was created as distinct from matter.

We notice too that in both verses 24 and 25 the "beast of the earth" is distinguished from the "cattle." We gather from this that originally, and before sin came in, God designed certain animals to be specially for the upkeep and benefit of the man He was about to create. After sin came in the beasts developed their wild and savage nature, while the cattle remained comparatively docile and useful to man.

Man was to be the climax of all this work of God, and before the sixth day closed he appeared.

Verses 26-28 are of the deepest importance, and for the third time in this chapter we get the word **created**. This is because once more a totally fresh element was introduced, though we do not find it mentioned until Genesis 2: 7 is reached. Man possesses **spirit** by the inbreathing of God. We may say therefore that in Genesis 1 we get three acts of creation. First, the original creation of matter. Second, the creation of soul. Third, the creation of spirit, which is man's prerogative as far as this world is concerned, since the creation of angels is outside the range of this chapter. All three acts bear upon man, for he possesses spirit, he is a living soul; his body is composed of terrestrial matter.

Verse 26 shows us that from the outset man was the subject of Divine consultation or counsel. That God should say, "Let US," is worthy of note. Elohim is, as we have said, a plural Name. In the Old Testament the three Persons in the Godhead are not revealed, but now that They are revealed we can see that, inspired of God, the language of our chapter is quite consistent therewith. There was present to the Divine mind all that man would turn out to be, and he was only brought into existence after this consultation within the Godhead Himself. In verse 26 it is "**Our** image;" in verse 27 it is "**His** image." There is no incongruity for it is the eternal "Three in One" who speaks.

Man was treated in both the image and the likeness of God. The former word seems to be used in Scripture for that which represents unseen realities. The images of the heathen world represented their gods, without necessarily being like them, for indeed they had never seen the demons they worshipped by means of the images that represented them to their eyes. Man was made, then, to represent God to the lower creation over which he was set. But he was also made after the likeness of God; that is, he was really like God in certain important respects. Not in all respects of course, for God is infinitely holy and man was merely innocent. Still man was God's "offspring" (Acts 17: 28, 29), a spirit being, though clothed in a body of flesh and blood, and hence with intelligence and moral sensibilities, which are a reflection of that which subsists on an infinite scale in God Himself.

Here let us pause a moment that we may realize the frightful debasement in both mind and morals which must flow from the degrading theory that man is only an improved ape, or come up from the protozoa, that are supposed to have existed in primordial slime, millions of years ago. Evolutionary theories have about them the fatal fascination of enabling their adherents to ignore the fall of man, and the state of sin in which he is found. What the Bible calls sin they regard as being merely unpleasing traces of animal ancestry manifesting themselves. The past 80 to 90 years have witnessed two things: the revival of the theory of evolution under the speculations of Darwin, which enables men to theorize on their **ascent**; and the **descent** of the more civilized peoples, where the theory has been mainly propagated, to a level of savagery and bestiality, far below the level of the heathen. This has been seen more particularly in the past ten years.

NO! Man was created in the image and likeness of God, and his present condition of sin and degradation is the fruit of a great spiritual catastrophe, which is on record in Genesis 3. He is now a fallen sinner; he never was an exalted ape.

Another thing about man confronts us in verses 26 and 28 he was created to hold **dominion** over the lower creation. In this feature he appears to be unique. There are rulers in the angelic world — "principality, and power, and might, and dominion" (Eph. 1: 21) — but their rule only extends over beings of their own order. Dealing with angels, Hebrews 1: 14 asks, "Are they not **all** ministering spirits?" Yes, **all**, even to the archangel himself, were created to serve. As far as Scripture informs us, only man was made to have dominion over others.

This is deeply interesting for it shows us that the Second Man was before God from the outset. The defection of the first man did not take God by surprise. When God said, "Let us make man," He knew what was involved. Man was not to be a mere machine, or unintelligent and irresponsible like the brute creation, but a moral agent capable of representing God, but capable also of rebellion against Him. As the fruit of sin man has lost control of himself and misused his dominion, but God's original thought for man is going to be realized on a vastly larger and grander scale in the Son of Man, who is the last Adam. Psalm 8 envisages this glorious prospect.

Verse 27 states that duality characterizes man. It says that God created "**him**; male and female created He **them**." This fact is elaborated in Genesis 2, but the few words here show us how closely

male and female are identified. The word, "man" covers both, and jointly they were to have the dominion, though the male from the outset was given the leading place. From the outset too they were blessed by God and bidden to multiply and replenish the earth. Before sin came in therefore children were in God's purpose for them.

The closing verses of the chapter show that the vegetable kingdom was designed to provide food for both man and beast. After the flood animal food was given to man — see, Genesis 9: 3, 4. Before sin came in, and death by sin, no animal was to be slain for man's food.

With the creation of man — male and female — and his being set in dominion and blessed, the work of the sixth day reached its end. As it concluded, God surveyed **all** that He had made. Six times already we have been told that God saw it was good, now on this seventh occasion, when the whole was inspected, we are told that **all** was **very** good. Let us take note of this for it demolishes at one blow the whole system of error, miscalled "Christian Science," which has, as one of its most fundamental dogmas, the idea that matter is **evil** and only spirit is good. The truth is the exact opposite of this, for when evil entered it came in by way of spirit and not matter.

We have seen that this chapter, from the first verse onwards, refutes Unitarianism, for GOD — Elohim — in the plural occurs no less than 32 times. We have seen how it refutes Evolution, for every species reproduces itself "after his kind." We have just seen how Christian Science is refuted; and now as we open Genesis 2, we meet with a statement that reinforces what has been apparent all through Genesis 1; namely, that God is outside and above all that He created and made. Thus, on the seventh day when creation was what we may call "a **going** concern," God is said to have **rested**. Thus Pantheism — the idea that God is **only** to be conceived of as **immanent** in creation, pervading all nature — is wholly denied. He may indeed act in nature, but He is **transcendent**, essentially above it in Person and Being.

Genesis 2: 1-3, really belongs to Genesis 1, and completes the paragraph. The seventh day was a day of rest for God. His work had involved both creating and making, but all was now complete, and evidently He has not set His hand to work of that order from that time until now. The entrance of sin necessitated His taking up work of another order, and the Lord Jesus alluded to this in saying, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5: 17).

Thus the seventh day was specially blessed and set apart, and we may say that a seventh day of rest after six days of work is a thought that dates back to the very beginning of man's history. The word "sabbath" does not occur until we reach Exodus 16: 23, where it designates **the seventh day after the manna was given**. After that the law was given, and this "sabbath" — this "ceasing" as the word means — became a legal institution for Israel, and a sign between them and the Lord for ever, as stated in Exodus 31: 17. Hebrews 4: 4-10 also alludes to this, and evidently Israel will yet enjoy her sabbath in the millennial age; God thus redeeming the sign He had given.

The sabbath was never given as a sign to the Church. In Christ we have not the sign but **the things signified**. The Seventh Day Adventist would put us back under the law, and into the comparative darkness of Judaism, ignoring the fact that for us the new moons and sabbath days are over, as indicated in Colossians 2: 16. Nevertheless we are as Christians very thankful to be able to observe one day's rest in seven, as indicated from creation, and to have that day of rest on the first of the week, **the day when our Saviour rose from the dead**.

## Genesis 2: 4 — Genesis 3: 1

The opening words of verse 4 must be specially noted, since they indicate the second of the eleven sections into which the book is divided. As printed in our modern Bibles the chapters number 50, but ten times do we find this expression "These are the generations . . ." (with once a slight variation), showing that, as given by inspiration of God, the chapters number eleven.

We will point out these inspired divisions at once, so that from the outset we may have them clearly before us. They are as follows: —

Genesis 1: 1 — Genesis 2: 3, which we have already considered, we may designate as — The Beginning.

Genesis 2: 4 — Genesis 4: 26, Generations of heavens and earth.

Genesis 5: 1 — Genesis 6: 8, Generations of Adam.

Genesis 6: 9 — Genesis 9: 29, Generations of Noah.

Genesis 10: 1 — Genesis 11: 9, Generations of sons of Noah.

Genesis 10: 10 — Genesis 11: 26; Generations of Shem.

Genesis 11: 27 — Genesis 25: 11, Generations of Terah.

Genesis 25: 12 — Genesis 25: 18, Generations of Ishmael.

Genesis 25: 19 — Genesis 35: 29, Generations of Isaac.

Genesis 36: 1 — Genesis 37: 1, Generations of Esau.

Genesis 37: 2 — Genesis 50: 26, Generations of Jacob.

The word translated "generations" occurs but sparingly in the Old Testament; apart from Genesis mainly in Numbers 1, and in certain chapters in 1 Chronicles, and it seems to have the force of "births," or "origins." If this be so, "the generations of the heavens and the earth" would signify their origins; whereas the generations of Adam, Noah, etc., would signify those who by birth found their origin in these respective patriarchs.

It is possible that Moses, the inspired penman of Genesis, was led to use existing records left by the patriarchs, in so far as they suited the Divine purpose, and also that he was led to indicate it in this way. From Genesis 5: 1, onwards, we have a Divinely given history of things, that may well have been taken from humanly recorded tablets of most ancient date, just as again and again in the Books of Kings and Chronicles we have allusions to the other books of reference written by prophets and scribes.

Two other remarks we make. First, what we may call the rejected line is always mentioned first; then the accepted line: Adam before Noah: The sons of Noah before Shem: Ishmael before Isaac; Esau before Jacob. Thus from the outset do we see indicated what is so clear in the New Testament, and plainly stated in Hebrews 10: 9, "He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second."

Then, second, we note that chronology is always confined to the selected line. God only counts the years in regard to these while the others He leaves unregistered. This is in keeping with what we find in Matthew 1, where in the fourteen generations between David and the captivity, kings who apostatized over Baal are omitted. God's thoughts and ways in these matters are not what ours would naturally be.

In verse 4 also we notice a change in the Divine Name: not now, as in Genesis 1, "God," (Elohim), but "LORD God," (Jehovah Elohim); and this name characterizes the whole passage to the end of Genesis 3. Based on this fact, the so-called "Higher Critics" many years ago began to build their theories as to Genesis being just a patchwork composition by nobody knows whom, but at any rate not written by Moses. The truth is, of course, that the Name is intentionally varied to suit the theme in hand. In Genesis 1 it is God in His supremacy, creating by His word. In Genesis 2 and Genesis 3 it is God placing man, His intelligent and responsible creature, in relation with Himself. — whether in his original innocence or afterwards in his fallen condition — hence **Jehovah** comes in, since this name sets Him forth as self-existing, unvarying, faithful to His covenant, as is shown in Exodus 6: 24. It is exactly the way in which He made Himself known to Moses, the writer of Genesis.

Verses 5-7, of our chapter, give us several additional details of the creation, and of man in particular. Verse 5 emphasizes that the vegetable creation came straight from the hand of God and was not produced by natural causes, such as rain, nor by man's cultivating skill. Verse 6 shows that it was maintained by a mist which rose from the earth itself, without water descending from above. Waters there were "above the firmament" (Genesis 1: 7), but as yet they had not descended as showers on the earth. Not till Genesis 7: 4, do we read of rain. Some think that the watering of the earth by mist and not rain persisted until the time of the flood. It may have been so.

Verse 7 is very important, giving us man's spiritual constitution by God's original creative act. The material part of man — his body — is composed of the elements that are found in the dust of the earth, but there is also the immaterial part. He is a living soul, as were the animals whose creation is recorded in Genesis 1. It is the way in which man became a living soul that altogether distinguishes him from the animal creation. Only man became a living entity by the Lord God breathing into his nostrils the breath of life. As the result of this Divine act man became possessed of spirit as well as soul.

This great act stands good not only for Adam, the first man, but also for all his race. Hence in the book of Job we find Elihu saying, "The Spirit of God hath made me and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life" (Job 33: 4). We all can say the same today. The possession of spirit by the inbreathing of the Almighty is man's distinguishing feature. This act also defined man's relation with his Creator. God is a Spirit and so man, possessing spirit by God's inbreathing, was fitted to represent Him, made in His image, after His likeness, as we saw in Genesis 1.

Man being thus created, a Garden of delights was formed for his dwelling place. The name Eden has the meaning of "Pleasure," and every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food was there, so for the sustainment of life and the giving of pleasure nothing was lacking. Two trees are specially mentioned. The tree of life was surely a witness to the fact that there was a life distinct from that which man already possessed, and that it was put within his reach. On the other hand the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was to remind him of his responsibility, and prove a test to it.

The location of Eden is indicated in verses 10-11. Two of the rivers can easily be identified; the other two very uncertainly. It seems certain that it lay somewhere to the east of the Euphrates, in a district noted for gold and precious stones and fragrant resin — for that is what bdellium is supposed to be.

The Ethiopia of verse 13 is really Cush, of whom we read in Genesis 10: 6. There appears to have been a district bearing his name between Mesopotamia and India, as well as the better known land we now call Abyssinia.

In this Garden man was put, not to be idle and while away his time, but to dress and keep it. Even

when in a state of innocence it was not good for man to have nothing to do. There was healthful occupation without hard labour and drudgery.

In our minds we often couple innocence and irresponsibility together; as in the case, for instance of a very small child. In verses 16 and 17, however, we find that Adam though created in a state of innocence was put in a place of responsibility. He had no knowledge of good and evil, so that one tree was forbidden to him, though he might eat freely of every other tree in the garden. He was put under law in the simplest way, for the law consisted of only one commandment and that commandment concerned with only one tree. He might have had many commands given to him of an intricate and confusing nature or alternatively, he might have been forbidden all the trees in the garden save one. As it was, the Divine command was cut down to the barest minimum, just sufficient to keep before him that as the creature he must be subject to the Creator and walk in obedience.

Moreover, he was warned as to the consequence of disobedience. If he acquired the knowledge of good and evil by disobedience, he would be unable to perform the good because enslaved by the evil. This would bring him under the power of death immediately. As we discover in the next chapter, he would not at once suffer the death of the body, which involves the dissolution of existing personality by separating the spiritual part from the material part of man. But he would at once suffer complete severance spiritually and morally from God, his Creator, which is death in its more intense form. In that sense he would die the very day in which he ate of the forbidden tree. To obey the one prohibition was his responsibility.

We are introduced to another great thought of God in verse 18. Man was not created to be an altogether self-sufficient being. He needed not only companionship but an "helpmeet" or "counterpart." We see the goodness of God as well as His wisdom in the way by which the counterpart came into being. The object being the good and profit of Adam, he was allowed to see for himself that no such counterpart existed in the animal creation by the whole range of beasts and fowls being brought before him.

Adam was evidently at the height of his intellectual powers before they had been in any way tarnished by sin. He was able to discern in each case the characteristic feature, so as to give the suitable name, for the names of course were descriptive and not just fancy words meaning nothing. Adam had both intellect and language, with command of speech. And just because he had, he found no counterpart in the animal creation.

In Ephesians 1: 23 we have the church spoken of as not only the "body" but also the "fulness" of Christ; which word signifies "that which fills up" or the "complement." What we have in Genesis is a foreshadowing of this. We must remember that in creating the first man God had the Second Man before Him, and therefore in a number of features Adam was "the figure of Him that was to come" (Rom. 5: 14). At the point we have now reached this figure begins to come clearly before us. The Son of Man is to have a far wider and greater dominion over all creation than ever Adam had, but in that exalted place He is not to be alone, but to have His complement or counterpart.

Hence in verses 22 and 23 we find woman made in a way that is full of typical significance. In the deep sleep we see that which foreshadowed the death of Christ. Woman was a part of man and designed as his counterpart. She was a rib of his body made into a separate being, which could be presented to him. In this was foreshadowed the fact that the church would be both the body and the bride of Christ. It is remarkable too that the word "made" in verse 22 is really "builded" as the margin shows, thus agreeing with the word of our Lord, "I will build My church" (Matt. 16: 18). Ephesians 5: 23-33 is our warrant for the above, and also shows us that God's action here was designed to

foreshadow the truth concerning Christ and the church.

In verses 23 and 24 we get a new word used for man. Up to the end of verse 22 the word is always "Adam," and in verses 26-28, of Genesis 1, this word covers both man and woman, for it says, "God created **man** . . . male and female created He **them**." Now we have "Ish," and woman is "Isha," because she is taken out of him, and takes character from him. Here again we see a type fulfilled in Christ and the church. The church is of Christ and takes character from Him. If however 1 Corinthians 12: 12, 13, be read, we find the human body used as an illustration of the body of Christ; but verse 12 ends, not "so also is the body of Christ," but "so also is Christ." Here Christ, or more accurately, "the Christ," is used as a term which includes His body, just as "Adam" was used to include Eve. These things are worthy of note for they emphasize and illustrate the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures.

Verse 24 puts on record the thought of God as to marriage from the outset, and to this the Lord Jesus appealed when answering the Pharisees, as recorded in Matthew 19: 3-9. Deviation from this Divine thought and order, or worse still the denial of it, has probably been the cause of more sin and misery in the world than any other single fount of iniquity. When maturity is reached, a man is to leave father and mother and to found a new family, adhering to one woman as his wife. Thus they become one flesh. As we have just seen, Adam and Eve were one flesh to start with, since she was taken out of him.

This Divine ordinance, if observed, is a great protection for woman; needed because she is at a disadvantage compared with man in more ways than one. In the heathen world it is unknown and in consequence woman becomes a mere chattel, bought and sold and misused by man. In some quarters she is regarded as though she were a distinct and inferior species. These errors, and the abuses originating from them, cannot live in the light of the truth we have here. Woman is not only of the same species as man but in her origin was of his very flesh and bone — taken out of man.

The last verse emphasizes how complete was the state of innocence in which they were created. Sin having come in, all is changed. Savages may still be found in a state of almost complete nudity but they are of the most degraded type. The tendency towards it, in lands where the light of the Gospel has been shining, presages a descent into apostasy.

Chapter 3 opens, "Now the serpent was more subtil . . ." He wormed his way into this fair scene of innocence. How much more easily will he deceive the silly creatures — men and women — who try to behave as though they were innocent when they possess fallen and lustful natures.

## **Genesis 3: 1-20.**

The serpent is introduced to us without any explanation as to the power working in and through him. From verse 1 we gather that he was amongst the beasts of the field that God had made, and that he was "more subtil," — of a higher order of intelligence — than any other, so that when energized by a higher power, speech was a possibility. The whole serpent tribe, as we know it today, is in a state of great degradation, as verse 14 of our chapter would lead us to expect. As originally created it stood at the head of the animal world, which had been made subject to Adam.

As far as our chapter is concerned, then, it is just the serpent, the visible agent of the mischief, that is mentioned. So also, in 2 Corinthians 11: 3 we read, "the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty." It is not until we reach the last book of the Bible that we get the clearest identification of the serpent with the unseen actor working through it. There twice over in almost identical words do we get, "that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan" (Rev. 12: 9; 20: 2). He is the originator and instigator of

that fearful thing, sin, which has invaded this fair creation. Let us mark how he did it.

His first move was to throw doubt on the Word of God. Very little as yet had been revealed, but on one point God had spoken clearly and decisively. The serpent questioned that revelation, distorting what God had said while he questioned it, so as to make his insinuation of doubt more plausible. Moreover he addressed himself, not to the man who was primarily responsible, but to the woman. Of the two links in the human chain she was the weaker, and the adversary struck just there.

In her reply the woman maintained that God had indeed spoken, but she fell into the error of adding to His words, for He had not said, "neither shall ye touch it." To add to His words is as mischievous a thing as subtracting from them. The more one realizes the overwhelming authority of the words of God the more careful one would be in quoting them. It looks as if that authority was already weakened in the woman's mind.

Having gained this initial advantage the serpent struck a far heavier blow, as recorded in verse 4. He boldly denied the word of God. God had plainly stated that if man disobeyed he would involve himself in ruin and death as an inevitable consequence. The serpent denied that any such consequence would follow.

Then he supported this denial by the audacious assertion that the real reason for the prohibition was that God knew that if man partook of the forbidden tree he would be immensely elevated — he would have his eyes opened, knowing good and evil and becoming "as gods." Though he would not become the Lord God, yet he would become an independent being and an object of veneration himself. Thus he blackened the Divine character, representing God as desiring to prevent man being a possible rival to Himself, and to keep him from what was to his advantage. He practically asserted that deity in a modified form was a possibility for man.

Thus the way of disobedience was seductively dressed up as the illuminated highway to enlarged knowledge and vastly increased importance. In truth it proved to be a dark and depressing road to utter disaster. Knowledge of good and evil there would be, but without power to do the good or to avoid the evil. Whoever commits sin becomes the slave of sin, as our Lord said so emphatically in John 8: 34.

All this sheds much light upon our own times. We have the word of God in the Divine Writings — the Holy Scriptures — but as the centuries passed they became inoperative, because withheld from the people and buried in an unknown tongue. About four centuries ago they were unearthed, translated, circulated, and their light once again began to shine. Then about the middle of the eighteenth century the devil's counter-attack was formally launched, and the same tactics employed.

First, came the questioning of Divine revelation, the casting of doubt on the word of God in the so-called "higher criticism" of the Bible. Second, there came the denial of the ruin of man and of the fact that death is the wages of sin. The fact of death cannot of course be denied, but it can be regarded as a debt that we all pay to nature, so as to clear the way for men of a higher and yet higher character to be evolved. Third, came the bold assertion of deity — of a sort - for man. Man is considered the most god-like being of which we have any certain knowledge. This deification of man will come to a head in the antichrist that is yet to be. The root of all this is seen in Genesis 3.

The trap set by the serpent was cunningly devised. Verse 6 shows that the fruit of the tree had its natural appeal to the flesh. It was "pleasant" or "a desire," to the eyes, and further the lie of the devil so presented it as to appeal to pride. The elements of the world, according to 1 John 2: 16, were all present, and in their cumulative effect overwhelmed the woman. She acted independently of God and of her husband. She took and did eat the fruit. She gave to her husband, who wrongfully accepted her

lead in the matter, and he too disobeyed.

This account of the fall, given to us by God, is often refused and even ridiculed. The awful evil that fills the earth cannot be denied, but to declare, they say, that it all sprang from Adam disobediently eating so small a thing as an apple is quite absurd. The absurdity however is on the part of those who think thus. The devil is far too astute to try inserting first the thick end of the wedge. Just as a railway train is only diverted from the main line to a branch over very fine points, so man slipped from the line of disobedience over what appeared on the surface to be a small thing. There was no shortage or want, urging to this disobedience. They were not hungry. It was just pure defiance of God's command, just that lawlessness which is sin, according to the correct translation of 1 John 3: 4.

The man and his wife were now creatures fallen from their original estate, and the results of this fall begin to unroll themselves. First, in verse 7, we have the effect upon themselves. In innocence they had been happily free from self-consciousness, as we saw in the last verse of Genesis 2. Now they were very self-conscious and ashamed, and stirred to feeble and ineffectual attempts to hide their shame. We say **feeble**, because everyone who knows the shape of a fig leaf must admit that any apron sewed from such must have been elaborate patchwork and easily destroyed. We say **ineffectual**, because verse 10 shows that immediately Adam found himself in the presence of God he confessed himself as naked, just as though the fig leaf apron had never been made.

Second, we have that which verse 8 emphasizes. Their relations with God were ruined. Gone was the happy footing that had existed for so short a time between a beneficent God and His innocent creature. Alienation had come in. The presence of the Lord God inspired them with fear and not pleasure. Their one idea was to hide themselves from Him, and for that purpose they would use the very trees of the garden, which had been given to them for their food and their pleasure. Thus the earthly and material blessings granted to them they turned into a curse.

Verses 7 and 8 are full of gloom. A ray of light however appears in verse 9. The Lord God might instantly have discarded the guilty pair and consigned them to their doom. Instead of that He sought them out; a sure indication that He had designs for their ultimate blessing. His call was, "Where art thou?" In response to this Adam had to reveal his whereabouts, and by attempting to cover his nakedness he uncovered his sin.

What is man's position as a fallen sinner? Where is he, now that he has broken loose from the Divine control? This is the first question of the Old Testament, and the rest of it works out the answer in all its hideous detail, till we come to the closing chapter of Malachi, ending with the significant word, "curse." We open the New Testament and not without design do we find the first question on record to be "Where is He . . .?" (Matt. 2: 2). We read on, to discover the glorious answer to this, and close the Revelation with Jesus as the coming One, the bright, morning Star, and meanwhile His grace resting as a benediction upon all His saints. The contrast is complete.

Having constituted Adam as the responsible head, the Lord God dealt directly with him, and challenged him as to his disobedience. Adam admitted it, and what he said in verse 12 was true, but stated so as to cast the blame on Eve, and even in an indirect manner upon God Himself. "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me" led me into this disobedience; the inference being that if God had not presented Eve to him all would have been well. Man's deep-seated sinful instincts are at once revealed. If he cannot deny his guilt he will blame somebody else, and if possible blame God.

In turning to the woman the Lord God asked a second question as to what she had done. The first had raised the question of man's state; now the second challenges his acts. Eve admitted she had eaten of the tree but blamed the serpent. As with Adam so again here, what she said was true, for the serpent

did beguile her, but her effort clearly was to shift the onus of the act from herself. In this connection Romans 2: 15 is very illuminating, though we have to add that apart from the working of the Spirit of God in the conscience the invariable tendency of sinful men is to indulge in the "accusing" of others and the "excusing" of themselves. So it was at the outset, but the truth was now out, as to the man, and the woman, and the serpent.

This being so, the Lord God pronounced the judgment that was to fall upon the sinners, beginning with the serpent and working back to the man. The serpent is recognized as the originator of the mischief; hence for him it is all judgment without a ray of light. The woman and the man were his victims; hence the only gleam is reserved for them.

The solemn words of verse 14 apply entirely to the serpent as a creature which God had made. It is degraded from the highest to the lowest place in the scale of creation. The opening words of verse 15 apply in the same way. The average man, if he spies a serpent, has only one thought — to kill it! The second part of the verse has in view however the great spiritual foe, who was operating through the serpent.

He has a "seed;" that is, progeny who are of his order in a spiritual sense, and they with him are in deadly enmity and opposition to the "Seed" of the woman. In the mention of this "Seed," we have the first intimation of the great Deliverer, the Christ, who was one day to come.

The first prediction of the Christ, then, came from the Lord God Himself and was entrusted to no human lips. It is, we may say, the germinal thought out of which every subsequent prophecy sprang, and it contains at least four very striking features.

Firstly, all through the realms of creation, from man downwards, seed appertains to the male and not the female. Hence the seed of the woman is not according to nature as we know it. It is something outside that which had just been constituted and points forward to a new creation. The Lord Jesus was born of a virgin and here we have the first intimation of that fact, which is a vital one. No taint of the fall attached to Him. He was not merely innocent, as was Adam at the start. He was holy.

Secondly, this announcement of the Seed of the woman was given before any "seed," or race of Adam had appeared or even been mentioned. That seed only appears at the start of Genesis 4, and a sorry start it is. Adam is recognized in Scripture as the first man and the head of the race that sprang from him through the woman. Christ is the Second Man and the Leader of God's chosen race. But the Second Man was always first in the thought of God, and evidence of this we find here.

Thirdly, the conflict between the two seeds is to end in the complete victory of the woman's Seed. He is to "bruise," or "crush" the serpent's head, the head being the seat of its life and intelligence. The bright gleam of hope, given at the very moment of the entrance of sin, contained then not only the announcement of the coming of a Deliverer — a Man of another order — but also of His full victory over the author of the disaster, reducing him to eternal impotence. How much our first parents understood of this is another matter. But there the announcement stood right from the outset.

Fourthly, it was intimated that this overwhelming victory should cost some suffering to the Victor. The serpent in the process of the conflict should bruise His heel. In walking, the heel is the first part of the foot to come into contact with the earth. The figure of speech is a telling one, for it was when He first touched the earth in His holy Manhood that the Victor suffered. He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death — that death that was instigated by the craft of Satan.

Having dealt with the serpent the Lord God turned to the woman. A twofold judgment fell upon her; the result in God's government of her sin. Childbirth was to become a time of sorrow and suffering

for her, and she was more definitely made subject to the rule of her husband. There has been much scheming in our day to get rid of both these things, but nothing can really abolish them.

Then Adam came up for judgment, and the governmental effects of his sin are more clearly seen. He had hearkened to the voice of his wife instead of hearkening to what God had said, and now he must face the fruits of it. The ground is cursed for his sake. He must earn his livelihood from it with sweat and sorrow until death should overtake him, when his body should return to the dust out of which it was taken. Nothing is said here as to his soul and spirit, for it is the governmental rather than the eternal consequences that are in view. There is an equal amount of scheming to get rid of the sweat and toil and men may think they are going to achieve it. But already we have heard the slogan, "We work or we want;" to that we may add, "We sweat or we starve;" for we can no more dodge that part of the curse than we can escape death.

It was at this point apparently that Adam gave the name of Eve to his wife. She is the mother of all living. Ages had to pass and another woman be found before the Seed of the woman appeared.

### **Genesis 3: 21; Genesis 4: 26.**

The promise of God that there should arise a Deliverer, who should break the power of the adversary, was supplemented by an act of God, which shed light on the way the deliverance would be brought to pass. Adam and his wife had attempted to cover their nakedness with fig-leaf aprons, and had failed. The Lord God did cover them with coats of skins. Now skins are not a vegetable but an animal product, and only available to clothe man when death has come upon the animal that produced them. Here then we find the primitive revelation of the fact that man can only stand clothed before God on the basis of death. He must own that the death sentence, which righteously lies upon him, has been endured by another in his stead.

The act that revealed this was followed by another act of God equally significant. Man had acquired the knowledge of good and evil without any power to achieve the good but rather with an acute propensity to the evil. Lest he should perpetuate his living in this condition he was driven forth from the garden of Eden, and his way back to the tree of life was barred by the cherubim with a flaming sword. This was doubtless an additional act of judgment but it contained within itself a strong element of mercy.

Supposing Adam had been able to put forth his hand and eat of the tree of life, what would have been the result? He would have perpetuated his condition of sin and misery, making himself a deathless creature in a hell of his own devising. That would have been bad enough. But it would have been a much worse disaster in this respect, that even by becoming Man it would not have been possible for Christ to die. His death has become to us the door into life. In eating of the tree of life Adam would have closed and barred that door. We may well thank God for the cherubim and the flaming sword!

Our first parents had now lost their innocence, lost their Paradise, and lost such happy communion with God as they had at the beginning. They had gained the knowledge of good and evil, but only to find themselves enslaved by the evil, and they had brought themselves and the creation beneath them under a curse. Under these sad conditions the propagation of the race began, as stated in the first verse of Genesis 4.

The first man to be born of woman appeared and Eve thought she had acquired him "from" or "with" the Lord, and hence the name that was given to him. We are not told what Adam said but only what she said, so it may have been again the case that she took the leading place which belonged to her

husband. Anyway she again was wrong, for Cain was not from the Lord, but rather "of that wicked one" (1 John 3: 12). The Lord Jesus told the Jews that the devil "was a murderer from the beginning," and again that "he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8: 44). We see him as the liar in Genesis 3, and as the murderer in Genesis 4.

When the second son appeared a name was given him more in accord with the fallen state of mankind; Abel meaning **Vanity** or **Transitoriness**. At this point the record of Adam's family stops, and we hear no more as to them until we come to the end of our chapter. Adam doubtless had many sons and daughters but God's object in Genesis is not to give us history, but to furnish us with sufficient detail to instruct us in His governmental dealings with fallen men, and that with a view to their ultimate deliverance and blessing.

When Adam was expelled from the Garden he was bidden to go forth and "till the earth," so there was no fault to be found with the occupation that Cain followed. Abel became a shepherd, since sheep are defenceless creatures and man's fall had produced wild beasts. Man had revolted from God, and feared His presence. The animal creation, broadly speaking, consequently revolted from man, and feared his presence.

Yet a day came when both brothers felt they ought to render some tribute to the Creator and seek a basis of approach to Him. In the sacrificial offering that Abel brought we see the second foreshadowing or type of the death of Christ. The first was in the coats of skins that clothed the guilty pair, where we discover that only by death can man's nakedness and sin be **covered**. Now we advance a step and find that the only basis of **approach** recognized by God is the death of an acceptable sacrifice.

In Cain's offering, there was no recognition of this. He brought the fruit of the ground which God had cursed — though probably he brought the finest produce of the toil of his own hands — and in this there was no acknowledgment of the death sentence that lay upon him. He was like a condemned criminal under sentence of death, seeking to curry favour with his judge by bribing him with something nice. Whatever an earthly judge might be tempted to do, God had no respect to this manoeuvre, and he found himself rejected.

Abel's offering involved the death of the sheep, as is evidenced by the words, "and of the fat thereof." At this point Hebrews 11: 4 should be read. It shows us that his offering was an act of faith — the first to be put on record. Now faith lays hold on what God has revealed. If we ask what had been revealed for Abel's faith to apprehend, we can only refer to what we have in verse 21 of Genesis 3. Abel apprehended the significance of the coats of skins, and hence by his offering acknowledged that he was a sinner under the death sentence, and could only approach on the ground of the death of a victim. Cain had no faith, He ignored this, and approached under false pretences.

Thus almost at the start we see human life like a river dividing into two diverging and even opposite streams, which have continued to this day. Hence we regard this incident as one of the most fundamental in the whole Bible, and lay the greatest stress upon it. Near the end of the New Testament we read of a "Woe" that rests on those who "have gone in the way of Cain" (Jude 11), and the number of those doing this — even though they might wish to be called "Christian" - has greatly increased in our day. The verse in Jude shows it to be the first of three steps that lead down to perishing in utter apostasy.

On the other hand, Abel stands at the head of the men of faith, who are recognized in Hebrews 11. The sacrifice he offered was "more excellent," and to it God bore testimony, accepting it in some way that was visible and definite, and this acceptance was clear evidence to Abel that he was righteous, or in other words, right with God. **Yet even** today there are to be found not a few who do sincerely trust

is Christ and through a defective understanding of the Gospel, considering themselves rather than the Divine testimony, they have their doubts as to how they stand with God. Amazing, is it not? to think that nearly four thousand years before Christ came, Abel enjoyed what many are missing nineteen centuries after He has come.

Rejected by God, Cain became very angry with God, and wreaked his vengeance on the man of faith whom God had accepted. The picture is true to life, for the same thing has been re-enacted times without number in the history of the world. Cain was not irreligious. Had he been, he would not have troubled himself even to make an attempt at approaching God. No! He was a religionist, and just because he was, anger and hatred filled his breast. God. was beyond his reach. He could not strike at Him. Abel was well within his reach, so the blow was effectually aimed at him. The most prominent example of this in the New Testament is Saul of Tarsus. He hated Jesus of Nazareth with an intense hatred, and because He was in glory beyond his reach he struck at His followers on earth.

Cain became a murderer in spite of God having remonstrated with him, reminding him that, in spite of what had happened, his rights as the elder brother should be respected — Abel having the subject place — and indicating where the mischief, and perhaps the remedy, lay. We are told that the Hebrew word translated "sin" also has the meaning of "sin-offering." So it may literally have been that there was almost at his feet a lamb which he might even at this juncture have brought as a sacrifice, and thus have put himself right with God.

Slaying his brother, Cain revealed himself to be "of that wicked one," and he did it because " his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." He proved himself moreover to be not only a murderer as regards his brother but utterly defiant as regards God. Challenged as to his brother's whereabouts, he showed not the slightest sign of repentance, but rather a truculent spirit that feared not God, and made a play in words upon the fact that Abel had been a "keeper" of sheep. He was not going to admit that he was "keeper" to Abel!

But Abel's blood from the ground had uttered its voice into the ear of God, and swiftly a special curse descended upon him, in addition to the curse that had already fallen upon Adam and his race, as we saw in Genesis 3. Adam was to obtain his food only by the sweat of his face, but Cain was to find the earth unproductive even if he laboured to till it, so that he would become a wanderer, fleeing from the face of God Verse 14 shows that Cain realized the significance of this curse and declared it was too great to be borne. From that day to this sinful men, **if unrepentant**, have complained of the severity of God's judgment. Only when men are repentant do they bow and humbly own that God's judgment is just.

Without a doubt there is in mankind an instinct that urges them to avenge wanton murder by the death of the murderer. Cain himself had that instinct and anticipated that some others of his brethren would slay him. No government was yet instituted in the earth and therefore God would allow no punitive action to be taken against Cain. When government in its most primitive form was instituted, then action was to be taken, as we see in verses 5 and 6 of Genesis 9.

In the last verse of Genesis 3, Adam was driven out of the Garden; in verse 16 of our chapter Cain "went out from the presence of the Lord." The one was a compulsory judgment; the other a deliberate forsaking. To an unrepentant murderer the presence of God was abhorrent. We read in Romans 1 of the barbarians that, "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge," and this was exactly the case with Cain. He departed to the land of "Nod," or "Wandering," carrying with him a wife and a son, and there he built a "city," some primitive kind of stronghold. As far as he could, he defied God's sentence upon him, and showed that he distrusted what God had done that he might not be slain. If the earth was not

going to yield its produce for him, then let others have the trouble of cultivating it! Rather than wander he would settle down and protect himself!

With this we take leave of Cain. Verse 18 merely mentions the names of his more immediate descendants. Verse 19 stops at Lamech to give us a few details. Remarkably enough this man was the seventh from Adam in the line of Cain, just as Enoch was in the line through Seth. In the details given we see the world system beginning to take shape. Its basic principles are revealed to us, and they agree with the analysis given to us in 1 John 2: 16.

It was Lamech apparently who first broke through the Divine ordinance as to marriage of one man with one woman, and instituted polygamy. He was a forceful character who intended to do **what he liked**, and not what God had said. Here, without any question, we see the lust of the flesh raising its ugly head.

The two wives bare children and in the details given as to them we see the lust of the eyes appearing, for that term covers man's search for what appeals to the inner eyes of his mind as well as spectacular shows that appeal to the eyes of his head. In Lamech's family there was the beginning of the life of freedom and the acquiring of wealth — for in primitive times a man's possessions lay in his herds — the beginning also of the arts and sciences in music; and the beginning of applied science in manufactures, especially in brass and iron. Here mankind started its career of expanding inventiveness, which in our day has reached the atom bomb stage. Man's eyes of lust have probed all too deeply into the secrets of the earth, and how much further they will penetrate before God drops the extinguisher upon all his projects by the appearing of Christ in flaming fire — who can say?

Lamech's daughter, Naamah, is the first woman to be mentioned after Eve. This is, we judge, because her name has the meaning of **Pleasure** or **Charming**. If we add pleasure, and its pursuit, to the features we have just noticed, we have the foundation principles on which man's world is based.

Lamech's speech to his wives may seem a little obscure, but the rendering of the New Translation, "**for** my wounding," and "**for** my hurt," makes it clearer. Some unfortunate young man had wounded and hurt Lamech, who in revenge, simply rose up and slew him. When Cain had murdered centuries before, he betrayed some sense of wrongdoing. Not so Lamech, who came home to brag to his wives of what he had done, and to make scornful allusion to God's action in forbidding revengeful action against Cain. If Cain was to be avenged sevenfold, why, he would be seventy and sevenfold. He felt himself to be eleven times more important than Cain. Here was the pride of life in high degree!

In this man, then, the seventh from Adam, we see both corruption and violence coming plainly to light. All evil may be classified broadly under these two heads, and evidently Lamech's polygamy and murder quickly bore their bitter fruit until just before the flood, "the earth also was **corrupt** before God, and the earth was **filled** with **violence**." It is a sad fact that in our day, and in lands where for long the light of the Gospel has been shining, similar conditions are rapidly multiplying.

The two verses that conclude our chapter carry us back long before the days of Lamech, for the next chapter tells us that Adam was 130 years old when Seth was born. Many children may have been born between Abel and Seth, but they are passed over in silence for Seth was the seed appointed to carry on the line of faith, as contrasted with the line of Cain. That Seth was a man of faith we gather from the name he gave his son — Enos signifying **mortal, weak**.

One of the first signs of faith springing up in the heart is that a man acknowledges himself to be a sinful creature under the death sentence. The next thing is that in the light of this he begins to call upon the Name of the Lord. So the closing words of our chapter are very striking. In the New Testament we

find that "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10: 13).

## Genesis 5: 1 — Genesis 7: 16.

Another section of Genesis starts with Genesis 5, the preface to it being found in verses 1 and 2. Herein the unity of the human race is again stressed, for though Adam called his wife's name **Isha** (Genesis 2: 26) and then Eve (Genesis 3: 20) God blessed them and called **their** name **Adam** from the outset. So Eve too was Adam jointly with her husband. This is not surprising, when we remember that the relationship of husband and wife was designed of God as a type of Christ and the church. So in 1 Corinthians 12: 12 we have "Christ," or, more accurately, "the Christ," used in a way that covers both Christ personally and His body, the church.

Until we reach Enoch the antediluvian patriarchs are mentioned without comment, save their age when the son was born in whom the line of faith and promise was continued, and the total years of their long lives.. Enoch was the seventh from Adam, as we are reminded in the epistle of Jude, and he was an outstanding character, as outstanding for good as Lamech, the seventh from Adam in the line of Cain, had been for evil. If in the one we see the world in its rebellion and sinfulness beginning to take shape, in the other we see the believer's separate pathway through the world.

Enoch walked with God, and as God and the world walk on wholly different planes, the walk of Enoch was of necessity apart from the men of his age. He was no recluse for he begat sons and daughters, and moreover he boldly prophesied, as Jude tells us, predicting the coming of the Lord in judgment upon the ungodly men of his own age, and indeed of all the ages. When he had completed 365 years, "he was not; for God took him." The significance of this is made quite plain in Hebrews 11: 5. He "was translated that he should not see death." This indicates plainly that he was removed because death threatened him.

Seeing that he had barely reached half the average age of the antediluvians, we may feel inclined to enquire how it came to pass that death threatened him, and the more so when we read that, "he was not found, because God had translated him." Why use the word "found" if he had not been sought? Moreover Lamech's murderous act, recorded in the previous chapter, must have taken place some centuries earlier. We judge this was so because Lamech came of the line of Cain which had a start of 130 years over the line of Seth. It apparently started the orgy of violence which filled the earth, according to the next chapter, and helped to provoke the flood. We judge therefore that Enoch's bold denunciation of the outrageous ungodliness which in his time began to fill the earth, would have moved the ungodly to slay him. But when they determined to strike and sought him, he was not there, for God had translated him.

The flood was God's governmental wrath falling upon the ungodly world, and the case of Noah shows us that God knows how to carry saints safely through such a period. But the case of Enoch furnishes us with an example of how God may be pleased to remove a saint to heaven without dying, before His wrath falls. In this Enoch foreshadows the removal of the church before the vials of Divine wrath are poured upon the earth in the great tribulation. It is thank God, definitely stated that "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5: 9). A simple summary of Enoch's life would be: He **walked with God**; he **witnessed for God**; he **went to God**, without seeing death.

When we reach Noah, the tenth from Adam, the history again expands. To begin with, his father Lamech at his birth named him with prophetic insight. He acknowledged that the earth was under the

curse of God and anticipated that his son would bring rest or comfort. This he did by building the ark at the command of God, thus carrying a few, that is, eight souls, into a new world. He lived apparently to the great age of 500 years before begetting his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Shem is mentioned first, not because he was the oldest but because his was the line in which faith was preserved. He was apparently the second son, for Ham is called the "younger son" (Genesis 9: 24), and Japheth is called "the elder" (Genesis 10: 21).

We get a further example of this kind of thing when we come to Abraham, at the end of Genesis 11 and this leads us to remark that it is not safe to lay too much stress on chronologies deduced from the details given in our chapter as to the ages of these patriarchs. It is easy to do this, and to make the years from the creation of Adam to the flood to be 1,656. But then the version of the Old Testament in Greek, known as the Septuagint, made about a couple of centuries before the time of our Lord, and, we are told, often quoted by Him, differs from the Hebrew. Adam's age when Seth was born is given as 230, and his subsequent years as 700. The same feature marks the next four patriarchs and also Enoch, so this at once adds 600 years to the calculation. There is also a difference of six years in the case of Lamech the father of Noah, which brings up the total years according to the Septuagint, to 2,262.

The same thing appears when we come to the ages of the patriarchs after the flood in Genesis 11. Here the Septuagint version would add 650 years to the chronology we should deduce. This is the explanation of the difference between Usher's chronology, following the Hebrew, and that of Hales, following the Greek. Some of the earliest "Christian Fathers," asserted that the years were curtailed by the Jews in the Hebrew, in order to oppose the argument of Christians using the Septuagint, that the Messiah appeared in the sixth millennium from Adam, as their tradition had led them to expect.

Be that as it may, the one thing that seems certain is that we cannot arrive at absolute certainty as to these matters, hence it would seem to be rather a waste of time to give much thought as to them. It is quite possible that when the Apostle Paul warned Timothy about "endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith," he had in mind such things as these. Had the exact number of years been of importance from a spiritual standpoint, it would have been made quite clear to us in the Scriptures.

As we open Genesis 6 we are carried on to the later centuries of the antediluvian age, when the population had considerably increased and human wickedness began to rise to a climax. Many have understood the term, "sons of God," to refer to men of Seth's line — the line of faith — who fell away and married daughters of Cain's line, but we agree with those who accept the term as meaning beings of an angelic order, as it clearly does in such scriptures as Job 1: 6 and Job 2: 1 and Job 38: 7. How such connection can have been established, resulting in progeny superhuman in size and strength, we do not know, but we believe that Jude 6 and 7 confirm what we are saying. Sodom and Gomorrha went after "strange flesh," committing such enormous evil as is forbidden in Exodus 22: 19, and these sons of God did the same thing in principle, by going after the daughters of men. Thereby they apostatized, leaving their first estate, and lest they should repeat the offence they are held in everlasting chains under darkness until eternal perdition falls upon them. They will be finally judged at the great day of the great white throne.

In Genesis however, we are only told about the terrible effect of this in the world of men. The monstrous men produced were monsters of iniquity, filling the earth with violence and corruption. Yet man in his fallen condition is such that these monsters instead of being considered men of **infamy** were treated as men of **renown**. They were the originals doubtless from whom sprang those tales of "gods" and "goddesses" and "Titans," etc., which have come down to us in the writings of antiquity. They are

popularly dismissed as fables, but it looks as if they have a larger basis of fact than many care to admit.

How incisive is verse 5! Man's wickedness became great, or abundant, for he was wholly evil in the deepest springs of his being. His **heart** was evil; the **thoughts** of his heart were evil, and the **imagination**, which lay behind and prompted his thoughts, was evil. And all this was **only** evil - not one trace of good — and that **continually**. Thus **before** the flood we have exactly the same verdict as to man as is presented to us in Romans 3: 10-18, by quotations extracted from scriptures, which describe the condition of men **after** the flood.

In verse 6 we are told how all this affected the Lord, and here for the first time we have human feelings attributed to God. Only thus could we have any understanding of such a matter, and there is nothing incongruous in it, inasmuch as man has been made in the image and likeness of God. Only there must be an intensity and elevation in the Divine thoughts and feelings altogether unknown by man. How great must have been His grief! All good at the outset, and now all so abominable, that nothing could meet the case but the total destruction of mankind, with but few exceptions, and also of the animate creation that had been committed to man's hand.

There was just one man that found grace in the eyes of the Lord. In this connection nothing is said of his wife nor of his three sons and their wives. Noah was a man of faith. Shem may have been the same. Ham, we know was not, and of the others we have no information, but as Hebrews 11 says, "Noah . . . moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." Faith on his part accepted the Divine warning, which moved him to **fear**. **Fear** moved him to act.

How the men of that age viewed the state of things that had developed in their midst we are not told, but to God it had become absolutely intolerable, so that He had to say, "The end of all flesh is come before Me . . . behold, I will destroy them with the earth." His Spirit should not always strive with man, and so a limit of 120 years was set. God thus condemned the world, and by building the ark Noah "condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

In his second epistle Peter tells us that Noah was "a preacher of righteousness." It was the period when "the longsuffering of God waited," as he said in his first epistle. Noah showed men what was morally and practically right in the sight of God, but it was without any fruit, for his hearers were disobedient and their spirits are now in prison. Only of Noah could God say, "Thee have I seen righteous before Me in this generation" (Gen. 7: 1). Righteousness for men was not fully accomplished until the death and resurrection of Christ, and of that righteousness Noah became an **heir**. The believer of today is not an heir of righteousness, for he possesses it. He is an heir of the great inheritance, which is vested in Christ.

Noah was the builder but God was the Designer of the ark. The door was in the side to allow easy access by men, but the window was above, to let in light from heaven and shut out any view of the watery waste presently to be. Its dimensions were large. The cubit is computed to have been from 18 to 22 inches in length, and as it was made simply to float and not shaped like a ship to travel, its cubic capacity must have been very great.

Instructions also were given as to all that the ark was to contain; seven of the clean creatures and two of the rest, male and female, with a sufficiency of food for all. Nothing was left to arrangement or imagination; all was ordered by God from first to last. This is worthy of note for here we have the first illustration of salvation that the Bible furnishes. At a later date Jonah declared, "Salvation is of the Lord," and how fully this is so we discover, when coming to the New Testament we find unfolded the "so great salvation" that the Gospel declares. Chapter 6 closes with the statement that Noah was obedient in all particulars, doing just as he was told.

The first verse of Genesis 7 furnishes us with the first instance of how God, in dealing with men on the earth, links a man's house with himself — "thou and all thy house" occurs for the first time. Salvation from judgment poured out on earth is before us here, but in Acts 16: 31 the same principle holds good in regard to eternal salvation. How thankful we should be for that word!

If we read verses 1-16, we might be tempted to think that here was a good deal of repetition, but we believe the passage is so worded to impress us with two things: first, the exact and careful way in which Noah obeyed God's instructions; second, the exact ordering and timing of all God's actions in judgment; as also, that the great catastrophe was of a nature wholly transcending any ordinary convulsion of nature and altogether an act of God.

The term, "windows of heaven," is very expressive. It denotes an outpouring **from God above**; it may be in blessing, as Malachi 3: 10 shows, but here it was in judgment. The devastating waters descended for forty days and forty nights, a period that we meet again in the Scripture several times, indicating a full period of testing. But also there was **from beneath** a breaking up of the established order. What exactly is signified, when we read that, "the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up," it is impossible to say. The tremendous event had never happened before, and it will never happen again, for we read, "neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth" (Genesis 9: 11). So obviously we must be content to know that there were immense internal convulsions, that produced a mighty upsurge of earth's waters, to meet the waters descending from above.

Verse 13 makes it plain that Noah and his family entered the ark on the very day that the storm broke. Noah had been a preacher of righteousness, just as Enoch had been a prophet of the Advent. He is the first preacher of whom we have any record, and his theme was that which stands in the very forefront of the Gospel that is preached today, as Romans 1: 17 declares. Only today, it is God's righteousness revealed in Christ and established in His death and resurrection, which is presented as the basis of **blessing** for men. Noah had to preach God's righteousness as outraged by man's violence and corruption, and demanding **judgment**. Still to the very last day the door of the ark stood open, and nothing would have prevented a repentant man from entering, had such an one been found.

The last day came however, and each of the four men and four women took the last decisive step which ensured their preservation from destruction. The decisive step for each was when they planted one foot on the ark, and removed the other from the earth that was under judgment. It was impossible to have one foot in and one foot out. It was either both feet in, or both feet out. Which thing is a useful parable for Gospel preachers today. Their action endorsed God's judgment against the world, and expressed their faith in the Divinely appointed way of salvation. Once inside the ark, "the Lord shut him in." When the Lord shuts, no man can open — not even Noah himself had he wished to do so. The shut door secured salvation for the eight souls, and ensured destruction for the world of the ungodly.

In our day the Gospel is too often preached as a way of escape from merited judgment, without any emphasis on the other side which is presented here. By building and entering the ark Noah "condemned the world" (Heb. 11: 7), and the reception in faith of Christ as Saviour and Lord today involves just the same thing. Let us not shirk the issue, as though it could be Christ and the world. It must be one or the other; and may God help all who preach the Gospel to declare this with boldness.

## **Genesis 7: 17 — Genesis 10: 32.**

The flood waters, which brought destruction upon the world of the ungodly, had the effect of lifting the ark "up above the earth." This may serve to remind us that the salvation of God has an

elevating effect at all times. Today, very specially, we are called to set our mind "on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3: 2). When "the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth," no flesh was visible, and nothing but death was to be seen. God's word as to "the end of all flesh" coming before Him, was fulfilled, for now all were either covered in the waters of judgment, or in the ark, as it rode between the waters surging from beneath and descending from above. Noah and his family were out of sight in the ark a figure of the new place which is ours "in Christ Jesus," involving the non-recognition of our old status in the flesh.

How thankful we should be that judgment fell, not upon us but upon our gracious Saviour, just as the death-waters fell, not upon Noah but upon the ark. The whole episode is likened to baptism in 1 Peter 3: 21, or rather, baptism is likened to it. The first mention of Christian baptism being administered is in Acts 2, where it is connected with the word, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation." The passing through death in a figure, and thus cutting all links with old associations is, we believe, the main thought in baptism. All Noah's links with the old world were cut by the baptism of the flood. Peter wrote to converted Jews, who had been severed by baptism from the mass of their nation, and thus saved from the governmental judgments about to fall on it. For us Gentiles baptism has the same significance, severing us — if we understand it and are practically true to it — from the world which is rushing on to judgment. Are we true to what baptism means?

As to the flood itself, the account given (Genesis 7: 11 — Genesis 8: 14) is quite explicit, both as to its duration and its dimensions. The tremendous rain lasted for 40 days and 40 nights. The waters prevailed from the 17th day of the 2nd month to the 17th day of the 7th month, when the ark grounded on the mountains of Ararat. On the 1st day of the 10th month the tops of the mountains were seen. On the 1st day of the 1st month of a new year the waters had vanished from the face of the earth. On the 27th day of the 2nd month the earth was sufficiently dry for the occupants of the ark to go forth from it — one year and 10 days having elapsed from the onset.

Its dimensions were such that "all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven were covered." This seems to indicate that it was universal, and it is certain that nothing of a local nature could possibly have lasted for so long. Moreover the breaking up of "the fountains of the great deep" very possibly involved great changes on the surface of the earth: in other words, the configuration of continents, mountains, seas, etc., may have been very different in the antediluvian age from their present form.

God remembered Noah and all that were alive with him in the ark, and He stopped the waters and sent the wind, which commenced the process of drying up the waters. The window of the ark being in the roof and not in the side of it, Noah must have had an imperfect knowledge of what was transpiring without, hence his action recorded in Genesis 8: 6-12. A raven and a dove are birds of a different nature as to habits and food. The one feeding on carrion and other unclean things, the other a clean feeder. When first released there was plenty to attract the raven, but as yet nothing for the dove.

In the New Testament the dove becomes the emblem of the Spirit of God, and the expression used on the first occasion is worthy of note — "no rest for the sole of her foot." As yet the whole scene was a waste of death and corruption. On the second occasion the dove returned with, "an olive leaf plucked off." Here was the first evidence of life appearing above the waters of death, for it was not a leaf that had been drifting among the debris but **plucked off** a living tree. Death entered by sin, and "so death passed upon all men" (Rom. 5: 12), as much after the flood as before it. The first evidence of real life rising up beyond the scene of death was when Christ rose from the dead. Though the Spirit came at Pentecost as wind and fire, He came as a Witness to Christ risen and glorified.

When the dove was sent forth for the third time she returned no more, but it is not added that she **did find rest** for the sole of her foot. That she found somewhere to perch is obvious, but the statement is omitted, we believe, because there is a typical or allegorical significance, which comes to light when we reach Matthew 3: 16. When the Lord Jesus came forth there was at last found One, on whom the Spirit of God could permanently rest, and not before.

So what is related here is intended to cast our minds on to the Gospels, which begin with the Lord Jesus entering a scene of death as the only One on whom the Spirit of God could rest, and they end with His coming forth in risen life — a life on the other side of death and beyond its reach — the necessary preparation to the coming of the Spirit. When we read of the Apostles that, "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost . . . and with great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 4: 31-33), we see what is indicated — though faintly perhaps — by the olive leaf in the mouth of the dove.

Let us remember also that fallen human nature feeds on what is unclean, as does the raven. Only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, and therefore like the dove feeds on what is clean. If we recognize this we shall be very careful as to that on which we feed our minds. It has been well said that for spiritual growth we must "starve the raven and feed the dove."

Noah did not go forth from the ark until God told him to do so. He went out as he came in, under direct instruction from God. And now we discover why the clean animals were taken into the ark in sevens and the unclean only in twos. True, it is an unclean world still, alas! and hence unclean animals easily thrive, and one pair would suffice for such, as against three pairs of the clean. But why the odd one in the seven? Because they were to be offered in sacrifice as a burnt offering at the very start of the renewed earth. The Lord knew that the flood had effected no change in human nature. Even in Noah and his family it was the same after the flood as before it. Verse 21 emphasizes this; and hence from the outset the new world could only continue on the basis of sacrifice.

In Noah's sacrifice we have the third type of the death of Christ. The first type, in Genesis 3, set it forth as providing a covering for the guilty sinner. The second, Abel's offering in Genesis 4, as the basis of approach to God. Now we have it as presenting a "sweet savour," or, "a savour of rest," to God — that in which He finds His rest and delight, in the excellence of which the offerer finds the ground of his acceptance. The term, **burnt offering**, occurs here for the first time, the particular significance of which we discover when we come to the book of Leviticus.

It is not difficult to discern an orderly progression in these three types. When awakened to our sinful state, the first thing we were conscious of needing was a **covering** — the root meaning of **atonement** — before the eye of a holy God. That was good, but we could not endure to be permanently at a distance. We must have a basis of **approach** to God. And even more than this; we must be in full **acceptance** to be thoroughly at rest there. If God finds a savour of rest in the death of Christ, we find there our rest too.

The promise, which closes Genesis 8, was based upon the sacrifice, as also was the blessing which opens Genesis 9. God knew what man would again prove himself to be, but He guaranteed that there should be no further judgment of the sort just executed. The flood had been of such magnitude that for just over a year seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and even day and night, had been obliterated. This was never to occur again. Indeed Genesis 9: 8-17 show that God established a definite covenant to this effect, the token of which is the rainbow.

This covenant made with Noah and all creation was unconditional. It was a covenant of promise, not depending on any faithfulness of the creature. It was something new. The words, "I do set My bow

in the cloud," clearly infer that the phenomenon of a rainbow had never before been seen by mankind. This would appear strongly to support the thought we mentioned when considering Genesis 2: 5, 6 that until the time of the flood no rain had fallen on the earth but it had been watered by mist.

Noah and his sons were blessed and made specially fruitful, so that mankind should multiply rapidly on the renewed earth, and their dominion over the beasts of the earth was emphasized. Moreover man was now given animal food for his sustenance as well as vegetable. And yet further, in the new regime established the sanctity of human life was clearly stated in connection with a primitive form of government. Murder had filled the earth before the flood, and from the time of Cain any human vengeance had been forbidden. But now God would require the blood of man's life at the hand of the slayer, and He would authorize mankind — Noah in particular, no doubt — to be the executor of His judgment. The penalty of death for murder was thus instituted by God Himself, and that from the very start of the post-diluvian age, and not merely as enacted in the law of Moses centuries later. It is of universal validity. Efforts recently made to overturn the Divine enactment are significant, especially if taken in connection with efforts to overturn other basic enactments as to marriage, parental responsibility, etc. The end of the age is marching upon us. It will arrive not with a flood of waters, but in the revelation of the King of kings and Lord of lords, when "He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."

Verses 18 and 19 again emphasize the fact that the only males now left alive were Noah and his three sons. From the three sons all mankind on the earth have sprung Nations have become a good deal intermingled but the three strains — Semitic, Japhetic and Hamitic — can still be discerned.

We may say then, that after the flood mankind was given under Noah a fresh start; But, as under Adam so again, failure and sin rapidly supervened. We have had abundant testimony to the fact that Noah was a godly man who found grace in the sight of the Lord, and he lived for no less than 350 years after the flood, as we are told at the end of our chapter, yet the one and only thing on record concerning him in all those years is that he planted a vineyard made wine, was trapped into self-indulgence, and became unconscious in drunkenness. The man most responsible now to control others lost control of himself. The age of patriarchal government broke down at the outset, even in the hands of a godly man.

This sad episode became the occasion of revealing the character of Ham, and apparently also of Canaan the son of Ham. Shem and Japheth acted with due respect to Noah, both as their father and as the ruler in the new conditions, whereas it was absent with Ham. Disrespect of authority, whether parental or governmental, since both were originally instituted of God, is a very grave sin. It leads ultimately to the setting aside of the authority of God, who instituted it. It is only as we give these considerations due weight in our minds, that we see how justified was the solemn curse pronounced by Noah, when he knew what had happened.

In verse 22 Ham is mentioned, and Canaan only appears as his son. When we come, in verses 25-27, to the curse that came from Noah's lips, we find it fell upon Canaan without any mention of Ham. This, we think, indicates two things. First, that Noah's sad lapse occurred some time after the flood; sufficient years having elapsed for Canaan to have been born and come into activity. Second, that he was associated with his father in the matter, and on him rather than his father the weight of the curse fell.

We must also bear in mind that in uttering it Noah spoke as a prophet, and the subsequent history of Canaan and his descendants fully justified his solemn words The next chapter gives us the sons of Canaan, and from them came the nations that inhabited lands to the east of the Mediterranean and just north of Egypt, so that it became known as the land of Canaan. Centuries later these nations had

become so abominable in their gross sinfulness that God issued an edict of extermination against them, and sent Israel in to inhabit their land. Only Israel's failure saved them from being completely wiped out.

But Noah's prophetic utterance contained a blessing as well as a curse. The blessing was to be specially the portion of Shem, and in a secondary way to come upon Japheth. The blessing, as ever, is connected with the name of the Lord, who was to be known as the God of Shem. Japheth was to be enlarged and "dwell in the tents of Shem." This, we gather, would signify that by reason of close identification with Shem, Japheth would also come into the knowledge of God. If the prophecy of Enoch was concerned with the coming of the Lord in His glory to judgment, that of Noah summarized in most concise fashion the future of the human family in its three branches until the Lord comes.

We can now see how it has been fulfilled. Out of Shem sprang Israel and Moses, and then in due time the Christ, "who is over all, God blessed for ever." Out of Japheth have come the nations who have been enlarged and assumed leadership in the earth, and amongst whom the light of the Gospel has mostly shone. Ham, whose name means "Black," or "Swarthy," produced the races that most have been degraded and reduced to servitude.

But on the other hand, as is so often the way, the Hamitic peoples on whom the curse rested, at first seemed to be the ones to prosper and assume leadership. Chapter 10 supplies us with evidence of this, filled as it is with lists of names and peoples who sprang from the three sons of Noah, lists which are important in connection with the early history of mankind. There is just one point where a short parenthesis occurs by reason of the great prominence of a grandson of Ham.

The forceful Nimrod, as a mighty hunter, acquired ascendancy and founded a "kingdom," the beginning of which was Babel. This happened, we judge, before Noah's long life ended; and if any **kingdom** existed, it should have been his. The power that should have been vested in Noah was taken by Nimrod, and prostituted to the ends of serving himself and his own renown. With this there began the founding of cities to serve as centres of human influence. Babel, Erech, Accad and Calneh are amongst the first of which there is any record.

Nimrod's action, in short, represented the setting aside of the primitive patriarchal government instituted of God, by brute-like, human force in self-aggrandisement. The results of this abide in the earth to this day.

## **Genesis 11: 1 — Genesis 13: 4.**

The closing verse of Genesis 10 alluded to the distribution of the nations of the earth after the flood. The first nine verses of Genesis 11 tell us how that division came about. For some time after the flood nations did not exist. All men were descendants of Noah: a rapidly increasing family, but all speaking alike.

As time went on population increased and the urge to push outward from the original centre became irresistible. The pioneers of this movement were doubtless the more daring and forceful individuals, who soon became conscious that their migration from the centre of things might entail a loss of prestige and power. This they determined to remedy by a bold stroke.

Human history had recommenced under Noah in the mountainous region of Ararat: they now found themselves on a flat and uninteresting plain with no commanding heights. So they would build themselves a city surrounding a tower of immense height, and thus make themselves a name. When considering the last verse of Genesis 4, we noted that the name Seth gave his son was significant, for

Enos means mortal and weak. He recognized man's frail mortal nature, and it is at once said that **then** men began to call on **the name of the Lord**. What is now before us is in direct contrast with that. Here were men full of self-sufficiency and self-importance bent upon making **a name for themselves**.

The expression, "Go to" is old fashioned. Today we should say, "Come on." They incited one another in their course of self-aggrandisement. They had left the regions where stone was plentiful so they invented brick-making, and the "slime," or "bitumen," which abounds in the Mesopotamian plain served them as mortar. The Nimrod episode had taken place somewhat earlier. That was **one man** exalting himself at the expense of his fellows. The tower of Babel episode was **mankind concerting together** for their own self-glorification in the establishing of a great centre of power and influence.

It is an interesting fact that the archaeologists, who explore the ruined cities of the Mesopotamian plain, often allude to the "ziggurat" that is, a large elevated structure — around which the city was originally grouped. So the tower idea was evidently quite popular in those far-off days. They became the "high places" where idols and idol sacrifices flourished.

The tower of Babel may well have been the start of man's lapse into idolatry, for we know that in later centuries Babylon was recognized as the original home and mother of idolatry: see Jeremiah 51: 7 and Revelation 17: 4, 5.

Upon all these doings the eyes of the Lord rested. He not only saw its immediate significance but foresaw its ultimate development, as is so strikingly presented in verse 6. He knew the capacities with which He had endowed mankind, and the imaginations that would fill their minds as fallen creatures. Those imaginations are only evil continually, as we read in Genesis 6: 5. If the human race remained in unbroken unity, to develop into hundreds of millions, all their evil imaginations would find speedy accomplishment. The Creator knew that man, His creature, had such powers and capacities as would enable him ultimately to accomplish all he imagined to do. Hence His action in confounding the language of the spreading families of mankind, thus putting a heavy brake on the wheels of man's chariot of progress.

We may pause to observe that now, for the last century or two there has been renewed effort to consolidate the human race. There have been efforts to provide a universal language. Scientific and technical knowledge is much more freely pooled, and in result things have been achieved that 200 years ago would have seemed simply incredible. The ancients entertained the imagination of men flying like birds. A century ago romances were written of men travelling beneath the seas. The imagination was there, but will it ever be translated into fact? It did not look like it! Yet the Lord had said, "Nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." We have reached the twentieth century after Christ, and lo! these things are done.

We are living in an age when there is being unfolded before our eyes the implications of Genesis 11: 6. Had it not been for the confusion of language the atom bomb would have arrived far earlier in the world's history, and mankind well-nigh destroyed itself long ago. 'The Governor of the nations acted in judgment at Babel, and we can thank Him that He did so, since an element of mercy was enfolded in His judgment.

The scattering of mankind into language groups was the inevitable result, and the building of Babel was halted. Each individual had of necessity to go with those who spoke as he did, and each language group naturally separated itself from the others, who became foreigners to it, and with whom at the outset no intelligent intercourse was possible, Hence by this one act of God, the fruit of His wisdom and power, the plans of men were brought to nothing. Their purpose had been centralization, lest they should be scattered. The Divine act produced in the simplest possible way the very thing they

aimed at preventing.

We regard this as a sign given in the very early days of the present world system of how God will always react in the presence of men's evil schemes and projects. Consequently men are again and again bringing upon themselves the things they aim at avoiding. And not only so, they also produce "Babel," that is, **confusion**. Was ever mankind so full of ideas and theories and projects as today? And was ever the earth more filled with confusion? We may be sure that though the mills of God's government grind slowly they grind with precision. Earth's outlook is terrifying apart from the blessed hope of the coming of the Lord.

Verse 10 starts the fifth paragraph or division of the book; Genesis 10 began the generations of the sons of Noah. We now come to the generations of Shem, one of the shortest of these divisions. It extends only to the end of verse 26, and gives us names and ages of the patriarchs descended from Shem up to the time of Abraham. As to these we have only two things to remark; the first being that, as before noted in connection with the ages of the patriarchs before the flood, there is again discrepancy between the Hebrew Scriptures and the Septuagint, as explained when we considered Genesis 5. Any chronology that may be deduced as to the lapse of time between Shem and Abraham is rendered doubtful to the extent of 650 years.

The second remark concerns verse 26, from which we should be inclined to assume that Abram was the eldest son of Terah, born when his father was 70 years old. But Genesis 12: 1 quite definitely states that Terah died in Haran aged 205 years; verse 4 of that chapter states with equal plainness that Terah being dead (see Acts 7: 4) Abram left Haran, aged 75 years, and not 135 years as we should have expected. The conclusion to be drawn appears to be that Terah's family commenced when he was 70 years of age, that Abram was not born till he was 130, but that he is mentioned first in verse 26 because Terah's other children were of small importance compared with him. These things should surely teach us that God is concerned with moral and spiritual considerations rather than those of a chronological kind.

The generations of Terah begin with verse 27, and do not end until we reach the death of Abraham in Genesis 25. As to Terah himself, we learn at the end of our chapter that Ur of the Chaldees was his home, and that late in his life he left Ur to go to the land of Canaan, but stopped at Haran on his way. With him he had Abram and Sarai together with Lot his grandson. Milcah, who was Nahor's wife, is also mentioned, inasmuch as her descendants come into the history of God's ways later on.

But, as we open Genesis 12, a new fact of great importance is mentioned. This migration of Terah from Ur of the Chaldees, just stated, really took place at the instance of Abram, to whom God had spoken, calling him to a life of separation from his old associations. He was to cut his links with country, kindred and even his father's house; that is, with his national, his social, and his domestic circles, in order to go to a land that God would indicate. The full significance of this will be better appreciated if, before going further, we read Joshua 24: 2, then the opening of Stephen's address in Acts 7, and also Hebrews 11: 8-10.

There is no mention of idolatry amongst the evils that filled the earth during the antediluvian age. By the time of Abram the post-diluvian apostasy that started with Nimrod and Babel, had developed; idolatry was overspreading the peoples, and threatening to exclude the true knowledge of God. It had got amongst the descendants of Shem and even Terah, if not Abram himself, had been infected by it. To preserve a testimony to Himself God called Abram clean out of the evil, to become a pilgrim and stranger in the earth. Mankind was already divided into nations **under the Divine government**: it was now to witness a division of another kind — the separation of a godly seed from the mass of the

ungodly. This was a division produced by **Divine grace**.

To the men of Ur Abram's departure from their city with all its civilized amenities doubtless appeared as foolish an act as that of Noah had appeared, when he built his ark on dry ground — foolish indeed but unimportant and soon to be forgotten. We now look back to it, nearly 4,000 years after it happened, and realize it to have been an epoch-making event, establishing a principle of God's ways, the effect of which will abide to the end of time. From that moment God's work in the world has been based on the calling out of a people for Himself and separating them from the ungodly. From Abraham sprang the nation of Israel, who were separated under **His government**. Today the church is being called out and separated under **His grace**. In the coming age He will separate a people for millennial blessing under **His Judgment**.

Verses 2 and 3 show us that the man of faith, separated to God, obtains what the men of the world aim at and miss. The builders of Babel desired to make themselves a great name by concentration, and brought down upon themselves a curse, and their names have long been utterly obliterated. God made Abram's name great in his separation by faith, and through him all the families of the earth have been blessed. No name from those early ages has remained so great and famous as his. It is known and revered even today by millions - not only by Christians and Jews, but by Mohammedans also. The promises of these two verses have been amply fulfilled in the 4,000 years since they were spoken, and supremely so by the coming of Christ.

Verses 4 and 5 declare that though Abram was detained at Haran until the death of Terah, he did ultimately reach the land to which God called him, taking with him his nephew Lot and all their possessions. The following verses show that, having reached it, God again appeared to him, and confirmed the promise of the land to his seed as well as to himself. In that early day the descendants of Canaan, the son of Ham, who had come under the curse of Noah, were in possession of the land. Fully 400 years had yet to pass before the curse would fall upon them by Israel taking forcible possession; and meanwhile Abram- was a pilgrim in a tent, but in touch with God and building an altar to Him in the places of his sojourn. Nevertheless from that moment there can be no question as to those who are the rightful owners of that land. To Abram's seed it belongs today, though it will need an act of God to put them in possession in a lasting way, just as their ejection from it, both under Nebuchadnezzar and under the Romans, were acts of God.

Abram had been called of God and greatly blessed in responding to the call. He was pre-eminently the man of faith, yet the Scripture does not hide from us his occasional weakness and failure. God had called him to Canaan and not to Egypt. Yet when famine arose he does not appear to have asked counsel of God, but down to Egypt he went. By so doing he doubtless escaped the famine, but he ran into difficulties that he had not faith to meet. Have we not often had to discover that a way which to worldly wisdom seems eminently wise, leads us into a position of spiritual danger? In Abram's case this dawned upon him as he neared the borders of Egypt. With all its splendour and affluence the morals of Egypt were deplorably low and he sensed danger.

The simple ruse that Abram suggested to Sarai was not the telling of a downright lie, since Sarai was his half-sister, as we find in Genesis 20: 12, yet it worked disastrously. It was just that kind of half-truth, or half-lie, which so often has been a snare to true saints of God. Men of the world may do that kind of thing and apparently be gainers, but if saints of God descend to that level they are always ultimately the losers.

His first thought was for his own life, and then for Sarai's virtue. The situation developed very much as he expected, but the outcome was not at all what he expected, inasmuch as God intervened.

His mistake lay just there. In this move he had left God out of his calculations, though in the main purport of his life he was a man of faith. Thus it often is with us: we may trust Him in the big things, yet forget to refer to Him in the smaller things.

The Lord intervened so drastically in the plaguing of Pharaoh's house that even that heathen monarch woke up to the facts of the situation and acted rightly. And not only so, but he also rebuked Abram. Now it is a sorry situation when a man of the world can rightly rebuke a man of faith. But so it was here, and so alas! it has too often been since. Let us all be concerned that we do not find ourselves in such a situation.

As Genesis 13 opens we find Abram returning into the south parts of Canaan and making his way back to the spot between Bethel and Hai, where he had raised an altar when first he came into the land of promise. This was the spot where he had been in touch with God and where he should have stayed instead of going down into Egypt.

Back at the old spot, we read, "there Abram called on the name of the Lord." The interrupted communion was restored, since he had got back, so to speak, to his first love. Here is a record which is intended to make us "wise unto salvation" from backsliding of a similar kind.

Now that we have Abram back in his right place, let us sum up the situation. The world system started by men realizing that they could achieve as a community what they could not as mere individuals. They aimed at glorifying themselves by the building of a city as a permanent centre of influence, and a mighty tower, which would be used ultimately — if not immediately — for idolatrous purposes, and for getting into touch with the demon powers which lay behind the idols.

Abram is called by God out of that world system. Instead of a city of bricks and bitumen he had but a flimsy tent, which could be taken down in an hour. Instead of a lofty and imposing tower he had a lowly altar, whereon were offered the sacrifices that were according to God's thoughts. And there he called on the name of the Lord, and entered into communion with Him instead of falling a prey to the deceits instigated by demons.

The world system has developed, but it has not changed its essential features. Let us see to it that we pursue a path through it in keeping with the way pursued by Abram.

## **Genesis 13: 5 — Genesis 15: 21.**

Another crisis in the life of Abram now comes before us. His was the faith that led to the migration from Ur, and in Lot he found a companion. Lot shared in his pilgrimage up to a certain point, but evidently, though a righteous man, he did not fully share in the faith that prompted the pilgrimage. A point had now been reached when the increase in their possessions, under the Divine blessing, was such that strife broke out among their servants and they could no longer dwell peaceably together. It was not seemly that the two professed pilgrims should be in conflict in the presence of the Canaanite and Perizzite.

Formerly they both had separated from Ur; now they must separate from each other geographically, and put sufficient distance between their cattle and herdsmen to avoid conflict. Abram, the man of faith, is content to yield the first choice to Lot the younger man. The choice of Lot reveals him at once to have been one who walked by sight rather than by faith. They were dwelling on the central heights of the land, whence, lifting up his eyes, Lot could see the warmer and much more fruitful plains of Jericho, stretching down to the Dead Sea and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. With a keen eye to his own profit, Lot made choice of that alluring district and left the less fruitful heights to

Abram. He journeyed east, coming down to the plains.

In this episode we see Abram back at the moral elevation that had marked his outset. Then he gave up Ur with its civilized amenities; now he yields up the choicest part of the land of promise content to be still a pilgrim, if in communion with God. His altar indicated that he was in touch with God; his tent that he still remained a pilgrim, though in the land of promise. What lay behind it all is indicated in Hebrews 11, where we read, "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles [tents] . . . for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." We also read in the same chapter, "They desire a better country, that is, an heavenly." He had been called by "the God of glory," as Stephen made known in his final address, and to that call he remained true.

In contrast to this, Lot saw that the plain, stretching towards Sodom and Gomorrah, was "as the garden of the Lord," and he embraced it, pitching his tent toward Sodom. The men of Sodom however excelled in wickedness, as verse 13 tells us, so evidently though those cities were like the garden of the Lord, they were really a playground of the devil. Towards that evil spot Lot gravitated.

From verse 14 to the end of the chapter we get God's response to Abram's faithfulness. The gift of the whole land to him and to his posterity is confirmed, and a promise is given that his seed shall be very numerous as the dust of the earth. He is bidden to survey the land walking through the length and breadth of it. This led him to move his tent to Mamre or Hebron, but there also he maintained his altar to the Lord.

We can have little doubt that the confusion of tongues at Babel, and the consequent division of mankind into nations, must soon have given rise to fightings and regular warfare, but we have no record of a battle in the Scriptures until we reach Genesis 14, when four kings from the Mesopotamian district made an expedition towards the Dead Sea, ravaging cities as they marched, and ultimately defeating the five kings of the cities of the plain. The "kings" mentioned were mostly, if not all, the leaders of various cities, what we should now call petty chiefs. Chedorlaomer was apparently the suzerain of the kings associated with him, and he had extended his sway over the region of Sodom. The repudiation of his suzerainty was the reason for the expedition.

It is an interesting fact that at this point in the Scripture narrative we come to names of persons that the archaeologists believe they can identify as the result of their researches in digging up the past. Some of these greater kings, such as Amraphel and Chedorlaomer, left their mark on very ancient records, whereas no mark of that nature would be left by Abram the pilgrim, who years before had severed himself from their cities and their whole way of life.

In Genesis, however, all the interest is centred upon Abram with Lot in the background. In verse 12 we are permitted to see another step in the downward course of Lot. Not content with pitching his tent toward Sodom, he had now abandoned tent life altogether and taken a permanent residence in the wicked city — a spot worse than Ur, which originally he had left under Abram's guidance. He now suffered the fate of the people of Sodom and was carried captive with all his house.

Abram acted with great decision directly the news of this disaster reached him. Arming his servants he pursued after the victorious kings, and overtaking them by night, utterly defeated them. No idea is given us of the number of the adversaries but we are told the small number of Abram's forces — 318 beside himself. And we are told this we believe, to indicate that Abram's action was prompted by very extraordinary faith. The army he attacked must have been immensely stronger than he, and also flushed with victory all along the line up to that point. Yet he hesitated not, and God was with him. His victory seems to us as remarkable as the victory of Gideon over the Midianites, recorded in the Book of

Judges.

In result Abram recovered everything, including Lot, his household and possessions. How striking the picture, and how important its lesson for us! The man — even though he was "just" — who grasped at the world with its outward prosperity and pleasures, lost everything and found himself a captive. The man who gave up the world and walked with God, was the only one in the whole region who could act in faith and have the power of God answering this faith, and giving him the victory.

At the end of the chapter we find Abram winning a victory of another kind, but before we reach it we have the episode of Melchizedek, of which much is made in Hebrews 7, inasmuch as he was a striking type of Christ in the power and grace of His eternal priesthood.

He is introduced to us in verse 18 without any details as to his ancestry: an unusual feature, seeing he held a place of nearness to God. With those who had lapsed into idolatry ancestors are sometimes not mentioned, as, for instance, in the early part of our chapter, but otherwise they are. This fact is part of the Divine design, as pointed out in Hebrews. As far as the record goes, he is without father or mother; there is no pedigree, no mention of his birth nor of his death. He appears suddenly at verse 18 of our chapter, and after verse 20 he disappears. The Son of God has neither beginning of days nor end of life, and in a typical way Melchizedek was made like unto Him in this. Note carefully that in Hebrews 7: 3, he was made like the Son of God, already existing from eternity; not the Son of God made like to him.

Melchizedek then was raised up as type of the eternal order of priesthood, which is consummated in Christ. His name means, "King of righteousness," and Salem meaning peace, he was "King of peace." The argument of Hebrews 7 is that the Lord Jesus, risen from the dead, is Priest after this eternal order, though at present He is exercising His priesthood in ways that were typified in Aaron.

This is the first mention in the Bible of a priest, and so, as we might expect, the full thought of priesthood is here typically set before us. That which the Lord is doing today, as set forth in Aaron, is provisional, in view of our wilderness experiences. When, as seen typically in the beginning of our chapter, the power of the adversary is broken and the captives are delivered, the priesthood, of Christ will be strikingly manifested. He will be the Minister of spiritual food, refreshment and blessing to those who come to Him. In the type we are not carried beyond the blessing that; will be brought to pass on earth, and the millennial name of God — "Most High God" — is used for the first time in Scripture. We have to pass to the New Testament to get a view of heavenly things. Here we have to be content to know that the Most High God is the Possessor of heaven as well as of earth.

Abram, though possessed of earthly goods, as yet possessed nothing of that which God had promised him. To be blessed of the One who is Possessor of heaven and earth, must have been no small thing to him. Abram **received** the blessing and he **gave** tithes of all. Both the receiving and the giving were . through Melchizedek, the priest. And since the less is blessed of the better, we see, as pointed out in Hebrews 7, that as priest Melchizedek took precedence of Abram and of the Levitical priesthood of Aaron. Once we know the One who was typified, how luminous the type appears!

The king of Sodom had gone forth to meet the victorious Abram, as mentioned in verse 17, but he does not really come into the picture till verse 21. Wishing to recompense Abram he offered to him all the goods of Sodom, that he had recovered. The way Abram declined the offer is very striking. Through the ministrations of Melchizedek he now knew God in a new way. Put into touch with the Possessor of heaven and earth, the goods of Sodom, however attractive they might have seemed to others, had no value for him. Moreover they were all stained with the enormous sins of that city and brought defilement with them.

Hence, in verse 23, we find language of great decision. The young men had eaten certain things, and Abram's confederates and helpers might take their portion, but as for himself he would take nothing, not even the smallest item. He had been so fully enriched, both spiritually and materially, by God Himself, that he needed nothing more. His testimony to that would have been marred, if he had given opportunity to the king of Sodom to say he had made Abram rich. It is the same in principle for us today. If we are in the enjoyment of the spiritual blessings that are ours, we have neither need nor desire for the gifts or patronage of the world.

The first verse of Genesis 15 is intimately connected with all this. Not only had the hand of God been with His servant, but the eye of God had been upon him. Abram had renounced his original home in Ur; secondly, the more fruitful parts of the land of promise in favour of Lot thirdly, any portion or tribute from the sinful world, at the hands of the king of Sodom. All this had been observed, and now in a fresh vision God presents Himself to him as his shield and his "exceeding great reward."

If Abram had not had some confidence that God would be his shield he would hardly have undertaken to pursue the victorious kings and rescue Lot with a mere handful of men, as he had just done. But that he should have God for his reward went far beyond this. When he left Ur, he may have looked upon the land of promise as his reward, though he never actually possessed it. Now God Himself is to be his reward, and this surely is "exceeding great." Brought, as we are, into the light of God revealed in Christ, we are better able to estimate the greatness than ever Abram could have done.

The greatness of it did, however sufficiently dawn on Abram to make him feel acutely, by way of contrast, the poverty of his present position as a childless man with a servant born in his house as his heir. How could the everlasting God be reward to one who had no hope of a posterity to carry on his name? Hence his seemingly rather selfish enquiry, "Lord God, what wilt Thou give me?"

The answer to this was the word of promise, which called forth Abram's simple acceptance of God's word in such distinctness and in such measure that he stands for all time as the pattern of faith. To his example Paul appeals in Romans 4, calling him, "the father of all them that believe." The word to this childless man was that he should have true seed as numerous as the stars of heaven; and the record is that, "he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness."

As yet there was no sign of the promise being accomplished. But Abram simply took God at His word, and in view of this God accounted him to be righteous. As we saw in Genesis 3, when our first parents began to doubt the word of God, sin entered and mankind got out of right relations with God. Conversely when a man dismisses doubting and simply takes God at His word he is thereby put into right relations with God — he is accounted righteous.

This promise of the seed enfolded within it a far greater blessing than appeared at the moment, for presently we shall find that the promise of the Saviour was wrapped up in it. For the moment a numerous posterity was guaranteed, and coupled with that the lesser promise of the land was repeated, as we see in verse 7. As to this second part Abram's faith was not so robust, and he desired some confirmation that he might know with assurance. Have we not often found that we may accept the greater thing in faith, and yet be lacking in assurance as to some lesser thing? He was already in the land and yet possessed nothing of it, and the years were passing by. He felt he needed some extra assurance on this point.

God graciously condescended to answer this by making a solemn covenant, according to a rite that was common and accepted in those far off days. In Jeremiah 34: 18, 19, we find an allusion to this kind of ceremony as ratifying a covenant. In the case before us the solemnity of the occasion seems to be enhanced by the number and variety of the animals that were sacrificed. Abram was kept waiting

however until sundown before anything happened, and then he fell into a deep sleep, accompanied by horror and darkness. God was drawing near to him, and the covenant involved darkness as well as light.

Verses 13-16, give the terms of the covenant. The centuries of affliction in Egypt for Abram's seed are predicted, and this was in keeping with the great darkness that had fallen upon him. But there was light also for he had the assurance that he should end his days in peace, and that ultimately his seed should be delivered from their affliction by the judgment of their oppressors, and back to the land of promise they should come. Thus, in spite of long waiting and much trouble, the land was made sure to his seed.

The ratification of all this as a covenant was when after dark a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between the divided pieces of the sacrifice. In this twofold way did God manifest His presence. There was no thought of Abram passing between the pieces, as though he were pledging himself to anything. It was God pledging Himself to do as He had just said, and that in an unconditional way. This manifestation of God, passing between the pieces, was as remarkable as His manifestation to Moses in the burning bush.

In after days we find both Moses and Solomon speaking of Egypt as the "iron furnace" — see, Deuteronomy 4: 20; 1 Kings 8: 51. How apposite then the manifestation afforded by this vision! God was in the furnace equally with the flame of the lamp. It might be easy to discern Him in the bright shining of the flame, but not so easy in the smoking furnace. It was the guarantee however that he would be with Abram's seed when they should be in the furnace, and then when the hour struck, lead them forth with Himself as a pillar of fire at their head.

Before we leave Genesis 15 note two things. First, God was going to permit the Amorites to fill up the cup of their iniquity before he ejected and destroyed them. This is ever the way He takes in His holy government, and it accounts for the long-suffering He extends to the guilty world in which we are living. He knows the full nature of man's evil from the outset, but He allows it to be fully developed, so that His judgment, when it falls in full severity, may be justified in the sight of all created intelligences.

Secondly, the full extent of the land pledged to the seed of Abram, is given — "from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates. The land we call Palestine is bounded on the East by the small river, the river Jordan, and is only a very small part of the land they are ultimately to possess. Ten peoples are mentioned in the closing verses as then dwelling therein. All are to be dispossessed and in the millennial age the true Israel will possess their promised land.

## **Genesis 16: 1 — Genesis 18: 33.**

Chapter 16 introduces us to the episode in the life of Abram, which has an allegorical significance, as the Apostle Paul shows in Galatians 4. Hagar was a bondwoman; she came from Egypt, type of the world; her son was born "after the flesh;" her name is said to mean "Wandering." Law and the flesh and the world and bondage are closely connected all through Scripture, and here first we have them all brought together.

In Genesis 12 we saw Abram's lapse in going down into Egypt, and though both he and Sarai came out safely, owing to God's intervention, it appears that they brought something of Egypt out with them in the shape of this handmaid of Sarai, who became a snare before long, and a source of trouble that has persisted over thousands of years. The hostility between Ishmael and Isaac is visible in their descendants today. In the same way many a trouble in our lives as Christians may be traced to some lapse into worldliness of which we have been guilty.

The standards that prevailed in patriarchal times as to matrimonial relationships were much below those established in the light of Christianity. In those days no law had been given, and when it was given through Moses it did not express the perfect thought of God as the Lord Himself said in Matthew 19: 8. This accounts for the action in this matter of both Sarai and Abram. What they did was done without any sense of wrong. The promise of a seed had been given to Abram: Sarai was barren, and this was just an attempt to secure its fulfilment after the flesh. We have to learn that everything achieved after the flesh ends in failure and trouble.

The trouble started before Ishmael was born, as soon as the bondwoman effectively took the place of the freewoman. The bondwoman then despised the freewoman, just as later the child of the former persecuted the child of the latter. The immediate result was that the freewoman asserted her place and dealt hardly with the other so that she fled.

At this point the Angel of the Lord intervened. According to the customs of that time Hagar had evidently had no option in the matter, and God is a God of pity, and of judgment. Even if she had been impertinent to her mistress, she was not to be left in the wilderness in her need; only, returning she was to be subject and submit to her mistress. Viewing her personally, apart from her typical significance, she was as much sinned against as sinning, and by God's intervention the scales of justice were evenly held.

And not only this but the future of the coming son was foretold: his name was given, his character indicated. His name means, "God hears." Hagar spoke of God as "Thou God seest me," or "Thou art the God who reveals Himself" (New Trans.) The well by which the angel appeared to her became known as "The well of the Living who was seen." Thus even poor Hagar derived blessing from this trying episode, though the son, when born, became a trial to Abram himself, as well as to Sarai and the future Isaac.

The name of the son, Ishmael, was to commemorate the fact that God heard the affliction of Hagar. It had reference to her rather than to him. He was to be a "wild man," the word really means a "wild-ass." In the light of Galatians 4, this is significant, since "he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh." Now Romans 8: 7 tells us that the mind of the flesh "is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Man after the flesh has lawlessness stamped upon him, and he is aptly typified by a wild ass.

Here too we see in figure what accounts for the state of the world today. Man in the flesh is not only lawless in regard to God but antagonistic in regard to his fellows. The one characteristic springs out of the other. There could be no peace where Ishmael was. And to make matters worse there was to be no shutting him out or getting rid of him; for the decree was, "he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." Hagar typified the covenant of the law, given at Sinai. Now that did not abolish the man after the flesh. It only laid restraint upon him, "which gendereth to bondage." The restraint was immediately broken and the "wild ass" character more fully revealed.

This Hagar episode took place when Abram was 86 years old, and we hear nothing further as to him for thirteen more years. When 99 years old another great revelation reached him and a further covenant was established, as we find in Genesis 17. Here for the first time do we get "Almighty God" (El-Shaddai). Abram was to know Him according to this name — the God who can raise the dead, and to whom nothing is impossible — as is made clear in Exodus 6: 3. Abram knew the name, Jehovah, for we have the record of his using it, but what that great name signified did not come to light until the time of the Exodus and the subsequent giving of the law, for it was relevant to that. God Almighty was the name relevant to the unconditional covenant made with Abram. That covenant altogether depended

upon God, and His almightiness ensured its ultimate fulfilment.

The closing words of verse 1 show the responsibility that rested on Abram in the light of the revelation. His ways were to be regulated by his knowledge of God. His perfection lay in his complete conformity to the revelation that had been given. In Matthew 5: 48 we find the word, "perfect," used in just the same sense, only there according to the revelation of God to the disciples as their Father who is in heaven. Today we should be perfect according to a revelation of God which is even higher than that.

This revelation, "I am the Almighty God," was followed in verses 2-8, by a covenant of promise, in which no less than seven times God states what He will do.

"I will," is the characteristic phrase; beginning, "I will make My covenant," and ending, "I will be their God." The little word "if" is only conspicuous by its absence, for it was a covenant without condition on Abram's part. He had sought to obtain a seed by natural means through Hagar, but God intended to multiply him abundantly, making him a father of many nations, and securing to his seed the land of promise, being in a special sense their God.

In confirmation of this covenant God changed Abram's name to Abraham, meaning, "Father of a multitude," and from this point onwards the new name is used though as yet the promise involved in the name had received no fulfilment. Thus God pledged Himself to bring it to pass in His own way.

Though the fulfilment of this covenant depended upon God and not upon Abraham, there was a sign given in connection with it, and Abraham was to keep the covenant in the sense of observing the sign. Of this verses 9-14 speak. The sign was circumcision, and it was to be observed by Abraham and his descendants and all his household; the latter term including all born in his house and bondslaves, obtained by purchase. The casual type of servant, who was only hired, was evidently excluded. Here for the first time in Scripture we find a household recognized, as identified with him who is the head of it. They are those over whom the head has authority, so that he can command them, as we see in verse 19 of the next chapter.

As far as Abraham was concerned circumcision was just a rite to be observed, since there is nothing to show that he was instructed in its spiritual significance. Twice in Deuteronomy does Moses mention the circumcising of the heart in contrast with that accomplished in the flesh, but it looks as if its full significance did not come to light until "the circumcision of Christ" (Col. 2: 11) became an accomplished fact. Abraham and his descendants had the rite, for it was the sign of the covenant of promise — just as the Sabbath was the sign of the Mosaic covenant of law — but the meaning of it is reserved for us Christians, who, if Gentiles, do not observe the outward rite at all.

According to that verse in Colossians the true circumcision is that done without hands in Christians "in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of the Christ" (New Trans.) As the next verse shows, the allusion here is to His death. He, the Messiah, was cut off as predicted (Ps. 102: 24; Dan. 9: 26). He was actually severed from His life down here in flesh and blood, in order that He might take up life again in resurrection. As identified with Him, we put the sentence of death on the old fleshly life that once we lived, and thus put off the body of the flesh. Thus the significance of the rite was the putting of the death sentence on the flesh and all its works. God's unconditional covenant of promise is not to be made good on a fleshly basis. If the flesh was spared, the covenant was broken, as verse 14 indicates.

In connection with this, God also changed the name of Sarai to Sarah, which means, Princess. She too was to be blessed and become the mother of a son, though she was now nearly ninety years of age. Abraham's response to this surprising announcement was remarkable. He fell upon his face and

laughed, raising in his heart the question as to his own great age, and Sarah's also. At first sight we might be inclined to regard both the laughter and the language as indicating a spirit of scepticism, but in the light of Romans 4: 18-20, we must regard it rather as expressive of joyful wonder. Verse 18 of our chapter points to the same conclusion. He recognized that the supernatural birth of the one who was to be the heir of promise involved the supplanting of him born after the flesh. Hence his request that Ishmael might yet live before God.

In response to this the promise of a son is confirmed and his name is given by God. Now Isaac means **Laughter**. This further confirms what we have just stated, for Abraham's laughter would hardly have been thus commemorated by God if it had signified doubt and not faith. The covenant of promise was to run in the line of Isaac, yet God answered the request as to Ishmael and promised to bless him in natural things, making him a great nation under twelve princes. The fulfilment of this is recorded in Genesis 25: 12-16.

The closing paragraph of the chapter shows how the faith of Abraham promptly expressed itself in works. He accepted the outward sign of circumcision for himself and for his house. No time was lost: the thing was accomplished "in the self-same day." The operation itself was not a pleasant one, running contrary to natural feelings, and in each the flesh would have cried out to be spared. How suitably therefore does it typify that death to the flesh, of which the New Testament speaks, only there it is not the material body of man that is in question but the fallen nature characterizing that body, with its appetites and lusts.

This prompt response of faith on Abraham's part invited another manifestation of the Lord to him, with which Genesis 18 opens. It evidently took place very soon after the other. It was unusual in character, differing from any preceding appearance inasmuch as "three men" approached, and it was "in the heat of the day," just when no one would pay a visit in the ordinary way. Abraham's hospitality rose to the occasion, and angels were entertained unawares, as Hebrews 13: 2 puts it — indeed more than this for one of the three was a manifestation of Jehovah Himself. The picture presented of patriarchal simplicity is striking and beautiful, and the heavenly Visitors partook of the refreshment provided.

Sarah was now to be tested, and the announcement of the birth of a son to her was made in her hearing. Her response also was a laugh, but one which she thought was hidden from others, and which evidently did have in it an element of unbelief, so that she tried to deny it. It was known to the Lord however. Sarah's unbelieving question only drew from Him the great question, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Nothing was too hard, for He had just recently revealed Himself to her husband as "the Almighty God," though she had not grasped it so far. Jeremiah grasped it in his day (Jer. 32: 17) and presently Sarah did so, or we should not have the statement: "**Through faith** also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed (Heb. 11: 11).

But the heavenly Visitors had come, not only to confirm the wavering faith of Sarah, but with other purposes in view. They set their faces toward Sodom and Abraham went with them for some distance, and this gave occasion to that incident in which we see Abraham as the friend of God. A mere servant does not know what his Lord does, as the Lord indicated in John 15: 15, whereas a friend has access to things kept secret from others.

Hence Abraham is not to have hid from him that which the Lord was about to do in the judgment of the cities of the plain; and that not only because of the privilege conferred upon him, but because of his moral character and worth. He was privileged not only to become a great nation but also to be the progenitor of the Messiah in whom all the nations would be blessed. His character was such that the Lord could say: "I know him," and that he would maintain what was right, not only personally but also

in his family and household. So later on the prophet, speaking on God's behalf, could say, "Abraham My friend." (Isa. 41: 8).

Thus it was that when two of the three had proceeded on their way to Sodom, Abraham was permitted to speak to the Third, even to the Lord Himself, and even to reason with Him. Of all the cases recorded in the Old Testament where men were brought face to face with God this instance stands alone, we think, in the intimacy and liberty enjoyed, coupled with absence of fear. Abraham, secure in his own standing before the Lord, took the place of an intercessor.

He reasoned before the Lord in the assurance that the Judge of all the earth would do right, and in his pleadings he doubtless had in view Lot and his family. In the next chapter we read of Lot's sons-in-law, so probably he reckoned that together with his wife, unmarried daughters, married daughters and their husbands, as many as ten could be found in Sodom who could be accounted righteous. Hence, starting at fifty, and descending to forty-five, forty, thirty, twenty, he stopped satisfied at ten. The next chapter shows that even ten were not to be found.

Though Abraham knew such liberty in the Lord's presence we find him, like all others who really have to do with God, deeply sensible of his own sin and nothingness. We hear Job saying: "Behold, I am vile;" Isaiah saying: "I am undone;" Peter saying: "I am a sinful man, O Lord;" Paul saying: "I am chief" of sinners. Abraham says, I "am but dust and ashes," and, as far as the Scripture record goes, he heads the list, the first to condemn himself in the presence of God.

And he who thus condemned himself is the man called the friend of God. In both these respects are we following in his train?

## **Genesis 19: 1 — Genesis 21: 33.**

Abraham had remained, interceding before the Lord, not so much for the guilty cities of the plain as for the ten righteous that, as he hoped, were to be found in Sodom. Two "men" of the three had turned their faces toward Sodom and as we start Genesis 19 we find them arriving at the gate of Sodom, and now they are plainly disclosed as "two angels." As they approached, Lot sat in the gate of Sodom; which signifies, of course, that he had accepted magisterial office in that exceedingly wicked city. This enables us to understand more fully how he "vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds," as recorded in 2 Peter 2: 7, 8. He not only saw and heard fearful evils as a private person but came into contact with it all as a magistrate.

Bearing this in mind, our chapter is full of the most solemn warning for us all. He may have regarded his election as a judge as an elevation; it was in truth a sad fall, entailing dire consequences. We saw him at first pitching his tent toward Sodom. Then he dwelt in it, and shared in its defeat, as recorded in Genesis 14. Now he has become a leader in it. And with what effect? Has he prevailed to clean up its degraded morals, to improve its ethical standards? Not in the least! He has, as we shall see, only involved himself and his family in its evils.

He had preserved however patriarchal politeness and hospitality, as we see in verses 1-3. He too entertained angels unawares, but with a very different result as compared with Abraham. As night came on his house was besieged by godless men, bent on monstrous evil. Lot's attempt to pacify them by the sacrifice of his two unmarried daughters shows how low in his own mind he himself had sunk by reason of Sodom's contamination. Lot's position as judge now counted for nothing, indeed they flung it back at him as though he had been a mere usurper of the office. If he had flattered himself that he could exercise an influence for good, he was now undeceived.

As the contest reached a climax the angels intervened and took charge of the situation. Blinded by angelic power the evildoers were baffled for that night, preliminary to their destruction on the morrow. Having disposed of them, the angels plainly told Lot that Sodom was to be destroyed, and he was given opportunity to get out together with his family and all that he had. In this a full answer was given to the intercession of Abraham earlier that day. The contrast between Abraham interceding as a friend with God on the heights, and Lot, defiled and impotent in the worldly cities of the plain, may well be thoughtfully considered, and sink into all our hearts.

Lot now saw everything in a very different light, and went forth to his sons-in-law to warn and deliver them. But to them he seemed "as one that mocked." Notice, it does not say that they mocked him, but that they thought he was mocking or making sport of them — that really he was joking. Having come into Sodom and invested all he had in it, they could not believe he was serious, when suddenly he declared the whole place was to be destroyed in a moment. His previous course of life wholly contradicted his present testimony. We shall do well if we each ask ourselves this question — If I testify that the second Advent of Christ draws near, involving the judgment of the present world system, will they take me seriously, or will my manner of life lead them to think that I am joking?

The judgment was not going to slumber, so escape was urgent, and without the married daughters and sons-in-law the angels constrained Lot, his wife and two daughters to flee, such was the mercy of God to this true saint, who nevertheless had fallen so low. Moreover his request to be allowed to shelter in the fifth and smallest city of the plain, instead of fleeing to the mountain, was granted. Sodom would have been spared if only ten righteous persons had been in it. Zoar was spared because only one righteous man entered it. Such is the abounding mercy of our God, and His slowness to judge.

The word of the angel in verse 22 is worthy of note, "I cannot do anything till thou be come thither." Why, "cannot"? Not because power was lacking to act in judgment, but because it is a fixed principle of God's ways that penal and eternal wrath is never to touch His people. The judgment of these cities was not merely a matter of governmental wrath, for penal wrath also was involved, as we see in Jude 7. The "vengeance of eternal fire" could not possibly touch Lot, since he was a righteous man, though a misguided one.

Lot having been withdrawn, the judgment fell from heaven. Those who have examined that region, in the light of modern discoveries as to oil and bitumen-bearing sites, tell us it is quite easy to visualize what happened. Perhaps so, but the miracle consisted in fire from the Lord out of heaven starting the mighty conflagration and eruptions that blasted these four cities out of existence, and left their sites to this day as "an example to those that after should live ungodly." (2 Peter 2: 6). The thought of the evil and its judgment has persisted, for the word "sodomy" is found in our language as designating sin of a specially vile and unnatural sort. This judgment, moreover, was a sample of what is yet to come on a much greater scale in "the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (2 Peter 3: 7)

Four persons came out of Sodom, practically dragged out by the angels, as we saw in verse 16, but only three entered Zoar. Lot's wife evidently left her heart in Sodom, and her eyes following her heart, she looked back, became involved in the disaster and perished under a deluge of salt. One of the shortest verses in the Bible records our Lord's words, "Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17: 32). We may well remember and let the lessons of her end sink into our hearts. She was married to a true saint, she was prayed for by an eminent saint, Abraham, she came under the constraint of angels from heaven; yet she was lost. She had the unclean nature that loved the filthy garbage of Sodom. What vexed Lot evidently had attractions for her.

Verses 27-29, shows us that Abraham was a man who watched unto prayer. He did not just ejaculate his desires and think no more about it. He resorted the next morning to the spot where he had prayed, and saw that God had fulfilled His word. Presently he was to learn that God had remembered his prayer, and though ten righteous persons had not been found, Lot had been delivered. The fervent prayer of a righteous man does indeed avail much, and it had been answered though not in the way he hoped and expected.

Lot's faith was very feeble. Though Zoar had been spared for his sake, his fear was such that he forsook it for the mountain region that formerly he had dreaded. There he found a cave and in it, having lost all his substance, he dwelt with his two daughters. We take a sad farewell of him in the closing verses of our chapter. The two daughters were saved physically but were lost morally, for we are permitted to know that they had become infected with the immoral ways of Sodom. They brought dishonour on themselves and on their father, and brought into the world both Moab and Ammon, both of whom gave their names to peoples, who in after days became opponents of the people of God.

The failures of God's saints are not hidden from us in the Scriptures, as we have just seen in very pronounced fashion as to Lot. We pass on to Genesis 20, and we get a glimpse of Abraham on a very much lower level than he was in Genesis 18. He moved to Gerar and before Abimelech the king he resorted to the same device as he employed years before in Egypt. This time it was even more serious for Sarah was just about to bear the child of promise. Abraham's defection might have compromised what God had promised and was about to perform. Hence God took what we may call drastic action to protect Sarah, not dealing with Abraham who had failed, but with the heathen king.

When faced by Abimelech with his deception, Abraham confessed that fear for his own safety, in a place not marked by the fear of God, had led him into it. In result however the fear of God was more marked in Abimelech than in Abraham. It was a definite rebuke to Abraham that God, who so frequently had appeared to him should now pass him by and deal with the king in a dream, exposing the true situation to him direct. Abraham was a prophet and an intercessor in prayer, as the king is told, yet in this matter he is ignored by God.

Responding to the word of God Abimelech acted very rightly, and as regarded Abraham, very handsomely; rebuking him in this fashion. Sarah too came in for his rebuke, as verse 16 records. Speaking of Abraham as her "brother" added a touch of irony to his rebuke. It is a sad situation when an upright man of the world can rightly rebuke the saint of God. But it is a state of affairs all too often reproduced. Abraham evidently accepted the rebuke and, as God had said, he prayed for the king and his household, and the hand of God which had been upon them in His government, was removed.

Genesis 21. After this lapse on Abraham's part, God fulfilled to him and Sarah the promise of a son. That which humanly was impossible came to pass and Isaac was born, as we may say, on the principle of resurrection: a living child springing from parents, who from a reproductive standpoint were dead. Now Sarah could laugh indeed, and feel that all others would laugh with her. This time her laughter had in it nothing of incredulity, but was rather a note of triumph in that which the power of God had brought to pass.

The sign of the covenant — circumcision — was duly put upon Isaac, and when he was weaned a great feast was made, which to Ishmael was a subject of mockery. This led to the casting out of the bondwoman and her son, which has an allegorical significance as we learn in Galatians 4. Four centuries had yet to pass before the covenant of law was established at Sinai, and many more centuries later the basis on which the new covenant of promise rests, was laid in the death of Christ. But thus early in the world's history do we get presented in an allegorical way the supplanting of the former by

the latter. The law only produced bondage, since it addressed itself to the flesh; that is, man's fallen nature, which is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can it be. The son of the freewoman came into being by an act of God in grace, and therefore aptly typifies the new covenant. We believers are "the children of promise," as Isaac was.

The initiative sprang from Sarah, and to cast out Hagar and Ishmael was very grievous to Abraham. This feature too we may apply to ourselves. To give up all hope of blessing on the ground of law, and to dispossess the flesh is not something that naturally pleases us, but the reverse. Still it is the course that is according to God. Sarah may not have had much thought of God in her demand, nevertheless God endorsed it. God said in effect to Abraham, You have got the promised seed in Isaac so let not the departure of Ishmael be a grief to you. We see the same thing in principle in 1 Samuel 16: 1, where the prophet is bidden to stop grieving over Saul, whom God had set aside, for there was a far better king in view, even David. God takes away the first, "that He may establish the second" (Heb. 10: 9). If Christ the Second Man fills our vision, the first man and the covenant of law, that applied to him, are set aside.

Bidden thus by God, Abraham acted with decision. Early in the morning he rose up and dismissed the bondwoman and her son, giving them bread and water for the start of their journey. True to her name the poor woman became a wanderer in the wilderness and soon all their slender resources- were gone, and the lad was brought almost to the point of death. The Apostle James tells us in connection with Job, that the Lord is "very pitiful, and of tender mercy." We see it exemplified here. Though Hagar and Ishmael had this unhappy allegorical significance, and personally belonged to the world rather than the house of faith, they were needy creatures, and as such objects of mercy.

Years before an angel had been dispatched for her succour. Now again poor Hagar is at the end of her resources and weeping in her misery. A second time God intervenes by an angel for deliverance. It is rather remarkable that while the record runs that she "lift up her voice and wept," it adds that, "God heard the voice of the lad." Ishmael must now have been about fifteen years old and he had raised his voice for help, since he was dying for lack of water. The deliverance came in a simple yet unexpected way. God opened Hagar's eyes so that she saw a well of water. It was there all the time but she had not had eyes to discern it.

Is there not in this a parable for today? Ishmael was dying of thirst within a stone's throw of the life-giving water. There are many today going down to spiritual death with the means of spiritual life right before them. The trouble is they have no eyes to see it. God opened her eyes and immediately the need was met. We need to pray for men, that no longer may the god of this world blind their minds to the light of the Gospel, as indicated in 2 Corinthians 4: 4.

Thus Ishmael was granted life in spite of the fact that his descendants would be inimical to the people of God. And not only that, but God was with him, enabling him to maintain himself in the wilderness by his skill as an archer. His mother came from Egypt, and out of Egypt she took a wife for him. In this we see the stamp of the world riveted upon him.

In the latter part of our chapter Abimelech again appears, and once more we behold him in a favourable light. He was a man of discernment and he perceived that God was with Abraham in all that he was doing, in spite of the fact that his doings in Gerar had not been right. When our first contact with a man is unfavourable, it takes some discernment to see him subsequently in a favourable light. Abimelech and his chief captain had evidently been watching Abraham very closely, and this was the conclusion they had come to. Let us remind ourselves by this incident that thoughtful men of the world do observe very narrowly the professed saints of God, and we may well desire that the conclusion they

draw may be as favourable as in this case. Too often, alas, it is otherwise.

In result a covenant was drawn up, and the well, Beer-sheba, was made sure to Abraham, a well that in later days became famous as the southern boundary of the land. There for some years Abraham made his dwelling, and there he called on the Lord as the everlasting God. When the promise of Isaac was given, God made Himself known as the Almighty. Now that the promised heir is born and the promise redeemed, Abraham recognizes Him to be the Everlasting as well as the Almighty. Abraham had to wait for the promise to be fulfilled, and man being a creature of brief years, this waiting is to the flesh a very trying business. But to God as the Everlasting One, time is not of prime importance. He moves with deliberate yet certain steps, to the accomplishment of that which He has counselled and promised.

In the Psalms we hear the godly man more than once crying out, "How long?" How long shall the wicked flourish; how long before righteousness be vindicated? We in our day may cry out "How long?" as we desire the promised advent of the Lord Jesus. But with Isaiah we have to know that, "the everlasting God . . . fainteth not neither is weary; there is no searching of His understanding." (40: 28). His way and time is perfect. With this let us be content.

## **Genesis 22: 1 — Genesis 24: 6.**

Two episodes in the life of Abraham stand out with special prominence. The first, when against all natural hopes, he "believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Rom. 4: 3). In the second he was, "justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar" (Jas. 2: 21). To this second great event we come in Genesis 22.

"After these things," we read, God put Abraham to the test, and this is ever His way. Peter speaks of "the trial of your faith," and declares that it is "much more, precious than of gold that perisheth" (1 Pet. 1: 7). At the outset Abraham's faith laid hold of God as One who was able to raise the dead. Under test he was now to demonstrate that such was his faith, in a way that would be apparent to any thoughtful observer. He showed his faith by his works.

If considered typically the chapter has remarkable significance. Here we get father and son both going up together to the sacrifice. In a figure the son is sacrificed and raised from the dead. We have already seen the death of Christ typified (1) as atonement, covering the guilty sinner, in the coats of skins (Genesis 3); (2) as the basis of approach to God, in Abel's sacrifice (Genesis 4); (3) as the ground of acceptance, in Noah's burnt offering (Genesis 8). Now we find a fourth and fuller type in the offering up of the son, and this brings in not only death but resurrection also. Consequently we find in this story details of very striking significance.

In verse 2 Isaac is mentioned as Abraham's "only" son, which is rendered in Hebrews as, "his only begotten son" (11: 17) . This makes it abundantly clear that Isaac was a type of our Lord, and further, it sheds light on the meaning of the words "Only begotten" as applied to Him. Ishmael indeed sprang from Abraham but being after the flesh he did not count in the Divine reckoning, and Isaac was quite unique. So our Lord Jesus Christ was Son of God in a perfectly unique sense.

It was God who declared Isaac to be Abraham's "only" son, and He also added, "whom thou lovest." Now this is the first time that love is mentioned in the Bible, which is remarkable, seeing it prefigures the love in the Godhead of the Father for the Son. Not until we reach the New Testament and such a statement as, "Thou lovest Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17: 24), do we get that love fully revealed; but now that it is revealed, we can better understand the great statement that, "God

is love." How fitting that the first mention of love should be typical of that supreme love, which is the fountain from which flows all true love of which we have any knowledge.

The command of God was that this only son of Abraham's love should be offered by him as a sacrifice upon a mountain, chosen of God in the land of Moriah. He was to deliver to death the son, in whom all the promises were vested. This, was indeed a tremendous test of faith, as is made so plain in Hebrews 11: 17-19. That he did not fail under it was due to the fact that he believed that God was able and prepared to raise him from the dead.

The spot chosen for the sacrifice was that whereon, centuries after, the temple was built, and where Jewish sacrifices were made at the altar of burnt offering. Though Abraham cannot have known it the circumstances were divinely arranged to complete the typical picture. What we do see in Abraham is the energy with which he responded, rising up early in the morning, and the preparation he made to act in obedience. He departed with son, servants and wood for sacrifice.

On the **third day** Abraham saw the chosen spot; this was significant, for in after days he would look back to it not so much as the place of sacrifice as the place where in figure he received him as from the dead — **the place of resurrection**, in fact. That the faith of Abraham embraced resurrection is borne witness to by the closing words of verse 5. The sacrifice of Isaac was contemplated as "worship," and the lad as well as his father was to "come again." Abraham's confidence as to this coming again is the more striking as he carried both a knife and the fire, as the next verse records. The wood was laid on Isaac. We may see in this a foreshadowing of that which is recorded in John's Gospel — "He, bearing His cross, went forth into a place called . . . Golgotha."

The sacrifice commanded was to be a burnt offering, hence to the eyes of Isaac the fire and the wood were perfectly natural, and the only question raised in his mind was, "Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham's answer, though he may not have known it, was prophetic of something far beyond his own days: "God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering." No lamb that ever died on any altar, patriarchal or Jewish, was other than provisional, and in view of that which was to come. The question, "Where is THE lamb?" was unanswered until John the Baptist was able to declare, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Abraham, however, was fully persuaded that God would provide the lamb for this occasion, and in that faith both father and son went together.

Verses 9 and 10 relate how full was the measure of Abraham's obedience. Nothing was lacking up to the point where the death stroke would have taken place. At the last possible moment the Angel of the Lord intervened. His obedience had been tested to the full and had stood the test. He had not withheld his only son. This not only proved beyond question that he believed in God as the God of resurrection, but also furnished a foreshadowing of the infinitely greater moment when God "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all."

Though not stated in the narrative, we must not fail to notice the submission of Isaac. No word of remonstrance on his part is mentioned. He typifies the One of whom the prophet testified, "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth" (Isa. 53: 7). His experience must have typified that which our Lord passed through, in infinitely greater measure, in the Garden of Gethsemane.

The voice from heaven arrested the death stroke that was to have fallen on Isaac, and now Abraham's eyes were directed to God's immediate provision; not a lamb merely but a ram. If we desired to have the strongest and most vigorous specimen from among the sheep, we should have to select a ram. This one moreover was caught in the thicket by its horns, symbolic of its strength, and it

was offered as a burnt offering "**in the stead** of his son." Though the actual words, **substitute, or substitution**, do not occur in our English Bible, here we have exactly that which the words mean. A substitute is one who stands in the stead of another.

So in this incident, which presents to us the fourth type of the death of our Saviour, we have before us salvation by a **substitutionary** sacrifice. And further, since the ram was detained to be the sacrifice by its horns, the strongest part of its frame, we may see how our blessed Lord was held to His sacrificial work by the strength of His love. No nail that ever was forged could have detained him on the cross. What held Him there was love to the Father, and love to us. (See John 14: 31; 13: 1).

Abraham recognized the wonderful way in which God had provided the lamb for a burnt offering, and signalized it by naming the place Jehovah-jireh, meaning, "The Lord will provide." And out of that sprang a saying which was still current when some four centuries later Moses wrote these things: "In the mount of the Lord **it shall be seen,**" or "**shall be provided.**" That was the language of faith, for another four centuries, or so, after Moses, there stood on Moriah the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite, and years after that Solomon's temple was built there, and so it became the place for Jewish sacrifices. That to which all these sacrifices pointed took place "without the gate," for the Lord Jesus was the rejected One.

The first call out of heaven had acknowledged the completeness of Abraham's obedience: the second call pronounced great blessing, confirmed by an oath. This is the occasion referred to in Hebrews 6 when God, "because He could swear by no greater," "swore by Himself." The extent of the blessing might well have staggered Abraham. His seed was to be multiplied (1) "as the stars of the heaven," (2) "as the sand which is upon the sea shore;" it was (3) to "possess the gate of his enemies," and in it (4) "shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." It is not surprising, therefore, that God reinforced His bare word by His oath, that there might be "two immutable things" on which to rest.

The ancients knew but the stars that are visible to the naked eye. Only in our day has it been discovered that they are literally as numerous as the grains of sand on the sea shore. But we think we may see in (1) his spiritual seed, whose destiny is heaven (see, Galatians 3: 7); in (2) and (3) his earthly seed who, born again and redeemed, will enjoy millennial blessing and victory; and in (4) a prediction to be fulfilled in Christ, who is the Seed — in the singular, as Galatians 3: 16 points out — in whom all nations shall be blessed. All this blessing is guaranteed by the mighty oath of God.

All this accomplished, Abraham returned to Beer-sheba, and there he dwelt. That was the place of the oath between Abraham and Abimelech. Was it now to be connected in Abraham's mind with the vastly greater oath to which he had listened at Moriah?

The closing verses of our chapter give us a little further genealogy, and that evidently for the purpose of introducing Rebekah, of whom we are to hear in Genesis 24 as the bride of Isaac, who is now in type the risen seed. Before we reach that point, however, we have to see Sarah disappear from the picture.

When we start Genesis 23 we are carried on about twenty years from the events of Genesis 22. Abraham was at Hebron when Sarah died, an event which also has typical significance. In the next chapter Isaac, the risen seed, is to find his bride, typical of the church, who is to be united to the risen Christ. But before Christ takes His church, Israel, out of whom He sprang according to the flesh, is set aside. The death of Sarah is a type of this severing of the earthly links for a time. This severance is expounded for us in Romans 11, as also the fact that a redeemed and renewed Israel will come into blessing when the church period is over.

The details as to the burial of Sarah take up the whole of this chapter, and we may be inclined to wonder why the story should be given us at such length. We believe it to be with the object of impressing us with the fact that Abraham was truly **a stranger** and **a sojourner** in this land which was to be his according to the promise of God. In verse 4 Abraham claims to be this, and makes it his plea, supporting his request for a burying-place in the land.

This was indeed a remarkable fact. It was stated in very concise fashion by Stephen, as recorded in Acts 7, when he said that God "gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on," and that, though God had "promised that He would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him." But though this chapter makes the fact so clear, what is not divulged here, nor anywhere else in the Old Testament, is the spiritual understanding given of God, which enabled him to take such a course.

We have to travel on to Hebrews 11: 9-16, to get light on that point. There we discover that he had expectations connected with a scene which lay, not only outside the land of promise, but outside the earth altogether. "He sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country," but that was because "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." We further read that he desired "a better country, that is, an heavenly." These facts, which only come to light in the New Testament, disclose to us that these patriarchal men of faith received from God the knowledge of heavenly things, which in their day were not the subject of public revelation.

In Old Testament times, and up to the cross of Christ, man was under probation, and that trial was in its earlier stages in patriarchal days. The test was as to whether any man could prove himself to be exempt, from death as the wages of sin, and thus establish his title to live on the earth. The test reached its conclusion in the rejection and death of Christ, when all men were proved to be lost. The Lord Jesus had come, speaking of "heavenly things" as well as "earthly things" (John 3: 12), and it was when "His life was taken from the earth" (Acts 8: 33), that the heavenly things came into full revelation. To have made **public** disclosure of the heavenly things before the earthly test was completed would not have been according to the Divine order.

Abraham had left a city of no mean standard of civilization, when he turned his back on Ur of the Chaldees. He was now but a stranger and a sojourner in the very good earthly country that had been promised to him. This was possible because he was looking for a city that God would build and a country that, being heavenly, was better than any earthly country could be.

The contrast between verses 4 and 6 is very striking. The man who confessed himself to be a stranger and sojourner is acknowledged by the children of Heth as "a mighty prince." Notice too, that they said "**among** us," and not "**over** us." Abraham moved among them but as a stranger he did not meddle in their concerns or interfere with their politics. Just because he did not, his moral greatness was fully apparent to them. As the friend of God he possessed something to which they were strangers.

Having so favourable a reputation, he was able without difficulty to negotiate the purchase of the burying-place for Sarah. All was concluded in the presence of witnesses according to the customs of that land at that time: and subsequent history shows that the transaction was respected and made sure. In all this Abraham may well be an example to us, as is indicated in 1 Peter 2: 11, 12. If we, as "strangers and pilgrims" have our "conversation honest among the Gentiles," we may, by reason of the reproach of Christ, be spoken against. Yet beholding good works, they will eventually "glorify God" in the day of visitation. There is clearly an analogy between this passage in Peter and this incident as to Abraham.

Sarah died when Isaac was thirty-seven, predeceasing Abraham by thirty-eight years; and since

Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah (Gen. 25: 20), only about three years can have elapsed between the incidents recorded in Genesis 23 and Genesis 24. At the age of 140 Abraham was old. Also he **was** "a mighty prince," for the Lord had blessed him **in all things**. It was a day when His blessing was largely expressed in earthly things, and thus it was with Abraham, though he had been given some knowledge of things lying outside the earth. Isaac was his heir in whom the promise was vested, and it was most important that his marriage should be rightly arranged.

Genesis 24: 1-6 show that two things were stipulated: first, that the wife should not be taken from among the Canaanites, then in the land; second, that though she should be of his own kindred, the union should not be allowed to **lure Isaac back to the land whence he had come** out. The chosen woman must be willing to share the stranger position which Isaac occupied, and come to him. He was not to go to her.

If in our day every Christian contemplating marriage were to observe carefully the principles underlying these two things it would make for spiritual prosperity. The breach of them has brought about untold disaster, as is too often painfully manifest.

## **Genesis 24: 7 — Genesis 25: 34.**

The opening verses of our chapter show us that Abraham remained true to the call of God, that had originally reached him; and that, not only for himself but for his children and household after him; thus justifying the Lord's estimate of him, as expressed in Genesis 18: 19. Verse 7 supplements this by showing the full confidence he had that the Lord would support this faithful adherence to His word. Twice in these verses does he speak of the Lord God of heaven. Heaven has been mentioned several times before, but this is the first time God has been so designated. In the light of what is revealed in Hebrews 11, it is not surprising that Abraham knew God in this way, especially as Stephen has informed us that it was "the God of glory" who appeared to him at the outset.

The God of heaven is far above all the little storms and frustrations that fill our small world. He does as He pleases, and so the servant is sent forth with the assurance that direction would be given by God's angel, leading him to the suitable wife for Isaac. The mission was only to fail if the chosen woman was not willing to follow the servant to the waiting bridegroom.

It is worthy of note that the first oath recorded on God's part is that of Genesis 22: 15-18, which was fulfilled in the raising up of Christ, the promised Seed. The further oath, which is before us here, is connected with Abraham's servant, who is a type of the Holy Spirit, sent forth to secure the bride for Christ, the true risen Seed. We may be sure that His mission will be carried to a more successful and perfect issue than that of the servant in the story before us.

The servant departed, fully equipped by his master since he had control of his master's goods. It is evident how this suits the type we have indicated. Moreover, the servant addressed himself to his mission in a prayerful spirit, though the way he addresses God, as recorded in verse 12, shows that his knowledge of God was of a second-hand nature. He knew Him as Abraham's God rather than as his own. In this he fails from the typical point of view.

And this leads us to remind readers that no type is perfect in all its particulars. Hebrews 10: 1 would lead us to expect this, for what it states is as true of patriarchal days as of the time of the law. We have not the very image of the Antitype but only the shadow of Him or it. Now a shadow gives us but little in the way of detail. We get an outline and can discern, for instance, whether a shadow is that of a house or a tree, without knowing where are the windows in the former or the branches in the latter.

If we recognise this limitation in the types we shall be saved from the effort to force meanings into small details connected with the person or incident forming the type, which so often ends in what is fanciful and imaginary.

But in spite of this feature in the servant's prayer, it was of a most intelligent nature, and it met with a remarkable and immediate answer. He was confident that the God-provided damsel would be of a gracious and willing spirit, as evidenced by her response to his request, and so it came to pass, and that at once.

The answer came before he had done speaking. Rebekah arrived and acted with all the grace he had specified. Moreover she was a "chaste virgin," such as Paul desired the church at Corinth should be for Christ, and such as the completed church will be by the work of God when she meets her heavenly Bridegroom in the air at His coming. The answer was complete as well as immediate. She was of the right kindred and there was accommodation in her father's house. The servant had just to bestow on her golden ornaments, as an earnest of what was to come, and then bowing his head he worshipped the Lord.

Laban now comes into view. For some reason Bethuel, though the father, does not take the prominent place that was customary. He was alive as verse 50 shows, but retired into a secondary place. Presently we hear more of Laban in his dealings with Jacob, and his self-seeking character comes clearly to light. But a trace of it is at once revealed here. His effusive welcome of the servant was connected with his sight of the costly gifts already bestowed on his sister. But over all this rested the hand of God, pursuing that which He purposed.

The servant, however, was true to his master and full of his errand. He would not even eat before he had delivered himself of his charge.

He had only one thing before him. He had not come to enrich Bethuel's house or to improve conditions in Mesopotamia, but to take out of both a bride for Isaac. Here we see a striking type of the Holy Spirit and His mission, which is not to improve world conditions but to take out of the Gentiles "a people for His Name" (Acts 15: 14).

To this end the servant retired into the background. He confesses, "I am Abraham's servant." In verse 37 he speaks of Abraham as "my master," and in verse 65 we find him saying to Isaac, "It is my master." So both the father and the son were master to him, and his mission was to extol both. In verse 35 he speaks of the greatness and wealth of Abraham. In verse 36 he speaks of the son, and as to him he testifies that the father had given to him "all that he hath." This at once reminds us of John 3: 35, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand." At this point in the story Isaac typifies the risen Christ, as we have already said.

Consequent upon the resurrection and ascension of Christ comes the mission of the Holy Spirit, which the Lord Jesus described in anticipation in John 16: 15, "All things that the Father hath are Mine; therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall shew it unto you." How all this is typified in the chapter before us is very plain.

Having recounted the greatness of his master — both father and son — the servant related how his way had been opened up and ordered of God. This was evidence that, "The thing proceedeth from the Lord," as both Laban and Bethuel recognized, and hence they gave their consent to Rebekah's departure and left the final word to her, though they pleaded for delay.

Before the ultimate decision was made, but in the certainty of it being made, the servant bestowed on Rebekah gifts, which were an earnest of the wealth she was going to inherit as the wife of Isaac. Her

relatives also were made to experience the bounty of Abraham. All this was also a seal upon her betrothal to Isaac, so that we may see here a type of the Holy Spirit as both Seal and Earnest — the Seal securing us for the Divine calling and purpose, and the Earnest being the pledge of the inheritance yet to be ours in its fulness in the coming age.

Verse 54 shows that the servant's mission was of a character that permitted no delay. On the day of arrival the betrothal took place: on the morning of the next day he would be off to his master. For Rebekah the new link was established, so the old link with kindred and country was at once to be broken. This is a wholesome reminder for us that, being linked by the Spirit to the risen Christ, our old links with the world are broken. It is a sad fact that all too many Christians attempt to hold on to Christ with one hand and yet grip the world with the other, but it can only be done for a little while and at very heavy cost and loss.

Rebekah's relatives pleaded for delay, and so often do the relatives of believers today, and if we have no relatives to do this our own foolish hearts will do it even more effectively. The servant, however, would brook no delay, so the question was put to Rebekah, for the ultimate decision rested with her — "Wilt thou go with this man?" Was she prepared to entrust herself to the servant, who was acting on behalf of Isaac, and to do so at once? Her answer was simple and decisive — "I will go."

Here again we may see a type or analogy that may very well search our hearts. Believing the gospel of our salvation, we have been sealed by the Holy Spirit, but have we made such a committal of ourselves to Him as is indicated in the story before us? Happy is that Christian who at conversion, or very soon after, is so committed to the leading of the Spirit, who indwells in order to glorify Christ, that the old links with the world are thoroughly broken, and to reach Christ in His glory becomes the goal. The spirit of this we see exemplified in Paul, as he has put on record in Philippians 3. May we all go in for this so really that everybody may see that we have made the great decision, "I will go."

Rebekah's decision made, her relatives released her with their blessing. "Thousands of millions" sounds somewhat exaggerated, but we understand that "ten thousand" would be a more exact translation than "million." With that correction we have to admit that their blessing has come to pass, but only as the fruit of her going forth to Isaac under the leadership of the servant.

It has often been pointed out that the journey across the desert, however long it took, is related here as though it had been all accomplished within a day. Verse 54 speaks of "the morning," when the journey started, verse 63 mentions "the eventide," when the journey finished, and Isaac met his bride. It is worthy of note that he did not receive her, seated in state in his father's tent, but as one who had gone forth to meet her. The servant recognized the lonely man, walking in the field so meditatively, as his master, and this knowledge he communicated to the bride, who thereupon veiled herself, that hidden from other eyes she might be presented to him.

All this very strikingly befits the type we are considering. At the end of the church's pilgrimage the heavenly Bridegroom will come forth into the air to meet her, and then introduce her into His Father's house. At that glad moment she will be veiled in the all-resplendent light of His glory. Every eye will be upon Him rather than upon her. Later, as we know, the saints will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father; and at the present time the church is not veiled but in the place of witness as the pillar and ground of the truth. But at the end of the journey the Bridegroom will be everything, and the present mission of the Holy Spirit will be brought to a perfect conclusion.

The last verse of our chapter tells us that in acquiring his bride Isaac forgot the sorrow occasioned by the death of his mother. Sarah here typifies Israel, out of whom Christ came as concerning the flesh. At the present time Israel is disowned nationally, but the blank thereby created has been filled, and

more than filled, by the calling out of the church under the hand of the Spirit.

As we commence Genesis 25, the typical character of the history ceases. We are permitted to know that Abraham had other wives and many sons, no one of which had anything like the importance of Isaac, or even of Ishmael, who had much earlier been dismissed. All the others were sent away into the east country, out of which he had been called. Evidently he realized that the call of God had been personally to himself and to his seed after him, and did not extend to his other children. All that he had was given to Isaac as the son of promise. Beyond this fact we are not told anything of his closing years. In this he stands in contradistinction to Jacob, as we see in Hebrews 11. The man whose life was poor and chequered ends with a striking display of faith on his deathbed. The man who walked habitually with God testified by his life, and needed no such bright display at the finish. We only know that he lived 175 years, and he was buried in the purchased field at Mamre by his sons Isaac and Ishmael. The line of faith continued in Isaac, and upon him the blessing of God rested.

Another of the divisions of this book begins at verse 12. The "generations" of Terah began in Genesis 11: 27, and have continued to this point. Ishmael represents the rejected line and his generations are related first and with great brevity, for the generations of Isaac start with verse 19. His years were 137, and his sons became princes of some renown, since some of their names became of note and occur again in Scripture. Yet eight verses suffice for his story since he typifies the first man who has to be removed for the introduction of the Second. We shall notice the same feature when we come to Esau and Jacob.

The main line of the history is resumed when we come to the generations of Isaac. He was not nearly so striking a character as Abraham, yet he knew the Lord for himself, and when Rebekah proved to be barren he entreated the Lord for her and was answered in the birth of twin sons. Rebekah also had learned to turn to the Lord for an answer to her question. In the reply that the Lord gave her we find enunciated another great principle that characterizes God's purpose and which runs all through Scripture. It is that of **election**. The principle had operated from the outset, but here it comes fully to light. God declares His choice before the children were born, or had had any opportunity of doing either good or evil, as is so plainly declared in Romans 9: 10: 12.

Esau and Jacob, not yet born, were declared to be two nations and also "two manner of people," and the elder was to serve the younger. When born the prediction was clearly verified. They were entirely different in physical appearance, in habits and mental make-up. The one a skilful hunter, a lover of the open air; the other a plain or homely man, fond of tent life. All this would have been obvious to the ordinary onlooker, but it is the incident at the end of the chapter that discloses the real rift between them, that the onlooker might never have discerned.

Of the two Esau was the elder by a mere matter of a few minutes, still the birthright would naturally have been accounted his. The birthright became the great test, and in their attitude to it we can see they were indeed two manner of people. Jacob coveted it and Esau despised it. What was involved in the birthright? The one who possessed it was in the direct line, moving on toward that "Seed," in whom all nations were to be blessed. The birthright led to CHRIST.

So here we have in typical form the first intimation of the truth expressed in the well-known lines,  
"What think ye of Christ is the test,  
To try both your state and your scheme."

though we must not suppose that either of the two young men fully realized what the birthright meant. Still they knew that it carried with it a blessing from God. This Jacob greatly desired, whilst to

Esau it signified practically nothing. He was willing to barter it for the transient satisfaction produced in a hungry man when he has devoured a good meal of pottage. The bargain was struck and thus Esau despised his birthright and lost it. But even on Jacob's side the deal was not a creditable one. It was a case of seeking a right thing in a wrong way. He did not get the blessing then. Later he did get it from his father, but he only got it **from God** when subsequently he was brought face to face with Him, as recorded in Genesis 32: 29.

In a word, Esau despised the spiritual and chose the material. Jacob desired the spiritual. The majority of the men of the world agree with Esau and follow Him. We Christians agree with Jacob in desiring the spiritual.

## **Genesis 26: 1 — Genesis 28: 9.**

Where faith exists in any of us, it is ever God's way to test it, as we have seen very clearly in the case of Abraham. The faith of Isaac, though less robust than that of his father, must now be subjected to a test. Canaan was watered with rain from heaven, and if the rain was withheld famine supervened. Egypt was watered by its famous river, and usually was the land of plenty. So when famine again descended on Canaan, Isaac's steps would naturally turn towards Egypt. But the word of the Lord to him was that Egypt was forbidden. He was to stay in the land and in spite of appearances God would bless him there and fulfil all that had been promised to Abraham. So Isaac descended to the coastal region, inhabited by the Philistines, and there for a time he dwelt.

But settling down amongst these people, there came the same test as confronted his father, and he met it in the same way, by subterfuge. Now subterfuge, practised by men of the world, may have considerable success; practised by a saint of God it always ends in failure, sooner or later. In Isaac's case it seemed to answer for a considerable time but at length the Abimelech of those days discovered the truth. Consequently we find again a man of the world, marked by a considerable measure of uprightness, rebuking the saint of God — a sorrowful sight! But one which has often been repeated from that day to this. Let each of us be careful lest it be repeated in our own history.

Nevertheless God did not forsake Isaac because of this lapse on his part. He had obeyed the instruction not to descend into Egypt and hence, in spite of the famine, God blessed him abundantly in his sowing, his flocks and herds and servants, so much so that he had to depart from the Philistine's land. In those days the Philistines were not numerous, since Abimelech, their king, had to confess that Isaac's large household had become mightier than they were. But one thing they had done to Isaac's disadvantage, as verse 15 records; they had filled the wells with earth.

In that land everything depended upon the well-springs, that made the rain of heaven available; hence the well becomes symbolic of the source of life and fertility, and ultimately of the Holy Spirit, springing up into life and blessing. The wells had been dug through Abraham, the man of faith, but the Philistines had stopped them with earth. Presently in Scripture we hear a great deal about the Philistines, who became numerous and powerful, and they have undoubtedly a typical significance. In these earliest mentions of them that significance becomes manifest.

They were a people who got into the land of promise, without being called into it by God. They were not like the Amorites, the old inhabitants of the land, mentioned in Genesis 15: 16 but they were a people who had got into God's land without being God's people, and therefore typical of the religious world rather than of the worldly and irreligious world. Now the religious world, whether nominally Jewish or Christian, has always concentrated on a purely earthly order of things. Stopping the

wellsprings of divine and heavenly blessing has always been a favourite occupation of the Philistine, whether literal or typical, and earth and its things have ever been the material they have handled. The Apostle Paul had the typical Philistine in view when he penned Philippians 3: 19 and even when he wrote Colossians 3: 2.

Isaac had to dig again the old wells, but he called them by their original names for they had not changed their characters. He also dug new wells and some of these the Philistines claimed. The well, Rehoboth, however, he retained, for he left his case in the hands of the Lord who made room for him. We may see an analogy to this in church history. Many a well of apostolic days was filled with earth as the centuries passed and has had to be dug again. But when dug it has the same old name. Luther and his co-workers in other lands dug again an important well. It had the old name of "Justification by faith."

With the well Isaac connected the thought of fruitfulness, as we see in verse 22. This fits in with its spiritual significance. We are only fruitful as we abide in Christ and He in us, as stated in John 15: 5 and of this we have knowledge, "by the Spirit which He hath given us" (1 John 3: 24). Isaac now returned to "The well of the oath" where his father had dwelt, and there again God appeared to him and renewed His promises, and there we see Isaac at his best, for there he pitched the tent of his pilgrimage, and there he had his altar of sacrifice and communion, in addition to the well.

There too the Philistine king and his servants approached him, and confessed that they had seen that the Lord was with him, and this in spite of the fact, of which Isaac reminded them, that they had disliked him because of his prosperity and had sent him away. They now wished that there should be an oath and a covenant of peace between them, and this was established. Isaac could now pursue his pilgrim way without further interference from the Philistines, and we can see how his course illustrates the injunctions of Romans 12: 17-19. Isaac had not recompensed evil for evil, nor sought to avenge himself, but as much as lay in his power he had lived peaceably with all men. May the same spirit be ours as we go through the world.

The two verses that close the chapter show us that at the age of forty Esau had developed a mind altogether opposed to that of both Abraham and Isaac, who made no alliance with the Canaanite. Esau established the most intimate connection, that of marriage, with two Hittite women. He thus brushed aside the thought of taking a wife from their own kindred, and linked himself with the people of the land whose iniquity was rising until their judgment fell some three to four hundred years later. Previously he had despised the birthright, now he despised a restriction that had Divine sanction. The call of God was nothing to him. It was a grief of mind to his parents and a challenging of the purpose of God.

In Genesis 27 we see the governmental result beginning to manifest itself. Isaac does not now appear in a very favourable light, nor indeed does Rebekah. Both were marked by partiality, as had been stated in verse 28 of the previous chapter, and were governed by their own special fancies. Isaac's loss of sight made him anticipate death a good many years before it came to him, and he was anxious to bestow the blessing on Esau, in spite of the fact that before birth it had been indicated that he was to serve Jacob. He was thus attempting to defeat the purpose of God, and the chapter reveals how his effort failed.

Rebekah, on the other hand, knew what God's purpose was, but in her anxiety for the blessing of her favourite she resorted to a calculated course of deceit in order to trick her blind husband. She instigated the deceit and Jacob practised it with success. Later episodes in Jacob's life reveal him to us as a man who was a master of artful and even underhand designs. It is a solemn thought that he got the

earliest recorded lesson in this kind of thing from his mother. His bartering with Esau as to the pottage and the birthright was sharp practice, but had not in it the element of deceit.

Mankind is endowed with five senses, as we all know. One of the five was lacking with poor Isaac. **Sight** being gone, he was shut up to the other four, and this striking story shows that all the four were exercised. Rebekah's clever cookery presented the flesh of the kids as though it were venison, so his **taste** was deceived. Her production of Esau's garments, putting them on Jacob, was effectual in deceiving his sense of **smell**. Her plan of covering Jacob's hands and neck with the hairy skin of the slain kids was equally successful in deceiving his powers of **feeling**. One sense remained, that of **hearing**, and Isaac recognized the voice as that of Jacob. It was a case of three senses against one. Three senses declared that the son he could not see was Esau, and only one declared that it was Jacob. Isaac accepted the verdict of the majority and blessed the son he could not see.

Yet the majority verdict was wrong, and only the testimony of his ear was right. We see in this an allegory, illustrating a very important principle, namely that God-given faith comes by **hearing**. Faith is not sight, as we know. But there are many who seem to think that it comes by feeling; and that, not only among those who are desiring assurance of salvation, but also among those who are saved. Such would like to be guided by feelings or other natural senses rather than by simple faith in the word of God. We are living in an epoch in which God is addressing Himself, not to sight or feeling, but to the hearing of faith. We may safely trust His voice, even if all our natural senses contradict.

The deceit which Jacob practised, as instigated by his mother, was reinforced by a direct lie on his part, when he declared that he was Esau. Fully deceived, Isaac blessed him. Verses 28 and 29 give the terms of it, and we notice that it was all concerned with earthly things. He was to have plenty to eat and drink, and be served by his brethren and other nations, who would themselves be cursed or blessed by their attitude to him. There was no word as to God being his shield and reward, as we find with Abraham. Still, such as it was, it indicated the blessing on earth that was to be his. His descendants have forfeited it, as we know, but it will all be made good to them in the coming millennial day.

Our thoughts are now turned to Esau, who had been forestalled in this fraudulent way. Yet, as is so often the case, man's evil is overruled to work out the purpose of God. The great trembling of Isaac would seem to indicate that he was convicted of having tried to defeat God's purpose, and that having failed in this, and having been used to pronounce on Jacob what he intended for Esau, the thing was irrevocable. As for Esau, he at once recognized that here was the sequel to the wanton way in which he had sold his birthright. In regard to him we might summarize the whole sad story as: — The birthright: the barter: the bitter cry. The birthright was gone, and the bitter cry remained.

In Hebrews 12: 16, Esau is designated, "profane person," and coupled with a "fornicator." The appropriateness of the connection is apparent when we remember that this latter sin is used figuratively for unholy connections between the believer and the world; whilst the profane person is one who lives wholly for this world, and shuts God and His world out of his thoughts. Esau had not only done this but also had despised what was of God. Now when people go to the length of despising God and His blessing they perish, as is stated in Acts 13: 41. In our day and in our land there are multitudes slipping into that great sin in regard to the Gospel, and they stand on the brink of destruction.

Esau was now a pitiful sight. He wept. His tears could not undo the past or recover the birthright, but they did draw forth a blessing from Isaac, though not **the** blessing. And in uttering what he did in verses 39 and 40, he spoke doubtless as a prophet. For many a long century the yoke of Jacob has been off the neck of Esau.

But the feud between the two brothers remains to this day, and is one of the greatest forces

provoking discord in the earth. The beginning of it and the root of it come before us in verse 41. But again we see that in all his thoughts Esau had not God before him, otherwise he would not have imagined he could defeat God's purpose by slaying his brother.

He miscalculated in thinking that his father's death was impending, when it did not take place for a number of years. His threat however reached Rebekah's ears and stirred her to a further plan on behalf of her favourite son. There was in it again, we think, an element of subterfuge. To explain to Isaac his sudden departure to Laban, she complained of the annoying behaviour of the Hittite wives of Esau, which doubtless was quite true, and insinuated that Jacob might follow this bad example. Really, however she only anticipated that Jacob's stay with his uncle would last for "a few days," and then, Esau's anger having evaporated, she would have her favourite son back again.

The incident that fills this chapter relates some sordid details, but contains some searching instruction. We see how God maintains His purpose and at the same time exercises His disciplinary government. Everybody suffered; Esau and Isaac, and finally both Jacob and Rebekah, since the parting lasted for many years, rather than "a few days," as she anticipated. **Further, Jacob** went forth to be deceived by others and Rebekah was left to the unwelcome society of the daughters of Heth. She dwelt upon her weariness as a reason and an excuse for sending Jacob off to her brother, but doubtless the discord between them was very real, and she was left to face it without her favourite son.

That Isaac was satisfied with Rebekah's explanation is evident as we read the opening verses of Genesis 28. Indeed at this point we see him in a much more favourable light, and speaking as a man of faith. He charges Jacob to go to Padan-aram and find a wife among his own people, and he blesses him in a way that surely indicates that he now accepted the purpose of God as to his two sons, which overruled and cancelled out his own natural inclinations. He calls upon God to give "the blessing of Abraham" to him, for that particular blessing, which carried with it the coming of the "Seed," in whom all nations should be blessed, was the very essence of the coveted birthright.

We notice further, that the possession of this blessing entailed the ultimate possession of the land of promise, but for the present strangership in the midst of it. This has a remarkable voice for us, since we read in Galatians 3: 14, of "the blessing of Abraham" coming "on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." In receiving the Spirit we have the Earnest of the heavenly portion that is ours, but for the present we are left as strangers in the place where we are. Our portion lies **there** in the age to come. Our strangership is **here** in the age that is.

Verses 6-9, are sadly illuminating as to the mind of Esau. He not only contracts a further marriage that was bound to displease his parents, but that also would contravene the purpose of God. In the previous chapter he appears as a prospective murderer: now he is again revealed as a deliberate and high-handed despiser of God and His word. We saw this contrary spirit characterizing him at the end of Genesis 26; we now see it breaking out even more decisively and flagrantly, so that it is not difficult to understand the statement in the last Old Testament book, "I hated Esau." As yet the history of Jacob has not furnished us with any clear reason why God should say, "I loved Jacob."

## **Genesis 28: 10 — Genesis 31: 55.**

In spite of all his defects Jacob's action in going forth to Haran was consistent with the purpose of God, and hence by a dream encouragement was ministered to him. At the time of Babel men sought to elevate themselves to heaven by a tower of their own construction, and it ended in scattering and confusion. But God has established a link between heaven and earth, indicated by the ladder of his

dream, and this link in those days was made good by angelic administration. Jehovah Himself was at the top of the ladder and poor Jacob, the fugitive, at the bottom, needing a blessing and getting it.

Three things stand out clearly in this divine communication. First, though Jacob was running away from the land of promise, it was confirmed to him and to his seed, which was to be greatly multiplied and spread out in all directions. Second there was the promise of blessing for all the families of the earth in him and in his seed. Third, the promise of the Divine presence and preservation in all his wanderings, and his ultimate restoration to the land which was his according to purpose. He may have some bitter experiences under Divine government but God's purpose will stand.

It may be that when the Lord uttered the words recorded in John 1: 51, He alluded to this incident. If so, we have to notice an important difference. In the coming age the Son of Man will not be a mere "ladder," but rather the administrative Centre of all things. Being Lord of all, angels will ascend and descend as He directs. The heavens and the earth will be brought into harmony and unity under His sway.

Verses 16-22 show us how Jacob responded to the dream. In the first place, it awoke him to the realization of the presence of God. That we may be in the presence of God, and yet quite unaware of it, is a solemn thought. To Jacob it was not merely solemn; it was **dreadful**. But that was because he had no assured standing before God on the ground of redemption. Only when the death and resurrection of Christ were accomplished facts could believers say "We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ," having received the reconciliation. For us the presence of God is not dreadful but delightful.

Then again, Jacob recognized that where Jehovah manifests His presence, there is the house of God. Right through the Scriptures runs the thought of the house of God in its various forms and aspects, but here is the first mention of it. It is remarkable moreover that Jacob connected "the gate of heaven" with "the house of God." The first mention of a gate is in Genesis 19: 1, where Lot sat in the gate of Sodom, and this shows that the word is used not only to designate the place of entrance and exit but also the place where men of age and wisdom sat to execute judgment. In other words, gate has a figurative as well as a literal meaning, and where God dwells in His house, there is the place of Heaven's administration and judgment.

And further, Jacob's action in taking one of the stones that had served him for-a pillow, and anointing it as a pillar, and identifying it thus with God's house, is remarkable and significant in the light of 1 Timothy 3: 15. In ancient times pillars were used for support, as we see in Solomon's Temple. But they were also set up as witnesses to certain facts. Three times do we read of Jacob rearing pillars; here and in Genesis 31 and Genesis 35, each time as a witness.

It is in this sense, we believe, that the word is used in 1 Timothy 3: 15. The Church of the living God is the house of God and the pillar and ground, or basis, of the truth. The "church of the living God" is being built by "the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16: 16-18), and it is at the present time the standing witness to the truth in the power of the Spirit of God. It is worthy of note that in our chapter Jacob poured oil upon the pillar, which we may take as a figure of the anointing of the Spirit of God. His action originated the name, Bethel, which means, house of God.

But, though Jacob did all this, the ground that he took in his vow was about as selfish as ever to be found in a true saint of God. It came to this: — If God will be with me, and look after me, and do for me what I desire, then He shall be my God, and I will yield to Him a tenth of all that He gives me. A bargain such as this is barely above the level of a decent man of the world. Yet God bore with him and evidently accepted his feeble vow, and did for him all that he wished, and more also.

In Genesis 29, we find Jacob resuming his journey, and the merciful hand of God, directing him and opening up his way, is at once manifested. His steps are guided to the very well where the sheep of Laban, his uncle, were watered and where he met his cousin Rachel. Into the house of Laban he was received with an effusive welcome, but only to find himself there in the hands of a man who was his equal in duplicity.

After Jacob had sojourned there a month, serving Laban, the question as to his wages was raised and, loving Rachel, he agreed to serve seven years for her. The story of how Laban deceived him at the end of the seven years is given to us in verses 23-30, and Laban had a plausible excuse for acting as he did. We cannot fail to see in this the working of the government of God and an illustration of our Lord's words, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." It was Jacob's turn now to complain of being beguiled.

Moreover, there was discipline from the hand of God. Jacob's love was centred on Rachel and in comparison with her Leah was hated, so it was ordered of God that, while Leah bore children, Rachel was barren. The closing verses of the chapter give us the birth of four sons and their names. It is worthy of note that in each case the name was given by the mother, and was related to her own circumstances and feelings. Jacob does not appear as having any say in the matter. During this period of his chequered career there is no record of his having an altar of sacrifice and communion. Being out of touch, he had no guidance as to the names of his children, and we shall see that this was the case with all his children except the last. Then, though Rachel named him, his father also named him, and Jacob's name prevailed.

The rather sordid story of Jacob's children, and of the devices of both Rachel and Leah, as they endeavoured to gain sons and thus establish themselves in his favour, is related in Genesis 30: 1-21. Here we have the origins of the tribes in these sons, who were named by Leah and Rachel. The handmaids did not name their own sons, and the four tribes descended from these do not appear to have made any particular mark in the subsequent history of the nation.

When we reach verse 22, we find God begins to act, and we leave behind us the scheming of the two wives, though still it is Rachel who bestows the name of Joseph. Yet clearly here is a son who was born as the fruit of God acting in response to Rachel's prayers, and the story is lifted to a higher level. The son appears, who is to play a great part in the history of the nation, and who is to become a striking type of Christ, perhaps the most striking that the Old Testament affords.

In verse 25, we find that the birth of Joseph helped to lift Jacob himself to a higher level and, as a consequence, his mind turned to the land that was his according to God's purpose, and he desired to return thither. We may take it as axiomatic, and true in every dispensation, that when the saint enters into communion with God, the Divine purpose becomes to him all-important. Jacob freshly realized that there was a country that he could call, "mine own place."

Laban, however, intruded into the question and ultimately his thoughts prevailed, and he delayed Jacob, as it turned out, for six years. Laban was a shrewd man and recognized that Jacob's presence with him had brought blessing. He wished to retain that blessing, and was prepared to allow Jacob to settle his own wages. As a result there ensued a further battle of wits, and this time Jacob and not Laban gained the advantage.

Jacob bargained that all the spotted and speckled cattle should be separated and put under his sons, while he tended the others. Then, if these others produced young of the spotted and speckled sort, they were to be his and added to his flocks. The closing verses of this chapter reveal the device that he employed to increase his flocks at the expense of Laban's. We observe how true he still is to his name

— meaning Supplanter.

In reference to this matter, Jacob had said to Laban, "So shall my righteousness answer for me in time to come," which would seem to indicate that he had rather a low idea of what is right in the sight of God. It was quite clear that in time past Laban had taken advantage of him, but to employ counter-devices, in order to reverse the situation, while quite according to the way of the world, is not according to God. It is true of course that Jacob did not walk in the light of God fully revealed as we do.

The effect of all this is seen in Genesis 31: 1-2. The sons of Laban saw that Jacob had largely despoiled their father of his flocks, and Laban himself began to regard him with disfavour. The situation became critical, and the Lord Himself intervened to end it. Back to his own land and kindred he was to go. In breaking the news of their impending departure to his wives he related how Laban had dealt crookedly with him, and how God had acted in his favour. We are now permitted to see how God had intervened and caused the agreement as to the spotted and speckled cattle to work in his favour. In the light of this our reflection would be that if he had rested with confidence in God, and not used the devices related in the last chapter, the end God purposed would have been reached, and his "righteousness" would have answered for him in a much more convincing way.

From all this we may draw a practical conclusion. We have no need nor right to resort to plans of our own, as though we could help God to achieve His purpose. If, on the other hand, God instructs us by His word to act, it is our duty and our wisdom to do as He says. Jacob asserted that Laban had changed his wages ten times. This, if a fact, was great provocation, but to have relied upon God would have saved him from actions also open to question.

In calling him back to the land of promise, God revealed Himself to him as "the God of Bethel," reminding him of the pillar he anointed and the vow that he made. Thus he was called back to the beginning of his direct dealings with God. Such is ever God's way with His people. We may wander away but back to the original spot, whence we departed, we have to come. The point of departure proves to be the place of recovery.

Rachel and Leah altogether supported Jacob in his determination to return. Their attitude shows that they were convinced of their father's dishonourable and callous conduct, and furnishes us with further evidence of how Jacob had suffered at his hands. Their advice in the emergency could not be bettered — "Now then, whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do." Complete trust and obedience to God is the only right thing. It reminds us of the words of Mary, the mother of our Lord, recorded in John 2: 5. God alone has the right to demand such unquestioning obedience.

But in the manner of his departure we again see the character of Jacob revealed. Instead of dealing openly with Laban, meeting him face to face, and then departing with due notice, he stole away unawares while Laban was absent, shearing his sheep. In so doing he presented Laban with fresh ground of complaint, for he had submitted himself to being in the place of a servant, working for wages, though son-in-law to his master. Under those circumstances the parting ought to have been arranged by mutual consent.

A critical situation had been created, so critical that God intervened, speaking this time to Laban, who had no direct knowledge of Him, for he speaks of Him to Jacob as "the God of your father." In a dream Laban was warned not to overtake Jacob with violence of speech or action and, having regard to this, he adopted an attitude only of remonstrance, with a note of reproach in it as to the stealing of his gods. Verse 19 had told us that Rachel had stolen the "images," or "seraphim" of her father. Laban regarded them as his "gods."

Teraphim were small images, used for purposes of divination. The incident furnishes us with a sidelight as to the way in which spiritist practices had spread. These little "household divinities" were revered and valued, and oftentimes especially so by the women, hence Rachel's anxiety to have them in her possession as they travelled away from her old home. Heathen practices are very infectious. Of Rachel's action Jacob evidently knew nothing, so the accusation, correct though it was, stirred his anger and led to a statement of his case.

His words to Laban at last were very vigorous, and he told him to his face of the hard conditions of service that he had imposed. He attributed God's warning to Laban as not merely a considerate intervention in regard to himself but as a rebuke to Laban, and so indeed it was without a doubt.

Verses 43 and 44, would indicate that Laban himself was conscious that this was the case, and so, while asserting his fatherly rights, he adopted a different tone altogether, and suggested that a covenant should be agreed and established between them. This was accordingly done.

Again we find Jacob raising up a pillar of witness and also a heap of stones, according to the custom of those primitive days. Jacob undertook to deal rightly by Laban's daughters, and both agreed not to pass beyond the stones of witness to harm each other. We do not read on this occasion of the anointing of the pillar, but we do find that Jacob solemnized the occasion not only by an oath but also by sacrifice. The name of God was invoked, as we see in verse 53, and that as the God of Abraham and of Nahor, since both those patriarchs would have been venerated by Laban as well as by Jacob. In addition Jacob swore by the fear of Isaac his father. Such was the esteem accorded to parents and ancestors in those far-off days — very good in many ways. But there was the danger of the fear of Isaac, whom he could see, supplanting the fear of the God, whom he could not see. Hence the reminder of the unseen world that he got, as we find in the opening verse of Genesis 32.

## **Genesis 32: 1 — Genesis 35: 29.**

Thus far, many blemishes have marred the history of Jacob. His desire at the outset for the birthright and the blessing of God, which accompanied it, was right: the way he schemed to obtain it altogether wrong. God had been but little in his thoughts, and when, fleeing from Esau's vengeance, in a night vision he discovered the house of God, he felt it to be a dreadful place. One of our hymn writers describing his soul's journey, began with, "All of self and none of Thee." If it was not exactly thus with Jacob, it had certainly been, "Nearly all of self and very little of Thee."

Now however the time had come when God would deal more directly with him, and the first move was that he should encounter an angelic band. Jacob was migrating with wives, children, servants and many animals, thus forming a large band. He now became conscious that there was a second band, standing on his behalf. Even this did not free him from the fear of Esau, and his approach to him, as given in verses 3-5, though very diplomatic, bears traces of the working of a bad conscience.

Verse 7 again bears witness to this. The tidings that Esau, at the head of four hundred men, was coming to meet him, awoke his keenest fears. In spite of having seen the angelic band, he assumed at once, as the fruit of the working of his conscience, that Esau was on his way to take vengeance and, true to his nature, he at once worked out an elaborate scheme to placate his brother and secure himself. All his possessions, starting with flocks and servants and working down to wives and children, were to meet the brother he feared before he himself had to face him.

But this did not altogether exclude God from his thoughts. In verses 9-12, we have his prayer recorded. God had intervened with him previously and Jacob had registered a vow, but this is the first

actual prayer of his that is put on record. It does not breathe the spirit of communion and intercession, such as marked Abraham in Genesis 18, it was simply a plea for preservation, while acknowledging God's mercies to him in the past. Yet we notice how rightly he took a low place, though not as low as Abraham, who said, "I . . . am but dust and ashes" (18: 27). Jacob says, "I am not worthy of the least of all Thy mercies," which was indeed true, though it did not go the whole length. It is a fact in all dispensations that one's sense of unworthiness and nothingness deepens as nearness to God increases. As an illustration of this see Psalm 73: 17, 22.

Jacob's plan was to appease Esau with a present, as verse 20 records. All — even wives and sons — were sent over the brook at the ford Jabbok, and he was left alone, well to the rear. Not a very dignified or courageous proceeding! Yet God was in all this, for being left alone, the moment had come for him to be brought face to face with God Himself, that he might have an experience, the effect of which he would never lose. Up to this point his life had been mainly one of scheming against and wrestling with men. Now God by His Messenger was going to wrestle with him.

"There wrestled a man with him;" such is the record, and doubtless at the start of this incident the unknown Stranger was to Jacob but a mere man. Who was Jacob to give way to another man? Hence it put him on his mettle to resist. The Stranger strove to break him down and until breaking of the day he resisted. Then the supernatural nature of the Stranger was manifested by the powerful touch which crippled him at his strongest point.

Then at once Jacob's attitude changed. Instead of wrestling, which now had become impossible to him he took to clinging to his Conqueror. He ceased his striving and took to trusting, realizing that the One who had overcome him had done so for his blessing, and that he was in the presence of God. The Name of the Stranger was not revealed, but the blessing that Jacob had desired from his youth was bestowed upon him then and there.

"He blessed him there," in the place of solitude with God, and when his natural power was crippled and laid low. The vital blessing of God did not descend upon his head when he struck that crafty bargain with Esau, nor even when his blind father, deceived by his impersonation of Esau, pronounced the patriarchal blessing on his head. No, it was when God dealt with him personally in solitude, and broke his stubborn will. In all this we may see a picture of how God deals with our souls today, though the grace into which we are called is so much richer than anything that Jacob knew.

By naming the place Peniel — "The face of God" — Jacob disclosed his deep sense of having been brought face to face with God and that the outcome was preservation and not destruction. Here was good reason for him to revise his earlier thought that the house of God and the gate of heaven was a "dreadful" place.

In this incident we see foreshadowed several striking things. First, that in order to deal fully and finally with man, God Himself would stoop into manhood, since it was as "a man" that Jacob saw God "face to face." Second, that God's thought towards us, even the most wayward of us, is blessing. Third, that human struggling and wrestling achieves nothing, and that surrender or submission, and honesty in confession, is the way of blessing. Fourth, that it was when clinging to the One who had vanquished him, and confessing to his name of Jacob - meaning Supplanter — that his name was changed to Israel — meaning Prince of God — and he was told that he had power not only with men but with God, and he had prevailed. By changing his name God claimed Jacob as belonging now to Him.

Thus a great moment in his history had been reached, and as he realized that he had seen God face to face, with salvation as the result, the sun rose upon him. An experience of this kind in the history of any soul does indeed mark the dawning of a new day. In Jacob's case the experience was

memorialized for his children by a simple prohibition in their eating, as the last verse of the chapter records.

But as yet Jacob was hardly equal to his new name, so we do not find it used by the inspired historian until much later in his story. All his old characteristics come into display in Genesis 33, carried to a high degree of obsequiousness. The bowing down of himself and wives and children could hardly have been more complete and his proffered gifts were large, having made up his mind to "appease him with the present."

The attitude of Esau was however not what he had anticipated. His anger had cooled off during the intervening years, and he had become the leader of hundreds of men and thus a man of influence and of large possessions. Though ultimately accepting Jacob's present, he at first declined it saying, "I have enough," or more literally, "I have much." In verse 11, we find Jacob saying, "I have enough," but he used a different word, meaning, "all." That word he could use because he was able to say, "God hath dealt graciously with me." The man of the world may be able to say, "I have much," it is only the saint, consciously blessed of God, who can say, "I have all." This is what the Apostle Paul said in Philippians 4: 18.

Jacob called his gift "my blessing," but in spite of this he was by no means anxious to have Esau's company on his further journey. His plea, recorded in verse 13, was doubtless a genuine one. It lends itself to an application amongst the people of God today. There are always to be found those who are young and tender, who must not be overdriven. Those who have reached the stature and activity of full-grown men must remember this, and not force the pace of their weaker brethren to their undoing. Many a young and tender believer has been damaged by this kind of thing.

Having declined the proffered help and Esau having departed, Jacob again reveals the crookedness that seems to have been his natural bent. Having said to Esau, "I come unto my lord unto Seir," he promptly journeyed to Succoth which lay in an entirely different direction. Moreover, having arrived there, the record is that he built an house and made booths for his cattle, which indicates that he had a mind to settle down in the land rather than maintain the character of a stranger, following in the footsteps of his grandfather Abraham.

The next step recorded is his removal to Shalem, across the Jordan and in the centre of the land. Here, though he had a tent and an altar, we can again discern that his separation from the people of the land was becoming impaired. He pitched his tent close to the city, and then bought the land where he had encamped. Further the very name he gave to his altar tells a similar story. The name El-elohe-Israel means, "God the God of Israel." He did indeed use his new God-given name and not his old name of Jacob yet even so he connected God with himself instead of connecting himself with God. In effect he was saying "God belongs to me," instead of, "I belong to God."

There may not seem to be much difference between these two sentiments but there is a gulf between the practices they induce, as we may soon see in our own histories. We may recognize that as, "born of God," and, "in Christ Jesus," we have a new name, yet if we bring God down to connect Him with our new name, we may easily assume that we may connect Him with our things — things by no means worthy of His call or of His glory. On the other hand, to recognize that He has called us to link us with Himself, at once searches our hearts, and lifts us above many a thing that would entangle us.

The whole of Genesis 34 is occupied with the unhappy results that sprang from the lowering of Jacob's separation from the world, which we have just noted. Its effects for evil were not manifested in Jacob himself but in his family. The tide of evil runs in two broad channels: violence and corruption. They are first mentioned in Genesis 6: 12, 13: they are personified in "the evil man" and "the strange

woman" of Proverbs 2: 12, 16. The world is just the same today; and how often we have to hang our heads in shame and confess that a bit of world-bordering on our part, as Christian parents, has led to sorrow and even disaster in our families.

In our chapter the corruption comes first. His daughter, Dinah, wanted to enjoy the companionship and pleasures of the other young women of the land, and in result got entangled and defiled, and this aroused great wrath amongst Jacob's sons, which was not appeased by the action of Shechem and Ham or in the way of repairing the damage done. The anger came to a head in the atrocious violence of Simeon and Levi, which was never forgotten by Jacob, nor indeed by God. When at the end of his life Jacob spoke prophetically of his sons, foretelling the future of the tribes and uttering certain blessings, he denounced these two sons, cursing their anger, as recorded in Genesis 49: 5-7.

Thus the shameful story of Genesis 34 not only caused Jacob "to stink among the inhabitants of the land," — a dreadful position for him, seeing he was the only man in the land possessing the true knowledge of God — but it brought a judgment upon the two who were the promoters of the violence. It is of interest to note that in later days the tribe of Levi so acted as to gain a special blessing, and in consequence we are permitted to see how God can turn that which was originally a curse into a blessing. The word had been, "I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel" (49: 7). They **were** divided; but it was by Levi being called to special service and scattered throughout all the tribes.

The first verse of Genesis 35 shows us how God intervened when things had reached this sorry pass. He called Jacob back to the place where first God had made Himself known to him. There he was to dwell and there his altar was to be. At Bethel, as we saw in Genesis 28, God declared what He would be for and to Jacob, without raising any question as to Jacob's response or behaviour. Now God is always true to Himself and to His word. Before the giving of the law through Moses, God was dealing with these patriarchs on the basis of His promises in grace, and those promises abide.

God deals with us according to grace in the Gospel today. Hence we read of, "this grace in which we stand" (Rom. 5: 2), which is equivalent to saying that our dwelling before God is in His grace or favour. As we dwell in the sense of His favour so shall we be led to approach Him in the spirit of worship, and to have done with all that is displeasing to Him.

So it was with Jacob as we see here. Immediately God called him back to Bethel he realized that there were evil things to be found in his household, even strange gods. In Genesis 31 we saw how Rachel had carried off from Laban the "gods," or "seraphim," that he valued, and there is no record of Jacob taking exception to them at that time. But with God before him, he at once became alive to the evil of them. They were to be put away, and there was to be personal cleanliness, extending even to the garments they wore, for the presence of God demands a purging which covers even to that which surrounds us: an important lesson that we all need to take to heart.

So far all was well with Jacob but a defect soon appears. The unclean things were not destroyed but only hidden away. They had considerable monetary value and it looks as if he hoped to resume possession, or at least realize their value, in a future day. The tendency of our foolish hearts is just the same. Let us see that we do not act in similar fashion with defiling things of the flesh and of the world that would naturally attract us.

As Jacob went to Bethel God restrained the peoples of the land from taking vengeance on him and his household because of the violent action of his two sons; and so he safely got there, and built his altar. The name he gave it stands in contrast with that which he gave to his former altar, as recorded in the last verse of Genesis 33. There he connected God simply with himself. Here he recognized Him as

the God of His own dwelling-place. The altar, El-beth-el, demanded from Jacob a higher standard of conduct than did the altar, El-elohe-Israel.

Arrived at Bethel, things began to move rapidly forward. The first recorded event is the death of Deborah, who had been nurse to Jacob's mother. A break with the past is thus signified. Then, the promises of God were confirmed in a fresh appearance of the Almighty. Jacob's new name was confirmed, and the land was made sure to him. This moved him freshly to set up a pillar of witness and anoint it, as a response to the revelation. But, as is so often the case in God's ways this fresh grace from God is followed by fresh losses on the human side.

Leaving Bethel, Rachel was over taken in childbirth and died. Thus he lost his favourite wife, though in her death he gained a son. As we before noted this was the only occasion when Jacob himself had to do with the naming of his sons, and the child became known by that name, rather than by the name his dying mother gave him.

This blow was succeeded by the disgraceful sin of Reuben, so that at this point sorrow succeeded sorrow. Yet we cannot but think that there is a typical significance in the way these things are brought together: Rachel typifying the nation out of whom the Messiah was to spring. He was to be the "Son of Sorrow" in His rejection, which would mean the setting aside of the nation from whom He sprang. Ultimately the "Son of Sorrow" would be manifested as the "Son of the Right Hand," not only of Jacob but of Jehovah Himself. But until that time, and while as a nation Israel lies spiritually dead, the Gentiles come into prominence, just as the sons of Leah and the concubines are prominent in verses 23-26.

The closing verses put on record one more loss, in the death of his aged father, Isaac. Though he went blind many years before and anticipated his death (27: 2), it did not actually take place till he had lived 180 years. The division of Genesis entitled, "The generations of Isaac," began at Genesis 25: 19, and it extends to the end of Genesis 35. Under it has come all these many details as to the earlier history of Jacob.

## **Genesis 36: 1 — Genesis 39: 23.**

The section entitled, "The generations of Esau," begins with the first verse of Genesis 36, and continues to the first verse of Genesis 37. As in the case of Ishmael and Isaac, so again here the rejected line is mentioned first, but with brevity, and chronology is not pursued in connection with it. The selected line comes second and then sufficient dates are given to enable us to follow the passing of the years. Thus is foreshadowed the fact, stated so clearly as a principle of God's ways, "He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second" (Heb. 10: 9).

The chapter shows us that Esau prospered in earthly things so that the blessing of his father was fulfilled to him (27: 39, 40). He occupied his own territory, became quite independent of Jacob, his descendants multiplied and became chiefs and notorious. They not only became "dukes" but even "kings," and that before any king appeared in Israel's line. In earthly greatness and power the children of this world have always taken precedence over the children of God.

The chapter also shows quite clearly that Esau, Edom and Mount Seir are to be identified, when we find these names mentioned in later Scripture. Otherwise the many names mentioned may convey but little to us. The New Translation prefers in verse 24 the reading "found the warm springs in the wilderness," rather than "the mules." This was doubtless at that time a memorable discovery, but what spiritual significance this may have for us we do not know.

The generations of Jacob begin with Genesis 37: 2, and this is the last of these divisions of the book, continuing to the end. The first verse has told us that he **dwelt** in the land in which his father had been a **stranger**. In this he was moving ahead of God's purpose and hence presently God permitted circumstances to move him and his sons into Egypt, and thus all came to pass that had been predicted to Abraham in Genesis 15: 13, 14.

Here we may see a type of many a trying experience that intrudes itself to our Christian lives. God intends us to be strangers in the world that exists today. If we settle ourselves down and become dwellers, we may very easily find ourselves carried down into a spiritual Egypt and enslaved therein. So let us take the warning of this Scripture to heart.

The generations of Jacob are mainly occupied with the doings of his sons, who sprang out of him, and more especially with Joseph, to whom at the age of seventeen we are introduced in verse 2; It has been said that in him we have the most perfect and complete type of the Lord Jesus that we have in the Scripture, and we believe it to be true. In keeping with this we shall see that no sinful or unworthy action of his is put on record. Thus the value of his life is enhanced as a type, though he was a sinful man like the rest of us.

At the outset he is presented to us as the son specially beloved of his father on the one hand, and as dissociated from the evil ways of his brothers on the other. The former fact was signaled by the "coat of many colours," and the latter by Joseph bringing to his father the evil report of the doings of the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah. Thus is foreshadowed the unique Sonship of the Lord Jesus and His refusal of and separation from the evil ways of men.

As a result a complete breach supervened between Joseph and, his brethren. Knowing human nature it is just what we should expect in such a situation. The more it was manifest that he was specially beloved of his father, the more they hated him. To begin with their hatred affected their speech — they "could not speak peaceably unto him." Later their hatred flared up into wicked action. But we see at once a type of the One of whom Psalm 69 speaks prophetically "They . . . hate Me without a cause;" and again, "I am become a stranger unto My brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children."

Next there follows the record of Joseph's two dreams. Now it is remarkable how large a part was played by dreams in his history, since, before the climax is reached, no less than five are recorded, and every one of them contained a prophecy. Each of them therefore was produced by the finger of God touching the unconscious mind of the sleeper, and marked a Divine intervention, and indeed a revelation of secret things.

Both his dreams were prophetic of his coming eminence and glory, so clearly so that his brothers, and his father too, saw at once their meaning. The general drift was the same in both cases, but only the second suggested that his father and mother as well as his brothers would be bowing down to him in a future day. There was the further difference in that sheaves are connected with an **earthly** harvest, whereas sun, moon and stars are **heavenly** objects. The sun is a symbol of supreme authority, the moon of derived and associated authority, and Jacob saw at once how applicable this was to the place of father and mother in his large patriarchal family.

The recounting of these dreams fanned the flame of hatred greatly, as we see in verses 5, 8 and 11. His father rebuked him, under the impression that such an event as that indicated by the dream was impossible. Yet it is recorded that he "observed the saying," which shows that he could not dismiss it from his mind, and he recognized that there was more in it than he had thought at first. He had faith in God, even if it was weak; whereas the brethren had none.

The application of all this to the great Antitype, our Lord Jesus, is very striking. The Jews, His brethren according to the flesh, hated Him without a cause and rejected Him when He came amongst them, yet the day is coming when they will bow down before Him. But not only this: He is to be the central Object of worship to the heavens as well as the earth, for that which had been secret is now revealed, and we know that God's purpose according to His good pleasure is to "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth" (Eph. 1: 10). How happily therefore we can sing,

"Firstborn of many brethren, Thou!

To whom both heaven and earth must bow."

Joseph's two dreams therefore not only foretold his own glorious future in Egypt, but also foreshadowed the supreme glory of Christ.

With verse 12 a fresh episode begins, in which we see Joseph sent by his father on a mission of kindly interest in his brethren. He sought them and found them in order to express his father's love toward them. Their response to this was not only hatred but premeditated murder, their crime to be hidden under cover of a lying report. They thought his dreams were but an idle fancy, which they could easily dissipate. They had to learn that they were a revelation of the purpose of God which they could not overthrow.

God defeated their evil project by touching the hearts of two of the brothers, Reuben and Judah. Of the two, Reuben appears in the better light. His purpose was to deliver him ultimately to his father again. Joseph was stripped of the coat which expressed the special place he had in his father's heart, and cast into a pit in which was no water. Judah supported Reuben in this, but during his absence took the lead in selling him to the Midianite merchantmen for twenty pieces of silver. Thus, though he did not actually die, Joseph went down into the pit, and was sold as a slave.

It is not difficult to see the typical value of all this. As we pass further into the Old Testament we find "the pit" becomes a symbol of death and destruction. In Psalm 69: 15, we find prophetic words, applicable to our Lord, " Let not the pit shut her mouth upon Me." The same figure is used in regard to the future deliverance of a godly remnant of Israel when the prophet said, "By the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water" (Zech. 9: 11). In the same prophet also we read the prophetic words, "They weighed for My price thirty pieces of silver" (11: 12).

Verses 31-35, recount the crafty way in which Jacob was led to jump to the conclusion that Joseph had been killed and devoured by some evil beast. His brothers avoided the telling of a plain lie, they only inferred it, and Jacob fell into their trap. In Genesis 27 we read how Jacob by wearing Esau's garment deceived his blind father, Isaac. Esau's garment is called "goodly raiment," and as he was the elder it may have been something very similar to Joseph's "coat of many colours." By goodly raiment Jacob deceived his father: by goodly raiment his sons deceived him. As he meted out so it was measured to him again. God's government of His people works with great precision.

Meanwhile Joseph had been carried down into Egypt, just as though he had been some article of merchandise and again he was sold. His purchaser was Potiphar, the captain of the guard. Thus he was brought into a place of considerable danger, on the one hand, but of nearness to Pharaoh, on the other. Things began to work together for his ultimate good, though by no means apparent at the time.

We have the story of Joseph completely interrupted by Genesis 38. In Genesis 39 it is resumed and the great temptation that faced him is immediately recounted. It would seem that we have the deplorable story of Judah recounted in order to heighten the effect in our minds of the way Joseph

stood firm under temptation of a similar kind. Judah appears to have been amongst the better behaved of the sons of Jacob, yet the practices that marked him and his family were evil, and evidently accepted as nothing very unusual. We need not dwell upon this, save to remark that the Tamar of this chapter is the first of the women mentioned in the genealogy of our Lord, recounted in Matthew 1. Of the four women mentioned, only Ruth had a clean record from the moral point of view, and she came of an accursed race. Such names would never have appeared in the record had it not been for the grace of God — the grace that triumphs over human sin.

The first verse of Genesis 39 picks up the thread from the last verse of Genesis 37. Potiphar was an Egyptian, as is specially mentioned. This might have seemed to us a quite unnecessary remark did we not know that at that time the ruling class in Egypt and even Pharaoh himself were an alien race. For several centuries Egypt was dominated by these "Shepherd Kings," or "Hyksos," much as China for a long time and until early this century was dominated by a Manchu dynasty. Potiphar was of true Egyptian stock, and was greatly prospered by the service of Joseph.

We are given the explanation of all that happened — "The Lord was with Joseph" - and, that being the case, all that he did prospered, and even what looked like disaster proved to be only a stepping-stone to something much better. Verses 3 and 4 lead us to remark the striking way in which Joseph's "hand" is mentioned in the story. The Lord being with him, He "made all that he did to prosper in his hand." The consequence of this was that he found favour with his master, and "all that he had he put into his hand." Naturally this was so. Though he did not know the explanation of it, Potiphar found he had made a first-rate bargain when he bought the young Semitic lad, who displayed such skilful powers coupled with God-fearing uprightness and integrity.

And not only this ease of mind as to the ordering of his household was enjoyed by him, but extraordinary good fortune marked all his affairs, both "in the house and in the field." Consequently everything was left, "in Joseph's hand." Joseph moreover had developed into a specially fine specimen of young manhood.

Then came a time of fierce and prolonged testing, and we see how great is the contrast with Judah's action in the previous chapter. There the sin was committed at once and was hardly recognized as sin. Here the testing met him day after day, and he was only preserved by his fear of God and recognition of the great wickedness of the seduction laid before him. Whether young or old we do well, as we pass through this defiling world, to have continually in our hearts this question, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Had he complied he would have sinned against the woman, against Potiphar and against himself, but the controlling and saving thought was "against GOD."

By his steadfast refusal he enraged the woman, and she with cunning artifice concocted a story against him, which, believed by her husband, landed him into prison. But we are going to see in Joseph's history a striking exemplification of that word written by the Apostle Peter in his First Epistle, "If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" (1 Peter 2: 20). He was abased for a moment, but only that he might be exalted in due time.

In the first place we notice that he was put into that particular prison "where the king's prisoners were bound." This proved to be a link in the chain of circumstances that connected him with ultimate triumph. Had it been another prison he would never have met the butler and baker who had offended the king.

Then, in the second place, the Lord was with him as much in the days and place of his adversity as He had been in the days of his comparative prosperity in Potiphar's mansion and estate. In result He

showed mercy to him, which took the form of bringing him into the favour of the keeper of the prison, who evidently wielded autocratic power within his own limited sphere.

So, in the third place, we find everything in the prison "committed to Joseph's hand." The extraordinary statement is made that, "whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it." The young man cast in as a prisoner becomes the super-efficient deputy of the jailer, and ends by controlling the whole place! We wonder if a situation approaching this has ever been seen in a prison since that day. The keeper was relieved of all work and anxiety. He doubtless took the salary, and Joseph did the work.

He had now tasted the bitterness of both pit and prison. Taken both together they foreshadow Christ going down into death as a result of the malice of man. But there the power of His hand was felt. The skill of Joseph's hand in the house of Potiphar may remind us of the mighty hand of Christ in His matchless life. But in the closing verses of our chapter we see typified the power of His mighty hand in the dark domain of death.

## Genesis 40: 1-Genesis 42: 24.

The history of Joseph was introduced by the record of the two prophetic dreams that were granted to him. Chapter 40 puts on record two further dreams of a prophetic nature, and their fulfilment. Though not given to him, yet in the providence of God they had a very distinct effect upon his future.

Both the chief butler and the chief baker of Pharaoh had offended their lord. Nothing is stated as to the nature of their offence, but bearing in mind the fact of Pharaoh being of an alien race and therefore likely to fear an attempt upon his life by poison, it is not surprising that both the chief custodians of his drink and his food had fallen under suspicion. Pending a decision in the matter, they were confined in the same prison as Joseph, and put in his charge. The first link in the Divinely ordered chain of events was that Joseph should be put in the place where the king's prisoners were bound. The second was that in due season these two men should be placed there too.

The third was that both men in one night should have dreams of a peculiar nature and yet marked by certain resemblances, and the effect on their minds should be such as to make them look sad and attract the notice of Joseph. They felt that there must be a hidden meaning in their dreams and they desired an interpreter. Joseph's reply was virtually an offer to interpret, while he acknowledged that all power to do so came from God.

The butler told his dream. Its salient points were: (1) that the vine had **three** branches, which produced the ripe grapes; (2) that Pharaoh's cup was **in his hand**, so that he could press into it the ripe grapes; and (3) that the cup of grape juice passed **into Pharaoh's hand**. The interpretation was simple. Within three days Pharaoh would restore the butler to his place. Having declared this, Joseph very naturally asked the man to remember him when thus he was prospered, to the end that he might be taken out of prison.

Emboldened by this favourable interpretation, the baker told his dream. Its salient points were: (1) that the baskets of bakemeats were **three**; (2) that the baskets were **on his head**; and (3) that the bakemeats were **devoured by birds** and never reached Pharaoh. Again the interpretation was simple. Within three days Pharaoh would lift up his head, hanging him on a tree, so that the birds should devour his flesh. His dream had an exactly opposite meaning to that of the butler.

The event proved that Joseph's interpretations were given of God. Pharaoh's birthday was on the third day, and he acted as the dreams had indicated. Yet the chief butler in his renewed prosperity

forgot about Joseph, and has become a standing monument of human ingratitude. Nevertheless, as we believe, the hand of God was over even this. Had the butler remembered, Joseph's deliverance from prison would have been the result of thankful and perhaps respectful human arrangement. God intended to take him out, reviving the butler's memory, in a far more striking way. And not only take him out but also exalt him above the chiefest of butlers and bakers. How God brought this to pass Genesis 41 reveals.

Again dreams enter into the story; this time in connection with Pharaoh himself. In our last article we spoke of five dreams but we should have been more correct had we said six, since, as it was with Joseph at the beginning so now, Pharaoh's dream was in duplicate. The general drift of both dreams was the same, and that both should have occurred in one night was very impressive. Sheep were not popular in Egypt and cattle provided the flesh food, and corn gave them their bread. The river Nile was the basis of the prosperity of both.

Pharaoh was troubled for he must have had a vague sense that evil was indicated in both these directions. The magicians and wise men of Egypt were helpless. Their evil trade depended upon their being able to prognosticate **good** things for the kings that they served (see 1 Kings 22) and evidently both dreams portended some kind of evil. In this predicament the memory of the chief butler revived and, remembering Joseph, he narrated to Pharaoh the wonderfully accurate way in which he had interpreted the dreams of both himself and the chief baker no less than two years before. What a test those two years must have been! No wonder it says of him in Psalm 105: 19, "The word of the Lord tried him." The word of the Lord by his dreams had indicated his future glory, but how long he had to wait for it. A trying experience indeed!

May we not see here a forecast of the fact that though the sufferings of the Christ are to be followed by His glory in public display, there is a period to elapse between, in the which He is hidden from the eyes of men: a period which is characterized as, "the patience of the Christ" (2 Thess. 3: 5, New Trans.) Thus it was in a small way with Joseph. He remained hidden and forgotten in the prison, and the affairs of Egypt moved on without him.

Now however his hour had struck. Desperately anxious to find out the meaning of his peculiar dreams, Pharaoh ordered Joseph to appear before him, and having prepared himself, Joseph did so. His answer to Pharaoh's enquiry reveals his simple confidence in God. He disclaimed any power or wisdom in himself but declared that God would give an answer of peace. It is a mark of a true servant of God to say, "It is not in me." The same spirit we see in Paul, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves but our sufficiency is of God" (2 Cor. 3: 5).

Pharaoh, in recounting his dreams to Joseph, added one detail omitted in the earlier account. Having eaten the seven fat cattle the seven lean ones were just as bad as they were before. It is easy to see how this feature suited the interpretation which Joseph proceeded to give. The two dreams were but one in their significance, just as Joseph's two dreams were one in their meaning.

Again the dreams were prophetic. God was revealing what He was about to bring upon the land of Egypt. First, seven years of very great abundance, but these to be followed by seven years of grievous dearth and famine, both depending upon the waters of the Nile. At the end of the seven years of famine all the fatness of the good years would have disappeared. In the figurative language of the dream the seven lean cattle would be just as they were at the beginning. Moreover, the dream was doubled to Pharaoh that he might realize that the thing was determined, beyond any hope of revocation, and God would shortly bring it to pass.

Joseph not only interpreted the dreams but he indicated to Pharaoh what should be done since

these things were impending, and that what was needed was the man of wisdom who should be entrusted with the carrying of them out. Joseph was really speaking on God's behalf and he indicated that on the human side all that was needed in the presence of these acts of God, was A MAN.

As a ruler of men, Pharaoh had doubtless acquired a measure of discernment, and he at once saw that in Joseph the man for this emergency was found. It was indeed the Spirit of God who was speaking and acting through Joseph, though Pharaoh, being an idolater, only thought of "the spirit of the gods." Still he recognized at once that here was superhuman wisdom and executive power. In result he straightway appointed Joseph as administrator of all Egypt with authority only second to his own.

Once more, in verse 42, Joseph's hand appears. Its power and skill had been manifested in Potiphar's house, in the ordinary affairs of life, and then later, amid scenes of much humiliation in the prison. Now amid the splendour of the palace, the ring from the very hand of Pharaoh (doubtless carrying the great seal of the kingdom) was placed upon the hand of Joseph. Power of a practically autocratic nature was his. Step by step he had gone down into the valley of humiliation. Now at one mighty bound he had ascended into power and glory. The typical nature of all this is very evident. In Philippians 2 we have detailed the downward steps of our blessed Lord, even to the death of the cross. But this is followed by one mighty uplifting to the glory, where to Him every knee will have to bow.

So, in verse 43 of our chapter, we see Joseph arrayed in fine linen, with a gold chain about his neck, in the second chariot of the kingdom, and "Bow the knee!" is the cry as he rides through the streets. Moreover a new name is given to him. It is said that Zaphnath-paaneah would have meaning whether it be read as Hebrew or as Egyptian. In the former it would mean "Revealer of secrets," in the latter, "Saviour of the world." We may happily accept both, and see in this double meaning a further type of the One whom we adore. In Him both **revelation** and **redemption** have reached their climax and full accomplishment, to our eternal blessing.

Then again, it was while Joseph was thus separated from his brethren and exalted among the Gentiles that a bride was given to him, and she was of Gentile stock. Two sons were born to him before the years of famine came, and while he was employed in collecting and laying up the produce of the seven years of plenty. The names of the sons are significant. Manasseh means "Forgetting," and Ephraim means "Fruitful." The name of the elder was negative in its bearing, for it commemorated the fact that he had been severed from all his old family associations, as well as the toil and sorrow of his early years. The name of the younger had a more positive significance, commemorating the fruitfulness that was produced from his former afflictions.

And so it has been with our Lord Jesus, only in a far larger and more striking way. His afflictions did not stop short of death itself, and out of His death springs eternal fruitfulness, as the Lord's own words, in John 12: 24, declare. Moreover that fruitfulness at the present time is being produced mainly among the Gentiles, while His links with Israel as a nation are broken. In our chapter we see a **typical** forecast of this great two-fold development. In Isaiah 49 we have it **prophetically** announced. It was declared that, even if Israel were not gathered, the Servant of the Lord would be glorious in the eyes of Jehovah, since the raising up of the tribes of Jacob was a light thing, and He was to be a light to the Gentiles and God's salvation to the ends of the earth. The **historical** fulfilment of both type and prophecy we find in the Acts of the Apostles.

The closing verses of Genesis 41 record the complete fulfilment of Pharaoh's dream. The resultant famine was of exceptional severity, extending over the habitable earth. When the people cried to Pharaoh for relief, his reply was simple: "Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do." We are immediately reminded of the words spoken by the mother of our Lord on the occasion of His first

miracle, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it " (John 2: 5). Does a conscience-stricken sinner cry out today for salvation? The answer in three words is, "Go unto Jesus." All God's grace and bounty flows through Him.

The scene changes as we begin to read Genesis 42, and we are carried back to Canaan, to Jacob and to Joseph's brethren. He was now highly exalted among the Gentiles and acting as saviour of the world, but his brethren needed his bounty as much as others. They had, however, by their own wicked actions, shattered all the links that once bound them to him, and those links could not be rightly restored save by severe dealings of a nature very painful, yet calculated to work in them a real repentance. The terrible famine, whatever else it might do, was designed to play a part in bringing to pass that desirable end.

All his brethren except Benjamin were dispatched by Jacob to buy corn in Egypt, and in result we begin to see the fulfilment of Joseph's dreams. Joseph was the governor, and the brethren bowed down before him with their faces to the earth. They did not know him though he recognized them, and started at once to deal with them in such a way as to test them and arouse their consciences. Accusing them of being spies, he drew forth from them the family details he wanted, including mention of Benjamin and of himself; for he was the one who "is not." How mistaken they were in this! They were presently to discover that Joseph "IS," and that their very lives are in his hand. The careless world to-day acts as though Christ is not. They have yet to learn that He is the Master of their lives, for He is the great "I AM."

The men, however, were speaking the truth as far as they knew it, and their confession gave a good opportunity to put them to the test. Benjamin was a son of Rachel, as Joseph himself was, and therefore specially beloved of Jacob. He would demand that Benjamin should be taken from his father's side, and until he was produced, one of them should be held as a hostage. How would the brethren react to that?

The point of this struck home to the brethren. They had robbed their father of Joseph, and now he is to be deprived of the younger son on whom his affection was specially set. It stabbed their consciences into action, as we see in verses 21 and 22, and this was their first step in the right direction. Moreover it was the first indication to Joseph of a change taking place in them. He had spoken to them roughly, as indeed they deserved, and he understood their language, though they knew not the Egyptian dialect in which he spoke.

The effect upon Joseph of this first sign of repentance was very striking and beautiful. He turned from them and **wept**. They were evidently tears of thankfulness. Now we shall see, before we finish the story of Joseph, that no less than seven times is it recorded that he wept. Never once is it recorded that he wept for his own sorrows in the days of his affliction. Every occurrence was during the days of his glory, and was an expression of his love and interest in others.

His tears were not of the merely sentimental kind, as verse 24 shows. He did not allow his deep feelings to hinder his further action, still of a severe nature, for he had Simeon bound as a prisoner before their eyes. The workings of conscience, which lead to repentance, had only just begun and that work needed to be greatly deepened. Thus it is that God deals with us. He permits His hand of chastisement to be heavy upon us until the work is carried to a completion. Then afterward the blessing is reached.

We think then that we may speak of Joseph as the man of **the mighty hand** and of **the tender heart**. The power of his hand is emphasized in the earlier part of his history: the tenderness of his heart in the later part. But in both he is a fitting type of the Lord Jesus, in whom power and grace are

perfectly blended, though not expressed in just the same order. His grace came fully into manifestation at His first advent, and of that grace we have received abundantly. We must wait until His second advent for the full display of His power.

## **Genesis 42: 25 — Genesis 45: 28.**

Though Joseph entertained such tender feeling towards his brethren that he wept over them, he did not allow it to deflect him from the stern dealing that was necessary, if they were to be brought to a proper spirit of repentance as to the great wrong they perpetrated against him, and against their father also, many years before. Simeon was held as hostage, but the rest were sent off with full loads of corn and provision for the way, but each man with his money placed in his sack.

Only one of them discovered this while at the inn, and the effect of the discovery on their minds is recorded in verse 28. They suspected that some plot or pretext lay behind it and it filled them with fear. Their consciences were still at work and they saw in it an act of retribution on the part of God. We too can recognize that truly the hand of God was in it.

Arrived home, they related their experiences to Jacob, and their fears were increased by the discovery that each man had his money returned in his sack. Poor Jacob's reaction to it all, recorded in verse 36, is very characteristic of him. When he said, "Me have ye bereaved . . . Joseph is not . . ." he spoke more truly than he knew. His bereavement, as regards Joseph, did indeed lie at their door, so this must have been a further stab to their consciences.

His complaint was, "All these things are against me." And so indeed it appeared. He had yet to learn that all these things were a part of God's plan for his ultimate good, so that at the end of his life he might be able to refer to "The Angel which redeemed me from all evil" (Genesis 48: 16). The fact was that "all these things" were going to "work together for good," and therefore provide us with an effective illustration of the truth of Romans 8: 28.

For the moment Jacob flatly refused to part with Benjamin, but Genesis 43 shows us how his stubborn refusal had to give way before the hard logic of facts. There would be no obtaining of the needed food except Benjamin were permitted to go with his brothers down to Egypt. In the words of Judah, recorded in verses 8 and 9, we find disclosed an attitude towards him quite the opposite to his attitude towards Joseph years before. A repentant spirit was beginning to disclose its fruits.

In Hebrews 7: 22, we read of Jesus being made "a Surety of a better testament." In verse 9 of our chapter we have an excellent illustration of what surety-ship involves. If there be any breakdown the blame of it must lie for ever on the surety, and all must be required at his hand. Were there any breakdown in the new covenant, the blame of it would rest upon Christ for ever. But, No! Its stability and the security of all its blessings are ensured for eternity.

Jacob's scheming propensities come again to light in verses 11 and 12, but at the same time there was a measure of trust in the mercy of God. With his permission the brethren at last depart for Egypt, taking Benjamin with them, and arrive in the presence of Joseph. Seeing that they had complied, and brought Benjamin with them, he was prepared to bring them into his house to dine at noon. This kindly attitude only stirred up more alarm in their minds, since they remembered the episode of the money in their sacks and they still had no idea of the identity of the man who was now lord of all Egypt.

Their ignorance made all Joseph's actions seem the more remarkable and their uneasiness and suspicions increased. On his part we are permitted to see again how true were his affections, particularly for Benjamin. He was again moved to tears, as verse 30 records. But he was marked by

wisdom as well as love. At the dinner the rift between Hebrew and Egyptian was manifest, but the brethren sat before Joseph, and he placed them in the exact order of their ages, with Benjamin's portion five times as much as any of the others. All this must have seemed to indicate almost superhuman discernment on the part of the great man, and increased the uneasy feeling that they had.

Their consciences had already been aroused as we saw when reading Genesis 42: 21, but the work of repentance needed to be yet deepened. Hence Joseph's further dealings with them as recorded in Genesis 44. The incident is so well known that we need only to point out a few of its salient details. Things were so ordered that the apparent guilt should fall upon Benjamin, for whom Judah had stood as surety to Jacob. This naturally brought Judah forward as the spokesman. He had taken the lead in selling Joseph to the Midianites going to Egypt, speaking with much hardness of heart. Now he has to speak as to Benjamin, and what a change is manifest! Instead of hardness great tenderness of feeling, particularly for his old father, Jacob. **Then** it mattered not how Jacob would feel: **now** it mattered everything to him. Here we see the working of a repentance not to be repented of.

Judah presented the whole case as regards his father and Benjamin with very great pathos, such pathos as could only spring from intense and genuine feeling, the reality of which was evidenced by his closing request to be allowed to stand as substitute for Benjamin. He was prepared to face life-slavery for himself rather than see his brother taken and his father's grey hairs brought down with sorrow to the grave. We saw Judah in a very unfavourable light in both Genesis 37 and Genesis 38; now we see what a complete change is produced when real repentance takes place.

In all this we see typified that national repentance of Israel, predicted in Zechariah 12: 10-14. In that chapter Jehovah speaks, and He says, "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him." They will discover that the One whom they pierced is Jehovah Himself. In the same way the repentance of the brethren here reaches its climax when they discover that the great lord of Egypt is none other than Joseph whom they had pierced with so many sorrows. This discovery they make, as recorded in the opening verses of Genesis 45.

Again we see how very fittingly the history presents us with a type. The discovery was not made as the result of any discernment or sagacity on the part of the brethren but wholly by the revelation of himself on the part of Joseph. When at His second advent Christ is revealed in His glory, then Israel will recognize Him and cry, "My God, we know Thee" (Hosea 8: 2). Moreover Joseph's revelation was made as the fruit of his love for them: love so real that he could not restrain himself longer and that moved him to tears.

In Joseph we see displayed both affection and magnanimity. With the brethren the workings of their consciences reached their climax, producing fear and reducing them to silence. They found themselves wholly at the mercy of the brother whom they had so bitterly wronged, and as yet they could not believe in his magnanimous dealings with them. What must it have been to them to hear his words, "Come near to me, I pray you"?

It was as they turned to Him that the veil was taken from their eyes and they knew him. So it will be with Israel in the coming day. At the present time "when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away" (2 Cor. 3: 15, 16). Then they will discover that Jesus, the Nazarene, whom they sold for thirty pieces of silver and crucified, is the Lord of glory, and at the same time the personification of magnanimity and love.

We might have expected that, having bidden his brethren to come near and said to them, "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt," it would have been they who wept, firstly at the

recognition of the great wrong they had perpetrated against him, and secondly at the grace that abounded over their evil. But, no, the tears were his and not theirs. They had had to bow down before him, but he deserved it for he towered above them in the things that are really great in the sight of God. A faint foreshadowing of the greatness of Christ.

A further thing characterized Joseph, as we see in verses 5-8. His eye rested upon God and not upon circumstances, however trying they had been. The evil actions of the brethren had faded into insignificance in his mind. He recognized that God had been behind all that they had done, and had worked it in as part of His plan for salvation and deliverance. We are reminded of that prayer of the primitive church, when they acknowledged that Herod, Pilate, Gentiles and Jews, gathered together against the Lord Jesus, had only accomplished "whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done" (Acts 4: 28). Joseph had been instrumental in bringing to pass "a great deliverance," yet it was very small when compared with the deliverance wrought by the death and resurrection of Christ.

And further, God had sent Joseph down into Egypt in order to preserve a posterity in the earth for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He knew what Joseph can hardly have known; that many centuries after out of that posterity, as concerning the flesh, would come the Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Turn where we may in Scripture, Christ is ever before the mind of God, and at this epoch Joseph was the instrument used of God to preserve that line of descent that finally would lead to Him.

Whatever Joseph may, or may not, have realized as to this, there was a touch of the prophetic about his words, and in the whole matter God was so distinctly before him that he was lifted far above any resentment as to the wrong done to him. To his brethren he said, "So now it was **not you** that sent me hither **but God.**" Happy should we all be, if in regard to the perverse things of life, wrought by perverse persons, we could always say in truth, "Not you, but God." If in adversity we see man, we are irritated, if we see God, we are humbled, subdued and blessed.

Joseph acknowledged that it was God who had made him "lord of all his [Pharaoh's] house," and, "lord of all Egypt." Already we have had "lord" a number of times, but used as a title of respect, much as we might now address someone as "sir." This is the first time we read of anyone being **made** "lord." So that here we have a type of Jesus being made "Lord," as Peter announced in Acts 2: 36. As lord of all Egypt Joseph had all power vested in him, and that power he wielded to promote what was good. So the Lordship of Jesus involves firstly, His **absolute dominion**, and secondly, His **benevolent rule**.

A very tender and touching note runs through the message that Joseph sent by his brethren to his father. After the long years of separation he was to be near unto his beloved son, and nourished by him. Tenderness and urgency marked the message that he sent, and realizing that in old age his father might be slow to move, he instructed as an incentive, "Ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt."

We have had the word "glory" once before in Genesis 31: 1, used to indicate wealth. This is the first time it is used to indicate honour and splendour, so again we can discern its typical value. It is when Christ is revealed in His glory that Israel will be gathered to Him, and bow down before Him. Then shall be fulfilled the word, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power" (Ps. 110: 3). They were by no means willing in the day of His humiliation and poverty.

Having delivered these instructions, there was again a touching scene of affection and tears. Benjamin being his full brother, it was not surprising that there was this display after so long a separation; but that he should kiss and weep upon the brethren, who once had so cruelly wronged him, was a remarkable thing. The kiss and the tears were the sign not only of affection but also of a full forgiveness. It is significant that the record is, "**after that** his brethren talked with him." The free

conversation, which flows from communion, could only be established on the ground of forgiveness.

Thus indeed it is with us today. Until we are assured of Divine forgiveness, and thus we are in the enjoyment of peace with God, we cannot be at home in His presence nor enter into communion with Him. Until then we find it impossible to freely address Him in either thanksgiving or in prayer.

## Genesis 45: 16 — Genesis 47: 31.

There had been a considerable measure of secrecy in all these dealings between Joseph and his brethren, but now all secrecy was abandoned. Pharaoh and all his court were now fully apprised of what had taken place and it pleased them. Since "every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians," as we are told in the last verse of the next chapter, we might have been surprised at this did we not know, as we before remarked, that at this epoch the ruling powers in Egypt were not true Egyptians but an alien race, closely allied with the nomadic and shepherd folk to which Jacob and his sons belonged. It is quite probable that the Pharaoh of those days looked upon it as a stroke of good business to receive Jacob and his descendants. It would bring under his protection those who would be his natural allies.

Pharaoh therefore instigated the sending of beasts and wagons sufficient in number to effect the transport, and also the sending of the message and invitation, recorded in verses 17 and 18. Here again we find words which strongly remind us of New Testament language. We quote them: "Come unto me; and I will give you . . ." Of what does that remind you? We shall all surely answer that it reminds us of Matthew 11: 28 Come unto Me . . . and I will give you rest." Joseph's word was to be, "I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land." But that "good" would involve to them rest from their fears of famine and the wearying search for food during the years of famine; coming to Joseph they would find rest indeed.

There was now bestowed upon them bounty beyond all their thoughts, in the presence of which only one thing became them, and that was the obedience of faith. We read, "And the children of Israel did so." They did exactly as they were commanded. Everything necessary was conferred upon them, as verses 21-23 record. Thus they were dispatched to their father with the injunction, " See that ye fall not out by the way. "There was very rightly a little sting for their consciences in this. They fell out badly over Joseph many years before. As forgiven men they were now to manifest an entirely different spirit.

Back to Jacob they went with tidings of Joseph, astounding and to him almost unbelievable. But there were the wagons sent from Joseph with their full supplies. They were to him a foretaste and earnest of the good things to be found in Joseph's presence, and that wrought conviction and revived Jacob's heart. His nerve returned and he was ready for the journey. The words of Joseph had been supplemented by the firstfruits he sent.

Today, we have not only received the words of One far greater than Joseph, but we have received the firstfruits of His Spirit. Our spirits should indeed be revived and aglow, as we travel to the place where Jesus our Lord is.

The way in which Jacob's new name of Israel is introduced in the record is worthy of note. Jacob's heart had fainted because of unbelief, and then his spirit revived. But when his faith had revived, it is **Israel** who said, "It is enough." Again, when at the beginning of Genesis 46 we find the faith of his heart translated into positive action, it is **Israel** who gathers his possessions together and journeys, stopping at Beer-sheba to sacrifice to the God of his father Isaac. In these things he was acting in a way more worthy of one who was "Prince of God," than of one who was "Supplanter."

Beer-sheba too had been specially identified with his father Isaac, and from that spot the

wanderings of Jacob had begun - see Genesis 28: 10. Jacob had now come full circuit, if we may so say, and was back at the point of departure. Hence we find God Himself intervening and dealing directly with him. Yet though there had been this response of faith on his part, God knew that the old Jacob nature was still strong in him, and addressed him as such. The repetition of his name added emphasis to the revelation God gave.

In Genesis 26: 2, we read of God appearing to Isaac and saying, "Go not down into Egypt." As a result of this command we do not find Egypt in the picture until we find Joseph carried there. Now however the Divine direction is exactly opposite and Jacob was not to be afraid to go. God's word to him was brief, but it contained four distinct promises.

First, that the sojourn in Egypt should be so ordered that there Jacob's family and descendants should increase and be welded into a great nation. Their experience should be that of Psalm 4: 1, "In pressure Thou hast enlarged me" (New Trans.). In the tribulations of Egypt, acting like a furnace of iron, they were welded into a nation, that God took for His own. The hour had now come for this trying experience to be theirs, though at the outset all seemed favourable.

But, in the second place, this result would only be achieved because God Himself would go down with them. Had He not done so, they would speedily have been swamped by the abounding evils of that land. As it was, they got infected by them, as their subsequent history showed; but the presence of God with them secured the testimony to Himself in their midst.

So in the third place, there was the promise that God in His own time would bring them up out of Egypt, so that once more they might be in the land that was theirs according to His word. God never swerves from His declared purpose, though to reach it He may pursue ways that seem to be contradictory to it. So verse 4 is an illustration of the difference between God's **purpose** and His **ways**; a difference that we need to bear in mind as to God's dealings with ourselves today. Called with an heavenly calling, we must firmly seize God's purpose for us as members of Christ, and on the other hand not be surprised at, nor stumble over, the ways He may take with us in achieving His purpose.

Lastly, there was a promise personal to Jacob, which inferred that he would not be parted from Joseph until his end. The happy reunion would last until the finish, and when he died Joseph would be at his side.

Thus instructed and encouraged of God, Jacob pursued his way from Beer-sheba into Goshen, the easterly part of the land of Egypt, sending Judah before him to direct their route. We are given a list of sons and grandsons and told their number as 70. If we refer to Exodus 12: 37, we shall see the great increase that took place while they were in Egypt, and how God fulfilled His word as to making them a great nation.

In verse 29 we again see Joseph in a very favourable light and as a man of a very tender heart. The splendour of his present position had not spoiled him. He had reached it through sorrow, which has a mellowing and softening effect upon those who go through it with God. Moreover he undertook to be their mediator in regard to Pharaoh and instructed them how to approach him. They were to emphasize that their occupation had been with sheep and cattle. The Pharaohs of that dynasty being of the so-called, "Shepherd Kings," this would ingratiate them with the ruling monarch, and also make the Egyptians content to have them as far away as possible in the land of Goshen, since they detested shepherds.

It is easy to see how this suited the purpose of God, which was to make a nation of them, free from admixture of alien blood. Though under Egyptian jurisdiction, there was to be a line of

demarcation from the outset between them and the natives of Egypt. So in the early verses of Genesis 47 we read how simply and naturally all this came to pass. Pharaoh was most benign in his attitude. He welcomed them, allotting to them the best of the land in Goshen, and offering to them posts of importance as rulers of his cattle. Bearing in mind that Egypt, in common with the rest of the world, was in the midst of a great famine, such favourable treatment was indeed extraordinary, and only to be accounted for by the moving of God's hand behind the scenes.

Then comes the touching scene of old Jacob being presented by Joseph in the presence of Pharaoh. At the age of 130 he must have seemed a very old man in Egyptian eyes, but twice over, in verse 9, do we find him using the word, "pilgrimage." It is true of course that his life had been of a nomadic type, but nevertheless it indicates that these God-fearing patriarchs, as Hebrews 11 shows, ever had the eyes of their hearts upon the future, and knew that the present life was in view of a destination yet to be realized. If it was thus with them, how much more so should it be thus with us, who are partakers of a heavenly calling?

And moreover, twice in this paragraph, is it stated that Jacob blessed Pharaoh. The one thing cited in Hebrews 11, as showing his faith is his blessing of the sons of Joseph. That we get presently, but we remember the statement of Hebrews 7: 7, "without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better." The patriarch, though at that moment but a displaced person and a refugee in the presence of the great king, was consciously superior to him in his knowledge of the true God. He knew enough of Him to be conscious that to have His pledged presence and guidance was something greater than all the glory that Egypt had to offer. He possessed the better, while Pharaoh for all his outward majesty, possessed the less. In the light of the faith and glory of Christ the position of the Christian is much accentuated. Are we always alive to the favour wherein we stand, and therefore lifted above the favours and allurements of the world?

Joseph's father and brethren being placed in the best of the land and nourished there, we now turn to consider the state of things prevailing among the Egyptians. This occupies verses 13-26. As the dreams had foretold, the famine became progressively worse. The people were fed, but not as those in Goshen. They had to buy their food from Joseph, who acted for Pharaoh. They brought their money, and when that failed their cattle, and when those failed they had to sell their land. The only exception made was in the case of the priests, men who wielded great power because through their idol gods they were in touch with the supernatural.

Thus bit by bit everything in Egypt fell into the hands of Pharaoh, and a law made by Joseph was that his proprietorship should be acknowledged by a rent paid in kind — the fifth part of all the produce. This was oppressive legislation indeed, but the sort of thing that was quite ordinary in those days. We can see how in the course of many years it may have helped to provoke that uprising of the ancient Egyptian dynasty, which is recorded in Scripture as, "There arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph." (Ex. 1: 8).

Though this action of Joseph strikes us as oppressive, particularly perhaps his removing of the people from one end of the land to another, we cannot but think it has a typical value, setting forth how completely he was "lord of all Egypt," and thus a figure of Christ. Now the Lordship of Christ is absolute, for if He is not Lord of all and of every detail, He is not Lord at all. Moreover as Lord He subdues everything to God and disposes of everything according to the Divine mind. A time will come, "when all things shall be subdued unto Him" (1 Cor. 15: 28), and when as a result, God shall be all in all. But that which the Lord Jesus will bring to pass, though it will involve the execution of judgment, will be for the ultimate blessing of the universe of God.

In the closing verses of our chapter we return to Jacob in the land of Goshen. Seventeen more years rolled over him, so he remained until the dreadful years of famine were only an unpleasant memory. Then the time came that he had to die. Jacob indeed he was, but he spoke as Israel when he extracted from Joseph a vow that he would not bury him in Egypt, but lay his body with those of his fathers in the land which was theirs by promise. Joseph readily acceded for, as we shall see, he too had the same faith. They had received the promises and believed them, and they knew that the promised Seed would be connected with that land.

## **Genesis 47: 29 — Genesis 49: 12.**

The patriarchs, being men of faith, viewed Canaan as being the land of Messiah's glory, and though now descending into the grave, they expected to see that glory in a coming day. The closing verses of Hebrews 11 sum up the situation. Though they believed they did not receive that which was promised.

They were waiting, though they did not know it, for further purposes of God to come to light, and the church was yet to be gathered out of all nations. Hence we read that they — the Old Testament saints — without us — the saints composing the church — "should not be made perfect." In a glorified condition we shall all reach perfection together at the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The one event in Jacob's life which is singled out in Hebrews 11, as exemplifying the faith that was in him, is his blessing of the sons of Joseph. The importance of this act of his is evident here, for the whole of Genesis 48 is given up to the account of it. Being upon his deathbed, Joseph and his two sons arrived to see him, and it is striking how at once Jacob reverted to the moment when first he was brought into contact with God, as recorded in Genesis 28. The blessing then granted he remembered and the promises then made he rehearsed in a way that shows that he received them in faith. They were blessings of an earthly sort, but in the sons of Joseph he saw the beginning of their fulfilment.

There appears to be an element of prophecy in verse 5, for in the history of the nation Joseph's two sons were treated just as though they had been sons of Jacob, as Reuben and Simeon were his; each being treated as the head of a tribe, and all Joseph's posterity were ranged under the heads of these two tribes.

Then further, having recalled the original blessing received from God at Bethel, he passed on to recall the greatest sorrow of his life when Rachel, the mother of Joseph, died in the vicinity of Bethlehem. His faith could not embrace the distinction that was yet to come to the place, for centuries had to pass before prophecy indicated that spot as the birthplace of the great Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from the days of eternity. It was to be the place where not only was there to be a mourning for Rachel, but also where there should be a great mourning, "Rachel weeping for her children," according to Matthew 2: 18.

When Rachel died Jacob was still in full strength; now his natural strength was gone, his eyes were dim, so that he could not even discern the sons of Joseph. In his days of vigour he had too frequently walked by the sight of his own eyes; now at the close he begins to walk and act by faith and not by sight, and at the same time he realizes the exceeding kindness of God toward him. He had spent weary years thinking that never again would he see the face of his beloved son, and now not only had he seen him but his seed also. Upon the two sons he would now bestow his blessing.

With filial piety Joseph bowed down before his father and then presented them with due respect to their ages, so that Jacob's right hand might rest upon the head of the elder, according to the custom

of those days. At that moment it was the faith of Jacob that was prominent — faith which led to his possessing the spirit of prophecy. Consequently he reversed what Joseph had done, and crossing his hands he laid his right hand upon Ephraim and not Manasseh.

Herein we may see a parable that has meaning for us. The name Manasseh means **Forgetting**, which is negative in its bearing, whereas Ephraim means **Fruitful**, which definitely bears a positive character. The first man and his race are negative as regards God, the complete negation of all His thoughts. In Christ, the Second Man, is the Yea and Amen to all God's thoughts, and all fruitfulness is found in Him. He is indeed the Man of God's right hand, and it is a great day in the spiritual history of each of us when we heartily endorse the fact that the first man is dispossessed by the Second, and therefore we turn away from self-seeking to find our all in Christ.

Once more then we find a type pointing forward to the word, "He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second" (Heb. 10: 9). When challenged by Joseph, Jacob held his ground, and though Manasseh was definitely blessed, yet Ephraim was given priority. The probation of mankind was running its course at this time and the test was not completed. Hence the time had not come for the conclusive judgment of the first man to be set forth in type, but only the fact that the Second should dispossess the first.

Again in verse 21 we hear the accents of faith. Israel knew that he was about to die, but his eye was lifted from himself to God. He had done much scheming in his time, but now he recognized that the only thing that really mattered was the presence and purpose of God. No matter what he himself had been nor what his sons would prove themselves to be, God would be true to them and to His purpose to give them the land that He had promised. At last, God and His word was the stay of Israel's soul, and we shall be happy if, long before we come to the end of life's journey, we discover that there, and there **only**, is stability and security to be found. Thereby we shall be spared much of the fruitless and heart-breaking scheming which we have seen characterizing him.

The last verse of the chapter seems to allude to an episode not previously recorded. We read of, "the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph" (John 4: 5), and Joshua 24: 32 seems also to refer to this gift. If so, we must identify it with the transaction recorded in Genesis 33: 19, and that was close to the bad and warlike action of his sons Simeon and Levi, yet no mention is made there as to sword and bow in the hands of Jacob. However, there was the acquisition of a portion in the land as the result of conflict as well as purchase, and it was given to Joseph, who became thereby lord of that little portion of the land as well as lord of all Egypt. It was a kind of foretaste and pledge that ultimately the whole land would be possessed.

In Genesis 49, we find Jacob still presented to us as a man of faith. He called his sons together that he might pronounce a blessing upon them, and he was conscious that in so doing he was speaking as a prophet and foretelling that which should befall them in the last days. We are on safe ground therefore in interpreting his utterances as referring to "the last days," and not merely to the more immediate future experiences of the tribes.

Reuben was the firstborn and in him more especially the might, the strength, the dignity and the power of Jacob should be seen. The very beginning of Jacob's strength and excellency were to be expressed in him. And what was expressed? Nothing but instability and self-gratification, which was defiling and an outrage on all natural decency. What a disappointment for Jacob to see this evil manifested as the beginning of his strength!

Here surely we have predicted that which marked Israel the nation all through their sad history, and particularly when they were tested under the law. Whether in the wilderness or in the land; whether

under Moses or Joshua or the Judges or the Kings; their story is one long record of unstable fluctuations between the worship of Jehovah and of idols. They were defiled by their adulterous connection with false gods. And in contemplating this we must remember that they were the sample nation, selected that the test of man might be carried out in them. In their condemnation all the nations stand condemned; ourselves included as men in the flesh.

Simeon and Levi come next. Their father never forgot their cruel and violent action, as recorded in Genesis 34, and he dissociated himself from it. They claimed to be avenging the honour of their sister, but with what they did Jacob's honour would not be united, and he denounced it as the fruit of their anger. The allusion here is again to that which was past, and in which their natural character was seen. But to what did it refer prophetically?

It refers, we believe, to that terrible outbreak of anger and cruelty in the nation, which reached its climax in the rejection and death of Christ. Stephen speaks of Him as "the Just One," in contrast to the sinful men that were slain by Simeon and Levi, and he added, "of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers" (Acts 7: 52). Strikingly enough Simeon and Levi achieved their murderous intent by a preliminary act of betrayal.

The last clause of verse 6 is obscure, inasmuch as the reading is not certain. But taking it as it stands, "they digged down a wall," we may apply to the fact that in murdering their Messiah and Deliverer, they destroyed their own separated position, and digged down by so doing the wall of protection that had been theirs. They are still in a very full sense the scattered nation, and that in spite of a partial return to their own land.

Consequently there rests upon them nationally the curse of which Jacob spoke in verse 7. Indeed, as we know, they took the curse upon themselves in the presence of Pilate, the representative of the ruling Gentile power. Verse 7 is still being fulfilled before our eyes to this day, though early in their history a fulfilment of it began. Simeon was soon much weakened and relegated to an unimportant place among the tribes, whilst Levi was separated from them. But that was because after several centuries Levi was zealous not for his own honour but for God's honour, and used his sword to vindicate God's holiness.

We see, then, in verses 5-7, a prophetic reference to the death of their Messiah at the hands of the nation, resulting in the curse and scattering being their portion, as to this day. This is a national matter and does not conflict with the action of God's grace in still calling out from among them a remnant according to His election.

In the blessing of Judah an entirely different note is struck. In verses 8-12, we turn to a prophecy which refers to Christ, who though rejected and slain, as we have just seen, emerges triumphant both in grace and in judgment. There is a play upon Judah's name, for it means "Praise," and Christ is to be the Object of universal praise, as we see in Revelation 5; praise which shall fill both heaven and earth and go far beyond anything foreseen by Jacob. Two classes are seen in verse 8 — his brethren and his enemies. His brethren are to sound out his praise, and his enemies are to feel the power of his hand in subjugation; and how these things, spoken of Judah, point on to Christ, it is easy to see. Here his father's children are to bow down before Judah, as representing Christ, just as previously they were to bow down before Joseph, since he represented Christ.

In verse 9 Judah is compared to a lion, as a king among beasts. Here we see an allusion to Christ acting in judgment. Genesis is the seed-plot of the Bible. We pass to Revelation where everything reaches fruition and finality, and in Revelation 5 we find "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" about to take the book of judgment and break its seals. And the universe is filled with His praises. The connection is

too plain for us to miss. In this way old Jacob must have rejoiced to see the day of Christ, though doubtless not so fully as Abraham did.

Verse 10 contains a striking prophecy, indicating that Judah would be the tribe out of whom should come the kingly line, culminating in "Shiloh," a term which is taken to refer to Christ as the Prince of peace. And of course we know that our Lord, as concerning the flesh, sprang out of Judah, as we are reminded in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Out of that kingly line He sprang, as is shown by the two genealogies recorded by Matthew and Luke. But at the end of that verse another striking fact is alluded to, for the word, "people," is more correctly, "peoples;" that is, it refers to the nations generally and not merely to the nation of Israel. And the coming of Shiloh has resulted in His becoming, by reason of His rejection and death, the Centre of gathering for a multitude out of all nations; and in the coming age He will be visibly the Centre not only of Israel but of the nations also.

The prophetic allusions of verses 11 and 12 are not so clear, especially as the language is highly poetic and figurative. We cannot miss the words, "His foal," and "His ass's colt," which at once carry our thoughts to Zechariah's prophecy and its fulfilment as our Lord presented Himself to Jerusalem, as is shown in Matthew 21: 5. It looks therefore as if the words relate to His first advent rather than to His second, and thus refer to His sufferings and to the grace which is proffered as the result of them.

In Isaiah 55: 1 the Gentiles are in view for the call goes forth to "every one" that thirsts. "Wine and milk" are free for all. Our verses would indicate the reason. They are free because procured as the result of what He has done.

### **Genesis 49: 13-33.**

Thus far, in the blessing of the tribes, we have seen predicted the sorrowful history of Israel up to Christ, and Christ Himself presented as the Object of praise and the Wielder of power, though a hint be given of His suffering at His first advent.

With Zebulun, in verse 13 we pass to a prediction which sets forth that which has characterized the people after they rejected their Messiah. That tribe did occupy the north-western part of the land toward Zidon, which brought them into contact with the wide outlook of the shipping world, and for many centuries now the Jew has been pushed out all over the world and has given himself up to commerce, of which ships are an appropriate symbol.

With this Issachar also is connected. The figures here are very graphic. The Jew has indeed proved himself to be possessed of remarkable strength, but he has been continually pressed down beneath his two burdens, which he has endured for the sake of rest for his wandering feet and for a pleasant life. He has been burdened with the labour of acquiring wealth on the one hand, and of being "a servant unto tribute," on the other. Again and again has he crouched under the burden of having to yield up in some kind of tribute much of what he had burdened himself with.

These two tribes, then, set forth that which has characterized the people during this long period that has succeeded the rejection of their Messiah. Now in Dan, verses 16-18, we have a prediction of the antichrist, who is to come. When the true Judge of Israel appeared, His unbelieving people smote Him with a rod upon the cheek as Micah foretold: now another judge will appear, represented by Dan. The true Judge came with an authority which was Divine: the false will judge "as one of the tribes of Israel;" that is, his authority springs from man, for he will come "in his own name," as the Lord said in John 5: 43.

Moreover there will be about him an authority and power that is of the serpent - Satanic, as New

Testament scriptures show. Ungodly Jews of those days may imagine they are riding forward to victory, but in result they will be like a rider falling backward to disaster. The Jews have suffered many bitter things since they slew Christ, but the bitterest things lie before them under the brief domination of antichrist.

The contemplation of these things moved the prophetic soul of the patriarch, and led him to express his personal faith and hope. "I have waited for Thy salvation O Lord." This is the first occurrence of the word, "salvation," in our English Bible. Jacob had to **wait** for it. Many centuries after old Simeon could say, "**Mine eyes have seen** Thy salvation," and we can each now say, that in heart and life **we have experienced it**. But, in the sense in which Jacob thought of it, the cry still goes forth, "Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!" (Ps. 14: 7).

In verses 19-21, the three tribes, Gad, Asher and Naphtali, are grouped together, and Jacob's words seem to set forth the experiences of the godly in Israel as the antichrist is overthrown and replaced by the true Messiah. At first everything will conspire to overcome them under the persecuting power of the "beasts," of whom we read in Revelation 13. They will be persecuted and reviled for righteousness sake, but at the end theirs will be the kingdom, as the Lord stated in Matthew 5: 10-12. Like Gad they will overcome at the last.

Having overcome by the grace and power of Christ in His second advent, they will enjoy the fatness and royal dainties of the kingdom, as indicated in Asher. Further, as indicated in the word to Naphtali, they will have liberty secured to them.

The figure is a graphic one, for the "hind" is the female deer, naturally apprehensive and not furnished with horns for its own defence. Brought into this place of secure liberty, their mouths are opened with "goodly words." No longer will praise be silent for God in Sion (see, Ps. 65: 1, margin), for their mouths at last will be filled with thanksgiving.

This brings us to Joseph, where again we have a striking type of Christ. If in Judah we see Him presented as the royal Lion, who came down to lowliness and sacrifice, in Joseph we see Him as the One once hated and rejected, who nevertheless rises up in the strength of the mighty God to be the Inheritor of all blessing both heavenly and earthly, as well as the Source of all fruitfulness, which shall extend beyond the confines of Israel to all creation.

In Joseph's own history, that we have considered, we have seen a preliminary forecast of Jacob's blessing. His brethren hated him and shot at him, but the mighty God of Jacob stood behind him and made his hands strong, so that he became a blessing to the civilized world of his day. The language of verse 24 is remarkable in view of the way in which Joseph's **hands** are mentioned in the history — see, Genesis 39: 3, 4, 6, 22; Genesis 41: 42. Here the secret spring of Joseph's skill is revealed. Upon the hands of Joseph rested the hands of the mighty God.

At this point the thoughts of old Jacob travelled on from the type to the great Antitype. From that same mighty God would in due time come the One who is both Shepherd and Stone. We have already had Him mentioned as the **Seed** of the woman, which presents Him in relation to the whole human race, though as Man of another order than that of the first man, Adam. Here Jacob's words are more circumscribed, for Israel is before him. That nation will never be right until it finds itself gathered round the true **Shepherd** and under His care, and established upon the foundation **Stone** that can never be moved.

Genesis has well been called the seed-plot of the Bible. Here are three designations of Christ, which appear with increasing fulness of light right through the Book, and the figures, as we know, are

expanded into the New Testament and given an application in connection with the Church, to which we belong. Considerations of space forbid our tracing out here these further references, but we trust that many of our readers will be stirred up to do so.

True to the dispensation in which he was found, the blessings that Jacob pronounced were mainly earthly, but still of the widest sort — "unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills," for the Inheritor of them all is the One who had been separated from His brethren. It was the cutting off from His people of the Messiah that brought the wider purposes into view.

Lastly we come to Benjamin, and here we close on the solemn note of judgment. The earthly blessing of Israel will not be ushered in apart from judgment. This is a fact we are often tempted to overlook, and never more so than in the day in which we live. It is probably the case that in the latter part of the nineteenth century the preachers of the Gospel rather overstressed the solemn facts of judgment and hell fire, but the swing of the pendulum has now gone much too far in the other direction.

Benjamin, let us recall, signifies, "Son of the right hand." He typifies Christ exalted to the right hand of God and exercising judgment on His behalf as is brought before us so strikingly in Psalm 110. Verse 5 of that Psalm reads, "The Lord at Thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath." This exactly coincides with verse 27 of our chapter but stating the same truth in plainer and less figurative language.

So let us allow the solemn truth to sink into our hearts that judgment is a stern necessity with God, and there will be no bright millennial age without it. The idea still persists that the age will be brought about by the gradual diffusion of the Gospel, and we cannot help feeling that the main attractiveness of that idea lies in the fact that those who entertain it can largely, if not altogether, eliminate the fact of judgment from their minds. To eliminate the idea of judgment from the minds of the people was the work of false prophets in Old Testament times. Hence such scathing words as these: — "Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness and not light." (Amos 5: 18).

The blessing of the twelve tribes was now complete, as verse 28 states. The first verse of the chapter showed that Jacob's words had a prophetic bearing and we have read them in that light. The language used is full of figures and not nearly so plain as the later predictions which we get in the prophets. This is not surprising, as it has ever been God's way to make His revelation a progressive one. There is a progress of doctrine in the Old Testament as well as in the New.

The closing command of Jacob to his sons now comes before us, and still we hear the accents of faith. It is worthy of note that his thoughts turned to the original spot that had been bought by Abraham near Mamre. As Rachel had been so special an object of his affection we might have expected that he would have desired to be buried by her side. But no! there was this spot that had been purchased in the land, to faith a kind of pledge that one day God would fulfil His promise and all the land would be theirs. There had been laid Abraham Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah and Leah and there would he be buried.

So from the time that we found Jacob in the land of Goshen, — Genesis 47: 27 — to the finish, we see Jacob acting and speaking as a man of faith. He had reached Joseph, not as the result of his own scheming, clever or otherwise, but as the fruit of God's wonderful intervention. The storms of his life were over and he had sailed into an haven of rest. The eye of his faith had been cleared of mist and dimness, and God in the certainty of His promise and His power was fully in view. In this faith Jacob could calmly gather up his feet into the bed, yield up his spirit and be gathered to his people.

This glimpse we are granted of Jacob, "when he was a dying," is very cheering. It illustrates how

God can bring a saint, whose course for many years was a chequered one, to a calm and beautiful finish. Many of us in this day of Gospel light have to say,

"Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,  
But yet in love He sought me,  
And on His shoulder gently laid,  
And home rejoicing brought me"  
We thank God that thus He deals with us too.

A bright finish to one's earthly course is good. Yet it is even better to have the brightness of faith characterizing all one's course, though this may mean a less striking exit when the end is reached.

## Genesis 50: 1 — Exodus 2: 10.

All the sons of Jacob appear to have been present at his deathbed, according to the first verse of Genesis 49, yet no mention is made of them in the closing scenes. Joseph alone remains before us as we open Genesis 50, and again we see him as a man of deep affection, moved to tears. These patriarchs died in faith, as we are told in Hebrews 11, yet their faith did not lessen the love proper to natural relationships, nor does it do so for us today. The breaking of the link is a very real sorrow.

Being in Egypt, the burial customs of that land were observed up to a certain point, but Jacob's body was not to lie embalmed in an Egyptian tomb. By Jacob's desire, as well as Joseph's, it was to lie in the land of promise. The promise of God was a reality to their faith, since "Faith is the substantiating of things hoped for" (Heb. 11: 1, New Trans.). The things hoped for are real, and faith substantiates them, or, makes them real, to us.

Jacob's funeral bore witness to the extraordinary position of power and influence to which Joseph had attained. Pharaoh's permission was readily given. All Jacob's sons were associated with Joseph in it, and also many important personages of Egypt. It was recognized in Canaan as a great mourning of the Egyptians. Nevertheless his body was laid in the grave that witnessed to the fact that these men of faith were still strangers and pilgrims.

Back in Egypt, one last test confronted Joseph. His brethren sent him a message which revealed that they had never quite trusted his magnanimous attitude towards them. They felt it was too good to be really true, and suspected that it was a kindness assumed for the sake of his old father, Jacob. If that had been so, now was the time for the true Joseph to reveal himself in paying off the old score. Their message revealed that they did not altogether trust him.

Their message was very diplomatic. They invoked the memory of their dead father to shelter themselves. They acknowledged their trespass of many years before, which was good, and they professed themselves to be the servants of the God of Jacob. But still they revealed all too clearly that they regarded all his former goodness as not expressive of his real self.

This was a sorrowful stab to the heart of Joseph, and for the seventh and last time we read that **he wept**. This last test reveals him to us in a peculiarly excellent light. Any ordinary man might have been annoyed and antagonized by such a spirit of distrust, but Joseph's reaction was very different. He was moved to tears, expressive of wounded love, but his attitude toward them remained just as it had been, for it was the expression of his genuine nature.

In this again he is a striking type of the Lord Jesus. How many times have we, who have received of His eternal bounty, displayed either in word or deed, or in both, that we do not trust Him unreservedly; but His attitude toward us never alters, His love never wanes, His care never abates. Many years ago a servant of the Lord quoted the lines of the hymn,

"They, that trust Him wholly,

Find Him wholly true,"

and then surprised everybody by adding, "But I know something more wonderful than that." All had, however, to acknowledge that he spoke truly when he added, "It is more wonderful still that they, who do **not** trust Him wholly, **still find Him wholly true!**" This is illustrated here. Joseph's brethren did by no means trust him wholly, yet they found him wholly true to that which was his real nature and character.

Having wept, Joseph replied and his words show afresh how consistently God was before him. He was not in the place of God, and therefore not free to act without reference to Him. God had acted in the whole matter, and meant it unto good. That being God's intention, he would not for a moment swerve from it. His acts toward them would also be consistently for their good. His exaltation in Egypt was such that they were indeed his servants, as they confessed, but he would use his power for their nourishment and protection. He comforted them by kindly speech.

Verse 20 is a fine summing up of the whole story. They had committed a grievous wrong but God had overruled it for salvation. This at once directs our thoughts to the Lord Jesus Christ. The evil thought, which was wrought out against Joseph by his brethren, was as nothing compared with that perpetrated by the Jews when they rejected and crucified their Messiah. God permitted it because He meant it unto good in the accomplishment of an eternal redemption; for the laying of the foundation, whereon rests securely the superstructure of blessing, in a new creation according to His eternal purpose. Thus has God made the wrath of man to praise Him.

Joseph, as we have said, saw God in the whole matter, and it preserved him from pettiness and an unbecoming spirit. With this beautiful episode the story concerning him comes to its end. He lived to be 110 years old, and may have done many other notable things before his death, but as a type of Christ his history is completed as far as Scripture is concerned, save that we are permitted to know that he too died in faith, and in expectancy that a day would come when God would redeem His promise as to the land, and the Exodus would take place. It is this closing episode that is seized upon in Hebrews 11, to establish that he was a man of faith.

One cannot close the book of Genesis without being struck by the last four words. It opens with a couple created in innocence and placed in a garden of delights. It closes with a coffin in Egypt, and in that coffin a dead man, in spite of the fact that he was an eminent saint. Sin had come in, and death by sin.

{Continued in the file: Exodus.}