



The Book of Genesis

Lesson Number 20



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

TRANSLATION LEGEND: ABP=Apostolic Bible Polygot m(1992); ALT=Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED=Amplified Bible (1965), ABP=Apostolic Bible Polygot with Greek Interlinear (2003); ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), CEV=Contemporary English Version (1995); DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV=English Revised Version (1885), ESV=English Stand Version (2001), GENEVA=Geneva Bible (1599), GNB=Good News (1966), GWN=God's Word (1995), IE=International English (1973), ISV=International Standard Version (1967), JPS=Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV=King James Version (1611), LITV=Literat Translation of the Bible (1976), LIVING=Living Bible (1971), MESSAGE=The Message (1993), MKJV=Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY=Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD=Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB=New American Bible (2002), NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV=New King James Version (1979), NLT=New Living Translation (1996), NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS=J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT=Bishop's New Testament (1595), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), WEB=Webster Bible (1833), WEYMOUTH=Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS=William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE=Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE=Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT=Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- GREEK LEXICON LEGEND -----

LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT = Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER = Thayer's Greek Lexicon, LEH = LEH Lexicon, GINGRICH = Gingrich Lexicon

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF THE BEGINNING OF ALL THINGS: THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH, MANKIND, SIN, THE FIRST CHOSEN AND BLESSED NATION, THE FIRST CURSE, THE FIRST PROMISE, AND THE FIRST FAITH.

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

THE ABRAM'S EXPERIENCE IN EGYPT

Gen 12:10 "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. ¹¹ 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: ¹² 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. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair. ¹⁵ The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife. ¹⁸ 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? ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had." (Genesis 12:10-20)

INTRODUCTION

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

Finding a famine in the land, Abram goes down into Egypt in quest of sustenance and the maintenance of life. Having received a promise from God, his interest in maintaining life has been raised to a higher level.

In Spiritual Life

The same principle applies in spiritual life. It must be maintained. This includes proper nourishment that causes growth to occur. Everyone knows that life that does not advance from youth to adulthood is not only abnormal, it manifests a serious deficiency of some

sort. No parent of sound mind will ignore that lack of growth in their children. Yet, within the church, there are multitudes of people who are not growing, not advancing, and even going backward in their response to God and endeavor to obtain the prize set before us. Just as surely as Abram did what was necessary

Finding a famine in Canaan, Abram goes down into Egypt where God's care for him is made known " – Given O. Blakely

CONTENTS

- ▶ INTRODUCTION
- ▶ THERE WAS A FAMINE IN THE LAND (12:10)
- ▶ THE REQUEST OF ABRAM (12:11-13)
- ▶ THE EGYPTIANS BEHELD THE WOMAN (12:14-15)
- ▶ THE TREATMENT OF ABRAM FOR SARAH'S SAKE (12:16A)
- ▶ ABRAM'S WEALTH INCREASES (12:16B)
- ▶ THE LORD PLAGUED PHARAOH (12:17)
- ▶ PHARAOH CALLS ABRAM, (12:18-19)
- ▶ ABRAM, HIS WIFE, AND ALL THAT HE HAD ARE SENT AWAY (12:20)
- ▶ CONCLUSION

to sustain life, so those in Christ are responsible for doing whatever is necessary to keep up life and thereby grow up into Christ in all things.

On the Way to Egypt

On the way to Egypt, Abram thinks of a potential problem that could jeopardize his situation. Being still unacquainted with the Lord, he offers a solution that made sense at the time.

Upon arriving in Egypt, his concerns were confirmed, and Sarai was taken into the harem of Pharaoh. The Lord plagues Pharaoh because he had taken Sarai into his house. Although the cause of his perception is not revealed, Pharaoh realizes that Sarai is Abram's wife, and that his house is being plagued because he took her into his household.

During this apparently brief period of time, Abram's wealth increases exponentially. He apparently maintains his demeanor in a comely way, yet did not know how all of this would play out.

Upon considering his situation, Pharaoh returned Sarai to Abram, gave some orders to his men concerning the patriech, then sent him away, permitting him to take all of his possessions with

them – even those that were gained while in their country. The work of God, indeed! Lot also accompanied them, as they commenced their return to Canaan.

All Things Worked Together for God

For the first time in human history, we have in Abram a gloriously detailed accounting of God working all things together for the ultimate good of an individual. Such a perspective was not developed in Adam, Seth, Enos, Enoch, or Noah. **None of those antediluvian personalities were presented from a day-to-day perspective.** Their exchange with their peers was not developed.

Now, in Abraham, we are introduced to God working all things together for the good of an individual. This is seen in the altering of physical circumstances, the increase of wealth, the modification of human potential, and a host of other things.

Ponder how many details are provided concerning Abraham, with those who lived before him.

- ➡ **ADAM.** Genesis 2:19-5:5 (61 verses) – six events during a lifetime of 930 years are recorded: (1) – Naming of the animals, (2) Reception of wife. (3) The first transgression. (4) The begetting of Cain. (5) The begetting of Seth. (6) His death.
- ➡ **CAIN.** Genesis 5:1-17 (17 verses). Four events are recorded: (1) An offering to the Lord. (2) A confrontation by God, (3) The slaying of Abel. (4) His marriage. (5) His building of a city.
- ➡ **ABEL.** Genesis 4:2–8 (7 verses).

Two events are recorded: (1) His sacrifice to God. (2) His murder).

- ➡ **SETH.** Genesis 4:25-26; 5:3-8 (8 verses): Two events are recorded. (1) The Begetting of Enos. (2) His death.
 - ➡ **LAMECH.** Genesis 5:18-24 (7 verses). Three events are recorded: (1) His taking of two wives. (2) A conversation with his wives. (3) His confession of murdering two men.
 - ➡ **ENOC.** Genesis 5:18-24 (7 verses). One event is recorded: His translation.
 - ➡ **NOAH.** Genesis 5:29-32; 6:8-10:32 (128 verses). Ten events are recorded: (1) His call by God. (2) His building of the ark. (3) Stocking the ark with food. (4) Bringing the animals into the ark. (5) Exiting from the ark. (6) Building an altar and offering a sacrifice to God. (7) Planting a vineyard. (8) The episode that followed him being filled with wine. (9) The cursing of Canaan. (10)., His death.
 - ➡ **NIMROD.** Genesis 10:8-10 (2 verses). Two things are said about this man: (1) He began to be a mighty warrior. (2) He began a kingdom.
 - ➡ **ABRAHAM.** Genesis 11:26-26:18 (418 verses).
- Time and space will not suffice to list all of the details that are provided concerning Abraham's life. They are overwhelming, eclipsed only by the remarkably detailed record God has given of His Son.

The details of life are reported at a more detailed level because the involvement of the Lord Himself is more detailed.

The point to be seen in this is that the more a person is involved in the purpose of God, the more there is said about him. **The details of life are reported at a more detailed level because the involvement of the Lord Himself is more detailed.**

It will do no good to tell people who are living in aloofness from God that God cares for them, protects them, and is interested in the details of their lives. All of this may sound quite pleasing, but it cannot be confirmed with Scripture. We have the testimony of the entirety of Scripture that testifies to the measure of God's involvement with individuals. It is directly proportionate to their proximity to Him and involvement in His purpose. It is no wonder that Jesus said, *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"* (Matt 6:33). The phrase *"all these things"* relates to some of the details of living in this world.

THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF GOD SEEN IN HIS WORKS

Whatever the Lord says or does reveals something about His Person. Take, for example, the creation. It has been revealed that God's *"eternal power and Godhead"* can be seen in it: *"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse"* (Rom 1:20). His *"eternal power"* is perceived in a creation that has continued to operate consistently for over 6,000 years, without so much as a second of time being lost, or any segment of creation spinning out of order. God's *"Godhead,"* or *"Divinity,"* is seen in the upholding and governing of all creation. The largest and most complicated substance that can be known by man is *"the earth and the fulness thereof"* (Psa 24:1). Yet it is precisely ordered, maintained, and governed by the *"high and lofty One"*

(Isa 57:15) who has no peers, and who, in infinite wisdom works all things according to His own will (Eph 1:11).

If this is true of the impersonal creation, what can be said of the Lord's involvement with mankind, who has been made in His own image? **What aspect of God's Person and character are made known in those involvements?** To name a few:

DIVINE TRAITS MADE KNOWN		
Anger	Hatred	Omniscience
Care	Holiness	Patience
Comfort	Illumination	Perfection of
Compassion	Immutability	Preserver
Creativity	Infinite	Providence
Election	Invisible	Righteousness
Faithfulness	Jealous	Savior
Fatherhood	Judge	Sovereignty
Favor	Kindness	Unchangeable
Foreknowledge	Longsuffering	Unsearchable
Gentleness	Love	Wisdom
Goodness	Mercy	Wrath
Grace	Omnipotent	
Guidance	Omnipresent	

In an unprecedented way these Divine traits, and more, will be exhibited in the Lord's dealings with Abram, later to be named Abraham.

WHY THE RECORD IS RELEVANT

There are at least two reasons why this record is especially relevant to those who are in Christ Jesus.

First, the display of Divine qualities are especially important, for it is God *"with whom we have to do"* (Heb 4:13). In order to respond to Him properly, avoid His judgment, and procuring His favor, it is imperative that we have a working knowledge of His Person. **It is within the framework of the knowledge of God that our lives are to be lived.**

This differs significantly from the those who feel they have excelled when, as men say, they know the will of God for their lives. **However, men**

must be brought to the understanding that it is more important to know God Himself, than to arrive at, what is thought to be, what and where God wants us to be in this world. In fact, I do not know that it is possible to know the will of God for one's life if God Himself is not known. Therefore, God has chosen to reveal very much of Himself in the record of His dealings with certain men. **Abraham is a chief person in this category of men.**

Second, the means through which God prepared the world for the entrance of His Son into it is of critical importance. He chose to do it by raising up a special nation from a special man, among whom He would work extensively, and to whom He would make known His intentions. Through them He would develop the Scriptures and give them as a means of making one *"wise unto salvation"* (2 Tim 3:15) – i.e. able to comprehend what God is doing in salvation, the One appointed to provide its basis, and the gracious intention of that salvation.

Beginning Our Text

Now, with the nations in place, God begins to particularly focus on the purpose He determined before the world began. He will choose to do this by working with a man and his progeny. He did not introduce us to any details of His purpose for the Messiah to Noah. Neither were any details of it revealed to Enoch, or Seth, or Enos, or Noah. Until the time of Abram all that was made known about the coming Deliverer was, (1) He would be the Seed of the woman. (2) He would bruise the head of the serpent. (3) The serpent would bruise His heel. None of these sparse details was developed in any way. No implications were drawn from them. Further, what was revealed only pertained to the adversary, the devil. For the first two thousand years of history not a single word was spoken that developed the impact the bruising of reference would have upon humanity – not so much as a syllable. This is a most arresting thing to ponder.

THERE WAS A FAMINE IN THE LAND

Gen 12:10 ***“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.”***

We are now exposed to the first recorded famine or drought in Scripture. It is not in the territory occupied by Adam and Eve when they were expelled from the Garden. It is not in the area in which Cain wandered as a vagabond. It is not in Shinar, where the people conspired to build a city and a tower. **Instead, it is in Canaan – the land that God promised to Abram and his seed.**

Abram’s first exposure to that land was attended by a famine. When Isaac was in the land, there was a famine (Gen 26:1). When Jacob was in the land, there was a famine (Gen 42:1-5). **Thus, all of “the fathers” experienced a famine in the land of promise.** At this time, the land was occupied by people for whom it was not intended. – the Canaanites (Gen 12:6). Later, after it was occupied by Abram’s offspring, there will be famines in the land as a result of Divine judgment (2 Kgs 8:1; Hag 1:11).

A Type

Throughout the history of God’s people, there have been **spiritual famines**. Isaiah prophesied of times when *“Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall”* (Isa 40:30).

Amos foretold a time of devastating spiritual famine: *“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it. In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst”* (Amos

8:11-13).

Such a time occurred prior to the Reformation Movement, and lasted for a thousand years – 500-1500. During that time scarcely a sound word concerning the things of God was recorded, with very few exceptions. Even the Scriptures themselves were difficult to find.

We are, in my judgment, living in another time of great spiritual famine – a famine of hearing the word of the

thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen 26:2-4).

For Isaac, the land in which he was to dwell during the famine was Philistia. He sowed his seed in that land, and the same year reaped *“an hundredfold”* (Gen 26:12-15). He finally was driven from that territory, and eventually returned to Canaan (Gen 26:16-25). Taking his possessions with him.

The Scriptures themselves have been hidden beneath a plethora of differing versions, and the wisdom of men is now being spewed as a noxious stream from the pulpits and media of the land.

Lord, just as Amos said. It is a famine imposed upon men by the Lord because of their disinterested in His Son and the salvation that comes through Him alone. The Scriptures themselves have been hidden beneath a plethora of differing versions, and the wisdom of men is now being spewed as a noxious stream from the pulpits and media of the land.

What Are the Saints To Do?

What are the saints of God to do during this time? Our situation is much like that of Isaac. Like him, we must seek a means to survive, and are also being told by the Lord, *“Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father; And I will make*

So it is that during the present famine of hearing the Word of the Lord, we found a place where we could live in apparent peace. But soon we found hostility, jealousy, and other things that inhibited spiritual growth. For us, it was the Philistine-like land of dead religion – form without power (2 Tim 3:1-5). We found we had to get to Beersheba – just inside the border of the real promised land. And there, like Isaac, is where we built our altar of thanksgiving (Gen 26:25-26).

There is no simplistic way to approach this subject, as most of us have learned through experience. **Like Isaac, we will know we are in the right place when the seed we sow bears fruit.** That is the confirmation of the blessing of the Lord. A fruitless field is never a source of praise in the heavens. Oh, that men were convinced of the truth of this!

Significant Details of Abram's Life

We are now exposed to significant details in the life of Abram, later named Abraham. **These are the kind of details that have not been revealed concerning those who lived before the patriarch.** To be sure, there were some details of life concerning those living before Abram, but not many.

- ➔ **ADAM AND EVE.** Adam named the animals, and received a wife. Adam and Eve sinned and were expelled from the Garden.
- ➔ **CAIN AND ABEL.** Made offerings

project, and scattered them by confounding their language.

This represents about 2,000 years of human history. **The most significant things up to the time of our text are what God Himself did.** Keep in mind that this period, 2,000 years, is **one third of human history** to this day!

- ➔ The creation (Gen 1-2).
- ➔ Speaking to Adam and Eve (Gen 1:28-30; 3:9-19).
- ➔ Expelling Adam and Eve from the

God in the record thus far? What would lead anyone to imagine that what men were doing was the most important thing – or that men were free to do whatever they pleased. Behold to this point that God assessed what men did and acted accordingly. He did it with Adam and Eve, Cain, the whole world, and those who aspired to make a name for themselves. **He negated and terminated what He did not approve, and no one was able to question Him about it or in any way neutralize what He did and said.**

We are being introduced to the real God – *“the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting king”* (Jer 10:10). Viewed from a Scriptural perspective, the significance of humanity as a whole, or on an individual level, is directly proportionate to their identity with the *“Lord God Almighty”* (Rev 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 21,22). That identity can be favorable (Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abram), or unfavorable (Cain, Lamech, Nimrod). This (identity with God's purpose) is what vaulted worldly dignitaries into prominence: like Solomon, David, Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, Cyrus, and others.

This view of God will only be enlarged as we go through Scripture. His Sovereignty will be clearly displayed. **He will be seen as One who assesses what men do, intervenes in the affairs of men, overrides human determinations, and firmly establishes His will.** If men fail to see this, they will gain no lasting benefit from the Word of God – and that because they are blind.

THERE WAS A FAMINE IN THE LAND

And there was a famine in the land . . . Other versions read, *“there came a famine in the land,”* ^{GENEVA} *“At that time a severe famine struck the land of Canaan,”* ^{NLT} *“There was at that time a terrible famine in the land,”* ^{LIVING} *“The crops failed, and there was no food anywhere in the land,”* ^{CEV} and *“Then a famine came to the land.”* ^{MESSAGE}

Behold to this point that God assessed what men did and acted accordingly. He did it with Adam and Eve, Cain, the whole world, and those who aspired to make a name for themselves. He negated and terminated what He did not approve, and no one was able to question Him about it or in any way neutralize what He did and said.

to the Lord, the Lord accepted one, and not the other.

- ➔ **CAIN.** God spoke to Abel, he killed him, took a wife, and built a city.
- ➔ **LAMECH.** Married two wives, spoke with his wives, and killed two men.
- ➔ **ENOCH.** Walked with God and was translated.
- ➔ **NOAH.** Built and loaded an ark, built an altar and made a sacrifice, planted a vineyard, became drunk, and cursed Canaan.
- ➔ **NIMROD.** Became famous, built a city, and established a kingdom.
- ➔ **HUMANITY.** Desired to build a city and a tower to make a name for themselves, God evaluated their

Garden (Gen 3:23-24).

- ➔ Speaking with Cain (Gen 4:6-15).
- ➔ Assessing the condition of humanity (Gen 6:5; 8:21).
- ➔ Speaking with and directing Noah (Gen 6:8-9:17).
- ➔ Sending the flood (Gen 7-8).
- ➔ Commissioning Noah and His sons (Gen 9:1).
- ➔ Assessing the plans of men to build a city and a tower, making a name for themselves (Gen 11:1-5).
- ➔ Thwarting the project in Shinar and scattering the people by confusing their language (Gen 11:7-9).

Who does not see the priority of

Either the famine commenced when Abram arrived, or it had begun recently. Some versions suggest that it took place at the time Abram arrived. (DOUAY, GENEVA, NLT, MESSAGE). **The point of the text is that the famine was in full force when Abram arrived at Bethel.** We do not know how long he had been traveling about in the land at that time.

Because of the size of Abram's household, as well as that of Lot, and the significant number of their livestock, famine was a very critical situation.

Abram had come from Ur, where his possessions had increased, and no sign of famine, or any kind of material scarcity existed. The same plentitude apparently existed in Haran, where he dwelt for a season, increasing his servants, flocks, and herds. Now, however, that he has arrived in the land promised to him, he finds himself confronting a famine. How could these things be?

FAITH IS TESTED

This circumstance is a test of Abram's faith, and that of Lot as well. **Will this circumstance cause the patriarch to doubt what God has said?** On the surface, it appears as though Abram was better off in Ur and Haran than in the land that was promised to him. But that is a mere human observation.

Faith Had Not Yet Been Defined

At the time of Abram, **faith had not been defined and described as it has for us.** This did not obviate the fact that faith was possessed, but the cognition of what it is was not yet developed. We now know that *"faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"* (Heb 11:1). **I doubt that Abram could have said this about his own faith.** So far as he was concerned, he was convinced that what God said was true, and thus he shaped his life around it. However, such things as keeping the faith (Rev 14:12), fighting the good fight of faith (1 Tim 6:12), and the trying of faith (James

This is why it is so wrong for people living during the exaltation and mediation of Christ to criticize the saints of old because they did things that are so apparently wrong to us.

1:3; 1 Pet 1:7) were not fully grasped by him – at least not to the degree that it is in Christ Jesus.

The "Faith of Christ," Which Comes From Christ, Is Part of New Life

An intelligent perception of faith is part of the *"better thing"* that is realized in Christ Jesus (Heb 11:40). It is a facet of *"the knowledge of God,"* by which we have *"escaped the pollutions of the world"* (Pet 2:20), and come to appropriate *"all things that pertain unto life and godliness"* (2 Pet 1:3). It is part of *"the glory that excelleth"* that characterizes the New Covenant (2 Cor 3:10).

This is why it is so wrong for people living during the exaltation and mediation of Christ to criticize the saints of old because they did things that are so apparently wrong to us. It is also why it is a sign of spiritual inferiority to stand aghast at Abram's faith, as though it was in any way superior to the faith that is owned in Christ Jesus.

STILL ABRAM'S FAITH WAS TRIED

Still, even though Abram's perception of faith itself was not honed to the fine edge that is realized in Christ, **his faith was tried** – for God's nature demands that it be so.

By *"trial,"* or *"tried,"* the Scripture means "THE PROVING BY WHICH SOMETHING IS TRIED OR PROVED, A TEST," STRONG'S and "TO TRY AND LEARN THE GENUINENESS OF SOMETHING BY EXAMINATION AND TESTING." LOUW-NIDA

The testing, or trial, is to determine if the faith is genuine or real. Strictly

speaking, it is not the testing of the individual, **but of the genuineness of their faith.** Peter likens it to gold that is tried by fire (1 Pet 1:7). The material being tested may look like gold. It may have the feel of gold, and weigh-out like gold, but not actually be gold. The test of fire, however will find out whether or not it is real gold, for gold does not burn up by natural fire. **Only what is really NOT gold will pass away under the refiner's fire.** The same is true of silver (Psa 12:6; 66:10; Zech 13:9).

Genuine faith will never fail the test of God – no matter how hot the fire of trial becomes. Those with real faith have been known to survive a furnace that had been heated seven times hotter (Dan 3:13-27). Two notable men, namely Joshua and Caleb, had a faith that enabled them to survive forty years of wandering in the wilderness (Num 32:12). The faith that had been given to Paul was genuine, and thus he survived all manner of testing – perils, persecution, deprivation, and a host of other things (2 Cor 4:8-11; 6:4-14; 11:23-33). **It is not the amount of faith that enables a person to stand, but its validity.**

When men fail the tests of God, it is because their faith did not stand the test of God. There have been contemporary Christian leaders, that failed the test of seeing a beautiful woman. Some have failed the test of riches, while others have failed the test of fame. Some have failed the test of being rejected by men, or not being received by the institution. Others have failed the test of time.

And why have these failures taken

place? **It is because the faith they had at the time was not genuine, and the test proved it!** Such people will do well if they recognize this, acknowledge it before God, and seek to possess the real faith. If they ever did have real faith, they had cast it off (1 Tim 5:12). They departed from it (1 Tim 4:1). The faith that comes from the Lord (Rom 10:17; Eph 6:23; 2 Pet 1:1) holds up under testing – and that without fail.

The thing that must be known by every believer is whether or not their faith is genuine – whether or not it is recognized by God. This is precisely why Paul admonished, *“For though He was crucified through weakness, yet He liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you. Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”* (2 Cor 13:5). **Just as surely as Jesus lived following His crucifixion, so the believers, if they keep the faith, continue to live toward God after his testing.**

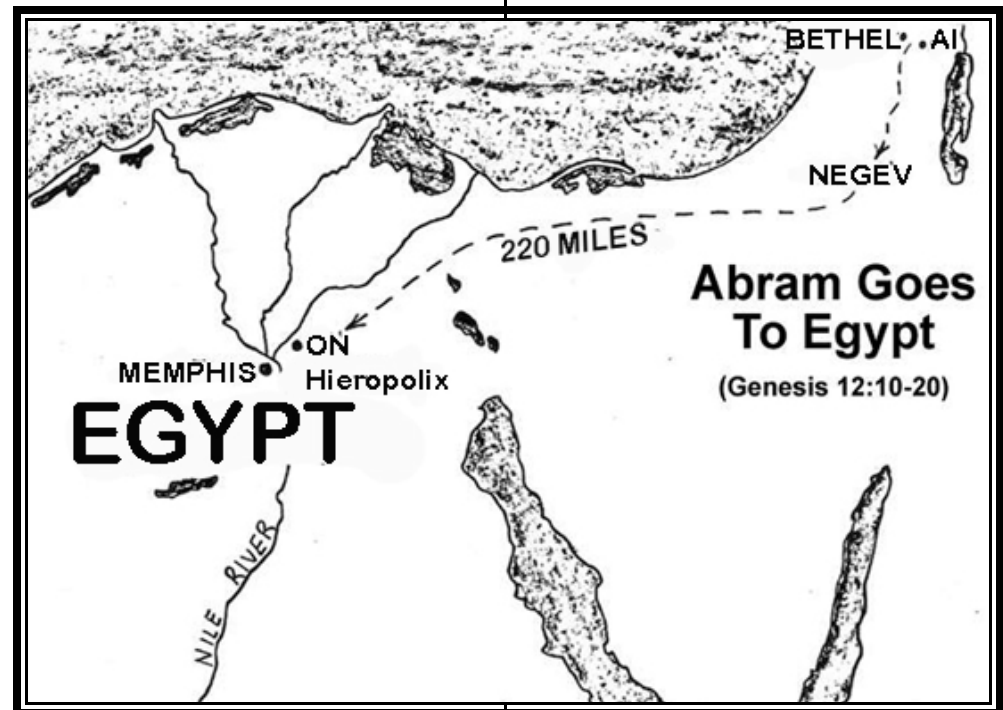
Too often modern Christians equate keeping the faith with not publically renouncing it. They imagine that if they still **say** they believe in God, and believe what the Bible says about Christ, they are keeping the faith. This, however, is not a proper view of things.

Departing from the Faith

Departing from the faith is not merely adopting a way of life that is obviously immoral, or one that embraces another God – like Allah. **It is rather when the person conducts their life in contradiction of the faith.** Here is how the case is stated by Paul. *“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils”* (1 Tim 4:1). In other words, when, in critical matters, a person is motivated by something other than faith itself, they have, in fact, departed from that faith.

In the above text, it was by yielding to the seductive influences of doctrines and dogmas that had been authored by

In some respects, the trying of Abram was like the trial of Job. That is, **succeeding generations knew more**



demons.

For some people, the seduction is of a moral order rather than a religious one. In a hasty and thoughtless moment, they yield to the impulses of the flesh, and are drawn into sin. What happened? Objectively, they were drawn aside. **Subjectively, they departed from the faith** – for men are always *“kept by the power of God through faith”* (1 Pet 1:5). Faith **always** overcomes the world with all of its deceptive ways. Therefore it is written, *“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith”* (1 John 5:4).

I do not believe this has been made sufficiently clear to the modern church. **A professed gospel is being preached that allows people to live outside the perimeter of faith.** How else can the increase of sin in the professed church be explained?

In Abram’s Case

about their trials than they did. While Abram’s trial will prove the validity of his faith, it will primarily prove it to the generations after him. I do not know that there had been sufficient revelation during the times of Job and Abram to even make such an evaluation.

Speaking from a practical point of view, when Abram confronted a famine in the promised land, it did not overthrow the promise of God in his thinking. He will take measures to sustain himself and his household during the duration of the famine. He will not, however, make any effort to return to Haran or Ur of the Chaldees. **His faith, being genuine, did not allow him to doubt what God had promised.**

That, in my judgment, is how we must view this passage – it accounts for him sojourning in Egypt, planning all the while to return to Canaan.

ABRAM WENT DOWN INTO EGYPT

“ . . . and Abram went down into Egypt . . . ”

This was a trip of at least two hundred and twenty miles – and that would bring Abram and company to the **edge** of Egypt. We are not told how he knew about Egypt, or how he was aware that sustenance could be had there. It is something that could have been revealed to him by God. As I see it, it is more likely that Abram made inquiry concerning these matters, as

someone went for forty days in the strength supplied by one meal – as in the case of Elijah (1 Kgs 19:7-8).

- ➔ There have even been famines when God blessed a person to sow and reap in the same year as a famine – as in the case of Isaac (Gen 26:1-12).

famines might occur in the promised land. The lack of ideal circumstances did not lead Abram to doubt the promise. And why not? **Because his faith was genuine**, and the testing of it proved this to be the case.

MY OWN TESTIMONY

Early in my life, I was persuaded that the Lord had called me to be a proclaimer and a teacher of His Word. This was confirmed by several elders, and by my father as well. I shaped my life around that calling, ignoring other career opportunities.

When I arrived in my promised land, I fared well for a short while, but soon the effects of a pervasive spiritual famine forced me to look elsewhere for a means to sustain my growing family. The Lord so arranged my circumstances that I had to go down to the Egypt of the business world for support. However, while there, which was thirty-four years, I maintained the status of a “sojourner.” I determined to get out of that circumstance as soon as possible, and therefore passed by a number of career opportunities within industry, which would have made me a citizen of that strange country.

In due time, at the age of fifty-five, I was able to leave the business world, and resume life in a place more commodious to my calling. For me Canaan proved to be among a devoted body of believers. That was not because there was a lot of spiritual sustenance in the geographical areas in which I lived. Rather, it proved to be a place where I could better fulfill my calling. It became my base of operation, so to speak.

In some way, this kind of thing has been experienced by many Kingdom laborers. Like Abraham, their faith was tested – and it may well have been over an extended period of time. But finally, by the providence of God, they found a place where they did not have to be sojourners. Praise the Lord for His marvelous grace!

Having believed God, Abram fully intended to return to Canaan. He did not choose to be a permanent resident of Egypt, thinking that additional famines might occur in the promised land. The lack of ideal circumstances did not lead Abram to doubt the promise.

they only related to God’s promise indirectly.

God has employed various means to sustain His own

- ➔ There were times when God revealed how His people could obtain food – as in the case of Elijah (1 Kgs 17:4-6, 9-16).
- ➔ There were other times when His people had to pay attention to reports that are given concerning the availability of food – as in the case of Jacob and his sons (Gen 42:1-2).
- ➔ There are also times when He miraculously supplied food – as in the case of supplying manna to Israel (Num 11:7-9).
- ➔ Still other times men simply had to eat what was available – as in the case of John the Baptist (Mk 3:4).
- ➔ There have even been times when

Faith will find the means of sustenance, whether it is in the body or in the spirit – God will see to that.

TO SOJOURN THERE

“ . . . to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.” Other versions read, “to live there for a while,” ^{NIV} “to reside there as an alien,” ^{NRSV} “to stay there for a time,” ^{NJB} “where he lived as a foreigner,” ^{NLT} “to dwell there,” ^{RWB} “to live,” ^{LIVING/ERV/MESSAGE} “to stay there,” ^{LITV} and “to live temporarily.” ^{AMPLIFIED}

Abram did not move to Egypt to stay, as some of the versions suggest (RWB; LIVING; ERV; MESSAGE). As used here, the word translated “sojourn” means: “BE A STRANGER, BE CONTINUING . . . TO SOJOURN, DWELL FOR A TIME 1A2) TO ABIDE, STAY, TEMPORARILY DWELL.” ^{STRONG’S} In English, the word “sojourn” means “a temporary stay.” ^{MERRIAM-WEBSTER}

Having believed God, Abram fully intended to return to Canaan. He did not choose to be a permanent resident of Egypt, thinking that additional

It ought to be added that there is a sense in which we are always sojourners in this world. Our ultimate home is not here. God intends, however, that the days of our

pilgrimage be spent among His people, for He has made us part of the “body” of Christ and the “Temple” of God, neither one being a depiction of personal isolation.

These are matters that cannot be bound upon people by law. They must, however, be perceived by faith, then acted upon in total trust.

THE REQUEST OF ABRAM

“¹¹ 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: ¹² 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. ¹³ 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.”

HE WAS COME NEAR TO EGYPT

“And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt . . .” Other versions read, “close to entering Egypt,” ^{NKJV} “About to enter Egypt,” ^{NIV} “came close to Egypt,” ^{CJB} “approached Egypt,” ^{NET} and “approaching the border of Egypt.” ^{NLT}

Remember, the promise to Abram was very vague at this point. He did not fully know what was meant by his “seed.” He did not know there was a single Messiah who would come from him. All he really knew was:

- ➔ He had to leave his homeland.
- ➔ He had to leave his kindred and his father’s house.”
- ➔ God would make a great nation of him.
- ➔ God would bless him.
- ➔ God would make his name great.
- ➔ He himself would become a blessing.

- ➔ God would bless them that blessed him.
- ➔ God would curse them that cursed him.
- ➔ In him all nations of the earth would be blessed.

Abram had no idea how all of this was going to be accomplished, the means through which it would be carried out, or why it all was promised.

Yet, Abram’s faith was genuine, and it was working in him, whether he was fully aware of it or not.

He approached Egypt

As he approached Egypt, his spirit felt the impact of the corruption that was there, and the consequent effect it could have upon him. He sensed danger, which is itself a remarkable thing. This sensibility was **not** owing to familiarity with Scripture, for there was no Scripture at that time. It was **not**

he had not. It was **not** because warnings had been issued by holy prophets – for there were no prophets at the time. In fact, Abraham is the first person in Scripture who is called a prophet (Gen 20:7) – and he had not yet achieved that status.

This was the uncultured impact of bona fide faith. By “uncultured,” I mean that his faith had not been matured through experience and further revelation. Abram’s faith was not the sort of thing he could have written about, or expounded at length.

As I understand the workings of faith, this sensitivity was all taking place in his heart.

HE SAID TO SARAI HIS WIFE

“ . . . 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

This was the uncultured impact of bona fide faith. By “uncultured,” I mean that his faith had not been matured through experience and further revelation. Abram’s faith was not the sort of thing he could have written about, or expounded at length.

because he had spent prolonged periods of time in the presence of the Lord, for

they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake. . . .”

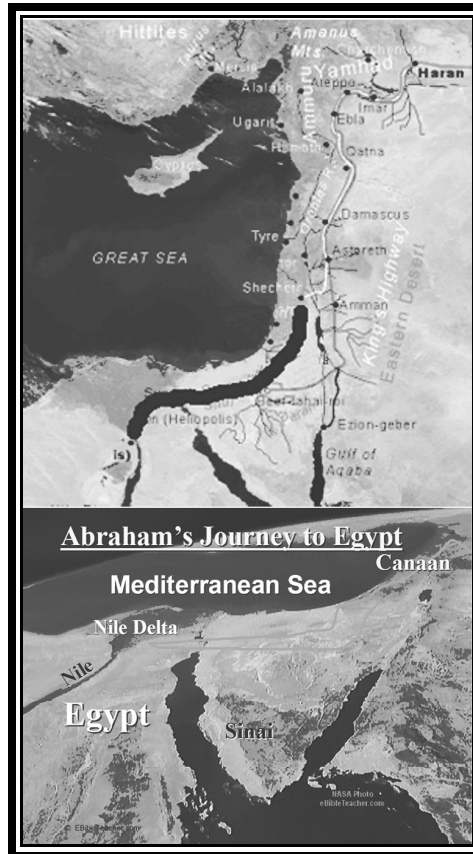
Here is the first occurrence of Abram reasoning in such a manner. He will do it again when he comes into Gerar, which was in Philistine territory (Gen 20:1-2).

Considerable criticism has been leveled against Abraham for this, even though God nowhere criticized him because of it. The reason for this is found in the sparsity of the things revealed to Abram, and therefore the inferior nature of his knowledge.

Knowing that Sarai was a beautiful woman, and would attract the attention of key people, he reasoned that the Egyptians would covet her, and kill him to obtain her for themselves. There apparently was no question in his mind about the Egyptians doing this. They would, he reasoned, desire Sarai, and therefore take her to themselves. His request had to do with the outcome of that event. It was not a suggestion on how she could be spared from the intentions of the Egyptians.

Thus he requested that she say she was his sister – which she actually was, having Terah as her father as did Abraham, although they did not have the same mother (Gen 20:12). Thus, while it may appear to be a technicality, there was some truth in what Abram said.

It is not unreasonable to consider that Abram was thinking of the promise that had been made to him by Almighty God. How could all of this come to pass if he was killed by someone in Egypt who desired his wife? Considering what God had told him, and the spiritually primitive nature of the times in which he lived, why would anyone expect Abram to reason any differently? The only reason any person would fault Abram for doing this is that the critic has more information than Abram had. Or, is there anyone who would postulate that Abram had as much understanding of God as is available to men today?



Some years later, when he had a greater acquaintance with God, and was more knowledgeable of what was involved in the promises given to him, he would reason in a more lofty manner. Ponder what he thought when God told him to offer up Isaac as a burnt offering to Him. It is written, **"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"** (Heb 11:17-19).

Faith, which comes by hearing, had matured in Abraham when he was told to offer Isaac, and thus he thought in a more mature manner.

But this was not the case when he was approaching Egypt for the first time. He thus thought more like a man, even though he was moved by his perception of the promises of God.

Because of these circumstances, it is improper to judge the request of Abram as though an abundance of truth was lying all about him – or as though vast bodies of spiritual knowledge were accessible to him. This would be like faulting Jesus, at twelve years of age, for asking questions of the *"doctors"* of the law (Lk 2:46). Why didn't He address His questions to His Father in heaven? It is because He was, at that time, increasing *"in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man"* (Lk 2:52). During His ministry, however, He had no such conversations with the doctors of the Law – and later in his tenured life Abraham made no such requests as is found in this text.

We know from apostolic doctrine that God accepts men according to what they have, not according to what they do not have (2 Cor 8:12). Abram did not yet have a matured and perceptive faith, and therefore we ought not expect him to conduct his life as though he did.

MY SOUL SHALL LIVE BECAUSE OF THEE

"... and my soul shall live because of thee." Other versions read, *"that I may live on account of you,"* NASB *"my life will be spared because of you,"* NIV *"spare my life out of regard for you,"* NJB and *"the will treat me well because of you, and spare my life!"* LIVING

Thus the request was made in the interest of Abram's life being spared. And why was this so important at this time. Was it merely an attempt to save his life, or was he thinking of the promise that had been given to him and his progeny – of which he had none at this time? It seems to me that it was because of the promise of God that he thought of his life being spared. Admittedly, in the blazing glory of the Gospel and the New Covenant, this is not a good way of thinking. However, neither of those glories existed on earth at that time, and we ought not expect Abram to reason as though they were. That is not sound reasoning.

THE EGYPTIANS BEHELD THE WOMAN

“¹⁴ And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair. ¹⁵ The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.”

Now, we will see that the Egyptians did precisely as Abram had reasoned they would do. Even though, at this time, Israel did not exist as a nation, the Law had not been given, and spiritual culture was at a minimum, yet Abram seemed to sense the nature of the Egyptians, who came primarily from Ham (Psa 105:23,27; 106:22), Noah's son, whose grandson Canaan, was cursed. I do not know how much Abram knew about this, but it must have been passed down through the generations leading to the ultimate birth of the Son of God.

If this was the case, it is easy to see why Abram thought as he did about the Egyptians. **He apparently did not think in this manner when he was in Ur of the Chaldees, or in Haran.**

Now, although Abram had done the best he himself could, what he feared came to pass. The impact of all of this upon Abram is not made known. **This is in order that we will make proper associations with Abraham, and not allow his experiences in this world to shape our understanding of him.**

Enough will be revealed of Abraham's beginnings to establish two things.

- ➡ That he took the promises of God seriously, and shaped his life around them.
- ➡ That God took up the cases concerning Abraham and defended him just as He said He would.

The entirety of the account of this episode will justify this these observations.

A Lesson to be Learned
Those who are in Christ can learn

- ➡ Moses was opposed by his own people throughout the leading of them through the wilderness (Ex 17:4).

- ➡ Gideon was opposed for casting

The impact of all of this upon Abram is not made known. This is in order that we will make proper associations with Abraham, and not allow his experiences in this world to shape our understanding of him.

much from accounts like this. **No believer should be surprised or confused by the presence of trouble, difficulty, and hardship in their personal lives.** There are simply too many accounts of people who have been received by God suffering trouble and affliction while they, like Abram, were engaged in doing the will of the Lord. A few examples will suffice to buttress this point.

- ➡ Abel was opposed and slain by his brother (Gen 4:8).
- ➡ Abraham twice had his wife taken from him (Gen 12:15; 20:2).
- ➡ Lot was chided In Sodom (Gen 19:9).
- ➡ Isaac had to endure a famine (Gen 26:1).
- ➡ Jacob had to endure a famine (41:1-2), thought he had lost his son (Gen 37:33-34), and was opposed by Esau (Gen 27:41).
- ➡ Job endured the loss of his possessions, children, and health (Job 1-2).

down idols (Judges 6:28-32).

- ➡ Elijah was opposed (1 Kgs 18:10; 2 Kgs 1:9)
- ➡ David endured slander and persecution (Psa 31:13; 59:1-2).
- ➡ Some of the prophets of the Lord were slain by Jezebel (1 Kgs 18:4).
- ➡ Micaiah the prophet was persecuted (2 Chron 18:26).
- ➡ Elisha was opposed (2 Kgs 6:31).
- ➡ The prophet Hanani was persecuted (2 Chron 15:9-10).
- ➡ Zechariah was slain by the Jews (2 Chron 24:21).
- ➡ Jeremiah endured affliction (Jer 15:10,15; 17:15-18; 38:6).
- ➡ Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego endured a furnace of fire (Dan 3:8-23).
- ➡ Daniel was cast into a den of lions (Dan 6:1-28).

- ➔ John the Baptist was imprisoned and slain (Matt 14:3-12).
- ➔ James the apostle was beheaded (Acts 12:2).
- ➔ After being raised from the dead, men sought to kill Lazarus (John 12:10).
- ➔ Stephen was stoned (Acts 6:9-7:60).
- ➔ Paul was subjected to all manner of hardship (2 Cor 11:23-28).
- ➔ Timothy was imprisoned (Heb

13:23).

- ➔ John was exiled to the Isle of Patmos (Rev 1:9).

Thus we see that Abram's experience, though difficult to bear, was a kind of standard for the people of God.

Something to Consider

How serious is it when professed believers groan under the weight of trouble as though some strange thing had happened to them? This in no way mitigates the fact that trouble is hard to bear. **But it must not be allowed to hide**

the truth from us. God is in those matters, perfecting his children for glory. As it is written, *"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified"* (1 Pet 4:12-14). **Our troubles must not be allowed to throw us off-course, a dim the hope of glory!**

THE TREATMENT OF ABRAM FOR SARAH'S SAKE

^{16a} **And he entreated Abram well for her sake . . .** Other versions read, *"treated Abram well for her sake,"* NASB *"for her sake he dealt well with Abram,"* NIV *"because of her, he was good to Abram,"* BBE *"Everything went well for Abram because of her,"* GWN *"On her account it went very well with Abram,"* NAB *"Abram was very well treated because of her,"* NJB *"Then Pharaoh gave Abram many gifts because of her,"* NLT *"to Abram he hath done good because of her,"* YLT *"Pharaoh was kind to Abram because he thought Abram was Sarai's brother,"* ERV

"Because of her, Abram got along very well." MESSAGE

To this point, everything has worked out precisely as Abram said – and even better. He told Sarah that saying she was his sister would result in him living. But even more than this has occurred – he is being treated *"very well . . . because of her."* NJB

The circumstances seem out of control – as though Sarai will be violated by the king. **But working within the framework of His eternal purpose,**

God will manage this whole situation for the good of both Sarai and Abram. There may be a thousand reasons cited by the sophists for this not taking place, and harsh criticisms raised against Abram for asking Sarai to say she was his sister. **But after all is said and done, God will not condemn Abram, but will work in a remarkable way in Abram's behalf.** The involvement of God in this whole affair is aligned against Abram's critics, and they ought to have a special regard to what He does. The Lord does not speak of Abram as they do.

ABRAM'S WEALTH INCREASES

^{16b} . . . **and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels.** Other versions read, *"and (Pharaoh) gave him sheep . . .,"* NASB *"Abram acquired sheep . . .,"* NIV *"giving him sheep . . .,"* CJB *"and he was given sheep . . .,"* GWN *"he received flocks and herds . . .,"* NAB and *"Pharaoh gave Abram many gifts*

because of her-- sheep . . ." NLT

Abram's wealth has been increasing from the time he arrived in Haran. When he left Ur of the Chaldees with his father, Sarai, and Lot, there was no mention of him taking any possessions (Gen 12:31).

After arriving in Haran, and before

the second leg of his journey to Canaan, he had gained *"substance"* and *"souls"* (Gen 12:5). Now, having arrived in Egypt, more is added to his wealth: *"sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels"* (Gen 12:16). The Lord was blessing him as He said.

The verse is phrased so that it is reasonable to suppose that Pharaoh

Finding a famine in Canaan, Abram goes down into Egypt where God's care for him is made known " – Given O. Blakely

gave Abram all of these possessions. This must have been in appreciation for the delight he had in Sarai. The literal reading of the verse is, *“and to Abram*

Those who seek to justify a gospel of health and wealth by pointing to the wealth of Abraham have failed to see the reason for his record in Scripture. It

8,16,17,32), **Paul** (Acts 13:26; Rom 4:1-3,9,12-13,16; 9:7; 11:1; 2 Cor 11:22; Gal 3:6-9, 14,16,18,22; Heb 2:16; 6:13; 7:1-2,4-6,9; 11:3,17), and **James** (James 2:22,23). The Lord Jesus mentioned him at least eighteen times. **Of the 56 times he is mentioned from Matthew through First Peter, there is not a solitary reference to him being rich, having a lot of possessions, and having an abundance – even though, historically speaking, he was rich and had many possessions. Yet, there is no stress placed upon that circumstance. That is simply a statement of the case.**

Those who use the patriarch as an example of how God wants His people to be wealthy must account for the fact that no one in Christ, or the Lord Jesus Himself, is ever recorded as making such an observation.

he is good in sake of her and he is becoming to him flock and herd...”
INTERLINEAR

But, what were these increased possessions in comparison to the loss of Sarai. Miserable substitutes, indeed!

The Scriptures do not reveal the thoughts Abram may have had about this whole matter. **The reason for this omission is that the Spirit is accounting for Abram’s involvement in the purpose of God, how he managed to arrive in Canaan, and what was involved in developing he Messianic lineage.**

is primarily to account for his faith, and what was involved in him keeping it – particularly as it regards the development of the Jewish nation and the coming of the Messiah. He is fundamentally our example of the faith that justifies, and by which we obtain the righteousness of God (Rom 4:9-16; Gal 3:7-9,14).

There are a number of New Covenant people who have mentioned Abraham. They include **Matthew** (Matt 1:1-2,17), **Luke** (Lk 3:34), **Mary** (Lk 1:55), **Zecharias** (Lk 1:73), **Peter** (Acts 3:13,25; 1 Pet 3:6), **Stephen** (Acts 7:2,

Those who use the patriarch as an example of how God wants His people to be wealthy must account for the fact that no one in Christ, or the Lord Jesus Himself, is ever recorded as making such an observation. Until such a reference can be found, these pretenders need to cease their misrepresentations of the Gospel. The faith of Abraham is the focus of the Spirit, not his riches! That is too apparent to excuse the erroneous emphasis being made by false teachers of our time.

THE LORD PLAGUED PHARAOH

“¹⁷ And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife.”

THE LORD PLAGUED PHARAOH AND HIS HOUSE

“And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues . . .” Other versions read, *“struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues,”* ^{NASB} *“afflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household,”* ^{NIV} *“sent great troubles on Pharaoh's house,”* ^{BBE} *“scourged Pharaoh and his house with*

most grievous stripes,” ^{DOUAY} *“afflicted Pharaoh with great and severe afflictions,”* ^{SEPTUAGINT} *“chastised [chastisements great and severe,”* ^{ABP} *“struck the king and everyone in his palace with terrible diseases,”* ^{CEV} *“caused Pharaoh and all the people in his house to have very bad diseases,”* ^{ERV} *“hit Pharaoh hard . . . everybody in the palace got seriously sick,”* ^{MESSAGE} and *“scourged Pharaoh and his household with serious plagues.”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

I do not know what those who say God never makes people sick do with this passage – or if they are even aware the Holy Spirit has inspired men to write it. In this text, God not only made people ill, He afflicted them with “serious diseases” ^{NIV} . . . terrible diseases ^{CEV} very bad diseases ^{MESSAGE} so that they “got seriously sick.” ^{MESSAGE}

The word *“great”* means “MAGNITUDE AND EXTENT” as well as “NUMBER.” ^{STRONG’S} The word *“plagues”* means, “1) STROKE, PLAGUE, DISEASE, MARK, PLAGUE SPOT 1A) STROKE, WOUND 1B)

STROKE (METAPHORICAL OF DISEASE) 1C) MARK (OF LEPROSY)” STRONG’S

It appears that these plagues prevented Pharaoh from defiling Sarai, for God was protecting her. The Psalms seem to allude to this, and similar, events in the 150th Psalm. *“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”* (Psa 105:12-15).

This, then, was God’s way of protecting and providing for Abram. It does not reach that the means He used was intended to be a pattern for all time, any more than Samson’s long hair was intended to establish the appointed means of having extraordinary strength.

BECAUSE OF SARAI ABRAM’S WIFE

“ . . . because of Sarai Abram’s wife.” Other versions read, “for Sarai, Abram’s wife,” ^{DOUAY} “on account of Sarai,” ^{TNK} “for the matter of Sarai,” ^{YLT} “account of her being there,” ^{LIVING} “on the word of Sarai.” ^{LITV}

The words “because of” are translated from the following Hebrew word: **דָּבָר** {DAW-BAW’} **MEANING:** 1) SPEECH, WORD, SPEAKING, THING 1A) SPEECH 1B) SAYING, UTTERANCE 1C) WORD, WORDS 1D) BUSINESS, OCCUPATION, ACTS, **MATTER**, CASE, SOMETHING, **MANNER** (BY EXTENSION).

This lexical definition suggests three possible meanings of the text.

- ➔ Because of the **saying, utterance, or word** of Sarai. In this case, Sarai would have spoken of the matter to Pharaoh – something like Joseph did to Potiphar’s wife (Gen 39:9). This also may have involved divulging to Pharaoh that she was, in fact, Abram’s wife.
- ➔ Because of the **matter, or case** of

Sarai. This would focus on the morality of the whole situation – that it was not lawful for Pharaoh to take liberties with Sarai, another man’s wife – like Herod marrying his brother’s wife (Mk 6:18).

- ➔ Because the **manner of conduct** of Sarah. This would involve the godly deportment of Sarai, and her obvious reluctance to yield to any of Pharaoh’s advances – like Peter’s different appearance and speech when Jesus was appearing before the high priest (Mk 14:70). In records like this, we must filter our thinking through the purpose of God – the revealed purpose of God. God had made certain inevitabilities known to Abram, and there was no chance they would not be fulfilled.
- ➔ He would make of Abram a great nation.
- ➔ He would bless Abram.
- ➔ He would make Abram’s name great.
- ➔ Abram would be a blessing.
- ➔ He would bless those who blessed2 Abraham.

- ➔ He would curse those who cursed Abram.

That is the mental template that must be laid over this entire text. It must not be read like a newspaper or novel. Although it appears as though we are merely dealing with an historical account, we are really in the Holy Place, beholding how the Lord works all things together for the good of those who love Him, and are the called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28). He will arrange for men, and even the devil himself, to do this or that, in order that His objectives may appear to be in jeopardy, and His will thwarted by the machinations of men, and even the prince of the power of the air. **He knows, and it is best for us to know it in some measure, that there is no such thing as an person, event, or word that is outside the circumference of His power.** He can confirm a word of man, or cast it down as a giant would swat a gnat.

If Pharaoh, king of Egypt, appears to interrupt what the Lord is doing, the Lord will bring his intentions to nothing. If Abram, owing to his ignorance of the purpose of God, goes about to do his best to work in conformity to what he does know, God will simply use the occasion to increase the possessions of



Abram so he will have a good start in the promised land. And, when the time comes, Pharaoh will be anxious to get Sarai out of his house.

Now, it is one thing to faintly see these things in the account before us – it is quite another to be convinced that God is just as precise with you, as He conforms you to Christ. This is involved

in all of God's works being in righteousness (Psa 145:17). Once you have seen this, and begin to live accordingly, you will know what it is to live by faith, and be saved by hope.

PHARAOH CALLS ABRAM

"¹⁸ 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? ¹⁹ 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."

What follows has the mark of God's work upon it. **When a heathen is on the initiative to do something right, men must think soberly about it – particularly when it brings an advantage to the saints of God.** Satan would

you (Matt 6:8.32; 1 Pet 5:7).

PHARAOH CALLED ABRAM

"And Pharaoh called Abram..."
Other versions read, *"summoned Abram,"* ^{NIV} *"sent for Abram,"* ^{BBE} and *"called Abram before him."* ^{LIVING}

Remember, these were not the days of civil rights, appeals, fair trials, and the likes. If the king wanted to take your life, he did. It was just that simple.

At the time of the summons, unless God had revealed it to him,

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..."

Abram does not answer this inquiry, or provide any kind of explanation, as he did later with Abimelech (Gen 20:11-12). I do not doubt that the sensitivity of this patriarch may have caused him some shame at this point. However, I fear to criticize him because of the limits of his understanding of the Lord and his ways. **He had done what he thought was best, but now he sees that his reasoning was flawed.** It appeared as though it had not even been necessary to withhold the fact that Sarai was his wife. However, it is equally true that the plagues might very well have awakened the conscience of Pharaoh to the impropriety of his action. Perhaps, had he known Sarai was Abram's wife, he might have killed Abram and taken her for himself. It seems to me that this is the preferred way of viewing the circumstance.

Here is a heathen ruler who had no known knowledge of the true God – unless he had obtained what little Abram and Sarai knew from them. Yet, he has a sense of moral propriety, and now knows it is not decent to take another man's wife to yourself.

certainly not do this. If he gives anything to men that seems to be to their advantage, he first requires that they bow down and worship him (Matt 4:9).

If things are being worked together for your good, do not think that it is because you are deserving of it. Give the glory to God, for He is the one who knows what you need, and cares for

Abram had no idea concerning the cause for the call. He has no Scripture to direct him in how to think, and there is no known record of any historical circumstance like unto this. **He will learn from experience, just like us, that faith enables its possessor to conduct himself with amazing calmness and expectation.**

WHY DIDST THOU NOT TELL ME?

" . . . and said, What is this that

Here is a heathen ruler who had no known knowledge of the true God – unless he had obtained what little Abram and Sarai knew from them. Yet, he has a sense of moral propriety, and now knows it is not decent to take another man's wife to yourself. In addition to this, his entire household has been plagued with serious diseases – and their beginning can be traced to the presence of Sarah in his harem.

We are not told how he knew Sarai

was Abram's wife. Somehow, however, he had made the connection between the plagues that now filled his house, and the fact that he took Sarai to be his own. It is possible that Sarai told him, or that God revealed it to him in a dream, or some other circumstance. It could also be that he reasoned the matter out and came to this conclusion.

That such a conclusion could be reached by reasoning should not surprise us.

➔ In Jonah's time, when a storm arose on the boat in which Jonah had fled from the presence of the Lord, the "mariners" made an association with Deity, and "cried every man unto his god" (Jonah 1:6).

• When the Philistines took the ark of God into possession, "the hand of the Lord was heavy upon them . . . and He destroyed them, and smote them with emerods" (1 Sam 5:6). As the Philistines thought upon this, they made a connection between their circumstance and the ark of God being in their possession. They sought to move the ark, and everywhere they moved it "the hand of the Lord was against the city" (1 Sam 5:9). Eventually, they concluded they should send the ark back to Israel with "a trespass offering" (1 Sam 6:1-16).

One of the marks of the depravity of our times is the inability of men to associate calamities with Divine judgements. It is true that care must be taken not to consider every calamity as a punitive judgment. The experience of Job is a case in point (Job 1-2). However, it is proper to associate such judgments with God Himself. This is found in the teaching of Scripture.

➔ "Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?" (Amos 3:6)

➔ "I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and **create calamity**; I, the LORD, do all these things" ^{NKJV} (Isa 45:7).

➔ "The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: **the LORD hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet**" (Nahum 1:3).

➔ Frequently, the Lord said He would send a "pestilence" (Lev 20:25; 2 Chron 7:13; Jer 24:10; 29:17; Ezek 5:17; 14:19,21|28:23). Then it is also said that the Lord actually did "send" a pestilence (2 Sam 24:15; 1 Chron 21:12,14; Amos 4:10).

➔ There are inspired records of the Lord calling for famines (1 Kgs

these days, there is a major factor that is overlooked. The text is Second Chronicles 7:14: "If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." **However, the verse that precedes it is rarely mentioned.** It is the context in which the quoted statement is made: "If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people" (2 Chr 7:13). **The theology of some people does not allow them to make such statements.**

Even among the heathen this Divine trait is recognized. The heathen on the island of Melita saw Paul being bitten by an extremely poisonous snake

It ought to be noted that in our time there are professed ministers of the Gospel who have taken the wife of another man, and have apparently had no pangs of their conscience because of it.

17:1; 2 Kgs 8:1; Psa 105:16; Isa 3:1; 14:3; Ezek 4:16-17; 5:16-17; 14:13| Hag 1:11).

➔ Who can forget the grievous plagues that God sent upon Egypt; water turned to blood, frogs, lice, flies, diseased cattle, boils and blains, hail, locusts, thick darkness, death of the firstborn throughout Egypt (Ex 7:14-12:30).

➔ The judgment of the flood (Gen 6-8).

➔ The judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19).

In a text that is frequently quoted

and reasoned, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live" (Acts 28:4). **This kind of thinking has all but disappeared in the churches and among the general populace of our country.** However, it should not surprise us if Pharaoh thought in such a manner.

It ought to be noted that in our time there are professed ministers of the Gospel who have taken the wife of another man, and have apparently had no pangs of their conscience because of it. Such men have stooped beneath the turpitude of the heathen king of Egypt How pitifully impoverished they will appear on the day of judgment.

BEHOLD THY WIFE

" . . . now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way." Other versions read, *"Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go!"*^{NIV} *"Now then, here is your wife, take her, and be gone,"*^{NRSV} *"Take her and get out of here,"*^{NLT} and *"take her and get away [from here]!"*^{AMPLIFIED}

This reflects the same reasoning of the Pharaoh during the time of Moses,

when Israel was being delivered from Egypt. Following the plagues he endured, he said to Moses, *"Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said"*(Ex 12:31). Plagues moved that Pharaoh to ask Moses and the people to leave Egypt; and plagues compelled this Pharaoh to ask Abram and Sarai to get out of Egypt. In both

cases, the Lord was acting in favor of His own chosen people. He turned the hearts of kings like rivers, so that His will might be done (Prov 21:1).

I will take it that this was the means the Lord employed to have Abram return to Canaan, where the famine had no doubt been ended. The time of sojourning in Egypt was over, and this is the way God worked.

ABRAM, HIS WIFE, AND ALL THAT HE HAD ARE SENT AWAY

"²⁰ And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had."

We have no idea of the time Abram and company spent in Egypt. That detail is not provided. However, it is neither necessary nor profitable to dwell upon how long Abram was in Egypt. God had called him to go to Canaan, making his tenure there the point of emphasis.

PHARAOH COMMANDED HIS MEN

"And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him . . ." Other versions read, *"Then Pharaoh gave orders about Abram to his men,"*^{NIV} *"gave men charge concerning him,"*^{ESV} *"ordered some of his men to escort them,"*^{NLT} *"commanded his men to lead Abram out of Egypt."*^{ERV}

The idea is that Pharaoh commanded his men to make sure Abram left the country, and did so safely. Like the Pharaoh of Moses' time, he saw no advantage to the people of God remaining in Egypt. There was a sense in which jeopardy came them. **This was the first known example of God cursing those who cursed Abram.** This was true even though, in a sense, and according to Pharaoh's own word, the misdeed was unintentional. That is

how precise the Lord's care is for His people. His primary concern is for them, not for those who conduct themselves unwisely and wantonly against them – which is what Pharaoh did. He wanted Sarai for himself – even though she was a sojourner with someone else.

A Lesson to be Learned

Some naive soul may think that just because inadvertently they hurt or in any way disadvantaged God's people, it will be overlooked by the Lord. This, however, is a foolish thought, because the Lord's care for His people does not wane because people did not mean to offend them. Any time life in any way becomes more difficult for the saints because of the words and actions of others, the Lord takes due note of it. Even when it involves fellow believers, the Lord is depicted as taking the side of the weaker and less informed. Paul confirms this in his teaching about offenses (Rom 14:1-2,21; 15:1; 1 Cor 8:7-12,22; 1 Thess 5:14).

THEY SENT HIM AWAY

" . . . and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had." Other versions read, *"they escorted him away,"*^{NASB} *"set him on his way,"*^{NRSV} *"they brought him on his way,"*^{ASV} *"they led him away,"*^{DOUAY} *"they conveyed him forth,"*^{GENEVA} *"they*

expelled him,"^{NET} *"sent Abram out of the country,"*^{NLT} *"sent him out of the country under armed escort,"*^{LIVING} *"to lead Abram out of Egypt,"*^{ERV} *"took Abram and put him out of the country,"*^{GNB} and *"to get Abram out of the country."*^{MESSAGE}

The word translated *"sent"* carries the idea of putting, or casting out.^{STRONG'S} Pharaoh did not ask Abram if he wanted to leave, but commanded his men to escort, or lead, him out of the country, together with everything he had – including the possessions that Pharaoh himself had given him.

There are several different ways to view this escorting of Abram and those with him out of Egypt.

- From Pharaoh's point of view, this would relieve him of any further cursing from the Lord.
- From Abram's perspective, this would ensure that the escorts would see to it that no other Egyptians would see Sarai and desire her for themselves.
- From Sarai's view, this was a release from bondage.
- From heaven's point of view, it was time for Abram to return to

Canaan, for the famine was over, and yet Abram was richer.

A PATTERN OF THE FUTURE

We have in this event a pattern for the future – coming out of Egypt and going into Canaan.

Both Jacob And Joseph will leave Egypt and return to Canaan – after both of them had died (Josh 24:32; 49:5-13). Both of them had left Canaan to go into Egypt. Joseph was sold into slavery, and thus sent to Egypt (Gen 37:26; Acts 7:9). By faith, knowing that Israel would be delivered from Egypt, Joseph gave commandment concerning his bones, that they would be carried with Israel into Canaan (Gen 50:25; Heb 11:22). Moses took them (Ex 13:19). Jacob had gone to Egypt during a time of famine (Gen 46:6-8). He was taken back to Canaan to be buried (Gen 45:5-13).

Israel was delivered from Egyptian bondage through a series of unparalleled judgments, and a physical deliverance that has been unequalled in all of human history (Ex 12-15).

The child Jesus came out of Egypt, where He had been hidden during

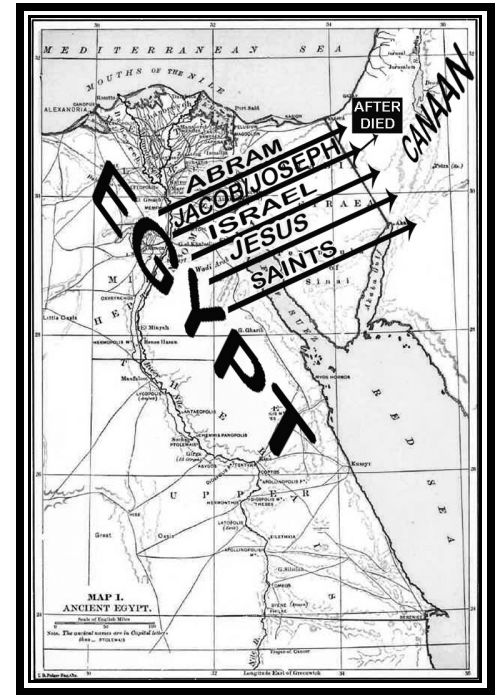
Herod's efforts to slay him (Matt 2:19-23). Matthew says that this fulfilled a prophesy by Hosea (Hos 11:1; Matt 2:15).

Those who are in Christ Jesus make the same kind of pilgrimage – from bondage into the liberty that is experienced in Christ Jesus (Col 1:13; Gal 5:1). And, ultimately the type will be fulfilled following death, or the coming of the Lord, when the saints are gathered out of the earth to be forever with the Lord (Matt 24:31; John 14:3; 1 Thess 4:16-17).

All of this is a revelation of how the Lord works with His eternal purpose in mind. Everything He made and everything He says and does, is in some way related to that *"eternal purpose"* that He has purposed in Himself (Eph

1:9-11; 3:11).

It only remains for us to see the relation between what God says and does with what He had determined. If we can comprehend that relationship, what God requires of us will make perfect sense to us, and will be done willingly and thoroughly. **However, if all**



of this is vague to the professing believer, life will prove mysterious and discouraging, and the way will be more difficult than it needs to be.

Those who fail to assist the saints to see these things are not good leaders, regardless of the seeming success they enjoy. These have been written for our learning (Rom 15:4).

CONCLUSION

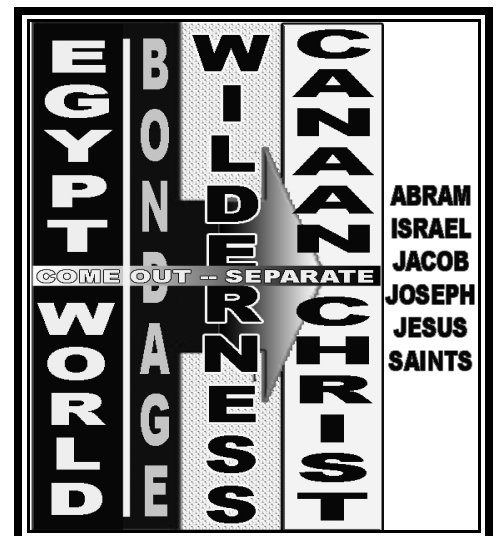
The record of Abram is a remarkable lesson in Divine leadership and human experience within that leadership. Those who feel that being led and blessed by God means that trouble, difficulty, and challenge will not

be confronted are gently corrected by the record of "our father Abraham" (Rom 4:12).

Faith that is genuine if proved to be so in the crucible of fire, where required refining takes place. An untried faith cannot be confirmed by men to be genuine. The Lord, of course, knows *"them that are His"* (2 Tim 2:19).

However, the Lord wants principalities and powers in heavenly places to be tutored in the wisdom and effectiveness of His ways, as well as the saints on earth.

Throughout the ages, the people of God have made the transition from an unacceptable and trying situation to an acceptance and favorable one. For Abram, it involved a move from Egypt to Canaan. Jacob and Joseph made that move after they had died, being buried in the promised land after having spent a considerable amount of time in Egypt. Jesus also made a move from



Egypt to the land of promise, taking up residence with his “parents” in Nazareth.

This same kind of experience takes place in the saints – those who are in Christ Jesus. They make the transition from darkness to light, from alienation to reconciliation, and from being strangers to being fellow-citizens. They move from not being a people to being

the people of God, and from not obtaining mercy to obtaining it. They made the move from death to life, from being dominated by Satan to being able to resist him, and from being sinners to being righteous.

This manner of movement continues through their lives as they are changes from one stage of increasing glory to another. They move from being

children in understanding to being men that are not moved about with every wind of doctrine.

This, and more, is being lived out before us in the chronicles of the life of Abram. In the various movements of his life we see how God actually manages the lives of His people, working things together for their good.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 11/3/11. We will continue our series of lessons on the book of Genesis. The twenty-first lesson will cover verses 1-12 of chapter Thirteen: “ABRAHAM AND LOT.” Following the incident with Pharaoh, Abraham, Sarai, Lot, and those with them leave Egypt. By this time, Abram “was very rich. He returns to Bethel, where he had been at the first, and to the altar he had built there. Owing to the largeness of their flocks and herds, the land was not able to sustain both Abram and Lot. Consequently, strife arose between their herdmen. In order to avoid strife, Abram asked Lot to take his choice of the land, and he would take the remainder. Thus the stage is set for a remarkable turn of events. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.



2011 PREACHING FESTIVAL

Theme:

**ILLUMINATION
AND
ITS REDEMPITIVE FUNCTION**

Friday, Saturday, Lord's Day
7:00 PM 1:00 PM 9:00 AM

NOVEMBER 11-13, 2011
AT THE BLAKELY HOME

The Blakely Family: Given, June, Benjamin, and Eva

406 South Sergeant Street, Joplin, MO 64801

Telephone: (417) 782-3063, Email: Given (GivenB@aol.com) June: (JuneE01@aol.com)

ADAH's Webpage: <http://wotruth.com/adah.htm> -- EVA's Webpage: <http://wotruth.com/Eva.htm>

Benjamin (Bensvison@aol.com), Eva (Evablakely@aol.com)

Adah Hutchcraft (adahhutchcraft@hotmail.com), Jason Hutchcraft (hutchcraftj@hotmail.com)

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COMMENTARY on Malachi: <http://wotruth.com/Malachi.htm>

COMMENTARY on Galatians: <http://wotruth.com/Galatiansindex-new.htm>

COMMENTARY on Genesis: <http://wotruth.com/Genesis.htm>

COMMENTARY on Ephesians: <http://wotruth.com/Ephesians.htm>