

*Inheriting
the Promises*

*Following in the
steps of Abraham*

Rev. Daniel G. Caram

“Inheriting the Promises: Following in the steps of Abraham”

© 2003 Daniel G. Caram
Printed September 2003
All Rights Reserved

Printed in the United States of America

Version 1.0

All Scripture quotations in this book are taken from the
King James Version unless otherwise stated.

The picture on the Front Cover is copyrighted by NASA
© July 1999 NASA — Used with permission

Printed by:

Zion Christian Publishers
P.O. Box 70
Waverly, NY 14892

Phone: (607) 565-2801 • *Fax:* (607) 565-3329

Visit our List of Publications at:

www.zcpublishers.com

ISBN # 1-890381-98-5

Acknowledgements

*We would like to acknowledge
the following:*

- ◆ To Mary Humphreys – for her proficiency in the editing of this book.
- ◆ To Jeremy Kropf – for his proficiency in the formatting of this book.

Table of Contents

Foreword	Page 7
Map of Abraham's world	Page 12
The Call of Abraham	Page 13
Leaving Country and Kin	Page 17
Unto a Land I Will Show Thee	Page 23
The Promises Begin	Page 27
Blessing and Cursing	Page 37
Down to Canaan	Page 43
Sichem and Moreh	Page 47
The Altar	Page 55
Abram's Detour to Egypt	Page 59
Lot Separates from Abram	Page 69
Walk through the Land	Page 77
Hebron	Page 81
Battle of the Kings	Page 85
Melchizedek	Page 93
Abram's Reward	Page 99
The Abrahamic Covenant	Page 109
Hagar and Ishmael	Page 117
Abram's Name is Changed	Page 125

The Covenant of Circumcision	Page 131
The Heir Must Come through Sarah	Page 137
Three Heavenly Visitors	Page 141
Abraham's Intercession	Page 145
Abraham Tested over Sarah Again	Page 153
The Promised Isaac Arrives	Page 159
Ishmael Mocks Isaac	Page 163
Abraham Offers Up His Only Son	Page 171
Offering Our Isaac	Page 183
The Burial Place	Page 185
Finding Isaac a Bride	Page 191
Keturah	Page 197
Abraham Dies – Full of Years	Page 199
Conclusion	Page 203
A Tribute	Page 207

Foreword

The true pattern of faith

“**W**ho through faith...obtained promises” (Heb. 11:33). The foregoing verse tells us that faith is the medium through which the promises of God are claimed. With this thought in mind, we are going to consider the man who is called “The father of faith” (Rom. 4:11-16). Of course, that man is Abraham and he was counted as one that inherited the promise.

Abraham’s life represents the true pattern for inheriting the promises of God. He is a prototype (a pattern) to the children of faith. His walk will show us how we too can inherit the promises and blessing. It says of Abraham: “*And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise*” (Heb 6:15). How many promises are left unclaimed because of a failure to allow the word of promise to test us?

In today’s Christian society there is a certain pervading mentality that has come to be known as “easy get-ism” – no cost, no investment, no price to be paid. Just claim it, it’s yours! We suddenly have a generation that can jump from Egypt into the Promised Land without the testing of the wilderness. That is scarcely the pattern that we find in Holy Scripture.

Until faith becomes sight

Gal. 3:29 “*And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.*” Yes, we can legitimately

say that we are called to inherit a blessing through Abraham. We could quote Galatians 3:14 and say, “Abraham’s blessings are mine.” Theoretically we are called, but what we often overlook is that there are certain conditions that must be satisfied before we receive that promise. Jesus said, “*For many are called, but few are chosen*” (Mat. 22:14).

What does that mean: *many are called, but few are chosen*? That simply means that to be called is one thing, and to be qualified is something else. The prophet Isaiah declared that we are qualified in the furnace of affliction. In other words, we are qualified via the trial of our faith. “*Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction*” (Isa. 48:10). Being chosen is associated with passing the test.

Theoretically we are called, but what we often overlook is that there are certain conditions that must be satisfied before we receive that promise.

Walking in the faithful steps

Israel could claim to be heirs of father Abraham physically but spiritually their lives did not measure up to that of faithful Abraham. Israel had very little spiritual fruit, and their lives bore little resemblance to Abraham’s. That is why John the Baptist said, “God is able of these stones to raise up seed to Abraham” (Mat. 3:9). Abraham is the spiritual father of those who follow in his steps:

“And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith” (Rom. 4:12-13).

The promise to Abraham concerned his seed – whose seed we are **if** we *walk in the faithful steps of Abraham*. This is what is called “the righteousness of faith.” Abraham not only believed, but he walked out what God said. He activated his faith through obedience.

Called, chosen and faithful

Abraham’s life is an example of one who was called, chosen and found faithful. We shall consider these three aspects of the Christian journey throughout this commentary. Just being called and chosen is not enough, it is the end of the race that counts! Many do not finish the race – they are not faithful until the end. The prerequisite for reigning with Christ in the millennium is found in Revelation 17:14:

Abraham caught a glimpse of something eternal, and that vision consumed his whole life.

“These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.”

Perspective

The life of Abraham helps us (the church) to put life into the right perspective. Abraham caught a glimpse of something eternal, and that vision consumed his whole life. It says of

Abraham: *“For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God”* (Heb. 11:10).

The city that Abraham saw afar off was not an earthly one, it was an heavenly one, and it was comprised of his own spiritual offspring. He knew that the real Kingdom was the heavenly one, even though many of the promises concerned the physical realm as well. (The realities of the physical promises are to be realized in the millennium). But as for his sojourn upon earth, he was destined to be a stranger and a pilgrim, setting a precedent for the spiritual offspring who were to follow. (See Heb. 11:13 and 1 Pet. 2:11.)

The greater promises to be fulfilled by Abraham’s seed

The full scope of the promises given to Abraham was only received in token measure. This is stated clearly in Hebrews 11:13: *“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth”*

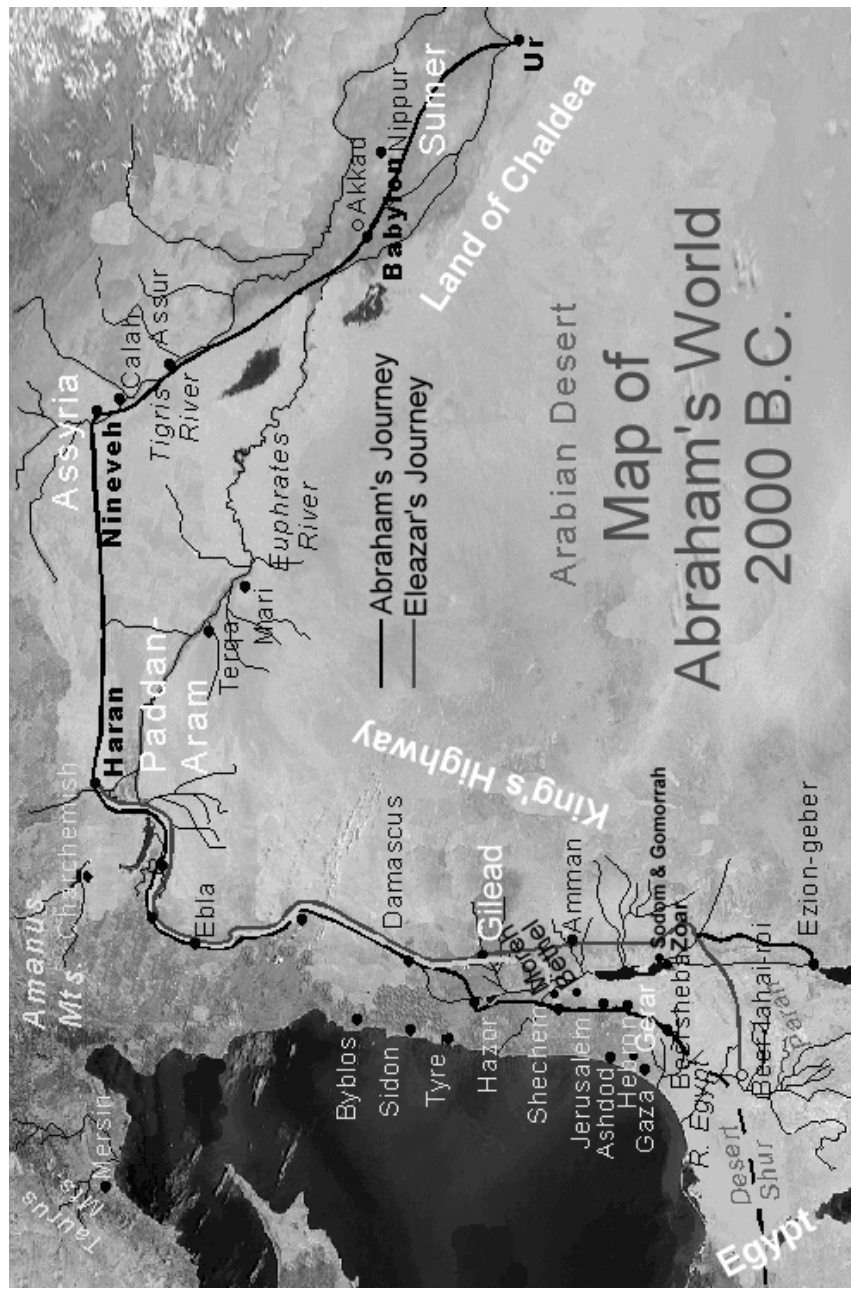
We are also told in Hebrews 11:39-40: *“And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”*

Our spiritual fathers saw these things from a distance. They were convinced of their validity, they lived their lives in the light of that vision, and it was accounted unto them as though they had attained! However, it is through the church that the

vision will be completed: "... *They without us should not be made perfect.*" It is through the means of the church that the vision shall be consummated! In fact, the Master himself substantiated the point when He said: "*Greater works than these shall he do...*" It is the glorious latter day church that shall complete the acts of faith and they shall incorporate the city that Abraham saw from a distance!

It is with this final thought in mind that I have penned this little commentary: that through the spiritual lessons demonstrated through the steps of faithful Abraham, we too might be recipients of those promises and enter into the things that Father Abraham saw from a distance. Amen!

*"And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."
(Heb 6:11-12)*



The Call of Abraham

Gen. 12:1 *“Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee:”*

From Ur

Although we are beginning our journey in chapter twelve at a place called Haran, Abram's journey actually began quite a distance south of Haran at a place called Ur in the land of the Chaldeans. (Better known as Babylon.) In the beginning of this venture (Gen. 11:31) it would appear as though Terah (Abram's father) was leading this expedition. However, we are told very plainly in the New Testament that God had called Abraham out of Ur:

Acts 7:2-3 “And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran [Haran], And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee.” (Also see Neh.9:7 and Jos. 24:3).

The birthing of a vision

Carefully note from the (above) passages that the call and vision was given exclusively to Abraham. Let us also consider what the prophet Isaiah said concerning Abraham's call:

“Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him” (Isa. 51:2). This is what election is about. It has nothing to do with genealogy. God calls us by His foreknowledge. He knows what we will do if given the opportunity.

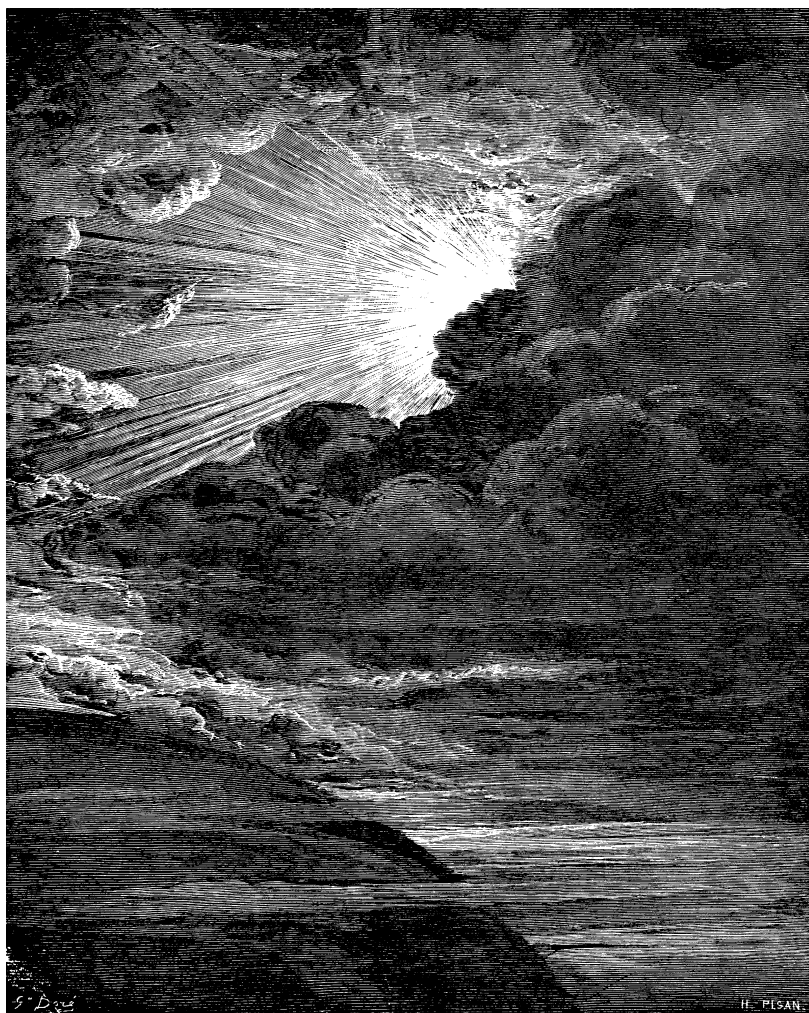
It must be clearly understood that God was birthing a vision uniquely to Abraham. It is God who chooses our inheritance for us (Psa. 47: 4). The rest of Abram's family did not share the vision, and that helps us to understand that there is a certain price tag attached to a vision. The patriarch Joseph is a good example of one who paid a price for his vision – his brethren persecuted him for it.

The New Testament tells us that Abraham was on a quest for a city that was not made by hands (Heb. 11:10). We are not told (per se`) at what point of Abraham's life this vision was birthed. Perhaps it took place when Abraham was told to look up to see if he could number the stars (Gen. 15:5). However it may be; something eternal was birthed in Abraham's spirit right from the initial call.

Jesus likened the kingdom to a treasure hidden in the field: *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field”* (Mat. 13:44). Here is a man who catches a vision of something eternal – the spiritual kingdom. He then sells out for that vision, and that vision consumes his life!

Many years ago the Lord awakened me with a vision. I can't define the vision except that I knew that God's hand had

come upon me for His eternal purpose, and that thought consumed every day of my life. Like the pilgrim in John Bunyan's novel, every day was absorbed with the heavenly call.



Looking for a City

Leaving Country and Kin

Gen. 12:1 “...*Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house...*”

Get thee out of thy country – the spiritual implications

For Abram the call was quite literal – “Leave thy country.” However, for us the calling may have other ramifications – let me explain: The main difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament is the difference between physical and spiritual.

<i>The Old Testament</i>	<i>The New Testament</i>
Physical circumcision	Spiritual circumcision
Physical journey	Spiritual journey (walk of faith)
Physical inheritance	Spiritual inheritance
Physical offspring	Spiritual offspring
Physical weapons	Spiritual weapons
Physical battles	Spiritual battles
Physical temple	Spiritual temple
Physical priesthood	Spiritual priesthood
Physical sacrifices....	Spiritual sacrifices....

Although the Old Testament functioned in the tangible realm, it was a type and shadow of the spiritual realm. Regarding the Old Testament, the apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:11, “*Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*” The word, *ensample* means type. The Old Testament was type; the New Testament is the anti-type.

Therefore, the main import that we want to receive from Abraham’s walk is the spiritual implications. For us, *get out of thy country*, could mean to separate from the world. Egypt is a type of the world in scripture, and we are exhorted not to be conformed to, or love the world (world system). Babylon is a figure of false religion; therefore, to get out of Babylon could mean to separate from our former religion. In fact, Ur was a notorious center of the occult and moon worship.

The literal connotation

I must also point out that the calling to *leave thy country* could also be quite literal. This may be understood from the missionary call. Many times God calls people to leave their homeland to serve Him on a foreign field. We have known a few dear saints that have virtually spent the greater part of their lives in another land. Yes, there is a price to be paid – but the eternal dividends are so great! May we, like Saint Paul be able to say, “*I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision*”(Acts 26:19).

Statistics tell us that 92% of the first year missionaries never finish their course – nor return to the field!

And from thy father's house

Obviously, there is a reason that Abram is told to separate from his kin and from his father's house. Firstly, they were not partakers of Abram's vision – this will be confirmed later on in this study. Secondly, his father's house was idolatrous. Although we are not specifically told that in Genesis, we are told this in other passages. For example:

“And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood (river), and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac” (Jos. 24:2-3).

Abram was not only called out of Babylon, but also out of his family because they were idolatrous. The scripture makes special note of a few people who severed the idolatrous ties of their parents. Gideon destroyed his father's gods (Jud. 6:27-32). Asa removed his mother from being queen because of her idolatry (1 Kings 15:13). Ruth left her country and family and their gods (Ruth 1:15-16).

Family idols

There is far more idolatry mixed into Christianity than what we may think (both naturally and spiritually). Several years ago I was preaching in a village church in Guatemala. At the conclusion of the service I gave an invitation to the altar, and as I was doing so I felt prompted to ask the people if they

were free from their former idolatries. I was amazed at what happened. The majority of the people began weeping and responding by coming forward.

I later learned that when the Jesuits had evangelized that area centuries ago, they had allowed the Indians to keep their gods. Catholicism in other countries is very mixed with other little deities – which they are allowed to incorporate into their feast days, etc. These Indians had been converted to Pentecostalism and apparently still felt they could keep their ancestral gods. This is a problem in many countries!

The false religions of our family will eventually taint our lives and ministry, and even our eternal place unless we totally sever from them spiritually or denounce them etc. I know of one particular man who loved our church. He loved the truths that we preached; however his wife was a staunch Catholic and he could not pay the price of severing from the family religion. Today, he unhappily accompanies his wife to her spiritual Babylon.

We knew another man who actually had quite an influential ministry, but somehow he never quite disconnected from his mother's Mormon beliefs. Later on in his ministry he got quite involved in genealogies (as the Mormons do). It tainted his whole ministry.

We can never whole-heartedly serve the Lord our God or follow the Lord our God as long as there are idols in our life. Even being bound to a family that serves other gods (religion) will eventually affect our relationship with God. There must be a clear denunciation – a severing in the spirit! I am not

endorsing breaking ties with the family; we want to see our families saved. But we must not be bound by their persuasion. I am not trying to minimize the cost; often the family rejects you because of your faith.

I just recently returned from a country where I happened to be touching this very subject. The lady who was translating for me began to weep – her family had rejected her for her faith. Although we in the United States are not affected as much by family religions, in some nations to leave the religion means excommunication from the family.

Part of the cross involves the family

The family issue sorts people out right from the start. The call of God will invariably challenge our family ties in some measure. Jesus said this: “*Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.*” (Mat. 10:34-38).


The sword is the Word of God, it separates those who will follow on to know Him and those who will not. This is all about family relationships. Let us also observe that we are not only tested in regards to our parents, but also in regards to

In today's society, parents often suffer for righteousness sake at the hands of their own children who do not want to leave the world.

our children. People often pass the first hurdle, they suffer rejection from their parents; but then later on they compromise when their children are against them. In today's society, parents often suffer for righteousness sake at the hands of their own children who do not want to leave the world.

We want to honor our father and mother, but if the choice is between honoring God or honoring our parents, we must honor God. Abram was commanded to leave his kindred and his father's house.

Unto a Land I Will Show Thee

 en. 12:1 “...Unto a land that I will show thee.”

True faith takes a step

What an excellent concept of faith this presents. God spoke, Abram believed, and thus he stepped out. I was told about a certain seminar teacher who majors in principles. (There is nothing wrong with principles as long as they don't overshadow what God is speaking.) This teacher was telling his followers that they should never step out until certain things came into place. He gave his constituency quite a list of things that must happen first... must have so much money, the right house, the right school, etc.

The real faith often requires us to go forward when there is nothing visible in sight: *“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went”* (Heb. 11:8).

Faith is not always sight

He was called. *He obeyed not knowing* what all was involved. This is what we call “The obedience of faith.” We do not always know what is involved. We may see the end, but

not all of the steps in between. As we shall learn from Abraham's walk, there is an on-going vision. As the psalmist said, "...*In thy light shall we see light*" (Psa. 36:9). What that means is that as we walk in the present truth or the present light – more light shall be given. The path of the just increases in light!

When the disciples asked Jesus, "*Where do you dwell?*" He answered them, "*Come and see*" (John 1:38-39). Jesus never made any promises concerning accommodations or a paycheck or a retirement program, etc. Following the Master was going to be a walk of faith. Those young disciples had no idea what was involved except that they believed in the One who had called them! *We don't always* get the full picture at the beginning. The step in-between is what the walk of faith is all about.

What distinguished the eleventh hour workers in the parable (Matt. 20) was that they had not made any agreement with the owner of the vineyard. They simply believed that the master would be just. The others had agreed on a price. Many who are called insist upon certain benefits – but they are selling themselves short in eternity.

Faith involves risk

There is another beautiful psalm that describes the risk of stepping out, "*They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep*" (Psa. 107:23-24). As we follow this psalm out, we see that the mariners face many troubles, but at length they arrive at their desired habitation. We can

be content to be a “shoreline Christian” and never see the hand of God move. Or, we can obey the voice of God and launch out into the deep (the unknown) and see the miracles of God.

May I caution us to hear God speak before we launch out. Peter asked the Master to beckon him to come before he stepped out of the boat!

May I caution us to hear God speak before we launch out. Peter asked the Master to beckon him to come before he stepped out of the boat!

The name Abram means “Exalted Father,” and we shall expound upon his name at the point where his name is changed to Abraham. Also, the physical land promised to Abraham shall be considered in later chapters.

The Promises Begin

Gen. 12:2 *“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.”*

And I will make of thee a great nation

As we shall learn throughout this journey, the initial promises given to Abram are not only reconfirmed, but they are also magnified. Perhaps Abram did not understand the spiritual implications of these promises at the first; however, I think that in time he fully understood them. The great nation was to be a singular nation comprised of people from many nations who were born into it by faith. We are describing the church! Peter called the church, *“An holy nation, a peculiar people...”* (1 Pet. 2:9).

Abram was called to be the progenitor of a multitude of people. This truth will be elaborated upon many times, but for the moment let us consider a few facts. Abram was 75 years old (Gen. 12:4). He was childless and would remain so for many years to come. This is what makes our God so awesome. He calls things that are non-existent as though they were! Saint Paul establishes this very point: *“As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations, before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were”* (Rom 4:17). God calls things the way that they shall be!

God knows the end from the beginning; therefore He proclaims it so: “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Isa. 46:10). God predestines our lives according to His foreknowledge of us. He knows what we will do if given the opportunity; He knows who will avail himself of His grace! Our Lord called Peter a rock many years before it was a reality.

This “great nation” had to come physically through Abraham and through his heirs. Physically we are looking at natural Israel for about 2000 years. But then the Christ would be born of the seed of Abraham, and through faith in Him many nations would be incorporated into this “Household of faith.”

*We will differentiate between natural Israel and spiritual Israel throughout this commentary. The greater promises are to spiritual Israel, perhaps with the exception of those Old Testament saints who were counted as though they had entered in (Heb. 11:13).

Our connection to Abraham

Mat. 1:1 *“The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”* We are connected to Abraham through faith in the son of Abraham – the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gal. 3:14 *“That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”* Through faith in Christ

we also become heirs of father Abraham. Galatians 3:14 helps us to better understand the intent of Genesis 12:3: “*And in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*” Abraham’s line would produce the Christ through whom all nations might be blessed.

We should also take note of the fact that at every point wherein Abraham was required to surrender something, something far greater was gained!

We should also take note of the fact that at every point wherein Abraham is required to surrender something, or give something up, something far greater is gained! Leave thy nation...God promises a greater nation. Leave thy family... God promises a greater family. Christians many times think, “Oh, the cost is so great.” The truth of the matter is, the benefits are far greater! As St. Paul said, “*...Not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us*” (Rom. 8:18).

Another verse that is worthy of consideration is Psalm 45:10: “*Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.*” Here is an exhortation to one that the Lord desires to bless. She is asked to leave her father’s house. But what is the benefit of that transaction? “*Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth*” (Psa 45:16). One of the promises to Abraham was that kings would come out from his loins. Is not this the desire of the true missionary – to raise up kings and priests throughout the earth?

I will bless thee

Having grown up in a Pentecostal environment I was often confused on what “blessing” was all about. I would see people shake or convulse or run or jump or blurt something out, and then others would say, “Oh, they got blessed!” Well, I’m sure that something had blessed their soul; yet, for myself I wasn’t too convinced that this was the blessing I desired to have.

Many years have rolled by since those days and I have come to understand that the blessing that God promised Abraham was more than just a tingle or some euphoric feeling. The blessing that we are considering here falls more into the category of “an anointing.” There are many forms of anointings, but to save a long exposition on the subject, let me point to a few scriptural references, and briefly comment on them.

The common blessing

There is a general blessing upon those who are the true spiritual seed of Abraham. That blessing affects our household, and it can affect the city in which we dwell, or the very nation itself. America has been known as a Christian nation, and we have known blessing above all nations. People can spot an American in other nations because they are light and free and their countenance is bright. America has been blessed for the gospel and for their support of Abraham’s natural seed – Israel.

Unfortunately, America has become very profane, and she no longer commands the respect that she once did. She will also lose the blessing as the ancient people did when they turned from God. America will be judged and will be restored.

Psa. 33:12 *“Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.”*

Pro. 11:11 *“By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted...”*

Gen. 39:5 *“And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.”*

Being tested on the promise

We might draw attention to the fact that Joseph’s life had a blessing upon it in spite of the reality that he was a servant and had not really entered into “The Blessing” that God had reserved for him. This foregoing verse expresses my point exactly. There is a difference between having an imputed blessing and having the imparted blessing. The imparted blessing is given to those who have allowed the promise to try them. Consider what is said of Joseph:

There is a difference between having an imputed blessing and having the imparted blessing.

“He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: Until the time that his word came [to pass]: the word of

the LORD tried him." (Psa. 105:17-19) Joseph was tried upon the very promise that God gave him, and we shall likewise be tried. There is always a fiery trial that contradicts our vision and our faith!

Abram enjoyed certain blessings as he traveled the King's Highway, but there was a considerable time before the real blessing (or promise) came. Abram's life was first being tested and proven. The pattern is so clear in scripture. God told Israel, "I will bring you into a land flowing with milk and honey." Notwithstanding, there were ten specific trials before they arrived there, and most of the older generation did not enter in:

Num. 14:22-23 *"Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; Surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it."*

We may think that this was the Old Testament and now the standard has changed. However, this is not what St. Paul asserted. Hear now what the apostle said on the subject in Hebrews 4:1: *"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."* Paul was warning the church from Israel's failure. Every generation has unique qualifying factors!

The real promises of God are conditional. In fact, Paul emphasizes the word "if" quite a few times in Hebrews chapters 2-4. Here is a little word that we should take note of when promises are made!

Why do we need the blessing?

Let us contemplate several reasons why we need this blessing. Firstly, we need to have the blessing of God upon our lives to fully promote the gospel. The psalmist said, *“God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations”* (Psa. 67:1-2). Some of God’s people (especially ministers) have corrupted the blessing into building themselves an empire upon earth. The psalmist had it right – “Bless us, that we may take thy saving health to the nations.” Let us always bear in mind that Father Abraham’s vision was on the eternal, not on the earthy.

◆ **That we might fully serve**

We need to have the blessing of God that we might fully promote the gospel. Often times we are restricted because of finances or the lack of people to help. The harvest is truly ripe, and there are cries from many places (like the Macedonian cry), “Come over and help us!” I am not just trying to be poetic as I pen this; we have invitations to many nations – nations that are crying out for teachers, and yet we only have limited means of reaching them.

We also need to be blessed in the area of our health so that we might fully serve our Master. May God bless us with His strength until our assignment on earth is over. I like how the aged psalmist put it in psalm 71:18, *“Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have showed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.”* What a beautiful desire: to finish the course, manifesting God’s power to his generation!

◆ **To reign**

Secondly, we need the blessing of God in order to reign in the millennium. It must be understood that those who reign in the next dispensation (1000 year – Millennium) are the over-comers. St. John establishes this fact in Revelation 20:6, *“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”*

Not all the believers will be given immortality during the millennium, nor will they reign upon earth. They will live out their allotted time, but will not receive immortality until the “Great White Throne” judgment at the end of the Millennium. (See Rev. 20:7-15)

David also said, *“For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth”* (Psa. 37:22). Let us be those who cry out for the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness, that we might qualify to be a part of the blessed reign of Christ. (Also see Rom. 5:17 and Psa. 24:3-5.)

And make thy name great

We are still looking at verse two of chapter 12. What does it mean to have a great name? In Psalm 45:17, the Lord made a promise to those who left their father’s house to worship Him alone: *“I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations...”* In the heavenly realm there are many distinctions. As St. Paul said, they shall differ as the stars. One thing is certain: we shall be known for what we have been (or haven’t

been), and those merits shall always adorn our garments and crown. Actually, some do not have crowns and the only thing that they can claim is forgiveness.

What I am saying is that there are those who have overcome and have finished their course, and there are those who have not. Consider what Jesus said on the subject: *“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven”* (Mat. 5:19).

Someone shared a vision of the pillars in heaven, and they had faces carved upon them of the saints who had overcome in life – they are eternal! (See Rev. 3:12).

Blessing and Cursing

Gen. 12:3 *“And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”*

The rise and fall of nations

This particular promise not only concerns the natural offspring of Abraham, but it also concerns the spiritual offspring (the Church) as well. Invariably, the people who hate Israel also hate the Church. In this generation that precedes the Second Coming of Christ and the millennial reign, we have seen nation after nation getting their independence – the reason being, that they might choose (as a nation) for the “Great Day of the Lord.” The nations that hate Israel will align against her and they shall be judged at His coming.

Zec. 14:2-4 “For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives...”

How the nations of the earth deal with Abraham’s seed (Israel) determines their very future as a nation. When the Lord returns, He separates the nations as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. The goat nations are the nations

that oppose Israel. The sheep nations are pro Israel. That is one reason that God has blessed the U.S.A. hitherto. Even in the millennium, the goat nations resent the righteous rule of Christ with His saints. Nevertheless, they must submit to His reign or the heavens will be stopped from rain:

Zec. 14:16-19 "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles."

The nations that curse Abraham's seed not only curse Israel but they curse the Christ – which is Abraham's seed, and they curse the Church – which is Abraham's seed!

◆ **America – June 2003**

As I have been working on this manuscript, our president has been in the Middle East trying to initiate his "Roadmap to Peace." Essentially this roadmap to peace is going to part Israel's land. It is going to force Israel to withdraw from land given to Israel by a covenant (Genesis 15). It will also help to establish a people that curse Israel and refuse to recognize her right to exist.

Basically, our support of Israel has been the last thread of our salvation as a nation. We are ripe for judgment, and this false peace effort may prove to be our demise. The rise and fall of nations hinges upon Genesis 12:3.

In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

*Our faith
in Christ
connects
us to
father
Abraham.*

As we have previously stated and will undoubtedly repeat again, Abraham's lineage would produce the Christ through whom all nations might be blessed. (See Gal. 3:14.) Our faith in Christ connects us to father Abraham. We become heirs of the promises given to Abraham through faith in Christ – who was the son of Abraham. In fact, the greater promises are to the spiritual seed – those born of faith! (There will be a fuller explanation on this point when we come to the birth of Isaac).

Out of every nation

God is taking to Himself a people out of every nation that shall know the blessedness of this holy family. In the book of Revelation we get a glimpse of this in chapter 5:9-10: “...*For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.*”

Until Christ, salvation was exclusively to the Jews, or to those who ceremonially became Jews (proselytes). Even the early church struggled on this point. It was actually years before

the early church accepted the gentiles. Jesus told the pious Jews of His day (those who had put their trust in the family tree) that many who were not of Israel, would sit down in the kingdom with father Abraham: *“And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth”* (Mat. 8:11-12).

The blessing of Christianity

Sometimes our young people do not realize the blessing of being in a Christian home (even some of the more tumultuous homes). Many of them envy the world; they envy other families that seem to have more things. They envy the pseudo liberty of other young people, etc. As Solomon said, “Youth is vanity.” May we encourage our youth to keep their eyes on the eternal. This world will pass away and the fashion of it.

My mother single-handedly raised “we three sons.” She was a devout Christian, but we were very poor. She worked a minimum wage job. We had no car, we had to walk to the grocery store to help carry the groceries home. I was ashamed of my clothes, my shoes, and our house. There was often fighting in our house because there was no supervision. To all outward observation there was not much of a blessing on our home.

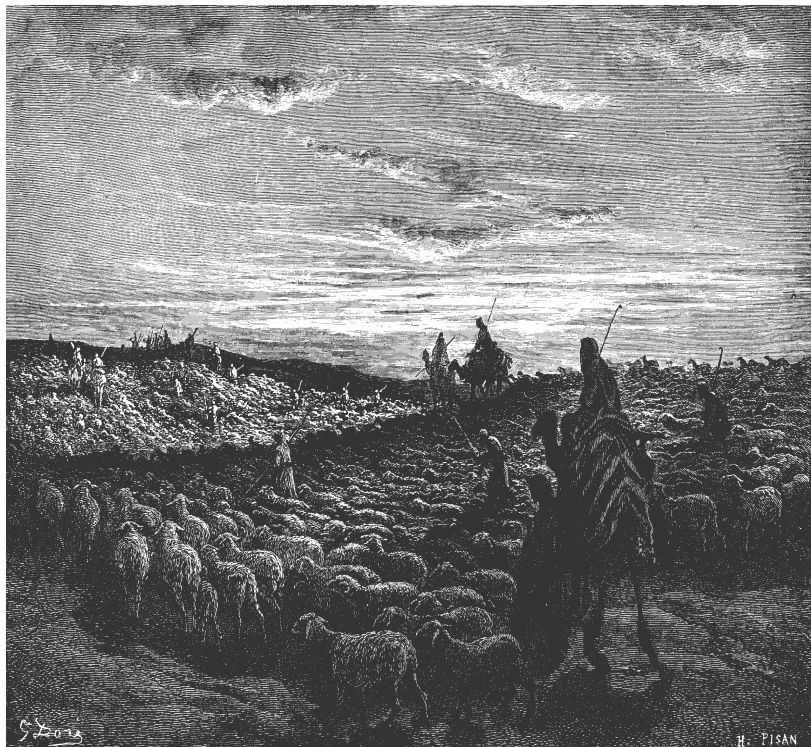
But my mother taught us about the streets of gold, and she taught us about the better country that she was longing to go to. And when we were burning up with a fever and there was

no doctor, she laid her hand on our heads and prayed; and when we strayed from the path she prayed and our heavenly Father corrected us betimes!

No, to all outward profession we didn't seem to have too much of a blessing. But in retrospect, I would not trade places with anyone in the world. Oh, I would love to convey the spirit of this to our present generation. I look on with sadness as many choose the way of the world. Many ruin their lives seeking for the false blessings that the world offers. Yes, some are restored when they come to the end of themselves (as the prodigal). But others end up in hell! *In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.* Through our Lord Jesus Christ, every family can be blessed!

Down to Canaan

Gen. 12:4 “So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.”



Down to Canaan

Apparently, Abram had come as far as Haran and had been there for some time. Perhaps, it wasn't until the death of his father Terah (Gen.11:32) that God spoke afresh to Abram.

Sometimes there is a certain patriarchal spirit that must be broken to release people. We also notice in this account that “Lot” (Abram’s nephew) has now attached himself to Abram’s company. Lot did not share the same vision as Abraham, and yet the Lord does permit people who are not of our vision to travel with us up to a certain point. Often it is for the purpose of clarifying who is who. No pastor is looking forward to a church split, but if your church has a vision for the higher ways of God, a church split will inevitably come!

No pastor is looking forward to a church split, but if your church has a vision for the higher ways of God, a church split will inevitably come!

Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran. The number 75 is not a complete number, which tells us that God was going to do a work in Abraham before the promise was fulfilled. Abraham was 100 years old when the promise came. We might also note that Abraham was 175 years old when he died. Therefore, from the first record of his age (75), we are looking at 100 years of his life. One hundred means fullness!

As we shall see, the places that Abraham must tread will tell us something of this “walk in the Spirit.”

From Haran into Canaan

Gen. 12:5 *“And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they*

went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.”

Taking a step down

Haran means, “mountain dweller.” Canaan means, “the low place,” or as some translate it, “humiliation.” In this first leg of the journey, we are immediately struck with a strange phenomenon. It often looks as though we’re going

As we are beginning to walk in the Spirit it often looks as though we’re taking a step down.

down! As we are beginning to walk in the Spirit, as we are beginning to follow the Lord, it looks as though we’re taking a step down. We suddenly begin this walk of faith, and we’re being humbled. Maybe we are leaving a good job, a nice home, or some position. But in reality, these are the means of coming higher. The way up is down.

I’m sure the early disciples looked foolish to many when they abandoned their father’s fishing business to follow – who knows what? The world looks on in amazement and proclaims how foolish we must be. Time would fail to relate all of stories of the saints who responded to the call only to look like a failure. One man was on his way to work to tell his boss he was resigning his position in order to pastor a little church. As he walked into the office, his boss said, “Ralph, we have good news for you – we are going to triple your salary!” Now that only happens when the Lord is calling you on...


The trial of our faith

When God is calling you upward there is often a deep valley we must descend first. Many years ago, there was a certain man in my congregation that I felt God's hand upon, and during a Sunday morning service I began to prophesy over him. As I began to prophesy I said to myself, "My God, what am I saying?" I was forecasting a disaster and a stripping which was coming into his life. Fortunately, it ended on a good note, but I was scaring myself by the words that were coming out of my mouth.

When we follow on to know the Lord we can expect to be tried upon the very word that God gives us. As the psalmist attests: *"For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidst affliction upon our loins. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place"* (Psa. 66:10-12).

Joseph had visions of the throne but he was sold for a servant! That promise from God must have mocked him for a long time. We must hold on to what God says!

Sichem and Moreh

 en. 12:6 “*And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.*”

Sichem - shoulder

Abram now comes to Sichem. Sichem is the same place as Shechem, and it means “shoulder.” This walk in the Spirit is often called “the school of the Spirit.” The school of the Spirit teaches us certain things that we can’t learn in the seminary. The call to fatherhood is the call to responsibility. It is the call to bear the burden for the weak. This is where we come to understand our “Shechem” or “shoulder.” – putting our shoulder to the burden!

The school of the Spirit teaches us certain things that we can’t learn in the seminary.

Preparing for service

The priestly portion of the sacrifice was the right shoulder, which tells us that the minister must bear the burden of the congregation (Lev. 7:32-34). It is said of the tribe of Issachar that they became servants because the land was worthy to serve for: “*And he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute*” (Gen. 49:15). By the way, Christ is called “The Servant.”

The call to ministry means service and hard work. It means becoming a servant. It means bearing a heavy load.

The scripture says prophetically of Christ: *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder...”* (Isa. 9:6). For many years our Lord labored in the carpenter shop and was responsible for His mother, His four brothers, and His sisters. We are not told at what time Joseph (the stepfather of Jesus) died. However, the scripture is clear that Jesus had the oversight of His mother, because He was the eldest.

The call to ministry means service and hard work. It means becoming a servant. It means bearing a heavy load. Often times, ministers and leaders crash because of pressure. Some of them were never exposed to hard labor or demands upon their lives. Jesus gave the following parable to illustrate what true discipleship was about.

We have only done our duty

“But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do” (Luke 17:7-10).

Jesus was preparing his disciples for Divine service: hard work, no thanks, and little recognition or reward for your labor. And then to add to the discipleship package, our attitude should be “I’ve only done my reasonable service...” If we follow the 3 ½ year ministry of Christ (especially from Mark’s version) we find that the disciple had little time for leisure. After ministering all day, then they must seat the congregation and serve them. May we adapt this mentality into our call to fatherhood and then we shall not be disappointed!

For many years, my younger brother (who is also a minister) and I worked on farms. We worked for little pay, scanty accommodations, and a lot of verbal abuse. Why did we stay there? In some ways we were trapped, but above that we wanted to prove that we were men and that we could take it. Yes, that was vanity and pride; but the truth of the matter was, that our heavenly Father had us there to keep us out of trouble and to teach us to put our shoulder to the burden!

The father role

The kingdom basically divides into three groups, and this is clear throughout scripture. The tabernacle scenario clearly divides the kingdom into three groups.

<i>Three Groups in the Kingdom</i>	
Outer Court	Little Children
Holy Place	Young Men
Holy of Holies	Fathers

The apostle Paul put it this way: “*For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers*” (1 Cor. 4:15). The dire need in the church world today is fatherhood. There are many voices, many dogmas being proclaimed, but oh, to hear the clear ring of a true father – one who has experienced the message. God was preparing Abram to be an example of a true Father.

Let us hear what the Spirit is saying concerning our Sichem – our workplace. Moreover, let us endeavor to put our shoulder to the burden and may we be faithful even in the small assignments! Being faithful in our responsibilities on the job or in the home are qualifying us to be useable material in the kingdom.

The plain of Moreh – the teacher

Some translations interpret the word “plain” to mean oak – The oak of Moreh. The name “Moreh” means teacher. How long Abram dwelt in Moreh we are not told. However, we do know that Moreh was a very significant part of the trip because Abram built an altar there; therefore, it was a place of consecration. What we must glean from Abram's sojourn in Moreh is the aspect of the teacher.

An integral part of fatherhood is that a father is a teacher. A father must have the answers for his natural/spiritual children. A father trains his children in the way that they should go. In fact, that is one of the reasons that God chose Abraham to be his pattern. It later says of Abraham: “*For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice*

and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him” (Gen. 18:19).

The student is as good as his teacher

If we are wondering what teaching has to do with inheritance, the question is answered in the (above) verse. The real inheritance is about people. The only thing that we can present to the Lord in the next life is the people that God has given us for an inheritance. What kind of people are we going to present to the Lord? Have they been groomed to stand in the King’s palace? St. Paul’s concern was to present sons and daughters that had come to completeness, perfected by the grace of God. That is why the apostle taught his children; that is why the apostle corrected his children!

The inheritance can only continue if our children are walking in the truth. If we want lasting fruit, then we must teach our children the ways of God and correct them! The 10,000 teachers in Corinth must have been overlooking all of the flagrant sins that were being committed. The true father corrected them!

*If we want
lasting
fruit, then
we must
teach our
children
the ways of
God and
correct
them!*

Psalm 78:5-6 *“For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children:”*

What makes a good teacher?

Abraham was getting this concept early in his journey. What makes a good teacher? A good teacher is someone who has had the quandaries of his own heart resolved. He has met with God and found the answers. We learn from study, and we should never cease to study; but we really never understand the scriptures until we pass through certain experiences in life. After we have passed through our “Moreh”, then we have lessons that we can impart to our offspring.


Over thirty years ago, I passed through an experience in my life when it was as though God opened my ear and my heart to His Word. It was as though a compulsion came upon me from heaven. I was awake early in the morning; many times at 3:00 AM I was sitting at my desk. Oh, the Word was so real, so precious. Every morning I was drinking at the fountain underneath the cloudless sky. I was feeding on the manna from His bountiful supply. Yes, I had a family and I had to go to work every morning, too. But for that particular time and space in my life I was camped at Moreh.

Surely, the whole journey is a learning experience; but then there are unique experiences that we pass through, and the lessons gained from these experiences become our life message. St. Paul claimed such an experience when he was set aside for some time in Arabia. (See Gal. 1:17.)

As ministers, we must teach, but to teach, we must continually study and learn. The teaching ministry is the premier ministry of the last days, and God desires to raise up true

spiritual fathers that they might instruct the many. Miracles are important, but the purpose of miracles basically is to create a platform for the ministry of the Word! If we want to inherit the nations, we must first teach the nations!

The Altar

en. 12:7 *“And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.”*

Whom the Lord appears to

When we meet with the Lord afresh, we want to build an altar of consecration there! I have been preaching now for 30 years, and over the course of those years I have met quite a few ministers. Many I consider to be my colleagues and my equals. But then there are ministers that God speaks to face to face. When God appears time and again to one of His servants, I do not count him as just an ordinary minister.

The difference between Aaron and the other Levites was the difference between ministering in the outer court and ministering within the veil (Num. 16). I am emphasizing these things that we might see the greatness of the man Abraham. Christ appeared to Abraham, and Abraham rejoiced to see the day. (We shall consider this again.)

Unto thy seed will I give...

Once more, the promise is reaffirmed to Abraham concerning his seed. (Abraham was still childless). May we continue to bear in mind that the greatest fulfillment of

the promise was to be realized in “the seed.” That includes us! Notwithstanding, the physical aspect of those promises applied basically to natural Israel, for example, the land promise. We shall consider the land in subsequent chapters; and as we shall see, God gave very specific boundaries to it.

It is interesting that even today (4000 years later), the enemies of Israel are still contending for the land that God promised to Abraham’s seed. The enemy never ceases to challenge God’s promise until it is fulfilled! Israel only claimed a small piece of the promised possession and then was later exiled from that. Obviously, there will be a future fulfillment of that promise in the Millennium.

Our unique inheritance

Our Lord still makes promises concerning lands. God even promises nations (spiritually) to those who please Him. The apostle Paul claimed nations – to which he was a light (Acts 13:47). We can think of many missionaries that were uniquely given certain countries for an inheritance. For example, Adoniram Judson was given Burma; William Carrie was given India.... Certainly others have an inheritance in those places as well. However, God is very precise about inheritance and we cannot assume anything. I have taught in various countries and I believe that God will give us an inheritance there; however, I do not presume to claim those countries for my unique inheritance because those nations are promised to others.

And there builded he an altar

Abraham was known for his altars. It was as though Abraham moved from altar to altar. The altar is the connecting place with God – not only in the Old Testament (remember that Abraham was before the law). The apostle Paul said, “*We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle*” (Heb. 13:10). The Jews could only meet with God at the altar, which stood in the outer court of their sanctuary. But Paul said we have an altar that the (unbelieving) Jews cannot partake of.

The Jews could only approach to God through a sacrifice. It is no different for us. We can only come to God through our “Once For All” sacrifice, the Lord Jesus Christ. We can only approach through the shed blood of our Savior; we can only approach through the veil of His crucified flesh. (See Heb. 10:19-20.) Yes, we have an altar – but it’s invisible. We come through the blood – but it’s invisible. The Jews can’t see this altar because it takes the form of a cross, and it’s invisible.

The altar is the place where we meet with God. Let us notice a few of the things that are transacted at the altar:

- ◆ Reconciliation
- ◆ Communion
- ◆ Worship
- ◆ Sacrifice
- ◆ Consecration
- ◆ Decision

Let us offer unto God continually

The altar is a place where we make fresh consecration to the Lord. Every time the Lord speaks afresh we need to come to our private altar and consecrate ourselves afresh. That is why we give altar calls in the church. It gives God's people the opportunity to come down and deal with the issue, or with whatever the Lord may be speaking.

*Every time
the Lord
speaks
afresh we
need to
come to
our private
altar and
consecrate
ourselves
afresh.*

Abraham was before the law. He was not confined to a place of worship, as were the Jews (who were under the law). But wherever he went he built an altar. (That is a good New Testament ideology.) Abraham was a priest. We in the New Testament are called to be priests also. We are called to offer spiritual sacrifices through our once-for-all sacrifice, Jesus Christ. If we want to inherit the good land, let us continually offer sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving (Heb. 13:15). When we give praise and thanks to our God, we are saying, yes Lord, I believe! This keeps all bitterness out of our hearts.

This is exactly why Israel failed. They did not serve joyfully, nor were they thankful. We will always find victory over circumstances as we offer the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. It is not always easy, but faith is released as we give thanks!

After the Lord spoke to Abraham, he consecrated himself afresh at the altar! There are places where we have met with God, and they have become sacred to us. We have an altar where others cannot attend!

Abram's Detour to Egypt

Between Betel and Hai

Gen. 12:8 “*And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.*”

The fact that Abraham builds an altar between two places tells us that it was a place of decision. Carefully note the two places that Abraham was in between: Bethel means “the house of God.” Hai means “the world.” Hai can also mean, “ruinous heap.”

At this moment Abraham is (spiritually) between the church and the world. It is an unfortunate thing that God’s people are so often camped between these two places. Much of today’s generation of Christianity (2003) cannot be distinguished from the world. They look like the world, talk like the world, think like the world and imitate the world. The prophet Elijah confronted Israel on this issue when he said, “How long halt ye between two opinions...?”

Tested where the two ways meet

The fact of the matter is that all of God’s people have to be tested at this juncture. When my mother was a teenager of about 17, she was struggling with the allurements of the

world. (Yes, there were temptations even back in 1934.) But then the Lord spoke: "Make your calling and election sure!" My mother built an altar there and it changed her life!

May we be challenged by this juncture to make our calling and election sure! Being planted in the house of our God is a choice: *"Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing"* (Psa. 92:13-14).

Down to Egypt

Gen. 12:9-10 *"And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south. And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land."*

The symbolism of Egypt

In scripture, Egypt symbolizes the world. In its time, Egypt was the most powerful and affluent nation on earth. Egypt was the power that held God's people in bondage for many generations. But Egypt was also raised up to illustrate the power of God and the purposes of God. God broke the power of Egypt and released His people from their grip.

Of course, we all know the story of the exodus. Israel experienced their salvation in Egypt. They experienced their Pass-over there (1 Cor. 5:7); and that began the journey to the Promised Land. God's people were to leave Egypt immediately and not return to it! The whole scenario was to ever serve as an allegory to the church (See 1 Cor. 10:1-11).

Seeking help from Egypt

As we study the history of Abraham's seed, it is amazing to see how many times Israel sought to go back to Egypt, or to seek Egypt for help. Consider what the prophet Isaiah said to the people of his day:

Isa. 30:1-2 *"Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin: That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt!"*

Isa. 31:1 *"Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!"*

It is an unfortunate fact that Christians too often turn to the world when they are in trouble. Whilst it is true that we must sometimes employ the help of worldly institutions or professions, such as a doctor or a lawyer, the problem is that we seek unto them before we seek the Lord. Thus was the case of king Asa:

2 Chr. 16:12 *"And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians."*

*A Christian should never employ a
psychiatrist – that is a strange covering.*

And there was a famine in the land

Returning to our text (Gen. 12:9-10), it seems that Abram had allowed circumstances to dictate because of the famine. As you will recall, Abram had been camped between the two persuasions, but now he is going down to Egypt (the world) for sustenance. I am sure that Abram did not understand the spiritual significance of Egypt; nevertheless, his detour there teaches us some important lessons.

There were at least three errors made by going to Egypt:

Abram almost lost his wife there.

Hagar was picked up in Egypt (16:1).

Certainly Lot and his family were weakened by the glitter of Egypt.

We must also observe the fact that Abram built no altar in Egypt!

Getting out of the Spirit

Our conference president tells a story about the great depression in Wales (earlier part of the 20th century). Wales was suffering great economic difficulties, and at the same time England was prospering. The Lord spoke prophetically to the Pentecostal Christians in Wales and told them not to leave, but to trust Him. Nevertheless, many of them moved to England where they found good jobs.

In the mean time, those who stayed experienced miracles of provision, similar to the miracle of the widow whose barrel never emptied (1 Kings 17:16). The Christians who stayed in accordance to the Word were blessed. The Christians who went to England missed God!

We want to be very careful in the days ahead to heed the lessons in God's Word. There will be many circumstances that challenge our faith. If we let circumstances rule, we will miss God. I am not saying that there is never a time that we should relocate or use the resources of Egypt, etc. The holy family fled into Egypt. Jacob went into Egypt to fulfill the purposes of God. But let us first seek the Master's will.

Abram's wife

Gen. 12:11-20 *"And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee. And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair. The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels. And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife. And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way. And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had."*

Fear and rationalization

Firstly notice, that when Abram stepped out of God's will there seemed to be a certain fear and a rationalization that pervaded his thinking. Abram tells Sarai to say she is his sister – which was a half-truth. Abram and Sarai had the same father. Of course, it was because Abram feared that the Egyptians would take Sarai and kill him. Sarai was 65 when she left Haran and she was still a beautiful woman. (God was preserving this princely couple to bring to pass His word).

Fear can get into our hearts when we get off the path. Fear binds faith. Abraham was letting fear bind him from believing what God had said. (God's promise had not come to pass yet!) I remember a story someone once told about going to an amusement park that he had been forbidden to go to. The moment he stepped into the park he was afraid, and as the day continued he became more afraid. It climaxed on the roller coaster when he was so filled with terror that he got down on his knees (as the cars were in motion) and repented. He made fresh vows to the Lord never to return!

This rationalization allowed Abram's wife to be taken by the Pharaoh. Consequently, this incident riled the house of Pharaoh. It brought plagues on Pharaoh's house – "Great Plagues." The Lord was showing Abraham, "I could have preserved you!"

*There must be a development of faith, a maturing
of faith in one's life before the promise comes.
Faith begins as a mustard seed but it must grow!*

Pharaoh reprimands Abram

Pharaoh then rebuked Abram and sent him away! It is really a slap in the face when we are rebuked by the world. When we who represent God's standard of righteousness need to be corrected by the world – that cuts! I remember an incident in my own life when I was so rebuked by a man of the world that it was like a slap in the face from God!

Another thing that we should glean from this incident is that when we fail a test, we are often retried on the same thing. (See chapter 20 – history repeats). Abraham's son, Isaac, was also tested in almost an identical situation in Genesis 26. That tells us that when we fail a test, those tests often pass on to our children. That is awesome!

Back to Bethel / Hai

Gen. 13:1-4 *“And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai; Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.”*

Full circuit

I think that we should carefully note that Abram had been on a detour. He had just made a full circuit right back to the

same place he had left, between Bethel and Hai. Abram had veered down into Egypt, but God mercifully brings Abram back to the altar from whence he had veered.

A minister was once relating a similar incident in his life. The Lord had brought this man to a particular place; and then during the night, the Lord began to show him the various problems that existed there. In the morning, he said, "Thank you, Lord, I can see that you are warning me about this place, so I'll be on my way!" One year later he found himself right back in the same place. The Lord said, "I showed you this place to prepare you – now stay!"

These things are recorded in scripture to save us from making similar mistakes. God preserves the righteous. As the scripture says, the righteous can fall seven times but God will lift him up again. Abraham was righteous, and the Lord was not going to allow him to fail in Egypt!

Egypt must test us all

Not to seem contradictory to what we have just said, we all must pass through Egypt. We must all be tested by the enchantments of Egypt. As the pilgrim in John Bunyan's epic tale, we must all pass through our "Vanity Fair." The problem is that many a pilgrim never gets through the fair. The scripture sites one such example in 2 Tim. 4:10: "*For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world...*" Many a minister fails because of the

As the pilgrim in John Bunyan's epic tale, we must all pass through our "Vanity Fair."

love for the world. Materialism and the lusts of the world often ensnare those that detour into Egypt and they never come back!

Love not the world

Demas was deceived by the allurements of the fair, but let us consider another pilgrim who did make it through: “*By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;) Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward*” (Heb. 11:24-26).

Moses refused the allurements of the world. He had his eyes upon the eternal (invisible) kingdom. May we also keep our eyes on the kingdom that does not pass away.

1 John 2:15-17 “*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.*”

Unto the place of the altar

Surely, Abraham had taken a detour, but God mercifully brought Abraham back to the place (Bethel/Hai) from

whence he had detoured and there he consecrated himself
afresh to the Lord.



Lot Separates from Abram

Gen. 13:5-7 *“And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.”*

Two visions

Abram and Lot represent two different visions. They are like two different pastors leading two different flocks, and ultimately there has to be a separation. It is like the prophet Amos said, “*“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”* (Amos 3:3). Up to a certain point Christians can walk together; there can be an agreement on certain fundamentals of the faith. But when one (such as Abram) has a vision for the higher purposes of God, there will be a separation!

During the charismatic movement (which began around 1966) there was quite an emphasis on unity. The baptism in the Holy Spirit was the common denominator, and believers from all denominational backgrounds would come together to worship. This is what we would (scripturally) call “*the unity of the Spirit*” (Eph. 4:3). There can be a co-existence and a certain harmony between brethren in this atmosphere. But this is not the ultimate unity!

True unity

True unity is not the idea of toleration or agreeing with one another here below. True unity is when God's people are in agreement with heaven. Christ is pictured as the cornerstone of the church. The building must take its measurement from "The Stone." God is looking for a holy people that will agree with Him – those who obey and do! Christ is looking for those who will conform to His doctrine.

I am reminded of a little parable in Isaiah that bears out my thought: *"And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach"* (Isa. 4:1).

Here is a picture of the (segmented) church. We'll call the seven women denominations. They all take hold of one man – Christ. They all want to be called by His name – Christians. But they all want to eat their own bread – doctrine. They all want to wear their own apparel – their own righteousness.

Our heavenly father is going to present a glorious bride to His Son. She is going to be in total unity, in total agreement with the Lord Jesus Christ. She has caught a vision for the eternal – she has sold out to be that bride! (c.f. Rev. 19:7-8).

There was a strife

Our Lord allows His people to travel together for a time for the purpose of polarization. These two camps had come to full maturity, and they fully realized which side they were

a part of. Spiritually, there will always be the children of Lot and the children of Abraham. The children of Lot do not share the same convictions as Abraham and will gravitate towards Lot. The true children of Abraham will gravitate towards Abraham. There will be schisms and doctrines that will divide the camps (1 Cor.11:19).

- Lot represents the worldly Christian whose main concern is with the things of this life. (Many of them resent the message of holiness.)
- Abraham represents the true pilgrim who is looking for the better country and the city to come.

Separate from us

Gen. 13:8-9 *“And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.”*

Abraham recognized that the strife between the two camps was not a reconcilable issue. It was the vision that separated them. May I say from experience, that after people have heard your message, (over a period of time) they have either received it or rejected it – there is no talking people into anything! Abram knew there had to be a separation.

Many years ago I was in a pastor’s meeting where a pastor was asking counsel concerning a major rift in the church. This pastor co-pastored a church with another pastor (who

was also present) and there were definitely two streams flowing in this church. The question was, “Should we split?” Immediately, some of the charismatic brethren came swooping in with words of love and unity. However, I could not in my spirit agree with that counsel, and so I counseled that they split. Well, I don’t know what happened to the love and unity in that meeting, but if looks could kill, I wouldn’t be here today! (Incidentally, the pastors took my advice.)

You choose

Here is the father spirit – “let us not strive. You choose.” Here is a lesson that our spiritual father (our pastor) taught us: when others choose – it will be God. We can’t make a mistake when we allow the others to choose first. It is the strong who can allow others to choose the best room – the best view, etc. If you go to the right, I shall go to the left.

It is really the Lord who separates the sheep from the goats (Mat. 25). The goats do not accept the message of the cross – dying to self. The sheep will accept the true message of the cross.

Church splits

I once went to a seminar where one of the topics was “church splits” (how to reconcile differences and bring unity, etc). And, may I say that I agree with this kind of theology. In fact, St. Paul dealt with these kinds of issues in Corinth, and even in the Philippian church. Paul had to deal with two women at Philippi whose strife was affecting the whole church (Phi. 4:2).

However, this is not what we are talking about here. We are considering two different streams, two different ideologies within the local body. We had a major church split 20 years ago, and we learned some indelible lessons from that split. It was a horrible ordeal and yet we knew that God was removing the people who were not real. After twenty years I can reflect back on the people who left. Had they gone on to walk with the Lord, or to do something for God, then I would have to challenge my own position, but that was not the case. I don't know of any of the 44 people who left who followed on to know the Lord. Most of them are in the camp of Lot – or worse!

Before the church age is over, there will be a major separation of the tares and the wheat. Please don't misinterpret what I am saying; Lot did not go to hell, but his end was very sad!

Lot chooses with his eyes

Gen. 13:10-11 *“And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.”*

Lot chose with his eyes that which had the appearance of being like the “garden of the Lord.” May we again point out the difference between the two visions: Abraham's vision was

heavenward. He viewed things through the eyes of the Spirit. Lot's vision was on the things of this world. As the apostle John said, *"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world"* (1 John 2:16).

Let us also remember that all of the time Lot sojourned with Abram, Lot was rich and blessed. But as time will tell, Lot only escapes with his life (salvation).

Lot dwells amongst sinners

Gen. 13:12-13 *"Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly."*

Lot is the type of Christian who doesn't condone sin but he has no power to condemn it! Loving righteousness is not enough! We must also hate wickedness! Solomon loved the Lord, but he loved other things too. Lot overlooked a lot of smut to be in Sodom. Oh, he doesn't like it, he just can't shut it off or walk out on it.

Psa. 97:10 *"Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked."*

Psa. 45:7 *"Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."*

Psa. 139:21-22 *“Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.”*

We are considering the one who inherits the promises!

Lift up now thine eyes

Gen. 13:14-16 *“And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.”*

- Lot – lifted up his eyes. Human perspective.
- Abram – God said, “Lift up now thine eyes...” Heavenly perspective.

The promise intensifies

It is very important for us to realize that it wasn't until after Lot separated that God spoke afresh. The reason God waited until Lot was gone was because God did not intend these promises for Lot. Also notice that God now speaks with a greater unction! “Look in every direction – this land is yours and your offspring's forever.” We shall also see that the promises continually intensify as the journey

The Lord spends years perfecting the fruit that he wants to replicate.


continues. In this passage, the promise is to have offspring as the dust. The dust speaks of Abraham's natural seed. Later, the stars will be incorporated into the promise, speaking of the spiritual seed.

The Lord spends years perfecting the fruit that he wants to replicate. The Lord told Adam, "Be fruitful – then multiply!" Our Lord's first concern is that we bear the fruit worthy of reproduction (Holy Spirit fruit). The Lord did not want to multiply Abram while Lot was still there. That is why God prunes His church before revival comes! We must further note that it was still many years before Abram saw the first-fruits of that promise.

We must cherish the promises that God gives over the years. God reconfirms, even intensifies the promises, but we are often tested by many years of not seeing it happen!



Walk through the Land

en. 13:17 *“Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.”*

“Arise and walk...” Often times there is a physical action required to activate our faith. Abraham's life was a long walk, and yet Abraham knew that the ground he walked on was being claimed for future generations. That is what faith is all about. It is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. There was not a shred of visible evidence that the land would really be his – except that God spoke it, and Abraham believed it!

Heb. 11:9 *“By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:”*

The promise reiterated by Moses

Every place that Abram stepped was promised to him and to his offspring. In fact, about 500 years later, Moses reiterated that promise to Abraham's heirs just as they were about to enter Canaan: *“Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be”* (Deu. 11:24).

You will notice that the boundaries mentioned in Deuteronomy run considerably beyond what Israel actually claimed.

You will also notice from the covenant that God later made with Abraham in Genesis 15:18, that Israel only claimed a little piece of the cake: *“In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.”* The land promised to Abraham extends from Euphrates to Egypt. Abraham walked that land! In the millennium all of that land will belong to Israel.

The walk of faith

God still speaks to Abraham’s spiritual seed, and often times it concerns land. We have heard a few testimonies of saints who felt God spoke to them concerning certain geographic territories. Perhaps they were told to walk it, or go to certain corners of the city, or perhaps to a mountain overlooking the nation, etc. It was here that they claimed that territory as an inheritance for Christ. God desires His people to possess the earth.

Sometimes the Lord speaks uniquely concerning a country or countries. But it must be clearly understood that the privilege of laying such claims is not something that we have the right to do simply by human volition – “Oh, I claimed this city by faith!” God chooses our inheritance for us (Psa. 47:4). Certainly, there is nothing wrong with praying for these places – and usually the people who pray will have an inheritance among them.

The inheritance is not multiple choice

However, the true missionary call is not a multiple choice: “Well, I think I will go to Columbia and be a missionary

there...” Number one, God does not accept the offering, and number two, there is no grace for the call. Moses told Israel that they were not to touch certain territories because they had no inheritance there (for that time).

Deu. 2:5 *“Meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth; because I have given mount Seir unto Esau for a possession.”* (Also note verse 9.)

Moses also gave Israel a warning concerning the place where they were to offer their sacrifice: *“Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: But in the place which the LORD shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee”* (Deu. 12:13-14). Spiritually, we do not have the right to offer our lives wherever we wish, but only in the place that God chooses for us. We can actually labor in vain if we are out of God’s will.

Logos and rhema

Let us rightly divide the Word. The written Word is generally what is known as the “logos.” We read the “logos” and we study it, and we are nourished and edified by it. But then there is another word that describes the Word, and that word is “rhema.” The “rhema” is the spoken Word. That is the Word that we are to live by:

Mat. 4:4 *“But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word [rhema] that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”*

The “rhema” is the quickened Word. It is the Word that God specifically speaks to your soul. Yes, all of God’s Word is true; however, that does not give us the liberty to indiscriminately claim or apply a verse wherever needed. We can’t claim a release when God is speaking captivity. We can’t declare life when God is saying “Set your house in order; I’m taking you home!” On this point, many dear saints run into trouble when they claim the Word and God hasn’t spoken it!

May I further state that God wants to give His people an inheritance in many places, even if they have never left their hometown. By faithfully supporting and praying for the nations that the Lord has laid upon their hearts, there shall be a rich inheritance for them. The true Christian life is a pilgrimage and a walk of faith – even if we never leave our city!

*A promise to the overcomers:
“Ask of me and I will give you the nations!” (Psa. 2:8).*

Hebron

Gen. 13:18 *“Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD.”*

Mamre, which is in Hebron, was known for its oaks. It connotes health and luster. You have here the thought of 3 John, where John says, *“That ye may prosper and be in good health as your soul prospers.”* God was doing something in Abraham, and he was being entrusted with health and wealth.

The spiritual significance of Hebron

Hebron is important because it would always be Abraham's returning point or home base. In fact, Hebron would be the burial place for both Abraham and Sarah. Hebron means “fellowship.” There is much history connected to Hebron. Hebron later became the capitol of Judah and the place of David's second and third anointing. But for the moment, let us reflect on the more recent events.

After the separation from Lot and company, God then intensifies the promise and brings Abram's company to Hebron – which means, “fellowship.” In actuality, God is bringing Abraham into a greater degree of fellowship! True fellowship is premised on light and truth (2 John 1:7).

If we may recall the scene from the Last Supper, it wasn't until the discord sower was removed from the group that

Jesus gave His new commandment to “love one another.” The Abram company was in harmony and fellowship. By the way, this company must have numbered in the hundreds at this time.

Degrees of fellowship

There are many degrees of fellowship within the kingdom. There were many following Jesus for various reasons. There was the “Outer Court” circle. They were basically following Jesus for the bread and fishes and miracles. There was a “Holy Place” circle who were pressing Him to hear the Word (Luke 5:1). But then there was the invitation to the inner circle – the “Holy of Holies” circle.

The invitation that we find in John is to the inner circle: *“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full”* (1 John 1:3-4). We want to be a part of the inner-circle!

Many years ago, my wife and I fellowshiped with a certain circle of believers that did not embrace the baptism in the Holy Spirit and speaking in other tongues. We were happy there for a time, but then the Lord said, “Move on!” Well, it appeared as though we had lost all of our Christian friends, and basically we had! But then a certain brother gave us a word that God would bring us into a greater fellowship of the saints. Indeed, that “greater” fellowship would connect us to peoples throughout the world. And it came to pass!

Unity of the brethren

We should also note several other events, which took place at Hebron. David was anointed king over Judah here – which was his second anointing. Seven years later, he was anointed the third time king over all of Israel. (c.f. 2 Sam. 2:4, and 5:3.)

The third anointing symbolizes the anointing to go “within the veil.” It was at the time of this third anointing that Israel came together as one man and declared themselves to be David’s flesh and bone. In fact, it is thought that Psalm 133 was inspired from this incident at Hebron. Psalm 133 is a psalm of unity, and certainly its conception could have taken place here.

May we appreciate the significance of “coming to Hebron.” It symbolizes true fellowship and unity. Unity of the brethren is likened unto the anointing that was upon Aaron. This was the anointing that allowed the high priest to enter the holiest place.

It was at this moment of great unity and anointing that David took the last stronghold – the stronghold of Zion. Until that time, Zion was a Jebusite fortress and the last remaining stronghold in the land. Interestingly, the Jebusites represent the discord sower, and it took the anointing of the brethren in unity to dislodge them! That is why true fellowship is important. It was the power of the early church!

Psa. 133:1-3 “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even

*Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;
As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon
the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the
blessing, even life for evermore."*

Hebron was Abraham's home base, and now we can understand why Caleb wanted that mountain: *"Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day, because that he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel"* (Jos. 14:14).

*There must be separation before true unity comes,
but then God will send us the people that are real people!*

Battle of the Kings

In the account of Genesis 14:1-17; the king Chedorlaomer, in union with three other kings subdued and controlled a number of cities in Canaan, including Sodom and the cities of the plain. (At least three of the four kings were from Babylon; Tidal was probably a Hittite king.) In the thirteenth year of this dominion, the Canaanite nations revolted against Chedorlaomer. Chedorlaomer then returned with his federation and smote at least ten of their cities, which included Sodom and the cities of the plain. Many captives were taken after the battle, and Lot was taken along with the others.

The cities of the plain include Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, and Zoar. The Dead Sea is there now!

Fighting the battles of the Lord

Gen. 14:14 *“And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan.”*

I want to consider a few of the truths that we glean from this portion of scripture. Firstly, warfare is a part of our training and calling. There is not a crowned saint in glory that did not win that crown without fighting the good fight of faith! Even our Lord Jesus said, (in essence) that it would be the violent

who take the kingdom (Mat. 11:12). This warfare that we are called to is a spiritual one: *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places”* (Eph. 6:12).

The Old Testament saints fought against flesh and blood but it was to teach us the principles of spiritual warfare. The objectives are the same – to break the dominion of the enemy! There is an enemy that holds captive many of God’s people, or those predestined to be God’s people. This same enemy defies the purposes of God, and seeks to keep us from that purpose.

There is not a crowned saint in glory that did not win that crown without fighting the good fight of faith!

The good warfare

When we consider the greatness of the inheritance that God has for us, we must also realize that it shall not come without a certain price. The promised inheritance will fight against us until we have the dominion. The pattern is clear in the Old Testament. Israel had to fight their way into their promised possession. But it is also true in the New Testament. St. Paul did not win those gentile cities without a tremendous battle! In fact, in one place Paul describes the battle as *“Being pressed out of measure... beyond strength.”*

1 Tim. 1:18 *“This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare.”* Our battle is spiritual. We too must fight with kings – demonic principalities! If

we want to be a part of the army that follows Christ upon white horses, we must learn spiritual warfare here on earth – during our earthly pilgrimage.

2 Chronicles 20:1-29 gives us some essential tactics of spiritual warfare. You will find at least ten principles of spiritual warfare in this portion. We might also note, that in the prayer of Jehoshaphat concerning the forthcoming battle, Jehoshaphat invokes God's intervention on the grounds that this land belongs to Abraham's seed – who was the friend of God! (2 Chr. 20:7).

Winning personal battles

It says of David, that he fought the battles of the Lord (1 Sam. 25:28), yet David did not just start out fighting the Lord's battles. He started out winning personal victories in his own life. He knew what the Lord could do when contending with both the lion and the bear. (The lion and the bear are both types of evil spirits.) David first experienced the anointing in his own personal life. He experienced the anointing in worship. He experienced the anointing upon his fingers as he drove away the depressing spirits that were upon King Saul:

Psa. 144:1 *"Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight:"*

Examples of personal victories? For a new believer this could be quite diverse. Some have to battle to get free from rock music, or vice. For some it is getting the victory over certain relationships... And there are always the many lusts that war against the soul (Jam. 4:1).

Trained for battle

Our Lord and Commander requires His saints to be trained for battle –beyond the sphere of just “holding the fort.” Christ desires a people that will be able to make war on behalf of the ransomed. To deliver the captives and let the oppressed go free! The Lord seeks to have a people that are expert in war, and that can fight His battles upon earth.

As strange as it may seem, God allows certain enemies to exist in our lives for the purpose of teaching us how to be overcomers. Consider the following verses:

Jud. 3:1-2 *“Now these are the nations which the LORD left, to prove Israel by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan; Only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof;”*

Heaven fights when we fight

In the book of Judges we find a very interesting scenario. The warfare in heaven was contingent upon the warfare on earth. When the saints fought upon earth, heaven was fighting from above: *“The kings came and fought, then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo; they took no gain of money. They fought from heaven the stars in their courses fought against Sisera”* (Jud. 5:19-20).

Arming our trained servants

As leaders, and as spiritual fathers, we must train our loyal servants (our congregants) to fight. We must train them in the art of spiritual warfare. We must equip them with the armaments mentioned in Ephesians 6:10-18. You will also notice from our text verse, that these servants had been birthed in Abram's house: "*He armed his trained servants, born in his own house.*"

When we undertake serious spiritual battle, we do not want half-hearted soldiers behind us, but rather those birthed in our house (church). In other words, those that have our vision birthed in them, and those taught and trained in our camp. King Amaziah was reprovved by the prophet on this very point. He had hired Ephraim to help him in a battle. (Ephraim represents the half-hearted believer.) The Lord said, "*I am not with Ephraim*" (2 Chr. 25:7). Remember also that Gideon's army was reduced to 300 men who were the godly.

Three hundred and eighteen

The number, *three hundred and eighteen* also reveals an aspect of Abram's warriors: The number three hundred and eighteen is a composite of two numbers: the number three hundred, and the number eighteen. Three hundred means "Walking with God" (Gen. 5:22). The number eighteen speaks of strength. Eighteen cubits was the height of the two main pillars of Solomon's temple. Therefore, we can conclude from this figure that this fighting unit was strong in the Lord; they were righteous and in tune with heaven.

The warrior prince

Gen. 14:15-17 *“And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus. And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother*

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

Truly Abraham was a king, and in a sense, it takes a king to wage war with kings.

In Genesis 23:6, Abraham is called a *“Mighty Prince.”* He is also proclaimed, *“Possessor of heaven and earth”* in Genesis 14:19. Truly

Abraham was a king, and in a sense, it takes a king to wage war with kings. (See 2 Sam. 11:1.) Are we are getting a little synopsis of our calling in Abraham – our spiritual father and progenitor?

Called to be kings

Let us dwell for a moment upon this thought of “king.” Part of our New Testament calling is to rule: *“And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth”* (Rev. 5:10). Notice the word “made.” We are not born into it, but that is what the election process is all about. God elected us for His purpose and we are assured that calling and election by submitting to the walk in the Spirit. As we walk

in the path that God has for our life we are fashioned and made to fit that purpose.

Part of our training to be kings is in the art of warfare. Abraham was a warrior prince, and he prevailed over a much superior force! Although the mathematics of this battle are not recorded, I think it is safe to say that a federation that dominated as large a territory as Chedorlaomer was far greater (numerically).

Even in the spiritual battles that we face today, we are generally facing something much bigger than we are. Yet it is not the numerics or the statistics that should be our real concern. The question is whether or not God is on our side. The Lord shows Himself strong for those whose hearts are perfect toward Him. Abraham's victory proves the point! He returned from this battle with all of the spoil and all of the captives. It was clear to the world who was on his side, and all the kings had to acknowledge the "warrior prince!"

God gives this honor to His saints:


Psa. 149:5-9 "Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand; To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD."

Review

In conclusion of this episode, let us review the lessons that we have learned: As leaders, we must first know some personal victories in our own life. Then we must teach our loyal servants to fight the good fight! We will be called upon time and again to fight the battles for God's people. In fact, David and his men were often called upon to deliver others, even while they were being hunted. As we travel life's pilgrim journey, may we also avail ourselves to be saviors of the oppressed and those ensnared by the enemy! Amen!



Melchizedek

en. 14:18 “*And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.*”

The person of Melchizedek

After the battle with Chedorlaomer, the Canaanite kings came out to honor Abraham; and amongst them was a very unusual personage (dignitary) from Jerusalem.

We are now introduced to the mysterious king/priest of Salem (Jeru-Salem). Melchizedek is a figure of Christ. He is also a figure of the New Testament priesthood according to St. Paul, in the book of Hebrews, chapters 5-7. There is a certain mystique concerning the person of Melchizedek because of his somewhat ambiguous origin, and his somewhat vague ending (as the apostle himself alludes – Heb. 7:3).

Paul spiritualized on the fact that Christ has no beginning or ending, but is as Melchizedek “a priest forever!” The Jews were sticklers on genealogies. Everything was reckoned by bloodline according to the law. Paul was drawing an analogy between Christ and Melchizedek – Melchizedek was a king/priest but had no record of descent or ending! Melchizedek is

*It is an historical fact that kings were elected
in Jeru-Salem at the time of Abraham.*

only mentioned one other time in the Old Testament (Psalm 110) and it is prophetic of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Melchizedek serves communion to Abram

“[He] brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.” Melchizedek (figuratively) serves the first communion to Abram – he brought forth the bread and the wine. When Christ served the first communion, He interpreted those symbols for us:

- Bread – symbolizes right relationship with man
- Wine – (blood) symbolizes right relationship with God.

What this mysterious king/priest (symbolically) was saying to Abraham was that he was in harmony with God and men. Abram had just wrought a great service for mankind. He had broken the oppressive yoke of the enemy, and he had returned all of the captives. Moreover, Abram was in favor with heaven. When we are in right relationship with God and men, there is a great blessing as we partake of the emblems!

The blessing of communion

Gen. 14:19 *“And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth.”*

Because of Abram's standing with God and men, it is now only fitting that a blessing be conferred during this communion: Melchizedek now blesses Abram. Actually, this is the one service where we are the recipients. There is an impartation

in the communion service; when I serve, I like to pronounce a blessing upon the participants.

Paul affirms that there is blessing in the cup of communion: “*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?*” (1 Cor. 10:16).

***Blessed be Abram of the most high God,
possessor of heaven and earth.***

What an awesome privilege to walk in Abraham’s steps. This is the call of Abraham’s seed – to possess heaven and

*After every
battle there
is something
gained in
the spirit –
there is
always an
enrichment.*

earth. In fact, Adam’s original call was to take dominion and to subdue the earth. Of course we know that Adam lost the authority and the crown; but it can be regained through the seed of Abraham – that is, through our Lord Jesus Christ!

After every battle there is something gained in the spirit – there is always an enrichment. (c.f. 1 Chr. 18:11.) In ancient times, the defeated king forfeited his crown to the victor. Perhaps we don’t always see this, but it will be acknowledged at the throne!

Abram pays tithe to the king/priest

Gen. 14:20 “*And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.*”

Firstly, observe that Melchizedek ascribes Abram's victory to the Most High God. God fights for those who put their trust in Him. Secondly, Abram pays tithe of all of the recovered goods to Melchizedek. The apostle Paul also makes reference to this incident in Hebrews 7:4-10.

As great as Abram was, his tithing to the king/priest of Jerusalem makes the figure of Melchizedek greater. As great as Abram was, the fact that the figure of Melchizedek blessed him, established the king/priest as being the greater! Of course, the point being driven home is that Melchizedek was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ – who is greater than Abraham!

The standard of giving

It seems that through this little scenario, Father Abraham is setting a precedent for giving to the Lord. The tithe has always been the standard for giving to the Lord's work. A tithe means a tenth (1/10), which also translates "reasonable service."

Although some of God's people would tell us that we're not under the law, the apostle Paul tells us clearly that the tithe is the New Testament standard, and he uses Abraham to prove the point. Abraham was before the law, and he tithed. Jacob was before the law, and he tithed (Gen. 28:22). In fact the Old Testament priesthood tithed (figuratively) in Abraham, who was before the law.

Heb. 7:9-10 *"And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him."*

Points to consider about Melchizedek:

- Melchizedek is only mentioned in the Old Testament in Genesis 14:18-20, and Psalm 110.
 - Melchizedek was a very real man, not a heavenly being.
 - He was the king/priest of Jeru-salem.
 - He was without genealogy.
 - Kings were elected in Jeru-salem at the time of Abraham.
 - He is poetically called “the king of Salem – king of peace.”
 - He is poetically called “the king of righteousness.” Melchizedek means “king of right.” (See Hebrews 7:1-2.)
 - He served communion to Abraham.
 - He blessed Abraham.
 - Abraham paid tithe to Melchizedek.
 - Melchizedek is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ.
-

Abram's Reward

Gen. 14:21-24 *“And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, That I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich: Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.”*

After the battle, Abram was offered all of the spoil that he returned.

Abraham delivers free of charge

“I will not take a thread ... lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich:” Abraham refuses any remuneration on the grounds that man could say, “We have made Abraham rich!” Herein is a little portion of scripture that some of the “deliverance” ministries should take heed to. We often see ministers charge for their services – “Send a gift and we’ll pray for your need.” Ministers who charge for their services certainly can’t say, “Man has not made me rich!” When a minister receives his reward from men, he is disqualifying himself from the eternal reward! Abraham set the captives free – no charge!

This reminds us of God's shepherd in Isa. 45:13: *"I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts."* If we want to charge for God's free gifts, we have had our reward. Therefore, let us follow in the steps of faithful Abraham. Abraham saw the greater reward – the true inheritance.

The three Amorite brethren that are mentioned: Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre were obviously men who loved Abram and were undoubtedly converted to the God of Abram. As the Lord Himself said, "He that is not with me is against me" (Matt. 12:30). Abram said, let them take their share.

Reflection

Let us take a moment and reflect upon what has just taken place: Abram had recently defeated the kings of Babylon. The king/priest of Salem has just honored the godly Abram before the kings of the plain. The whole reception committee was a witness to what God had just done (15-20 years before their destruction).

The motivating force in Sodom and Gomorrah was greed and avarice – materialism. Abram refused all of their material rewards, except for a tenth, which he tithed, to the priest of the Most High God, and even that served as a witness to these evil men. Furthermore, Lot should have been asking himself the question, "Why am I here? Why am I dwelling with this evil crowd?"

“The Reward”

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

May we bear in mind, that Abram had just refused a vast quantity of this world’s wealth. Now, the Lord speaks in a vision and says, *“I am thy shield and exceeding great reward.”* What an awesome vision is developing from this journey of Abraham.

<i>Consider what has transpired thus far:</i>	
Abram left his country	God was bringing him to a better country!
Abram left his family	God promises him a greater family!
Abram breaks fellowship with Lot	God brings him to Hebron, to a greater place of fellowship!
Abram refuses the rewards of the world	God said, “I Am Thy Exceeding Great Reward!”

The three measures

The kingdom of God is always revealed in the “three measures” or the three divisions – as the three divisions in the tabernacle scenario. The same is true with rewards. There are (if we could say) three levels of rewards in the kingdom:

<i>Outer Court</i>	(reward)	Jesus said, if a man give just a cup of water in My name, he shall not lose his reward. God's people are rewarded for the smallest act of kindness in His Name.
<i>Holy Place</i>	(great reward)	Jesus said that there is great reward for those who suffer for His Name's sake. David said that in the keeping of His commandments there is great reward.
<i>Holy of Holies</i>	(the exceeding great reward)	The exceeding great reward is winning Christ Himself!

Winning Christ

When we think of what the true inheritance is all about, is it not to win Christ? If we win Christ, we win all! Was this not the apostle Paul's foremost desire? *"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ"* (Phi. 3:8).

The true inheritance is all about winning Christ? If we win Christ, we win all!

Rev. 21:7 *"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."* The overcomer wins Christ, and if he wins Christ he wins all; and God will be his Father and he shall be His son. In the Old Testament the tribe of Levi was separated for the priesthood. The tribe of Levi was not to have

an inheritance as the other tribes, because the Lord was to be their special inheritance. In the New Testament we are called to be a kingdom of priests, and still the greatest prize is to win Christ. *“I Am thy exceeding great reward.”*

How can we measure such a statement? Abraham won Christ, and the Lord also promises to be his shield. In other words, nothing can touch Abram without going through the invincible shield – the Lord Himself.

The heir

Gen. 15:2-3 *“And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.”*

I don't think that Abram got the full impact of what the Lord had just said. Often we cannot grasp the greatness of what God says at first. It takes a little digesting. So Abram responds, *“but I have no heir except this Eliezer of Damascus.”* Abram is still preoccupied with the unfulfilled promises of years gone by.

In the Semitic part of the world, this is still the primary concern of every patriarch – to have a son, or an heir. This may seem like a simple statement, but if there is no heir the family line ends. The same is true in the spiritual realm. If we do not reproduce any spiritual children, then we will have nothing to present to the

*If we do not
reproduce
any spiritual
children,
then we
will have
nothing to
present to
the Lord at
His throne!*

Lord at His throne! Or, if our present generation of offspring is not holy, they will not continue to propagate the kingdom.

Let us reinforce this point by a promise given to Isaiah: *“As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever”* (Isa. 59:21).

Herein is a truth that is repeated throughout scripture: We will reproduce (spiritually) in our offspring the unique gifting that God has given us. Perhaps that gifting is in the area of faith, or healing, or in the area of teaching or the prophetic, or even in music. The mantle and the blessing imparted to us will pass down through our spiritual children. Smith Wigglesworth was renowned for his acts of faith; and all of his spiritual offspring were of the same mind and spirit. God wants to bless the nations through the holy seed that we produce!

The promise is reiterated and expanded

Gen. 15:4-6 *“And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.”*

The Lord responds to Abram's answer and says, “Eliezer shall not be thine heir, but one that issues from thine own being shall be thine heir.” The Lord then invites Abram to step out-

side of his tent and look into the heavens. (There are certain atmospheres that provide a far greater panorama of the heavens than others; and I’m sure that this must have been one of them. The night sky must have been spectacular!) “If thou be able to number...” Incidentally, this was the inspiration for our cover.

If we compare this promise with the last promise from Genesis 13:16, we will notice a slight amendment. The last promise was “offspring as the dust of the earth.” Now, the Lord is speaking of the stars of heaven. Clearly, there are two different groups in these promises; in other words, natural Israel and spiritual Israel.

<i>There are two different groups in the promises made to Abram — natural Israel and spiritual Israel.</i>	
The physical seed	of the earth.
The spiritual seed	of the heaven

Longing for the fulfillment

It is amazing how the Lord continually bears witness to the promises He has made – although the promise seems to linger and linger and linger! Sometimes years roll by, and we wonder if those promises are any longer within the realm of possibility. Then we find ourselves in a place where we are unknown and someone prophetically reconfirms that promise again. Promises have a tendency to mock us – not that the promise itself mocks us, but the enemy uses that promise to try to prove to us its invalidity.

I think the greatest cry within our spiritual man is to be fruitful. The “barren women” in scripture depicts the heart cry of the soul – “Oh I want fruit, much fruit... souls to be touched for your kingdom Lord!” All of the illustrations of the barren woman in scripture depict one who has spent years of “not seeing!” She has spent years of being humbled and not bringing forth the life that she so desperately desires. However, when that promise is fulfilled, and she does bring forth that “man child,” that child usually affects the nation, or nations! (Spiritually, we are talking about bring forth the Christ within!)

Sing O barren sing

Isaiah, pictures the barren woman in chapter 54:1: “*Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD...*” The apostle Paul quotes this verse in the book of Galatians in reference to the promised seed of Abraham – the Isaac. He then develops this into the spiritual offspring – the church:

Gal. 4:27-28 “*For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.*”

How can the barren bring forth more children than the married wife? How can the desolate and those that have never

travailed with labor pains bring forth more children? The answer is “spiritual children.” Paul is talking about the children born through faith. Isaac was born through an act of faith. We are born into the kingdom and become children of Abraham through an act of faith.

There are those within the kingdom that have never married, but have thousands of children to their credit. There are couples that have never had any natural children, yet spiritually they have untold numbers of children – as the stars of heaven! Sing O barren. That is an act of faith – to sing before the promise comes!

And Abram believed God

Gen. 15:6 *“And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.”*

Abraham was declared to be righteous by simply believing what God said. This Old Testament passage so inspired the apostle Paul, that he incorporated it into a cardinal point of New Testament theology. In fact, Paul quotes this verse to establish an integral part of the doctrine of salvation: “Justification without works.”

Romans 4:3-5 *“For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”*

Salvation comes through an act of faith. We are declared to be righteous on the grounds that we believe on the Lord Jesus who is our righteousness. This is called *imputed righteousness*. Righteousness says “yes” to God!

The Abrahamic Covenant

(Genesis 15:7-21)

Gen. 15:7-8 *“And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. And he said, Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?”*

The dialogue continues between the Lord and Abram that began in verse one of this chapter.

The Lord again affirms His promise concerning the land, and Abram responds by saying: “How shall I know that this will happen?” I’m sure that some would interpret this statement as doubt or unbelief. But I don’t think that it was, anymore than the response of Mary at the annunciation of the angel: *“How shall this be?”* Will there be a sign? How shall it all work?

The contract

Gen. 15:9-10 *“And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not.”*

What was about to take place was a customary transaction of the day. When two people were about to make an agreement

or a covenant, they would generally take a calf and cut it in two; then the two parties making the agreement would walk between the parts. Jeremiah alludes to the practice in Jeremiah 34:18-19: *“And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of*

God was going to show Abram that the real agreement was between the Father and the Son, thus making the promise immutable.

the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof. The princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of the calf.”

Abram knew very well that God was about to make a covenant with him. In fact, God was going to confirm His promise with a covenant. However, this transaction was going to be different from anything that Abram had ever known. God was going to show Abram that the real agreement was between the Father and the Son, thus making the promise immutable. The Lord then gives very specific instructions to Abram concerning the animals that are to be used.

Significance of the sacrifices

It is important that we see the significance of the animals used in this ritual. Abraham is before the Levitical law; however, these animals were later used in the Levitical sacrifices, and they are interpreted for us in the law.

<i>Heifer</i>	Speaks of purification of sin – passive sin (Num. 19). We are responsible for passive sin. Passive sin includes sins that are committed unintentionally, or the sin of doing nothing! (See Jam. 4:17).
<i>Ram</i>	Speaks of consecration (Ex. 29). Consecration means separation. God demands a certain separation from us if we are to be holy. There is too much mixture in God's people (I Pet. 2:11-12).
<i>She Goat</i>	Speaks of sins of ignorance (Num. 15:27). Some of God's people are guilty of sins that they are not aware of. (Ignorance is not an excuse.) The reason for the ignorance is because they either haven't been taught the law or they don't care to know it (Rom. 3:20).
<i>Turtle Dove</i>	Speaks of the burnt offering (law or first mention) Lev. 1:14. The burnt offering speaks of commitment. Romans 12:1-2 gives a New Testament analogy. The first commandment is to love the Lord your God with all...
<i>Pigeon</i>	Speaks of the sin offering (Lev. 5:7). The sin offering deals with the nature of sin. God wants us to know the full provision of the cross, and victory over the sin nature. Victory over sin does not mean eradication of the sin nature, but rather dominion over it (Rom. 6:14.).

We must fulfill the offerings in order to come into God's fullness. These sacrifices represent areas where God deals with us along this pilgrim journey. Christ historically fulfilled these offerings in His "once for all" sacrifice. We will fulfill them spiritually as we walk in the Spirit – as we yield to the Spirit, and overcome through the empowerment of the Spirit. As St. Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me!"

An horror of great darkness

Gen. 15:12 *“And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.”*

After Abram had arranged the sacrificed animals, a great darkness fell upon him. We have heard this experience described by a minister who actually had a similar experience, yet, I think to some degree we have all experienced this (naturally speaking) – falling into a deep trance-like sleep in which everything is so black and you feel so powerless. I once experienced this as I was in a deep, dark sleep; I thought that I heard burglars coming into the house, but I was too powerless to get up or to wake up.

It was almost as if Abram had lapsed into a coma, but this was a God-given coma because the Lord was going to show Abraham his powerlessness in this covenant! This was going to be a covenant agreed upon between the Father and the Son. Abram was like a bystander in this covenant.

400 years in Egypt foretold

Gen. 15:13-16 *“And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth genera-*

tion they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.”

The Lord now begins to show Abram his end, and the destiny of his offspring. Abram's seed would spend 400 years in Egypt. They would experience the taskmaster and the affliction of dwelling in Egypt (the world). But then in the fourth generation they would come forth with much substance. This tells us that nothing just happens by chance to God's chosen seed!

Harvest generations

Let us also carefully note verse sixteen: *for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full*. God allows wickedness to come to a head before his judgement fully comes. It is like the parable of the tares and the wheat. They must first ripen out – become fully visible for what they are. These are people that have fully chosen to be evil, and God's judgement shall be complete and justifiable! The final generation shall be a harvest generation – both of good and evil! The harvest of the earth is fully ripe (Rev. 14:18-19).

The final generation shall be a harvest generation, both of good and evil!

Incidentally, in the final analyses, the inheritance of the wicked shall be inherited by God's people.

Passing through the parts

Gen. 15:17-18 *“And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a*

burning lamp that passed between those pieces. In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.”

Here is a very important verse. The smoking furnace and the burning lamp are metaphors of God the Father and God the Son:

The smoking furnace and the burning lamp are metaphors of God the Father and God the Son:

<i>Smoking furnace</i>	God the Father
<i>Burning lamp</i>	God the Son

The significance of this agreement is that the Father and the Son agreed upon this covenant. They passed through the parts. Abraham was in a deep sleep and was powerless to fulfill any part of this covenant. God the Father and God the Son would be the enabling force and “They” would bring it to pass. This shows us the immutability of the covenant that God made with Abram and his seed.

Let us not misconstrue the contrivance of this “guaranteed” promise to Abram. As the previous verses have shown us, God knows the end from the beginning. The Lord declared what would happen to Israel before any of them were born. God made unalterable promises to Abram because of His foreknowledge of him: *“For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him”* (Gen. 18:19).

From the Euphrates to the river of Egypt

The Lord's response to Abram concerning his question about inheriting the land was answered by a covenant. We must also realize that the tract of land promised to Abram and his seed has never been fully realized yet. Furthermore, the physical land is promised to his physical seed – natural Israel.

Today, the land issue in the Middle East is a fiery bed of contention. The enemies of Israel contend for the land because they are fighting against the promise of God. In the end Abraham and his seed shall inherit the full package – from the Euphrates to the river of Egypt!



Hagar and Ishmael

Genesis 16:1-16 gives us a picture of what can happen when we try to bring to pass promises in our own strength. In this chapter, we have the familiar story of Abram and Sarai as they seek to fulfill God's word through human ingenuity. There are many insights to be gained from the mistakes of our spiritual parents – may we profit from them!

I was counseling a young man once who was blaming all of his woes on his parent's mistakes. He said, "My parents were Christians and all they had was trouble, therefore, it doesn't pay to be a Christian." I said, "What did you learn from your parent's mistakes?" He said, "I learned how not to do it!" I said, "Well then, you should be a successful Christian!" (Not verbatim.)

Trying to fulfill the promise in the flesh

Gen. 16:1-3 *"Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai. And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife."*

Over ten years have gone by since they had left Haran and Sarai is now about 75 years old. It is now becoming apparent to Sarai (at least in her own mind), that she is not the means, through which this promised heir is coming. Sarai then offers her bondmaid "Hagar" to be a surrogate wife. In other words, that she might have children through Hagar.

Let us first understand several things about this incident: Firstly, this was not immoral act. It was legitimate during the patriarchal period, and even during the age of the law there were provisions for more than one wife. (The Old Covenant was an inferior covenant.) You will recall that Jacob had several wives and concubines. It was allowable for that time.

Secondly, we can understand the rationale here; the Lord had stated that this promised seed would come through Abram's loins. Nothing was said concerning Sarai. Well, maybe the Lord means...? How often do we try to figure out what God meant? This is where we really have to separate soul and Spirit. Our soul desperately wants to see that fulfillment, and sometimes we allow our human intellect to come up with the answer.

Lighting our own fire

Let us hear what the prophet said on this subject: "*Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves*

about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow”(Isa. 50:10-11).

Here is the Lord’s servant, who obeys the voice of his Lord, but then finds himself in a place of darkness, without any light. This is not really an unusual case; every true servant will experience a similar situation. The question is, will we trust and wait for God to speak, or will we come up with our own solution? If we try to create our own light, that we might find our own way out, as the prophet said, *“This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow”*

Hagar conceives

Gen. 16:4-5 *“And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes. And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee.”*

After Hagar conceives, she begins to despise her mistress. In fact, she become very contemptuous – “God has honored me above you... God has vindicated me... You are barren, I am carrying the promised heir...” Sarah then realizes that she had made a big mistake and that she had contrived this thing out of her own spirit.

There are a number of lessons to be gained from this whole account. But for the moment, this incident helps us to understand the difference between a work that is born after the flesh, and a

work born after the Spirit. There are Christian enterprises that are birthed after the flesh. The one that is born after the flesh has no real promise.

Present day analogies

Let me draw a little present day analogy of Sarah/Hagar. Women in scripture often depict the church, or different churches. Here is a (Sarah) church. She has a promise, but it hasn't yet come to pass. In other words, she is barren and hasn't seen the fulfillment. In the interim, this "Sarah" church is committed to preach and to teach others. They sow the seed in many places (in other lands), and consequently some of those works are blessed and far outgrow the "Sarah" church who taught them. Then they look back at the Sarah church and say, "Who are you? We have more than you!"

I can also think of several ministers that fit this analogy: The one is a true father, and he is a man with great promises. He imparts his wisdom and his spirit to a young man who becomes very fruitful. After a time of success, the younger minister looks with disdain upon his spiritual father (the one who taught him everything he knew) thinking, "Who are you? I have more than you have!" May we be very careful to recognize that God gives and God takes away. The (Hagar) minister lost what he had!

Hagar flees from Sarai

As this scene continues (verses 6-14), Sarai deals very harshly with Hagar. Hagar then flees into the wilderness,

where she is visited by an angel. The angel comforts Hagar and tells her to return and submit to her mistress. The angel also tells Hagar that her son is to be called “Ishmael” and that he would also become a multitude of people. We must understand that God did care for Hagar in spite of the circumstances. (In a sense, Hagar was a victim, and God understands such situations.) But, it is also important to see that the promise could not be fulfilled through the bondwoman, but through Sarah.

The birth of Ishmael

Gen. 16:16 *“And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.”*

“Bringing forth an Ishmael” has come to be a proverbial expression that basically means, “It was a mistake!” When we get out of the spirit we are bound to make mistakes, and some of those mistakes are left around to remind us. “Ishmaels” don’t go away. Ishmael’s descendants are still here, and even to this day fight against Israel.

Ishmael churches

There are Ishmael churches. They are sons of Abraham (saved) but they have little promise, or no promise. These are works that were not birthed of the Spirit. They exist, but all that they can produce or reproduce are other Ishmaelites. Incidentally, the Ishmaelites later became known for having a golden earring in their ear (Jud. 8:24).

There are many examples of “Ishmael works,” but I suppose an illustration would be beneficial: There are certain church organizations that are rooted and grounded in psychology. Psychology does not come from the Holy Spirit; it comes from the human spirit. There are Christians that are into psychology, but there is no such thing as “Christian psychology.” Psychology cannot break yokes or bondages; it can only give a temporary fix at best! It is an Ishmael that cannot produce any eternal fruit.

Silent years

We have to realize from this account, that there are often long seasons of silence, years of (seeming) repetition that ever challenge our faith.

Abraham was 86 years old when Ishmael was born. It would be another thirteen years before the Lord spoke again (Gen. 17:1). We have to realize from this account, that there are often long seasons of silence, years of (seeming) repetition that ever challenge our faith. And then, there is always the temptation to go back – maybe back to some Haran, or back to family or friends or to the old home church.

St. Paul describes the pilgrim journey in Hebrews 11:15-16: *“And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.”*

What beautiful spirit these pilgrims had. They were not longing to return home, or to go back; but they were longing for the heavenly city. They were longing to see the fulfillment of the promise!



Abram's Name is Changed

"Chosen"

Gen. 17:1 *"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect."*

Walk before and be perfect

Thirteen years have now transpired since the birth of Ishmael. It is Abram's ninety-ninth year, and the Lord appears to Abram and says: *"Walk before and be thou perfect."*

It takes many years for a fruit grower to perfect the strain that he wishes to reproduce.

The message that is coming across concerning Abram's life is that Abram is the "sample fruit." It is like the apostle Paul said: "If the firstfruit be holy, [that which follows is also holy]." It takes many years for a fruit grower to perfect the strain that he wishes to reproduce. The word that is used for "perfect" has the sense of being "without blemish." This word also has the sense of completeness.

The walk of faith will eventually lead us into the circumstances that reveal a nature that God wants to amend. The fact that the number thirteen is being revealed in this account, tells us that God was certainly doing an atoning work in Abram's life. "Thirteen" speaks of atonement. God was

commanding perfection from Abram's walk, and that tells us that we can be perfect as we walk before our Lord in obedience! The apostle John affirms this in 1 John 1:7:

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

Our Lord Jesus himself demanded perfection, and the New Covenant affords the power (grace) to be so. The perfection that Jesus demanded (*telios*) is in relation to growth. As we continue to walk in the light or in the present truth, we can be perfect.

Abram becomes Abraham

Gen. 17:2-5 *“And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.”*

Once more, the Lord affirms his covenant with Abram. Moreover, He intensifies the promise. I will multiply thee exceedingly. Continue to bear in mind that Abram has been reassured of this for 24 years. (That helps us sometimes!)

A change of nature

But thy name shall be Abraham. What is so significant about a name change? A name is a revelation of a person's character.

When the Lord gives somebody a new name, He is making a statement concerning who he or she is! A change of names indicates a new position in God. When Jacob's name was changed to Israel, he also experienced a character change. Jacob means, "crooked," but Jacob prevailed with God and became Israel, a prince! But that is not the end of the story. He was also given another "poetic" name after his decease. He is called Jeshurun, which means – "made straight." (See Deu. 32:16, and 33:26).

This is also a promise to the overcomer: *"...And will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it"* (Rev. 2:17). This name change not only tells us that Abraham was an overcomer, but also that something had been done in his life.

Chosen

Abram means "high father." Abraham means, "father of multitudes." Abraham has now moved from "called" to "chosen." He has been **qualified** to be the progenitor of nations. Somebody, once said that what the church is lacking today is "fathers." St. Paul said, "Though you have 10,000 teachers, you have few fathers!" God wants us to progress on to become spiritual fathers – those worthy of reproduction. (Incidentally, it is within the next year that the promised heir came to Abraham!)

As you will recall, we drew a distinction between being called, being chosen, and being faithful. We also aligned them with the three divisions of the tabernacle. Abraham had

just gone through thirteen (13 – atonement) years of silent polishing. Now the Lord meets him, renews (intensifies) the promises, and changes his name. We shall also see that it is at this time that Abraham is given the covenant of circumcision. Circumcision (spiritually) speaks of the new heart.

Kings shall come out of thee

Gen. 17:6 “*And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.*”

Nations shall come out of thee and *kings* shall come from thee: Let us first consider this thought of kings. There were many kings that issued from Abraham's seed: King David and the great king Solomon and those who followed that line. But none can compare to the King who was born of the virgin Mary, who was also of Abraham's seed. Matthews's gospel begins: “*The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.*”

The King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords allowed Himself to be born through the seed of Abraham. Although Christ never wore a crown or sat on a throne during His earthly commission, He was every whit in command. Indeed, He reigned over life and death!

We are called to be kings

The spiritual seed of Abraham is also called to reign in this life and the next. Paul put it like this: “*...Much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness*

shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:17). Reigning in this life is the prerequisite for reigning in the next. Those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness shall reign. They shall triumph over the world (1 John 5:4).

The great commission is to teach all nations – to cause the nations to understand their inheritance in Christ. In fact, St. Paul stated this in Acts 20:32. Part of the inheritance is the calling to be kings and priests. There is much to be appropriated spiritually to fulfill that calling. Herein is the responsibility of the church: we need to groom our spiritual children for their regal calling. The book of Daniel gives us an idea of the kind of tutelage that is demanded: *“Children in whom was no blemish, but well favored, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king’s palace”* (Dan. 1:4).

*Reigning
in this
life is the
prerequisite
for reigning
in the next.*

From every tribe

Our conference president relates an incident that took place while he was in a very primitive part of Africa. It seemed that he was having difficulty trying to convey some of the deeper truths of God’s Word. The temptation was to just stick to the basics, and gloss over the deeper things. During the night, the Lord began to speak: “I have made provision for every kindred, tribe and tongue to be kings and priests. You must teach the deeper truths that they might apprehend the calling” (Not verbatim).

We are still in reference to our text verse (vs. 6) concerning the kings that would issue from Abraham. We are included in that promise, and yet we must make our calling and election sure. May this also be our desire, to prepare a people for the throne: *“Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations...”* (Psa. 45:16-17).

God’s covenant reassured to Abraham’s seed

Gen. 17:7 *“And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.”*

The Lord later confirmed these promises to Isaac and to Jacob and it was reiterated throughout the generations. God also confirms the land promises to his offspring in verse eight.

These few verses help us to understand something about the promises or the prophetic words that are spoken over our lives. Part of the promise given to Abraham affects us. Some of the things spoken to us may be far-reaching – even out of our present dispensation. We will find promises made to people in scripture who would never see fulfillment in their own day. Some of the promises made to Abraham extend into the Church Age, and some extend into the Millennium and beyond. Therefore, it is possible to receive a promise from God that will not take effect until the next age!



The Covenant of Circumcision

Genesis 17:9-14

As we reflect on the previous covenant that God made with Abraham (Gen. 15:8-21) – “The Abrahamic Covenant” – we remember that it was a covenant agreed upon between the Father and the Son. Abraham was primarily there to witness this covenant, which basically concerned the promised land. But now God is going to give Abraham another covenant that he and his children must keep: “The Covenant of Circumcision.”

Gen. 17:10-14 *“This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.”*

To be kept throughout the generations

Now the Lord gives Abraham a covenant that he and his children must keep through out their generations. The covenant of circumcision was to be the seal of Abraham's camp. Every son must be circumcised in order to be a recipient of the continuing blessings that are promised. The physical act of circumcision basically involves the cutting away of the unclean flesh.

The spiritual implications

The Jews took great stock in the physical aspect of this covenant, but they were not quite as keen on the spiritual implications of it. Even the Old Testament prophets tried to illumine Israel on the subject. Let us consider several passages:

Deu. 10:16 *"Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked."*

Deu. 30:6 *"And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."*

Jer. 4:4 *"Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings."*

These prophets also spoke about uncircumcised lips, and uncircumcised ears. (See Ex. 6:12, and Acts 7:51.) The prophet Isaiah

said, “I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.” I think we can get the message here! The promises of God are to the circumcision, and as we shall

Lot’s household was not circumcised. He is a good example of the carnal Christian, or those who will not inherit with Abraham!

see, this includes the New Testament saints as well! The uncircumcision cannot inherit with the true sons of Abraham – those who walk in the faithful steps of Abraham! “*That soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.*” Lot’s household was not circumcised – he is a good example of the carnal Christian, or those who will not inherit with Abraham!

Many of the Jews based their salvation in the physical act of circumcision, thinking, “We are in the kingdom. We are sons of Abraham by birth.” John the Baptist said this: “*Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham*” (Mat. 3:8-9).

The real circumcision

The real circumcision has been and will always be the people that are real – that worship God in spirit and in truth. St. Paul said this in Philippians 3:3: “*For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*”

We must also observe what the theologian said in Romans 2:28-29: “*For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly;*

There are many within the kingdom that are (spiritually) uncircumcised. The Corinthian church dissolves all doubts on that point.

neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”

There are many within the kingdom that are (spiritually) uncircumcised. The Corinthian church dissolves all doubts on that point. They were “carnal.” Carnal means, fleshy, earthy, and sensual. Unless God’s people allow the sword of the Spirit to circumcise their hearts, they cannot inherit Abraham’s blessing.

Circumcision does not take place at salvation

When we are born again, we are “saved,” and basically our salvation resides in the fact that we have been forgiven. However, we do not have a new heart. In fact we soon discover that we have many areas in our lives that need to be crucified or put to death. Again, this is what the walk in the Spirit is all about. The Lord leads us into circumstances that expose a nature that must be put to death. We are convicted through His Word and by His Spirit.

A newborn child was to be circumcised on the eighth day. The number eight speaks of “new life” or “new beginning.” It also speaks of resurrection and the world to come. That was Abraham’s vision, and the token of circumcision qualified him for that vision.

The spiritual analogy that we glean from this is that we are not circumcised when we are born (born again). Circumcision comes after the new birth. It is an ongoing process of having the old nature, or the works of flesh, cut from our heart by the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Those who submit to the spiritual circumcision are those who have a vision for eternity!

A generation of uncircumcision

The first thing that Joshua did after bringing Israel across Jordan was to bring them to Gilgal, where they were all circumcised. Basically the whole younger generation (those born in the wilderness) were uncircumcised. (See Joshua Chapter 5.)

Likewise, we live in a generation of Christendom that (for the most part) has never been taught the message of the “crucified life” or the message of heart circumcision. It shall undoubtedly take a great revival to open the hearts of God’s people in order to hear the message. In reality, this is what the New Covenant is all about – the message of the new heart and a new spirit. Once again, it does not happen at salvation, it is a work of the Holy Spirit as we yield to Him!

Jer. 31:33 *“But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”*

Heb. 8:10 *“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my*

laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.”


Natural Israel will not see the fulfillment of this promise until the millennium, but for the Church the promise is now! The New Covenant is the reality of the circumcised heart.



The Heir Must Come through Sarah

Genesis 17:15-21

Sarai's name is also changed

en. 17:15 “And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be.”

This was definitely a major turning point in the lives of Abraham and Sarah. The fact that they both had a change of names tells us that God had done something in their lives. Sarai means, “princess.” Sarah means, “queen.” A queen has a greater position than a princess does. Furthermore, with this change of names, Sarah must have had a renewing of youth, because the Lord now pronounces conception! These two must have been a handsome couple!

Remember, that Sarah is a figure of the fruitful church – the barren that hath brought forth the multitudes (See Gal. 4:23-24.)

Sarah shall be the mother

Gen. 17:16-17 “And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her. Then Abraham fell upon

his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?"

When Abraham hears that the child would come through his ninety-year-old wife he laughs within his heart. Actually, this laugh is not a mocking laugh, but rather, a laugh of faith, a laugh of amazement and astonishment. It was a "too good to be true" kind of laugh. Abraham believes, but he just wants the Lord to say it again.

Make no mistake about this incident. Abraham believed that it would happen. *"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God..."*

Rom. 4:17-21 *"As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations, before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform."*

We must also note from this account, that Sarah was also to become a mother figure to all the offspring of Abraham. The apostle Peter uses Sarah as a role model to the spiritual

daughters of Abraham. The chief characteristic that Peter attributes to Sarah is “meekness” (1 Pet. 3:4-6). Meekness is the quality that accepts God’s will – whether it is good or ill! Meekness is not afraid to accept the path that God has chosen because the meek know that all things work together for good to those who love Him.

The apostle Peter uses Sarah as a role model to the spiritual daughters of Abraham.

His name shall be called Isaac

Gen. 17:19 *“And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.”*

The Lord again states that the promised heir shall come through Sarah, and even names the child Isaac. Isaac means, “laughter!” We often spend years without seeing any evidence of the thing that God has spoken. At times, the promise comes to the place of impossibility (naturally speaking). We even mourn or feel the ache within our heart – how long, how long, how long?

Many years ago I was going through a certain phase of this pilgrim journey, and I was mourning. I was looking around at the world and it seemed that the people were all laughing – which didn’t help my present condition. Then I felt the Lord speak several verses to my heart:

Luke 6:25 *“Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.”*

Luke 6:21 *“Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.”*

*When the promise comes, there shall be great laughter.
A holy laugh sends tremors throughout the enemy camp!
Isaac was coming!*

In Isaac and his seed

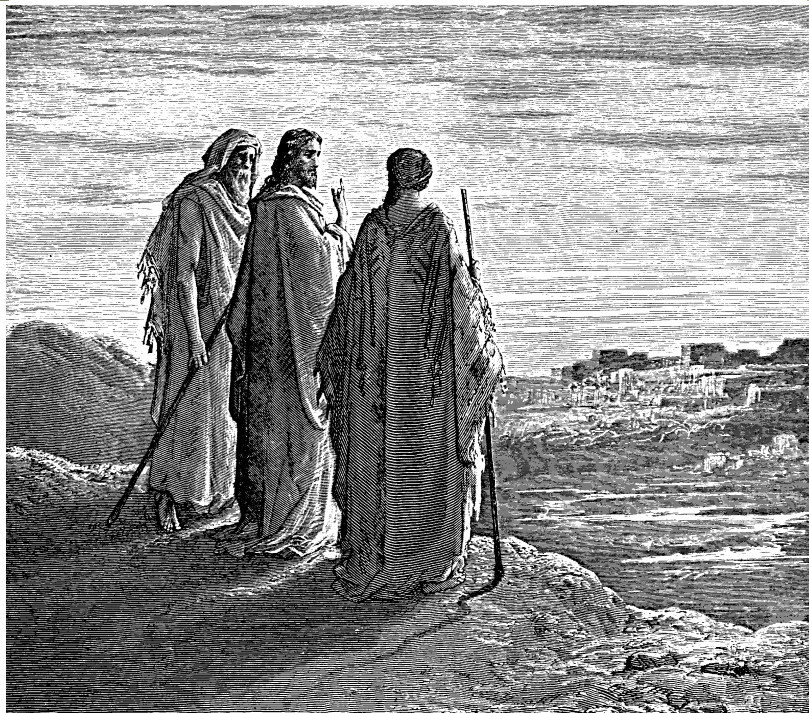
The promises and the covenants were to be realized through Isaac and his seed. We must thoroughly grasp this truth, because Isaac represents the spiritual offspring – the children born of faith. This shall be expounded upon more fully after we look at the birth of Isaac. May I also point out that there were saints in the Old Testament that were accounted as though they had entered in.

As this chapter concludes (vs. 20-27), the Lord tells Abraham that Sarah would bring forth within the next year. The Lord also speaks concerning Ishmael. Ishmael would likewise become a great nation. (The tribes of Ishmael are still here, but they are persecutors of Israel.) Abraham then commands his whole household to be circumcised according to the covenant.

Three Heavenly Visitors

Genesis Chapter 18

In chapter eighteen, Abraham is visited by three heavenly beings. One of them is the Son of God. (This visitation takes place about three months after the last visit in chapter seventeen.) This time, the Lord takes on a *bodily* form. We are warned in the book of Hebrews, to be mindful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares (Heb. 13:2).



Three Heavenly Visitors

There were several reasons for this visit:

- To declare life in Sarah's womb.
- To inform Abraham of what He intended to do in Sodom that Abraham might intercede for the few that were to be saved.

Gen. 18:1-3 *“And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant.”*

The Lord takes on a bodily form

Abraham immediately recognized the Lord and entreated Him to stay. The Lord Jesus made reference to this in John 8:56-58: *“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.”*

The meetings that we have with the Lord (the meeting at the altar, the personal meetings where God speaks) are transforming. The more that we know Him, the more we become like Him.

Abraham and Sarah then proceed to entertain their visitors (vs. 4-8). Now the Lord speaks concerning Sarah:

Gen. 18:10-12 *“And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?”*

Sarah is smitten with fear and faith

The Lord proclaims life in Sarah’s womb, and Sarah laughs within herself. It is amazing how many times the scripture records similar incidents, where God was listening to what men were saying in their hearts! Jesus many times addressed the things that people were saying within themselves. Sarah then becomes fearful when the Lord challenges her laugh (vs. 13-15), and she denies it. Well, she didn’t laugh out loud; it was inaudible except to the One who was proclaiming life within her womb.

In spite of the motivation of Sarah’s silent laugh, when the Lord challenged that laugh, it must have struck not only fear, but also faith into her heart! The “faith chapter” of Hebrews says this concerning Sarah: *“Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable”* (Heb. 11:11-12).

The Creative Word

Gen. 18:14 *“Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.”*

*The Lord
often waits
until it is
impossible
for man to
take the
credit and
then He
moves!*

Is there anything too hard for the Lord? This statement is repeated several times in Jeremiah chapter 32. The Lord often waits until it is impossible for man to take the credit and then He moves! This is one of St. Paul's themes to the Corinthians. God purposely chooses the ways and means to bring things to pass so “that no flesh can glory.”

The word of the Lord is creative. Our Lord calls things the way that they shall be even if they are not. One of the famed preachers of the nineteenth century was traveling by ship from England to Canada. Although stormy weather had set them almost a day behind schedule, the preacher proclaimed that the Lord had said the vessel would arrive on time. The captain declared that it was impossible. A few hours later they pulled into port on time, and the captain was amazed!

Let us reiterate Romans 4:17, *“As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations, before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.”*

Abraham's Intercession

Genesis 18:17-33

Part of our development, as a king/priest is that we must know something of the ministry of intercession. Basically the ministry of the priest is to intercede on behalf of others. Although the Lord can do whatever He wants, He looks for people upon earth to whom He can reveal His will that they might intercede accordingly. Ezekiel 22:30 establishes this point.

The Lord reveals His intentions for Sodom

Gen. 18:17 *“And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?”*

This episode is a continuation of the visit from the three heavenly strangers. The scripture declares that God will do nothing before he reveals his intentions to His prophets. (See Amos 3:7.) Incidentally, Abraham is also called a prophet in Genesis 20:7.

Furthermore, Abraham is called “The friend of God” in 2 Chronicles 20:7, and in James 2:23. The Lord Jesus Himself said to His disciples, *“Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you”* (John 15:15). The point here is that a

friend knows the Father's will. In other words, the Lord is saying, "I can't hide my purposes from my friend Abraham."

Gen. 18:18-19 *"Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."*

For I know him

"For I know him..." I know his character, I know his consecration, and I know that he will command his household to keep my ways! Let us take careful note of the last sentence of verse 19, *"That the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."*

This statement is the very heartbeat of this commentary concerning "Inheriting the Promises." The greater promises that were given to Abraham were not going to be fulfilled during his lifetime. They were going to be fulfilled through his "faithful" children (both natural and spiritual children). These promises were prefaced in God's foreknowledge of Abraham. *"I know him...he will command his house!"*

This is why Eli's house failed. He refused to deal with his sons and correct them, and he did not uphold the charge of his office. The promise continues through our children. As a parent, or a minister, the promise continues through our natural/spiritual offspring. True love corrects and disciplines. If our natural/spiritual children do not mature to be

spiritual fathers and mothers, we've missed it! They will not reproduce the holy seed!

Intercession for Sodom

Gen. 18:20 *“And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous.”*

The Lord is ready to destroy Sodom and her sister cities for their wickedness, but God wants Abraham to know this. The Lord wants Abraham to plead with Him for the few that are to be saved. True intercession is based upon the knowledge of God's will, and that comes through relationship. There is something that is developed in the heart of a parent or a leader through intercessory prayer. Our Lord Himself made intercession for the transgressors (Isa. 53:12).

Abraham knew that his (lukewarm) nephew and family were still in Sodom. Perhaps if Abraham were not the man that he was, his attitude could have been “Well, the Lord gave him a chance to leave that place once! We risked life and limb rescuing them. Didn't they get the message?” How often do we ministers adopt that philosophy?

The Lord told Moses to stand aside because He was going to wipe Israel off the map. The Lord said, *“Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation”* (Ex. 32:10). Only a true father could be trusted with such a proposition. Moses put his life on the line to “stand in the gap” for Israel. (Other references on the subject: Ex. 32:32, Num. 16:46-48, and Ez. 22:30.)

Gen. 18:22 *“And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.”*

Two of the angels leave for their inspection of Sodom, but Abraham continues to stand before the Lord.

Abraham pleads 7 times for the righteous

Gen. 18:23-25 *“And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”*

Abraham begins to plead for the righteous souls in Sodom, and then he becomes specific: *“Will you spare the city for the sake of fifty?”* The Lord said that He would spare. In the subsequent verses (26-33), Abraham continues to plead. *“Lord, would you spare if there were only forty-five? Would you spare the city for forty? Would you spare the city for thirty? Would you spare the city for twenty? Lord, would you spare the city for ten?”* The Lord said that he would spare the city for ten righteous souls.

Pulling them out of the fire

The little epistle of “Jude” makes a reference to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in verse seven. Jude goes on to

site them as an eternal example to those who live ungodly lives. But let us also note Jude 22-23, which could also have reference to Sodom or to those who spiritually live in a Sodom. *“And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.”* Abraham was literally pulling these people out of the fire through his intercession.

Lukewarm Christianity

Chapter nineteen of Genesis gives the account of the angel’s visit to Sodom, the rescue of Lot, and the destruction of the cities of the plain. The whole account of Lot makes quite an evangelistic message. In fact, Jesus uses the example of Lot’s family (dwelling in Sodom) to draw an analogy of the last days. Great judgment shall come in the last days, and if the righteous scarcely escape where shall the sinner and ungodly be?

The story of Lot has deeper implications as well. Lot represents a stream within Christianity that will be saved *“so as by fire.”* Lot was called righteous (2 Pet. 2:7-8) – he was a saved man, but he didn’t hate wickedness. Lot was not holy. Lot was the type of Christian that could overlook a lot of smut in order to enjoy “the better life.” Oh, he was vexed by the evil that was there. He hated to hear them take the Lord’s name in vain as he was watching his favorite program. He was appalled by some of the scenes that came across the screen, but not appalled enough to shut it off or walk out! In short, Lot represents the compromiser – the lukewarm Christian.

*Lot
represents
a stream
within
Christianity
that will be
saved “so as
by fire.”*

Abraham's intervention saved Lot from the eternal flame, but Lot ends up with barely the shirt on his back. As the apostle said to the Corinthians: "...*But he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire*" (1 Cor. 3:15). This is in reference to the Christian whose works are wood, hay, and stubble!

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

Gen. 19:15-16 *"And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city."*

And while he lingered... Lot and what was left of his family had to be translated out of the city. It almost seems that Lot didn't fully comprehend that they were standing on the brink of hell. The name Lot means "veil" or "covering." Lot certainly had a veil over his heart and mind.

Gen. 19:24 *"Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven."*

Sodom serves as an example for all time. To this very day, the words sodomy and sodomite remind us of the moral degeneracy and perversion of Sodom. This will be the end of the wicked, eternal fire!

If only our young people could see the bitter end of those who love the ways of the world. I just recently lost one of my flock to the world. She was like a calf getting out of the stall – kicking up her heels, frolicking with the world with great delight. O that she would consider her end!

Abraham looks toward Sodom

Gen. 19:28-29 *“And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace. And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt.”*

Abraham’s intervention saved Lot and his two daughters, but Lot’s wife turned back to look at Sodom, against the commandment of the angels (vs. 26). Lot’s wife loved the world so much that she was immortalized into a pillar of salt as she gazed back. If we love the world, then we do not love the Father! Jesus said, “Remember Lot’s wife” (Luke 17:32).

The end of Lot

Lot pictures many Christians who come to the end of life with nothing. Somebody once told a story of a man who strayed from the Biblical principles that he was taught, and devoted his life to making money. However, in the midst of his years he was smitten with an illness that took his life. As he was dying his tearful confession was, “I’ve been forgiven, but I will have nothing on the other side!”

Consider what Lot lost:

Economically, Lot lost everything. He escaped with the shirt on his back. He would now have to eke out a living from scratch. Lot was wealthy when he traveled with Abraham.

Lot lost part of his family to the delusions of Sodom.

Lot lost his testimony by living in Sodom. He had no power to convince his own sons-in-law of the impending doom.

Lot's wife was crystallized into a pillar of salt as she disobeyed the angels!

Lot's offspring, (through incest) Moab and Benammi, became the fathers of the Moabites and the Ammonites. These two nations later became enemies of Abraham's race. (No spiritual fruit Deut. 23:3.)

Spiritually, Lot portrays the uncircumcised Christian who comes to the end of life with nothing. They will not be a part of the "Glorious Church" that is caught up. They will not be a part of the millennial reign of Christ. They will not have any inheritance in this life or the next! (They are saved – so as by fire.)

Be not deceived

I would also like to make a final comment on Lot. Lot was a just man, but he was weak and he didn't have a lot of character. Please do not interpret this account to mean that we can sin, and we'll just lose our reward. Sinners go to hell! Backsliders go to hell – unless they repent!

Please do not interpret this account to mean that we can sin, and we'll just lose our reward. Sinners go to hell! Backsliders go to hell – unless they repent!

Abraham Tested Again over Sarah

Genesis 20:1-18

In this pilgrim walk there is a progression. God wants to bring us onward and upward, and unto a greater apprehension of His nature and character. As St. Paul said “*from righteousness unto holiness*” (Rom. 6:19). In chapter 20, it seems that the Lord is going to deal with Abraham on an issue that will affect the soon coming offspring.

The test

Gen. 20:1 “*And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar.*”

As we begin chapter twenty, let us continue to bear in mind that Abraham is 99 years old. Sarah is 89/90 years old, and the Lord has spoken that within the next year Sarah would bring forth the Isaac. (There must have been quite a renewing of their youth.)

Once again, we see that Abraham is camped between two places. This generally indicates a test. Kadesh means “holy or consecrated.” Shur means “a wall.” It is almost as though God is confronting Abraham on an issue.

Sarah is taken

Gen. 20:2 “*And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah.*”

It seems that Abraham is being confronted again on an issue that he had failed in Egypt 24 years earlier (Gen. 12:11-20). It is God’s mercy not to let us get away with things! However, I would like to suggest several reasons why God permitted this test:

Firstly, when we fail a test, our Lord often gives us another opportunity to redeem ourselves. The circumstances of this test are almost identical to the previous one.

Secondly, I believe that the Lord was allowing this to happen right before the conception of Isaac. Why? In order to correct a flaw in Abraham that would have passed on to the succeeding generation. If Abraham had passed this test, it would never have repeated in Isaac. We will find that invariably our offspring will be tested on the very tests that we flunk. (See Gen. 26:6-7.) Children take on the nature of the father at conception.

We will find that invariably our offspring will be tested on the very tests that we flunk..

Abimelech takes Sarah

Let me say in Abraham’s defense, that I seriously doubt that Abraham ever dreamed that lightning would strike twice in the same place. Even though this had happened once before in Egypt, I’m sure that Abraham thought, “Well, this time they’ll just think she is my sister and leave it at that; and if

they inquire about her, we'll go to plan B... we'll make a fast exit..." (She was his half sister.)

Sarah was 90 years old. That in itself was a witness that God was doing something! How many men have to worry about their ninety-year-old wife because she is so attractive?

The last day church shall be renewed

A number of saints have had visions of the last day church. What they found to be so extraordinary, was that all of God's people were all so youthful and joyful. It is the joy of the Lord that gives us strength. Or, as the Proverbs says, "*A merry heart doeth good like a medicine.*" It causes the bones to flourish!

God deals with Abimelech

Gen. 20:3-5 *"But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife. But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation? Said he not unto me, She is my sister? and she, even she herself said, He is my brother: in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this."*

God deals with Abimelech for taking Abraham's wife. The Lord said, "This man is a prophet. Restore his wife or you'll die" (vs. 7). This incident reminds us of what the psalmist wrote in Psalm 105:12-15:

“When they were but a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it. When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people; He suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, he reproveth kings for their sakes; Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.” God reproveth kings for the sake of His chosen. He said, *“Do my prophets no harm!”*

God reproveth Abimelech, but in a sense Abimelech reproveth Abraham and Sarah for their false appearance.

God is in every place

Gen. 20:11 *“And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake.”*

Abraham's response to Abimelech was: “I didn't think the fear of the Lord was here.” In a sense, we have to be generous in our appraisal of this situation. The whole world was a kind of a “proceed at your own risk” affair. There was no established law upon earth – other than the law of conscience. However, let us take heed to the lesson here; God is in every place beholding the good and the evil! (Pro. 15:3) God had already proved that point in Egypt 24 years earlier.

Sarah is reproveth

Thus, Abimelech restored Sarah to Abraham, and Abimelech greatly feared because the Lord had rendered the wombs of all the women in Abimelech's household sterile (verses 17-18).

Gen. 20:16 *“And unto Sarah he said, Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver: behold, he is to thee a covering of the eyes, unto all that are with thee, and with all other: thus she was reprovèd.”*

Abimelech even gives a little peace offering to Abraham – to cover his offense. To Sarah he says, “He is to thee a covering.” Thus, Sarah is reprovèd also. This little verse helps us to understand what St. Paul is talking about in 1 Corinthians 11:10. The woman needs to stay under the covering of her husband, under authority. That covering was removed when Sarah agreed to say she was Abraham's brother. When a woman is walking with her husband it restrains other men from looking at her. (When there is the correct order in a marriage, the husband transmits a protective covering over his wife.)

A wife should obey her husband – unless...

The fact that Sarah was reprovèd on this, tells us that a women should not go along with her husband on issues that are contrary to God's standard, or even against her own conscience!

The fact that Sarah was reprovèd on this, tells us that a women should not go along with her husband on issues that are contrary to God's standard, or even against her own conscience! Once more, I want to say that it is a slap in the face when the world corrects us! A lawyer once rebuked me, and I have never forgotten it!

I am sure that this whole incident caused Abraham to do some soul searching. When I reflect back over the

years, I remember different incidents in my life that were of similar nature. (That is, situations that were not presented in the clearest light.) Those little shakings challenged my heart not to let them be repeated. We have to see these kinds of dealings as God's mercy – to perfect us and make us holy! When God lets people go on and do their own thing, that is not a good sign. It is God's blessing when He is jealous over our life! (See Song. 8:6.)

Abraham and Sarah in eternity

Abraham and Sarah are put upon a very high pedestal in eternity. Even the New Testament lauds them as our spiritual Father and Mother. Someday we shall sit down with them, and they will know our names – that is, if we are the true seed and have continued to walk in their faithful steps. I say this because I have heard some very critical remarks about them from God's people. Let us think of them as though they were our parents. Whilst they may have made a few mistakes, they might seem relatively small in comparison to the ones we have made! How many people do you know who are called "The friend of God?"

The Promised Isaac Arrives

Gen. 21:1-5 *“And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him. And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him.”*

The son of the old age

There are several things in this text that I would like to consider. Firstly, God keeps His promises. In spite of their age, in spite of the physical incapability of this thing happening, God said it, they believed it, and that is enough! There is a little line in a chorus that we sometimes sing that says: “God specializes in things thought impossible, and He can do what no other power can do.”

One hundred

Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born. The number 100 has great significance in scripture. It speaks of fullness or

completeness or perfection. Jesus himself gave the illustration of the thirty-fold, sixty-fold and the one hundred-fold harvest (Matthew 13 and Mark 4). These three numbers could also equate with the three divisions of the tabernacle. One hundred is the surface measure of the holiest place.

The Lord reproduced Abraham when he had reached the status of “quality fruit.” We will also notice that the promised son, Isaac, brings forth 100-fold also! In fact, he is the only one recorded (per se) in scripture as bringing forth 100-fold (Gen. 26:12).

It has been said that the children who are born last (children of the old age) generally have the better qualities because there has been a greater maturity in their parents.

*I believe
that the
last day
church
will reap
the
100-fold
harvest.*

One of the first laws in Genesis is that everything brings forth like kind after itself. These laws apply spiritually as well. A young minister desires to see a lot of increase in his flock, yet he may not realize that he is only going to reproduce himself (spiritually). So the question is, what is he going to reproduce? This is the reason God allows some ministers to be barren for many years. He is waiting until they come to a maturity that is worthy of imitation.

The church must see the 100-fold blessing

Isaac represents the children of faith or the children of promise – namely, the Church. Remember that the greater promises are to be realized through the offspring; this also tells us that

the church must bring forth the 100-fold. I believe that the last day church will reap the 100-fold harvest. The fields have been growing over the centuries and they shall ripen out in this last day. *"Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise."* We, as Isaac, are children of promise (Gal. 4:28).

Twenty-five years

The scripture records that Abraham was 75 years old when he left Haran. That brings to our attention that there were twenty-five years until the fulfillment. We can actually find a number of interpretations for the number twenty-five. The priest began to wait upon his ministry at age twenty-five, and his ministry was primarily of a menial nature. His service was in the outer court until age fifty (twenty-five years). At age fifty he was promoted to do service in the sanctuary. The number twenty-five can mean "new order." The number twenty-five can also signify the work of grace: $5 \times 5 = 25$, since the number five means grace. We might say that Isaac represents the new order. (See Numbers 8:24-26.)

God hath made me laugh

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

The real promise is to the desolate – those who have been made barren by God. As you study the plight of the barren woman in scripture, you will always find that it was God who allowed the barrenness. As previously stated, the woman is generally a type of the church. The Lord allows barrenness to

come in order to produce the right heart cry – in other words, a cry for the real purposes of God to be brought forth. Hannah is a classic illustration (1 Sam. 1:1-11).

Sarah is also pictured as the barren woman who brings forth the real children in Galatians 4:22-28. (We'll consider this again.)

Sarah is now laughing, and all the camp is laughing for joy. The Lord Himself must have quite a sense of humor. The fact that they were to name their son Isaac (laughter) tells us the end of the story. In the end the people who have allowed God to deal in their lives will be laughing and singing. As the psalmist said:

Psa. 126:1-2 "When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them."

Ishmael Mocks Isaac

Gen. 21:8-10 *“And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned. And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.”*



Cast out the Bondwoman

***The children of the flesh versus
the children of the Spirit***

Apparently, a few years have lapsed between verse seven and verse eight. Perhaps, Isaac was somewhere between 3-5 years old. As Abraham was hosting a little celebration for Isaac, Sarah caught Ishmael mocking their promised little heir. Sarah was incensed over the incident, and she tells Abraham to “*Cast out this bondwoman and her son.*”

This is a very important passage of scripture. The one that was born of the flesh mocked the one that was born of the Spirit! Paul interprets this for us in Gal. 4:22-24:

“For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar [Hagar].”

In the subsequent verses of Galatians, St. Paul shows us very clearly that these two women represent the two covenants.

<i>Hagar</i>	Old covenant	Ishmael
<i>Sarah</i>	New Covenant	Isaac

Gal. 4:28-31 *“Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall*

not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.”

Obviously, the children born after the flesh can also include the people of the world, but in the Galatian text (vs. 22-31) Paul clearly labels Ishmael as a figure of the natural seed of Abraham. In essence, natural Israel would persecute spiritual Israel – the Church. The book of the Acts will certainly bear witness to this. The Jews (the natural seed) persecuted the early church – which was the spiritual seed.

The Messianic/Christian movement

In the last decade there has been a growing movement that basically identifies itself as “Messianic/Christian.” I have especially noticed large concentrations of them in Central America. They believe in Jesus, but they have incorporated much Judaism into their worship. They keep the Sabbath laws and the feast days. They have also incorporated ceremonial laws and customs into their doctrine. They even sing and dance to certain minor key songs (with a Jewish flavor).

This movement would compare with the first century Judaizers, who basically crippled the churches of Galatia. These Judaizers were trying to bring the early church back to the ceremonial law. St. Paul tells us very clearly that the law of ceremony was nailed to the cross:

Col. 2:14 *“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;”*

Eph. 2:15 *“Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;”*

May I point out, that we are not talking about the moral commandments. Jesus came to magnify the moral laws. The Sermon on the Mount proves that point. It was the ceremonial ordinances that were nailed to the cross.

Cast out the bondwoman

Sarah might have seemed a little harsh when she wanted Abraham to cast out the bondwoman and her son, but according to St. Paul, she was quite in the Spirit! The bondwoman was a figure of the Old Covenant that was in bondage to a lot of religious customs and rules. Ishmael was a figure of the natural seed of Israel. The real promises are to Isaac, not Ishmael. *“For the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.”* Yes, natural Israel is restored at the end. God renews His love to them and brings blessing to them. However, the real promises are not to Israel, but to the Church – and that of course includes the converted Jews.

*The real
promises
are to
Isaac,
not
Ishmael.*

Rom. 9:8 *“That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.”* Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. Paul did not give a lot of encouragement to the Galatians who were weakening themselves with a lot of religious ordinances that had been

abolished. Even today, there are sects within Christianity that are carrying a lot of excess baggage. The baggage of religion can be traditions, rituals, liturgy, and many manmade rules. Some have canonized these ordinances into their creed.

Will these things hurt me?

Will these things hurt me? Salvation resides through faith in the shed blood of Jesus. These things may not take away our salvation (unless we are relying on them to save us). However, they will hurt us! They will bring bondage into our lives. Some of these (traditions) are idolatrous; they will hinder your faith and rob you of any eternal reward that you might have had. Rachel, (one of Jacob's wives) was not buried with the other patriarchs and their wives. She was an idolater and she was cut off from the double portion. (I will try to elaborate on this more fully when we come to "The burial place.")

There are people that are saved in the Catholic Church, but they could lose any reward they might have had because of saint worship – unless they repent (Col 2:18). Some may even lose their salvation if they are putting their faith in the saints to save them! Let us cast out the bondwoman of religion!

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

Abraham was surely grieved over the incident, but he was also grieved over the suggestion to cast out Ishmael. After all, Abraham was his natural father and I am sure that he had strong feelings for his son.

Gen. 21:12-13 “*And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.*”

The Lord really had to speak concerning this situation. I don't think Abraham would have put Ishmael out unless God had spoken. The Lord said, “*Hearken to her.*” The Lord said, “I will make a great nation out of Ishmael, but the promise is to Isaac!” Ishmael later fathered twelve princes who became nations. (Some of the Arabic tribes came from Ishmael – See 25:12-16.)

In the following verses (14-21) Abraham sends out Ishmael and Hagar, who almost perish as a result. But God was tenderly watching them, even as He still cares for Israel.

Abraham's dealings with the Philistines

Through the remainder of chapter 21, Abraham continues in the land of the Philistines. It is interesting that there comes a contention between Abraham and the Philistines over a well. Four thousand years have passed, and the Palestinians (Philistines) still contend with Israel for the land.

The modern day word for Philistine is “Palestinian.”

Abraham then digs another well and makes an agreement with the Philistine king concerning the well:

Gen. 21: 30-31 *“And he said, For these seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand, that they may be a witness unto me, that I have digged this well. Wherefore he called that place Beersheba; because there they sware both of them.”*

Beersheba means, “well of witness.” Abraham proceeds to plant a grove there. Beersheba became quite well known in scripture, in fact, there is still a town there today. Some translate Beersheba to mean, “seventh well.” Abraham was known to have dug many wells (Gen. 26:15). Wells speak of salvation, and we should also unearth the wells of salvation wherever we go! (We have this well of witness within us!)

Abraham Offers Up His Only Son

Genesis 22:1-17

Gen. 22:1 *“And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.”*

The great test

The Christian life is comprised of little tests and conditionings that are (in reality) getting us ready for the big test – the one that really counts and will affect our eternal place. It is like school; we learn and are graded throughout the year, but the final exam is the one that counts. Israel failed the first nine tests in the wilderness; thus it was only natural that they would fail the tenth one. The last one was the one that disqualified them!

Gen. 22:2 *“And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”*

Figure of Calvary

Without doubt, this account is the greatest type or foreshadows of Calvary that you will find in scripture. The father

must give his only beloved son as a sacrifice. Notice that the Lord only recognizes the heir of promise as the true son (thine only son). This act would be literally fulfilled (2000 years later) when God the Father gave his only Son as a sacrifice for our sins. We might also take note that the mountains of Moriah are the hills that incorporate Jerusalem and the hills round about. Some speculate that this incident took place on Golgotha, the very hill that Christ was offered upon.

Gen. 22:4-6 *“Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.”*

On the third day... I am sure that Abraham must have been in anguish for the “three days” that they journeyed toward the hill. But, the fact that the three days are mentioned reminds us that Christ arose on the third day, and as we are about to see, Abraham receives his son back from the dead on the third day (in a figure).

We will return

Notice Abraham's declaration of faith: *“we will come again to you.”* Abraham believed that they would return together – that God would raise Isaac from the dead. The apostle substantiates this in Heb. 11:17-19:

“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.”

How old the “lad” was is left to a lot of speculation. Some have conjectured him to be as old as 40. Actually, Isaac lost his mother when he was 37 years old, and that was some time after this event. So obviously, he was younger than 40. Some have speculated that he was 33, the age of Christ when He was crucified. The word “lad” certainly extends into the late teens, because David was called a lad when he slew Goliath. I myself would favor the idea of Isaac being in his late teens, perhaps approaching the age of sonship (20). I believe that in order to fulfill the type, Isaac had the power to resist what his father was about to do, but he acquiesced to his father’s will.

Also observe that the wood was laid upon Isaac: *“Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son.”* As we know, the wood was also laid upon our Lord Jesus Christ that He might carry it up the hill.

The Father made the greatest sacrifice

All of the promises of a lifetime were personified (contained) in this one promised son. Abraham had waited a long time for this promised heir, he has invested his life into this one son. Indeed, all of the promises are contained in this one son, and now the Lord says: “Offer him up!” We talk about knowing the heart of the Father – nobody could have known the heart

of God the Father as Abraham did! God the Father made the greatest sacrifice.

God will provide "Himself" a lamb

Gen. 22:7-8 *"And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together."*

When Isaac inquires about the sacrifice, Abraham responds with another statement of faith: *"God will provide himself a lamb."* This was not only pointing to Calvary where the Lamb for sinners would be slain, but it also was pointing to the fact that God the Son "Himself" would be the Lamb.

Heb. 9:26 *"For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."*

Heb. 7:27 *"Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself."*

The sacrifice is impelled

Gen. 22:9-10 *"And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the*

altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.”

The son is bound as the sacrifice upon the altar. Christ was also fastened upon the wood. This scenario reminds us of

When we are not willing to bind the sacrifice to the altar, we will invariably seek to take it back.

what the psalmist said in Psalm 118:27: *“God is the LORD, which hath showed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.”* Actually, this psalm is a reference to the Lord’s coming to Jerusalem to die. When we are not willing to bind the sacrifice to the altar, we will invariably seek to take it back. The altar might involve people or circumstances or personal desire, or even self will. But if it’s not tied with the cords of commitment, we may easily break our commitment. We may easily turn back from the mission field or seek to renew a relationship, etc.

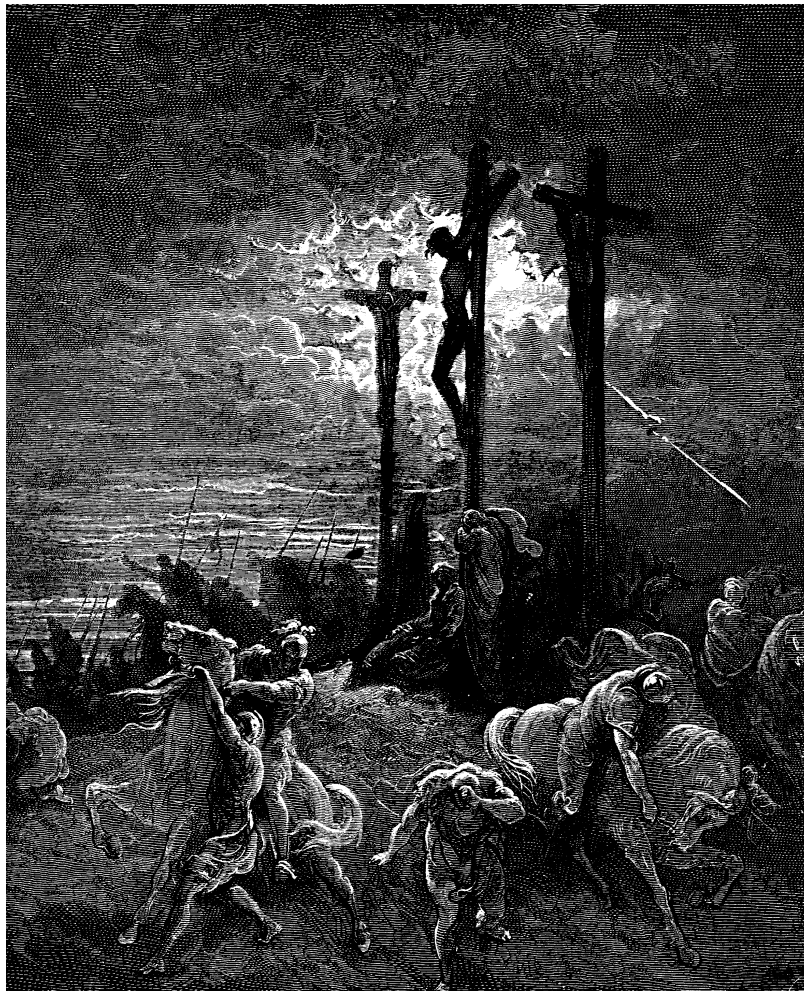
Gen. 22:11 *“And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.”*

Abraham surely would have slain his son had not the Lord called twice: “Abraham, Abraham!” The Lord did not want anything to happen to Abraham's son – it was a test!

Jehovah-Jireh

Gen. 22:12-14 *“And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and*

looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen”



On the mount it shall be seen.

Abraham has a revelation of the Lord on this mount. “Jehovah-Jireh” is one of the seven names of the Lord. It means, “The Lord provides.” Herein is an aspect of the nature of God. He provides for all of our needs. “I shall not want.” It is one thing to know this theoretically, but it is another thing to see the reality of it. God surely did provide a lamb on this mount, and this mount could have been the very Mount where the Lord provided Himself the only acceptable Lamb – the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord makes an oath

Gen. 22:15-18 *“And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”*

After Abraham had proved his obedience in giving his only beloved son, the Lord now makes an oath. If I could visualize this scene, I would envision that the Lord made this oath with great intensity and volume. I can almost see the Lord shouting: *“SURELY I HAVE SWORN BY MYSELF... Because thou hast not withheld thine only son...”*

It is as though the Lord is saying, “Because you did not hold back your best from Me, I will not hold back My best from you.” The Lord then intensifies the promises of blessing and

multiplication: children as numerous as the stars (the spiritual seed), and as the sand of the sea (the natural seed). I think that we could also say that after this test Abraham had passed the third qualification for reigning – “being faithful!” Remember the three qualifications: called, chosen, and faithful.

Thy seed shall possess the enemy's gates

There is also an additional promise included in this oath: “*And thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.*” We like to quote the words of Jesus, which tell us that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church. That is the defensive position. But in the truest sense of the promise, we must fulfill the offensive (the assault) position. “*The violent take the kingdom*” (Mat. 11:12). The church must possess the gates and the strongholds of the enemies. Israel fulfilled that (in a figure) when they entered their Promised Land. But the Church must also fulfill this; the last day church shall be triumphant!

The blessing of the Gospel

Let us also observe verse eighteen: “*And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.*” The apostle Paul interprets that statement as the “preaching of the Gospel to every nation.”

“*And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham*” (Gal. 3:8-9).

It was through Abraham's seed that the nations would be blessed. Truly, Israel (as a nation) was blessed as they walked in the ways of Abraham. However, this verse was not going to begin its fulfillment until the promised seed of Abraham came – the Lord Jesus Christ! Again, we look to the great theologian Paul to explain:

Gal. 3:16 *“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.”* In other words, the true promises were to be realized through the Christ. All nations could be recipients of the blessings of Abraham through the Christ, who was of the natural family of Abraham – through Isaac, and through Jacob, and through David.

Rom. 8:32 *“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”* God the Father gave us the dearest and best in the person of His own Son. Anything else would be as nothing in comparison. It is such an honor and privilege to be a part of this Royal family – let us walk worthy of the calling!

The immutability of the oath

I would like to reemphasize the magnitude of the oath that God gave to Abraham. That oath concerns us, because we are called to be heirs of that promise! St. Paul uses the word, “immutability.” The word “immutable” means that that it is unalterable (it can't be changed). Let us consider:

Heb. 6:13-14 *“For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself,*

Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.”

Heb. 6:16-17 *“For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath.”*

To the heirs of promise

God wanted to show the immutability of His oath, and because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself, *“Surely I will bless...”* God hath sworn by Himself, that (we) the heirs of promise might be fully assured that He will do it!

I do not believe that the Church at any time during its history has ever seen the fullness of blessing such as was promised. Perhaps the early church had a foretaste of it, but our Father reserves the best wine for last. Oh, let us (by God’s grace) be counted worthy to partake of the great things that God has reserved for the chosen seed of Israel’s race – the Church!

*Our
Father
reserves
the best
wine for
last.*

In a figure

The father sacrifices his only beloved son.

He is sent to a hill outside Jerusalem.

The son had to carry the wood up the hill.

He was then laid upon the wood.

The son submits to the act.

The father believes that his son shall rise from the dead.

The nations of the world are blessed through this act of obedience.

The perfecting of our faith

In conclusion of this episode, consider what the apostle James said in reference to this incident: *“Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect”* (Jam. 2:21-22)?

We have previously commented on the “righteousness of faith.” Abraham simply believed God concerning the promised heir, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness. Paul used that text (Gen. 15:6) in the book of Romans to establish his doctrine of salvation – justification without works (Rom. 4:3). Now, James uses Abraham’s offering to emphasize the “perfecting of our faith” – by works.

We are saved by simple faith	no works accepted!
Our faith is perfected by our works	obedience required!

Offering Our Isaac

In this walk of faith we (at some point and time) will have to offer our “Isaac.” We will have to relinquish something very near and dear to us. Just recently, a friend of ours said that God had dealt with him concerning “releasing his Isaac” to full time service elsewhere. This pastor had a very dear elder whom he didn’t want to release. But that is relatively small in comparison to what some must offer up.

Someone told a story about a man who labored for years, pouring himself into a work that he felt the Lord had promised him. Then, as the work was finally prospering, the Lord said: “Now offer it up!” As I understand the story, after the man surrendered his “Isaac,” God brought him into a much greater place. Howbeit, we must not think that this is always the way it works. But there will be an “Isaac,” and the outcome is up to providence – divine providence.

God dealt with another man about releasing his wife. The man knew that this was not going to be just a casual test. He knew that this was his Isaac, and there was a great struggle to offer her up. The Lord took her home! We can’t just assume that we’ll get our Isaac back! There is often a great cost involved, and those who are great in heaven have offered up an Isaac!

The equation

There is an old hymn entitled: *The Cross is not Greater than His Grace*. When we consider what we have lost in the scope

of what we have gained, there is no comparison. Notwithstanding, some things can only be rewarded in heaven. Perhaps we should consider again the equation between what Abraham lost in comparison to what he gained.

<i>Compare what Abraham lost to what he gained.</i>	
Abraham left his country	God was bringing him to a better country.
He had a good name.	God gave him a better name.
He left his family.	God gave him a greater family.
He separated from the fellowship of Lot.	God brought him to Hebron – a place of greater fellowship, and increased promises.
He refused the rewards of the world (the kings) when he rescued Lot.	God said, “I am thy exceeding great reward.”
He gave his only begotten son.	God gives him the nations of the world.
<i>Many of the promises given to Abraham are yet to be fulfilled.</i>	

Gen. 22:19 “*So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.*”

Abraham returns to Beersheba, where he had built an altar. Years later, Isaac comes back to Beersheba (the well of witness), and God confirms the covenant to him there.



The Burial Place

The death of Sarah

Gen. 23:1-2 *“And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: these were the years of the life of Sarah. And Sarah died in Kirjatharba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.”*

In chapter 23, Abraham's wife dies and Abraham must find a burial place. Continue to bear in mind that Abraham and Sarah were only pilgrims passing through a land that was not yet theirs. As the writer of Hebrews said: “Sojourning in the land of promise, as in a strange country...”

The significance of the burial place

The burial place has great significance in scripture. Indeed, we will find that many of the Old Testament saints were very specific concerning the place of their burial. Jacob made Joseph swear to bury him in the place of his fathers (Abraham and Isaac). Joseph also gave a commandment concerning his bones:

Heb. 11:22 *“By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.”*

Joseph did not want his bones left in Egypt; he wanted to be resurrected in the land of promise. (It would be another 400 years before they would carry his bones out of Egypt.) Moreover, during the times of the kings of Judah, we find that some kings were specifically buried in the “Sepulcher of the kings,” and others were not. All of the godly kings were buried in the sepulcher of the kings, indicating that they would reign in the millennium.

There is a message in the burial place. Perhaps the name of the place denotes something of eternal value. Perhaps it tells how they finished. As Solomon said, *“In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.”* In other words, where we finish could be a revelation of our future lot. It could also be the place of future inheritance. We have known missionaries who wanted to be buried in the land of their inheritance.

Machpelah – the double portion

Chapter twenty-three basically concerns the field and cave that Abraham purchased for a burial place. Let us contemplate some of these truths. Firstly, the name of the place:

Gen. 23:19-20 *“And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre: the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan. And the field, and the cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a buryingplace by the sons of Heth.”*

Abraham buries Sarah at the cave of Machpelah. Machpelah means “the double.” This cave represents the double portion. There are those in eternity who shall merit the

double portion. There is a book in heaven of those who have attained to the first-born blessing – the double portion! (c.f. Psa. 87:5-6, and Heb. 12:22-23.) Isaiah also mentions those who shall reap “the double” (Isa. 61:7). Job, as well, reaped the double portion after his horrendous trial; and there are others such as Joseph, who qualified for the double. Please note that all of these people paid a great price!

Abraham is later buried here at Machpelah. Also, Isaac and Rebecca, and Jacob and Leah were buried here (but not Rachel): The three patriarchs with whom God reconfirmed His covenant (and their wives) were counted worthy to be buried here. They received the double portion!

Rachel was disqualified

I had previously mentioned that Rachel (one of Jacob’s wives) was not buried here. Rachel was an idolater (Gen. 31:32), and she was disinherited from the promises given to the holy family. Oh, they were just little gods, but Rachel passed something down through her line, and later Ephraim (the Northern Kingdom) became very idolatrous. There are many things that could disqualify us from the great inheritance. St. John warns us not to lose the reward, and the crown:

2 John 1:8 *“Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.”*

Rev. 3:11 *“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”*

The finish line

Jacob was insistent that he was to be brought from Egypt to be buried at Machpelah. He saw the spiritual significance of Machpelah! (Incidentally, this monument still exists in Hebron.) Yet allow me to reemphasize the weightiness of what is being said here. It is how we come across the finish line that counts! The whole emphasis of this account is to make us aware that it is how we finish this race that matters.

*It is how
we come
across the
finish line
that
counts!*

The apostle Paul said, *“I have finished my course... henceforth there is a crown laid up...”*

We must finish the thing that God has put us here for, in order to obtain the crown. May I offer encouragement: if you do not know the purpose for which you are here, begin to seek God for that purpose!

Hebron

The same is Hebron in the land of Canaan. Hebron was very special to Abraham. It represents the place of true fellowship – the unity of the brethren. It would later become the place of the second and third anointings of David. The saints must experience the second and third anointings in order to reign in the Millennium. I didn't say to be saved, but to reign. They that are with Christ are called, chosen, and faithful (Rev. 17:14).

First anointing	Called
Second anointing	Chosen
Third anointing	Faithful

Paying the price

Abraham wanted to purchase this place for his burial grounds, but because the Hittites (sons of Heth) so revered Abraham, they wanted to give him the ground and cave (vs. 3-20). Notwithstanding, Abraham insisted on paying the full price. This enforces the fact that there is a price to be paid to finish as an overcomer! In the walk of Abraham, there are no short cuts or bargain rates. Indeed, the Proverbs tell us that an inheritance quickly gotten will not last! (Pro. 20:21.)

Abraham insisted on paying the full price of 400 shekels. Looking at the first mention of the number “400,” we see that it means “affliction.” Israel was to be afflicted 400 years! But as the psalmist said: “Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all” (Psa. 34:19).

The number “400” can also mean fullness (4x100), or it can mean universal witness. (Four means universal – the four winds, the four Gospels, etc.) Certainly the name of Abraham is still known throughout the earth!

Finding Isaac a Bride

(Genesis chapter 24)

As chapter twenty-four begins, Abraham has become concerned about finding a wife for Isaac. Isaac is about forty years old at this time (Gen. 25:20), and he is the next progenitor of the holy seed. Also, let us bear in mind that they are still dwelling amongst the Canaanites, and



Seeking Isaac a Bride

Abraham does not want his son to be unequally yoked with an alien. (See 2 Cor. 6:14.)

The steward's mission

Gen. 24:1-3 *“And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell.”*

The usual custom of the day was that the father arranged the marriage. However, in this case Abraham commissions his steward (with an oath) to find a bride for his son. (The steward in this scenario is almost a type of the Holy Spirit.) It was God who brought Adam his wife, and it is God who finds a good wife for his sons. The mission of the steward throughout this chapter is to find the right bride.

Pro. 19:14 *“House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the LORD.”*

The disaster of an unequal yoke

Abraham, knowing that the promises were to be realized through his offspring, is very concerned that Isaac not marry one of the ungodly inhabitants of Canaan. This has to be a concern not only for parents, but also for the minister. We can't allow our spiritual sons to marry just anybody. A wrong

marriage weakens the holy seed and will eventually disannul the promises. This was one of the big problems during the restoration era. The holy seed were intermarrying with the foreigners and aliens of the kingdom. Their children could only speak half the language of the Jews (Neh. 13:24). In other words their children lost the vision.

One of the worst disasters in the history of Israel began with a marriage between the line of godly kings of Judah and the ungodly kings of the North (2 Chr. 22:2-4). It ruined the kingdom.

Malachi, who was one of the prophets during the restoration era, said this concerning marriage: *“And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed.”* The purpose of marriage is to produce a godly seed (Mal. 2:15). That is why it is so imperative that the wife be joined to her husband’s vision. If a young man has a calling upon his life, it is not good enough just to find a young lady that is a Christian. She must be sold out to his level of commitment! Almost invariably a wife will pull her husband off the field if she is not joined to his calling.

God created Eve to help Adam fulfill his work – “I will make him an help meet for him.” Sarah was known for her willingness to follow Abraham and to be his helper. Husbands and wives are joint heirs together (1 Pet. 3:6-7).

Beware that my son not return...

Gen. 24:4-6 *“But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac. And the servant*

said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest? And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again.”

Beware that my son go not back to the place from whence we came. This is reiterated in Verses 8-9: *“And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again.”* From the time of the patriarchs until David was a time of pilgrimage.

The bride had to be willing to leave her country and her family to go on with Isaac. For Isaac to go back to the country which his father had left would have thwarted the whole plan and purpose of God. He would have been going backwards (a digression). This pilgrimage is always ongoing.

This had to be one of the qualifications for the bride – she had to be willing to leave her country and her family to go on with Isaac. The steward’s assignment was to return to the family that Abraham had come out of.

(Actually, this was the godly line that proceeded from Noah though the line of Seth.) The mission of the steward (a type of the Holy Spirit) was to find a girl that fit the criterion for “The Bride.”

The qualities of the bride

This is a rather long chapter; so we are going to summarize the qualifications that the minister found in the “bride to be.”

<i>Qualification found in the “Bride to Be”</i>
She was of the holy line.
She was led of the Holy Spirit (vs. 13-14).
She was fair – a holy beauty (vs. 16).
She was a virgin – purity (vs. 16).
She was industrious (vs. 19-20).
She was willing to go beyond the call of duty (vs. 19-20).
She was hospitable (vs. 25).
She was willing to leave family and country (vs. 58).
She did not hesitate to leave – although the family wanted to retain her ten days – a test (vs. 55).
She is a type of the Bride of Christ.

I will go

Gen. 24:58 *“And they called Rebecca, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.”*

God had granted Abraham’s steward many signs in leading him to this young woman. However, there is one verse that I would like to consider in regard to guidance. *“And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master’s brethren” (verse 27).*

“I being in the way the Lord led me...” This is a wonderful inspiration for guidance. Some have the idea that they can just sit down and the Lord will bring everything to their front door. It’s like finding a job – you have to get into motion before the Lord will lead you there. There has to be a certain effort on our part – *“I being in the way...”* The Lord said, *“Whilst thou art seeking me, I shall be found.”*


Gen. 24:59-61 *“And they sent away Rebecca their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men. And they blessed Rebecca, and said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them. And Rebecca arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebecca, and went his way.”*

Rebecca is now to become the next mother to continue the holy seed of Abraham's race. I hope that we can appreciate the message conveyed in this chapter and throughout this commentary. The promises are only as good as the offspring. Each generation must produce godly children in order to reproduce themselves in the succeeding generations. Moreover, the wives that our sons take will either make them or break them!

Keturah

Genesis 25:1-5

Offspring in the Millennium

 en. 25:1 “Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah.”

Sometime after the death of Sarah, Abraham takes another wife whose name is “Keturah.” Keturah is also a figure even as the previous two wives were. She represents a dispensation, as Hagar and Sarah did.

<i>The Three Dispensations Represented by Abraham’s Wives</i>	
Hagar	Old Covenant
Sarah	New Covenant
Keturah	Millennium

Hagar’s offspring represent the natural seed of Israel. Sarah’s offspring represents the spiritual seed of Israel – the Church. Keturah’s offspring represent the seed of Abraham that are born during the Millennium. Keturah bore Abraham six children (vs. 2) which also became great nations. We must remember that during the 1000 year reign of Christ, there are still many mortals living (and reproducing) upon earth.

Isaac still has the greater inheritance

Gen. 25:5-6 *“And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac. But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country”*

Of all the seed of Abraham, the children of faith, those born and perfected during the Church era, have the greatest promises!

The other sons received gifts and were sent away, but Isaac received all! The inheritance promised to the spiritual seed exceeds anything that natural Israel inherits, or even the offspring born in the next dispensation. Why is that? Because the church has paid a greater price than those born in the Millennium.

A good contrast would be David and Solomon. David pictures the Church Age and one who fights the battles of the Lord. Solomon pictures the Millennial Age, which is a reign of peace and prosperity. During the millennium, Satan has been bound, and the earth has been cleansed from his demon cohorts. Thus, there

is not the same temptation. Those born in the millennium will not have to fight the same battles that the Church had to fight! (However, there will still be sin in the millennium.)

May I further exhort us to press on to know Christ. Some are content to be connected to Abraham and to have a few gifts. That is not the ultimate vision! We have known ministers who had very wonderful gifts, and yet their lives did not reflect the Christ – the promised Seed. We are called to “be like Him.”

Abraham Dies Full of Years

Gen. 25:7-9 *“And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years. Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people. And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre.”*

Abraham dies at 175 years old. Considering the numerical truth of his death, we shall recall that the first mention of Abraham's age was in Haran and he was 75 years old. Abraham started to walk with God fully at age 75, after his father's death. Therefore the number 100 is the number that exemplifies his life. In fact, Abraham was 100 when the promised Isaac came.

Perfection

One hundred speaks of fullness and perfection. The phrase “full of years” translates “fully satisfied with years” or “pleasantly satisfied with years!” Truly, Abraham's life had its trials and tests, but in the overall analysis Abraham's life was filled with pleasant days – “fully satisfied with life”! It is pleasant to walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a pleasant path, and we can reach the end of our life fully satisfied! As the hymn of yesteryear rings

out: “Sweeter as the years go by...” Abraham had been perfected, and his walk sets the example for the children of promise.

Consider Jesus’ response to Peter when he said, “*Lord, we have left all...*”

Mark 10:29-30 *“And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.”*

*The phrase
“full of years”
translates
“fully
satisfied with
years” or
“pleasantly
satisfied with
years!”*

May I point out that if life were all blessing, we could never know Christ. There must be scattered persecutions along this road to keep us walking close to our Lord!

Abraham's burial at Machpelah tells us that he had qualified for the double portion, and that tells us that the best is yet to come. (We shall consider more of the eternal state of Abraham in the conclusion.)

Abraham's final exhortation

Although Abraham died 2000 years before Christ, Christ permits us to listen in on one more exhortation: “*But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented*” (Luke 16:25). The

tragedy of this statement is that Abraham was speaking to one of his sons who was in hell. It is sad that so many of Abraham's children are seeking their good things in this life and disqualifying themselves from the inheritance that is eternal! In some cases, they are disqualifying themselves from eternal life itself! (By the way, this was no parable!)

The Pilgrim Walk

Abraham's life has shown us where our real emphasis should be. For that reason, we conclude this episode highlighting a few of the lessons that we have learned.

The Christian life is a pilgrimage – a walk of faith!

The true pilgrim has a vision.

The true pilgrim desires another country – that is an heavenly.

The true pilgrim walk is moving foreword – no turning back.

The true pilgrim must put his shoulder to the work.

The true pilgrim must be a student of the ways of God.

The true pilgrim must separate himself from the world.

The true pilgrim can only walk with those of like vision.

The true pilgrim must fight the battles of the Lord.

The true pilgrim must be a savior to those along life's road.

The life of a pilgrim is a life of sacrifice and devotion.

The true pilgrim is the one that is circumcised in his heart.

The true pilgrim has a promise.
The true pilgrim will see those promises fulfilled.
The true pilgrim will know that “joy unspeakable!”
The true pilgrim will experience the pleasant arbors and the delectable mountains and the “Beulah land.”
The true pilgrim will (at times) meet his Lord upon this journey.
The pilgrim path is a path of righteousness, peace, and blessing.
The true pilgrim has a great inheritance waiting for him.
The true pilgrim will be a part of the church of the firstborn – the church with the double portion!
<i>So often people tell us that it is hard to be a Christian, but may I say from my own personal experience, and from personal observation: It's harder to be a sinner! Dear friend, choose the path that leads to life!</i>



Conclusion

Abraham will undoubtedly see the promises fulfilled in the Millennium, and throughout eternity. Moreover, if we are faithful, we too will have the opportunity to be a part of that fulfillment. What makes this study so intriguing is that *we* (the Church) figure into the conclusion of Abraham's vision.

- ◆ The true Church is the circumcision (Rom. 2:28-29).
- ◆ The true Church has the "Isaac promise" (Rom. 9:7-8).
- ◆ The true Church represents the children of promise (Heb. 6:13).
- ◆ The true Church is the promised seed of Abraham (Rom. 2:28-29).
- ◆ The true Church must fulfill father Abraham's vision (Heb. 11:39-40).

<i>Sand</i>	earthly seed	(Israel).
<i>Stars</i>	spiritual seed	(the church).

Abraham saw them in a figure

What Abraham saw from a distance was only a shadow of things to come. Abraham only obtained them in token measure, or in figure. He never saw "the outward profession" of things promised. As the author of Hebrews declared: *"These*

all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb. 11:13).

It was accounted unto Abraham (by faith) as though he had entered in, and yet he never saw the reality of things hoped for – he saw them only in vision:

Heb. 11:39-40 *“And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”*

We must complete the acts of faith

All of these died in faith and were counted as though they had obtained, and yet we must complete their vision. We must enter into the things that our fathers saw from a distance. As the last sentence of Hebrews eleven declares, *“They without us cannot be made perfect [complete].”*

We must enter into the things that our fathers saw from a distance.

We (the Church) must see the 100-fold blessing. The Church must see the last day ingathering, the multiplication – and indeed, the bringing down of the enemy gates! It is the last day Church that must fulfill the great commission (Mat. 24:14). Our Lord will have a people that come forth at the end and do the works of Abraham! (See John 8:39.)

Let us catch a fresh vision

Heb. 6:12-17 *“That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath.”*

The promises made to Abraham and to his heirs were immutable. The Lord swore by Himself that He would bring it to pass. Oh, we want to be a part of this! We want to be the true circumcision who walk in the Spirit – Those who are not only called, but also chosen and found faithful, as was our father Abraham. The Lord has reserved the fullness of blessing for the true heirs of promise in these last days. May we (by God’s grace) be a part of the glorious City that Abraham saw. Amen!

A Tribute

After studying the life of father Abraham, I have come to appreciate even more my own spiritual father – who is not just my spiritual father, but a father of nations and kings. His influence and faithfulness upon earth has literally kept the Church of our day on course!

In my opinion, and I am not alone, Rev. Brian Bailey is the greatest man of our generation! He has imparted to us (his sons) the key of knowledge and the personal example by which to gauge our lives.

