



The Book of Genesis

Lesson Number 24



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), BRENT=Brenton's English Septuagint; 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= Literal 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 = Barclay-Newman, 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 WORD OF GOD COMES TO ABRAM IN A VISION

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. ² 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? ³ And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. ⁴ 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. ⁵ 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. ⁶ And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness. ⁷ 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. ⁸ And he said, Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away. ¹² And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. ¹³ 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; ¹⁴ And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. ¹⁵ And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. ¹⁶ But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ 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: ¹⁹ The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, ²⁰ And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, ²¹ And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites." (Genesis 15:1-21)

INTRODUCTION

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

With the famine behind him, Lot separated from him, and a battle fought, the word of the Lord now comes to Abram in a vision. The

patriarch has seen the lay of the land, and all distractions have been removed. Now God will begin to enlarge on what He has already revealed to Abram, and will even make a covenant with him. He

will clarify who will **not** be counted for his seed, give him some specifics about the land, and who will be occupying it when his seed enters. He will also reveal certain circumstances concerning

With Lot separated from him, and a necessary battle having been fought, God appears in a confirming vision to Abram – Given O. Blakely

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his offspring – after they have multiplied. He reveals the reason for the delay of his seed inheriting the land of Canaan, and announces the generation during which his seed will come into the land. In the midst of some sacrificial animals, God confirms His covenant with Abraham. The animals slain consisted of *“an heifer three years old, a she goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a pigeon.”*

“FIRSTS” IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS

Through the 15th chapter of Genesis, there are 168 *firsts*. Chapters thirteen through fifteen contain twenty-one of them.

1. First trip from Egypt to Canaan (Gen 12:20-13:3)
2. First man mentioned who was rich: Abram (Gen 13:2)
3. The first example of a territory being unable to sustain those in it (Gen 13:6)
4. The first example of a dispute among employees (Gen 13:7)
5. The first separation of kindred spirits (Gen 13:8-12)
6. The first commanded perusal of the land of Canaan (Gen 13:17)
7. First use of the word “Hebrew”

- (Gen 14:13)
8. The first military initiative by a man of faith (Gen 14:14-15)
9. The first mention of Melchizedek (Gen 14:18a)
10. The first mention of a “priest of the most High God” (Gen 14:18b)
11. The first mention of a king who was also a priest (Gen 14:18)
12. The first mention of “bread and wine” (Gen 14:18)
13. The first mention of enemies being delivered into ones hand by the Lord (Gen 14:20a)
14. The first mention of “tithes” (Gen 14:20b)
15. First Vision (Gen 15:1).
16. First record of the words “*Fear not*” (Gen 15:1).
17. The first reference to God as a “*Reward*” (Gen 15:1).
18. First revelation of God in a protective capacity (Gen 15:1).
19. First reference to someone believing God (Gen 15:6).
20. First mention of righteousness (Gen 15:6).
21. First mention of man inheriting something (Gen 15:7).
22. First prophecy of a being judged (Gen 15:14).
23. First reference to iniquity being “full” (Gen 15:16).

This accents the importance of this book. **As we proceed through it believing, it is shaping the way in which we think – think of God, His character, and the manner of His works.**

common among some professing faith.

- That the universe evolved over an extremely long period of time. (Six-day creation)
- That the beginning of humanity was the result of a natural process. (Sixth day creation of man and woman).
- That someone created morally perfect, and placed in a special place by God could never be thrust from that environment (Adam and Eve driven out of the garden).
- That God did not care what men wore (Adam and Eve, God having rejected their fig-leaf aprons, made them coats of skin).
- That God is indifferent to those who ignore His word and warnings (Cain’s warned, then cursed when he ignored it).
- That God does not insist upon obedience (Adam and Eve’s disobedience).
- That God is not a God of judgment (The expulsion of Adam and Eve, Cain’s judgment, the flood, the dispersion of the builders at Shinar).
- That God does not destroy people

No one can take note of the book of Genesis, believe what is written therein, and conclude some of the things that are now common among professing Christians.

No one can take note of the book of Genesis, believe what is written therein, and conclude things like the following – things which are quite

(the flood).

- That God cannot protect those He has chosen (Noah and his sons, Abram, Sarai, and Lot).

With Lot separated from him, and a necessary battle having been fought, God appears in a confirming vision to Abram – Given O. Blakely

- ➔ That God is not selective. Chose Seth, Noah, Shem, and Abram).
- ➔ That God does not take due note of what unbelievers do (People of Noah’s day, builders at Shinar, Pharaoh of Egypt).
- ➔ That God does not scatter people (builders at Shinar).
- ➔ That God’s longsuffering is endless (flood).
- ➔ That God is not effected by what

He sees (Adam and Eve, Cain, Abel, the whole world of Noah’s day, the builders at Shinar, Pharaoh taking Sarai).

- ➔ That unbelievers are not responsible to God (builders at Shinar, Pharaoh men of Sodom).
- ➔ That God does not plague people (Pharaoh’s household plague).
- ➔ That God will not dispossess a land of those living in it (God gave Abram and his seed an inhabited land).

We see, then, that God is a God of judgment as well as a God of love. He is a purposing God as well as a reacting One. He chooses as well as rejects, and curses as well as blesses. He views individuals (Cain, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abram). He considers couples (Adam and Eve). He considers families (Noah, Abram). It is all in the book of Genesis, where we are taught foundational things about God and His dealings with men – things about His purposes, intentions for humanity, and even the involvements of holy angels.

THE WORD OF GOD COMES TO ABRAM IN A VISION

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.”*

AFTER THESE THINGS

“After these things . . .” Other versions read, *“After this,”* ^{NIV} *“Some time later,”* ^{CJB} *“After these events,”* ^{CSB} *“Now when these things were done,”* ^{DOUAY} *“Later,”* ^{GWN} *“After these words,”* ^{ABP} *and “After all these things happened.”* ^{ERV}

the understanding of the work of God. The prevailing purpose of Scripture is not to provide the details of human lives, but to clarify the Person and purpose of Almighty God.

Therefore, the Spirit proceeds to the next significant thing on the Divine agenda.

Something to Learn

As best as we can, we are to look at our lives with the intent of seeing what the Lord is doing. As evidenced by the Scriptural record, this will not

part, these are things that are common to both the righteous and unrighteous – things that do not directly impact on our standing before God. As you can see, the more a person tries to explain such things, the more words that are required. That condition is evidence enough of the vanity of trying to figure out the cause of everything we experience.

If, in our assessment of ourselves, we find something that is very difficult to diagnose, we should consider if such an effort is justified. To aid us, as we ponder what the Lord has done, and how He has revealed Himself through Christ Jesus, we will tend to evaluate our lives with a godly priority. For some people, there are great segments of their lives that are best forgotten. When, for example, Paul assessed his entire pre-Christian life, he came up with two segments: (1) When he was raised up at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3. (2) When he excelled as a Pharisee and persecuted the church (Acts 23:6; 26:5; Phil 3:5-6).

The believer is blessed who can assess his life in such a manner.

THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME TO

There are incidentals in life that are not worthy of prolonged meditation. For the most part, these are things that are common to both the righteous and unrighteous – things that do not directly impact on our standing before God.

This reflects the manner in which the Spirit records historical events. He does not report everything that took place, but only those things pertinent to

mean the assessment of every single thing that happens to us. **There are incidentals in life that are not worthy of prolonged meditation.** For the most

ABRAM

“ . . . the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision . . . ” All versions read the same – “vision.”

This is the first record of a “vision” in Scripture. To show the uniqueness of the occasion, the next mention of a “vision” was in a word God said to Aaron and Miriam – about 500 years later: “*And He said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?*” (Num 12:8).

A “vision,” then, is a means through which God communicates to people of His choice. **However, it is an inferior means, and not to be compared with a more immediate communication.**

Notable examples of identified visions include the following.

- ➔ Abraham (Gen 15)
- ➔ Balaam (Num 24:4)
- ➔ Samuel (1 Sam 3:15)
- ➔ Nathan (1 Sam 7:17; 1 Chron 17:15)
- ➔ Isaiah (2 Chron 32:32; Isa 1:1)
- ➔ Ezekiel (Ezek 8:4; 11:24)
- ➔ Daniel (Dan 2:19; 7:2; 8:1,2; 9:21-24; 10:1)
- ➔ Obadiah (Obad 1:1)
- ➔ Nahum (Nah 1:1)
- ➔ Hosea (Hos 2:2-3)
- ➔ Peter, James, and John (Matt 17:9)
- ➔ Zecharias, father of John the Baptist (Lk 1:22)
- ➔ The woman who visited the empty tomb of Jesus (Lk 24:23)
- ➔ Ananias (Acts 9:10)
- ➔ Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:12)
- ➔ Cornelius (Acts 10:3)

- ➔ Peter (Acts 11:5)
- ➔ Paul (Acts 16:9-10; 18:9)
- ➔ John (Rev 9:17)

There is a period spanning about 2,100 years. During that time twenty-people are expressly said to have received visions from God. Although a mere statistic, it does confirm the uniqueness of Abram among men.

DEFINITIONS OF “VISION”

“ . . . A SUPERNATURAL PRESENTATION OF CERTAIN SCENERY OR CIRCUMSTANCES TO THE MIND OF A PERSON WHILE AWAKE . . . VISION IS ALSO SOMETIMES USED TO SIGNIFY THE ECSTATIC STATE OF THE PROPHETS WHEN THEY WERE FAVORED WITH COMMUNICATIONS, FROM JEHOVAH.” McCLINTOK & STRONG’S

“ 1) VISION (IN THE ECSTATIC STATE.” STRONG’S

“ A VIVID APPARITION, NOT A DREAM.” EASTON DICTIONARY

“A SUPERNATURAL PRESENTATION OF CERTAIN SCENERY OR CIRCUMSTANCES TO THE MIND OF A PERSON EITHER WHILE AWAKE OR ASLEEP.” SMITH’S BIBLE DICTIONARY

Pulpit Commentary says of the word “vision” – “BIBLICALLY VIEWED, THE VISION, AS DISTINGUISHED FROM THE ORDINARY DREAM, DEFINES THE PRESENTATION TO THE BODILY SENSES OR TO THE MENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF OBJECTS USUALLY BEYOND THE SPHERE OF THEIR NATURAL ACTIVITIES.”

I would add that it is something that is seen, as compared with hearing only. This vision was accompanied with words. The fact that it is the first recorded vision in which God addressed man is arresting to consider. We can know no more of this vision that what has been revealed.

FEAR NOT, ABRAM

“ . . . saying, *Fear not, Abram . . .* ” Other versions read, “*Do not be afraid,*” NKJV “*Do not fear,*” NASB “*Have no fear,*” BBE and “*Don’t be fearful.*” LIVING

There was a need for these words to be spoken.

- ➔ This is the first time a man has heard such words.

- ➔ God Himself has intruded into the thinking of Abram.

This Divine utterance is more than a commandment, or the imposition of a duty upon Abram. This was a word like “*Let there be light!*” **There was power resident in this word to do what if required.**

Something to Be Learned

There is something to be learned here. Men do not learn well while they are distracted with fearing and trembling induced by the immediate presence of the Lord. Yet, such a response cannot be avoided when the individual knowingly is confronted by God Almighty.

When we are told to work out our own salvation “*with fear and trembling*” (Phil 2:12), it differs slightly from the trembling that must be subdued by a word from the Lord. That type of Fearing and trembling, or quaking, is produced by a keen awareness of the distance between Deity and natural men, and the lack of familiarity with God. **The fearing and trembling that is to accompany the working out of our salvation is produced by our knowledge of God, and of the understanding of what He has invested in our salvation.** It is also the result of knowing how unequal of ourselves we are to the task set before us. If we press forward to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, God will speak peace to us, so that we are not dominated by feat and trembling, but by our faith.

A Conclusion

Therefore, when speaking to those He favors, the Lord quiets their heart in order that they might listen more attentively and beneficially. It is in this sense that God is said tom “*speak peace unto His people*” (Psa 85:8).

If you have ever sensed you were in the presence of the Lord, or He was speaking to your heart, and you were calm and attentive, it was because He

spoke peace to you – just as He did to Abram.

This phrase – “*fear not*” – is recorded sixty-three times in Scripture. Jesus is recorded as saying these words twelve times. They are found once in the book of Acts, and once in the Revelation. It is apparent that something significant happened after Jesus ascended into heaven to be enthroned at the right hand of God. Now that those in Christ have “*peace with God*,” it is not as necessary to speak these words. In Christ Jesus, there is comfort when God speaks, not intimidation. Those who live by faith and walk in the Spirit are especially blessed when they perceive the Lord is teaching them (Eph 4:20-21; 1 John 5:20).

I AM THY SHIELD

“ . . . *I am thy shield . . .*” Other versions read, “*I am your shield*,”^{NKJV} “*I am a Shield to you*,”^{NASB} “*I will keep you safe*,”^{BBE} “*I am your Protector*,”^{CJB} “*I am thy buckler*,”^{GENEVA} “*I shield thee*,”^{SEPTUAGINT} “*I will defend you*,”^{LIVING} “*I will shield you from danger*.”^{GNB}

This is the first time God is depicted as a “*Shield*,” or Protector. The next mention of this Divine trait is found in Deuteronomy 33:29, taking place over five hundred years later. David referred to the Lord as his “*Shield*” hundreds of years later (2 Sam 22:3,31; Psa 3:3; 5:12; 18:2, etc). God is referred to as a “*Shield*” twelve times in the Psalms (Psa 3:3; 5:12; 28:7; 33:20; 50:11; 84:9,11; 115:9,10,11; 119:14; 144:2). The prophets did not mention God in this capacity. It is never mentioned by John the Baptist, Jesus, or the apostles.

The reason for the New Covenant rarity of the use of this word is that Jesus Christ is now standing for the people, who have been given a personal shield in their faith. In other words, the involvement with God is more intimate and immediate in Christ Jesus.

No one will be able to get to Abram without going through God Himself – and that included the devil and all of his hosts. It also explained why Abram’s small army was able to slaughter and thoroughly route four powerful kings and their armies

All of this highlights the extraordinary nature of God’s direct word to Abram. **No one will be able to get to Abram without going through God Himself – and that included the devil and all of his hosts.** It also explained why Abram’s small army was able to slaughter and thoroughly route four powerful kings and their armies.

Divine protection accounts for our survival in the world. This particularly applies to those who are in Christ Jesus. Satan is walking about as a roaring lion “*seeking whom he may devour*” (1 Pet 5:8). This specific reference is to those who are living by faith. The fact that Satan has not been able to remove the saints from the earth confirms that God is, in fact, their “*Shield*.”

I AM THY EXCEEDING GREAT REWARD

“ . . . *and thy exceeding great reward*.” Other versions read, “*exceedingly great reward*,”^{NKJV} “*Your reward shall be great*,”^{NASB} “*your very great Reward*” (with footnote, “*your reward shall be very great*,”^{NIV} “*your shield and shall give you a very great reward*,”^{NJB} “*I will give you great blessings*,”^{LIVING} “*your wage much will be exceedingly*,”^{ABP} “*your reward will increase greatly*,”^{LITV} and “*your reward will be grand!*”^{MESSAGE}

Versions that read “*your reward shall be great*,” or a similar expression include the following: New American Standard, New International Version, Revised Standard Version, New Revised

Standard Version, Basic Bible English, Compete Jewish Bible, Holman Christian Standard Bible, English Standard, God’s Word, Jewish Publication Society, Septuagint, New American Bible, The Net Bible, New Living Translation, Tanakh, Young’s Literal Translation, Apostolic Bible, Contemporary English Bible, English Revised, Literal Translation of the Bible, Message.

There is quite a difference between representing God as saying, “*I am thy exceeding great Reward*,” and “*your reward will be great*.” **I see this as God Himself being the Reward – the One who will be the all-in-all to Abram.** I do not see this as comparing the rewards the king of Sodom offered with the rewards that God would give Abram. I do not believe that blends well with the nature of Scripture and its representation of the superiority associated with man’s identity with God. A few Scriptural expressions will serve to confirm this.

➤ THE WORD OF ABIJAH THE PROPHET. “*And, behold, God Himself is with us for our captain, and His priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you. O children of Israel, fight ye not against the LORD God of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper*” (2 Chron 13:12).

➤ CONFESSIONS OF DAVID. “*The LORD is the Portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot*” (Psa 16:5).

“*I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said,*

Thou art my Refuge and my Portion in the land of the living” (Psa 142:5).

- ➔ CONFESSIONS OF JEREMIAH. *“The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him”*(Lam 3:24).
- ➔ WHAT JOHN HEARD ON PATMOS. *“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell*

with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Rev 21:3).

The Meaning of the Expression

The statement, *“I am thy Shield, and thy exceeding great Reward”* is intended to confirm the thorough adequacy of the Lord Himself. It was a foreshadowing of the saying, *“If God be for us, who can be against us?”* (Rom 8:31). The spirit of the words of Jesus

is in this expression: *“If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him”* (John 14:23).

John also wrote with the principle in mind that is reflected in our text: *“And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him”* (1 John 4:16).

AND ABRAM SAID

“² 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? ³ And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.”

So far as the record is concerned, Abram’s confrontations with God have yielded the following.

- ➔ His original call (Gen 12:1,4).
- ➔ God appeared to him in Schecum (Gen 12:7).
- ➔ The Lord spoke to Abram after Lot separated from him (Gen 13:14-17).
- ➔ The word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision (Gen 15:1-21).

This will be the most extensive revelation Abram has received to this

point. Here are the facts that were made known to him, including the text we are now reviewing.

- ➔ God would show him a land (Gen 12:1).
- ➔ God would make of him a great nation (Gen 12:1).
- ➔ God would bless him (Gen 12:2).
- ➔ God would make his name great (Gen 12:2).
- ➔ Abram would be a blessing (Gen 12:2).
- ➔ God would bless them that blessed Abram (Gen 12:3).
- ➔ God would curse them that cursed Abram (Gen 12:3).
- ➔ In Abram all families of the earth would be blessed (Gen 12:3).

- ➔ God would give Abram and his seed all the land that he saw, and through which he walked (Gen 13:14-15,17).
- ➔ God would make Abram’s seed as the dust of the earth, and stars of the heavens, in number (Gen 13:16; 15:5).
- ➔ God would be Abram’s Shield and exceeding great Reward (15:1).
- ➔ Abram’s steward would not be his heir (Gen 15:2-3).
- ➔ Abram’s heir would be begotten by him, not another (Gen 15:4).
- ➔ The Lord had brought Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees, so that he could inherit the land (Gen 15:7).
- ➔ Abram’s seed would be in a strange land that was not their own, serving the people there for four hundred years (Gen 15:13).
- ➔ God would judge the nation they served (Gen 15:14).
- ➔ Abram would be gathered to his people in peace, and would be buried in a good old age (Gen 15:15).

This will be the most extensive revelation Abram has received to this point. Here are the facts that were made known to him, including text we are now reviewing.

- ➔ In the fourth generation, Abram’s seed would come to their land again, for the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full (Gen 15:16).
- ➔ God made a covenant with Abram, specifying the boundaries of the promised land, and the nations that would be displaced (Gen 15:18-21).

Things to Notice

Notice that the only interpretation of the past pertained to Abram leaving Ur of the Chaldees. God brought him out in order that he might inherit the land in which he was now located. **All of the other revelations pertained to the future, and required faith to apprehend.**

There is also a certain progression in the revelations given to Abram that builds on previous revelations. **Past insights are not abandoned, but are integral to the understanding of new ones.** That also is a principle of godly learning. Previous revelations are never abandoned. If they are promises, they are fulfilled and become a milestone for thought. If they pertain to the nature of God Himself, they are integrated with later revelations, giving a fuller knowledge of the Lord.

Under this arrangement, the novice and the seasoned veteran in the faith can profit from the same teaching. This does, however, require a proper handling of the Word of the Lord (2 Tim 2:15).

AND ABRAM SAID

“And Abram said, Lord GOD . . .” The expression “Lord God” occurs 546 times in Scripture. It is mentioned eleven times in the account of creation itself. In our English Bibles, the only previous incident of a man using these words took place more than 1,600 years after creation. Noah said, *“Blessed be the Lord God of Shem”* (Gen 9:26). The Hebrew words, however, are different. Noah said, “yehovah elohiyim” – meaning Jehovah [the eternal existing One], God

[supreme One].

Now , more than four hundred years later, Abram refers to God as “*Lord God*” – only the second person to have used two words to describe God. The Hebrew expression he used was “adonay” [The Lord, “Lord of justice” STRONG’S] “Yehovhi” [the eternal existing

great obscuring of this truth in our time.

The perception of faith is something that testifies that it has, in fact, been given to us by God, through grace (1Tim 1:14). The prevailing absence of a proper view of God confirms that the flesh cannot really perceive Him. If His revelation,

However, having been exposed to far less revelation, Abram was convinced of the uniqueness of God, and the falsity of all others who claimed to be Deity.

One], God [supreme One]. The Interlinear reads, *“my Lord.”* This is the first time the Hebrew word “Yehohvi” is used in the Scripture – ordinarily transliterated “Jehovah.”

Although he had come from an idolatrous background (Josh 24:2), he now recognizes only one Lord – only one God. Only one is supreme, and is over all. That is something Israel did not learn (Deut 29:26; Judges 2:12; 1 Sam 8:8; 2 Kgs 17:7; Jer 19:4). **However, having been exposed to far less revelation, Abram was convinced of the uniqueness of God, and the falsity of all others who claimed to be Deity.**

It is this perception of God that is described in the words, *“he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him”* (Heb 11:6). Wherever this view is not seen and embraced, the individual had denied the Godhood, as it were, of God. With an obstinate spirit such have refused to submit to and obey God because they do not believe He is really God.

By way of comparison, Abram did believe God was who He had revealed Himself to be. **It was for this reason that, without hesitation, he always obeyed God.** I believe there has been a

particularly as it is in Christ Jesus, is rejected, other gods will be served.

SEEING I GO CHILDLESS

“ . . . what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless . . .” Other versions read, *“what can You give me since I remain childless?”* NIV *“what will you give me, for I continue childless?”* NRSV *“what good will your gifts be to me if I continue childless?”* CJB *“what wilt thou give me? whereas I am departing without a child?”* SEPTUAGINT *“what can you give me since I remain childless?”* NIB *“what can You give me, seeing that I shall die childless?”* TNK *“what dost Thou give to me, and I am going childless?”* YLT *“what will you give me, for I am wasting away childless,”* ABP *“you have given me everything I could ask for, except children,”* CEV *“there is nothing you can give me that will make me happy, because I have no son,”* ERV *“what good will your reward do me, since I have no children?”* GNB *“what use are your gifts as long as I’m childless,”* MESSAGE and *“what use are your gifts as long as I’m childless.”* AMPLIFIED

Abram seems to sense that if he does not have a child, nothing else really matters. There must be “seed” in order for God’s promise to him to be fulfilled.

God once enjoined Israel, *“Come, let us reason together”* (Isa 1:18). While the subject matter is not the same, the nature of the activity is. There are matters that are not yet clear to Abram. **This is not owing to any hardheartedness on his part, but is rather because of the lack of revelation received to this point.** Thus Abram reasons with God on the matter. If he continues childless, how will God fulfill His promise. It is as though he reasoned that he should have had a child by this time, seeing that the land had been promised to his seed. He does not doubt the promise of God, but now inquires concerning how it will be fulfilled.

This is the nature of faith. Faith does not doubt the promises of God. It will, however, inquire concerning them.

Some of the versions take this matter too far. I do not care for the way they represent Abram’s words. For example: *“what good will your gifts be to me if I continue childless?”*^{CJB} *“there is nothing you can give me that will make me happy, because I have no son,”* *“what good will your reward do me, since I have no children?”*^{GNB} and *“what use are your gifts as long as I’m childless,”*^{MESSAGE} **These representations have a tinge of doubt and skepticism in them that misrepresent Abram.** I take it that they are an attempt to make him appear as a mere man, rather than one who believed God.

The fact that Abram has been misrepresented in these versions will be

AN EXAMPLE OF JEWISH FABLES

STRANGE AND VARIOUS ARE THE FANCIES OF THE JEWISH WRITERS CONCERNING THIS ELIEZER; THE TARGUM OF JONATHAN ON (GENESIS 14:14) CALLS HIM THE SON OF NIMROD; OTHERS SAY HE WAS THE GRANDSON OF NIMROD, AND OTHERS, A SERVANT OF HIS, WHO GAVE HIM TO ABRAM FOR A SERVANT; AND WHEN ISAAC MARRIED REBEKAH HE WAS MADE FREE, AND THROUGH ABRAM’S INFLUENCE BECAME A KING, AND WAS OG KING OF BASHAN; ^{PIRKE ELIEZER, C. 16} AND OTHERS SAY HE WAS CANAAN THE SON OF HAM; ^{SHALSHALET HAKABALA, VOL. 2. 1} AND OTHERS AGAIN, THAT HE WAS LOT, WHO WAS VERY DESIROUS OF BEING ABRAM’S HEIR: ^{BERESHIT RABBA, SECT. 43. FOL. 39} BUT WITH NEITHER OF THESE WILL THIS DESCRIPTION OF HIM AGREE, WHO IS SAID TO BE OF DAMASCUS; EITHER HE WAS BORN THERE, OR HIS PARENTS, ONE OR OTHER, WERE FROM THENCE, WHO VERY PROBABLY WERE ABRAM’S SERVANTS; AND THIS ELIEZER WAS BORN IN HIS HOUSE, AS SEEMS FROM (GENESIS 15:3).” ^{JOHN GILL}

confirmed by his reaction to the further revelation of God.

ONE BORN IN MY HOUSE IS MINE HEIR

“ . . . 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.”

Abram reasons that one born in his house could be reckoned for his seed. Such was Eliezer, now the primary steward of Abram’s house.

I will take the text just as it stands, with no attempt to further define Eliezer. I gather that this is the same person referred to in the twenty-fourth chapter as *“the eldest servant”* who *“ruled over all that he had”* (Gen 24:2). The suggestion of Abram is that since this was the one who would handle his

household after his departure, he would be a good substitute for an actual son.

While it might appear on the surface that Abram was struggling here with unbelief, I do not choose to view the text in that manner. **It is not until after this statement that Abram learned for the first time that his “seed” would proceed from his own “bowels”** – i.e. Abram would beget the key offspring of reference.

Something to be Noted

Abram was not willing to let go of the promise of God. He did not conclude that since he had not yet had children, the promise had been nullified, or that he had misunderstood what God had said. **The means through which the promise would be brought to its culmination were not clear to him, but he was persuaded of the truth of the promise itself.**

This is the nature of faith. It will cling to the promise, even if the details of its fulfillment may not be clear. For example, in Christ Jesus, just how we will be finally presented to the Lord *“without blame”* may not be clear to us now. **Faith, however, is certain about the reality of that promise, and is willing to live in expectation of its fulfillment although there may be a thousand circumstances that suggest it is not possible.** A professed faith that is not so characterized is not faith at all. It is spurious, being from the devil, and is nothing more than a delusion.

THIS SHALL NOT BE THINE HEIR

“⁴ 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.”

As the time draws nearer when the promised seed will be born, there is more communication of the Lord with Abram.

HIM

You will note that the thrust of that communication relates to the promises God has made to Abram.

THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME TO

➔ *“Now the LORD had said unto*

With Lot separated from him, and a necessary battle having been fought, God appears in a confirming vision to Abram – Given O. Blakely

Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen 12:1-3).

➔ *“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” (Gen 12:7).*

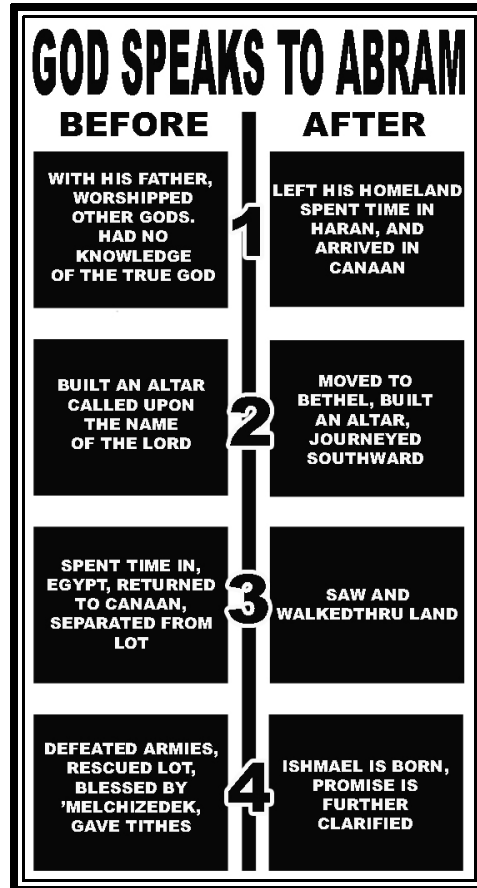
➔ *“And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee” (Gen 13:14-17).*

➔ *“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” (Gen 15:1).*

Each revelation involved more than was made known previously. Now, for the first time, God will reveal that Abram’s “seed” will be begotten by himself. A significant person within his household that was not actually begotten by him will not be counted for the seed.

THIS SHALL NOT BE THINE HEIR

That is, Eliezer, his leading servant, will not be Abram’s “heir” – the one through whom the promise of God will



come.

This is the first Scriptural use of the word “heir.” The word will not be mentioned again unto, several years later, when God tells Abram that Ishmael will not be the “heir” (Gen 21:10).

Inheriting A Promise

Ordinarily, the term “heir” pertains to inheriting the goods or possessions of another. But this is not how the word is used here, even though that may be involved secondarily. **Here inheriting a promise is the point.** Thus Paul wrote, *“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 4:13).* And again, *“That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Heb 6:12).*

Abram is the person on whom the promise of a Messiah and inheriting

eternal life became focused. Until that time, the only promise of a Savior and the reclamation of humanity was found in the words of God to the devil: *“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen 3:15).* For more than two thousand years, no further word was spoken concerning the subject of the promised “Seed.” But now, with Abram, the promised Seed becomes a preeminent consideration. This is why Matthew, in his “book of the generation of Jesus,” begins with Abraham, tracing the genealogy through the later generation of David: *“The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matt 1:1-17).*

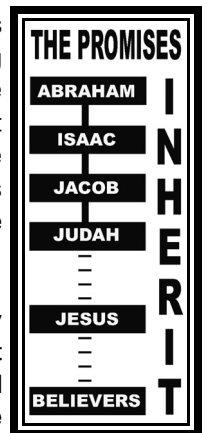
Those generations were, in fact, a listing of the “heirs” – the heirs of a promise, not merely of the possessions accumulated by the fathers.

This will be a key Kingdom reality that will be developed throughout the remainder of Scripture

– **inheriting the promises.** It differs from all other views of an inheritance, and opens a facet of faith to our understanding – namely that of hope, more specifically, of living in hope and being saved by hope.

Ordinarily, men see their inheritance with their eyes, or know of something tangible that they will inherit. **But now we are reading of inheriting something that was promised, and was really never in the possession of the one to whom the promise was made.** This is an aspect of faith that must be seen!

For Abram, the promise was twofold: first, there would be a “Seed” through whom the entire world would be blessed.” Second, there was a land



that would be inherited, which involved dispossessing a number of nations that occupied the promised land.

It was that two-fold promise that was passed along to succeeding generations. Even though Abram may well have purposed to leave his goods to the faithful steward over his house,

to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal 3:16). How is it that believers are now referred to as "Abraham's seed?" It is certainly not that they have displaced Christ. Rather, they are "joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom 8:17). In the world to come, we will "reign with Him" (2 Tim 2:12). It was revealed to Daniel that

the realization of the promise.

HE THAT SHALL COME FORTH

" . . . but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir." Other versions read, "come from your own body," ^{NKJV} "your very own issue," ^{NRSV} "your own son," ^{RSV} "a son of your body," ^{BBE} "he that will come forth out of thy body," ^{DARBY} and "shall come forth out of thy own loins." ^{RWB}

The word "bowels" is translated from the following Hebrew word:

עֲדָה {ME`EH} {MAY-EH'} **MEANING:** 1) INTERNAL ORGANS, INWARD PARTS, BOWELS, INTESTINES, BELLY 1A) INWARD PARTS 1B) DIGESTIVE ORGANS 1C) ORGANS OF PROCREATION, WOMB 1D) PLACE OF EMOTIONS OR DISTRESS OR LOVE (FIG.) As you can see, this word is used in a variety of ways. When used in reference to the human body, it refers to the various organs that come under the heading of "INWARD PARTS," one of which is "ORGANS OF PROCREATION."

The promised "heir" would be born to Abram through, what appeared to be, natural means. **God would give power and vitality to the reproductive capacity of Abram, who was, at the time, and from a reproductive capacity, "as good as dead"** (Heb 11:12). He would also. Through Sarai's faith, cause her to no longer be "barren" (Gen 11:30; Heb 11:11).

There is no record that Abram ever doubted that what God told him was true – not a single word, and not a single time. Every time God revealed something to Abram he believed it, and acted accordingly. Considering the time in which he lived, this is remarkable.

Spiritual Growth

From this perspective, spiritual growth may be viewed as receiving the Word of God, incorporating it into our reasoning capacity, and shaping our lives around it. If we could examine our lives thoroughly, I think we would find that every time we grew, it was owing to some insight into the Word of the Lord. Abraham's life is an excellent

There is no record that Abram ever doubted that what God told him was true – not a single word, and not a single time. Every time God revealed something to Abram he believed it, and acted accordingly.

God now informs him that Eliezer will not inherit the promise delivered to him.

Now the Lord will reveal something He has never before made known to Abram. From this time forward we will never again read of Abram considering the possibility of Eliezer being considered his "seed."

Inheriting the Promise in Jesus

We cannot leave this section without drawing attention to the role of this kind of inheritance among the saints of God. In Christ we also inherit the promise given to Abraham – of being blessed, made a blessing, and being made great. Thus it is written, "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb 6:12).

Paul develops the matter even further in his vivid description of the blessed status of those who are in Christ Jesus. "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal 3:29). Prior to that statement, Paul wrote, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And

"the saints" would, according to Divine purpose, "take the kingdom" (Dan 7:18,22,27). Jesus said of "the poor in spirit," and those that are "persecuted for righteousness sake," "theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 5:3,10).

That is something of what is involved in being heirs of a promise. What has been bequeathed to "the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 2:5), will, by the will of God, be shared with all who have believed on Him, and finished their course. **As long as they are in this world, those in Christ are looking forward to what has been promised.** They have received much, to be sure, but it is only the first-fruit of what is to come.

This utterly devastates the notion that what we have now is everything God has to give – or that our present experience is the ultimate of what will be experienced. While such a view may not be articulated in words, it is being said very loudly by the manner in which many professing Christians live.

Abram is a sterling example of living in this world in a state of responsiveness to God, shaping his life in such a way as to position himself for

portrayal of this process. Although it is something that cannot be codified, it is

something that can be experienced on a regular and consistent basis. It will

also bring joy and satisfaction.

LOOK TOWARD HEAVEN

“⁵ 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 involvements of the Lord with Abram are becoming deeper and more voluminous. That is the nature of God’s dealing with those He has chosen. The trickle of life-giving water that Ezekiel saw coming out from the right side of the throne of God became wider and deeper as it flowed. First it was a small flow. 1,500 feet from the source, it was ankle deep. Another 1,500 feet, and the waters were knee deep. Another 1,500 feet and the waters were waist deep. Another 1,500 feet and the waters were “a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over” (Ezek 47:1-5).

That is marvelous depiction of the knowledge of God. We are introduced to this nature of revelation in the record of God’s various revelations to Abram.

HE BROUGHT HIM FORTH

“And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them . . .”

This is the second time God has used the natural creation to depict the vast number of people that will come from Abram. The first revelation of this kind was given when settled in near

Bethel on a mountain, There God told him, “*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*” (Gen 13:16).

At this time, Abram has still not begotten any children. He has even drawn attention to the fact that he is “*childless*” (15:2). Now God again draws the attention of Abram to the promise – **not to Abram’s childless state, but to the promise!** “*And he brought him forth abroad, and said,*

And, who is the fool that would declare it was impossible to have so many stars? There they are – really nothing more than a representation of a staggering number. Most of which could not be seen with the human eye. But the reality of them could not be denied.

SO SHALL THY SEED BE

“ . . . and He said unto him, So shall thy seed be.”

The Lord boldly announces to Abram that his offspring would also be

It would not take Abram long to answer, for he well knew that he was beholding a phenomenon that was beyond any form of human reckoning.

Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them.”

God challenges Abram to look at the stars. Study them. Make an attempt to count them. It is as though God is saying to Abram, “Can you even give Me an estimate of the number of stars that you can see – and consider there are billions that you cannot see. Tell Me, Abram – how many can you count?” **It would not take Abram long to answer, for he well knew that he was beholding a phenomenon that was beyond any form of human reckoning.**

staggering in size. **The same God who put the stars in their place will summon forth an exceeding large number of children from a man who was now aged, had a wife that was barren, and did not have so much as one single child.** How will Abram respond to a promise like that?

How will faith react when hearing of something impossible? The text will speak for itself, and it will be comforting to those who are living by faith.

AND HE BELIEVED IN THE LORD

“⁶ And he believed in the LORD; and He counted it to him for righteousness.”

With Lot separated from him, and a necessary battle having been fought, God appears in a confirming vision to Abram – Given O. Blakely

Faith, real faith, and real believing reckons with God in mind not the immediate environment or abilities. This is how faith reasons – and there are no exceptions.

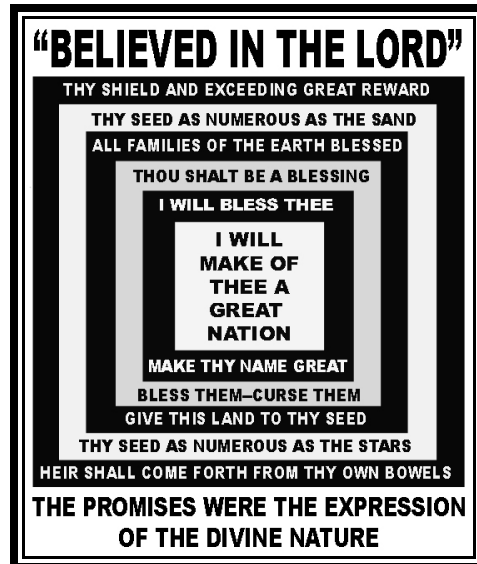
Here is a man who has had little exposure to God. He was not raised up as a believer. **Our text is the first time of record that he has said anything responsive to God.** Twice he “called upon the name of the Lord” (Gen 12:8’ 13:4). Counting this occasion, God has spoken to him four times, and this is the first time Abram has responded. Now God has declared plainly that Abram himself, although he is naturally incapable of doing so, will beget an heir. **Without any apparent delay, faith leaps forward, leaving doubt behind, and takes hold of the promise of God. That is what faith does!** This is not super-faith, but faith itself. It is “*the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*” (Heb 11:1). Faith is not an ambiguous wish, but a strong and positive assurance. There is a sense in which faith does not cause the promise to happen. It is rather the comforting assurance that it will happen.

All of this must be considered in view of the times, and the comparative sparsity of revelation that had been given. If faith could react in this manner during those times, what ought we to expect faith to do now that the “Sun of Righteousness” has risen to the height of His glory, grace has been lavished upon the saints, and the Holy Spirit has been poured out abundantly upon them? At once you should see the error of trying to drag Abram down to the level of contemporary doubters.

According to the Interlinear (literal translation), the text reads, “*and he believed in Yahweh.*” INTERLINEAR

HE BELIEVED IN THE LORD

“*And he believed in the LORD . . .*” Other versions read, “*believed in Jehovah,*” ASV “*believed the Lord,*” NIV “*had faith in the Lord,*” BBE “*believed God,*” DOUAY “*put his faith in the Lord,*”



NAB “*put his trust in the Lord,*” TNK “*And he believed! Believed GOD!*” MESSAGE and “*believed in (trusted in, relied on, remained steadfast to) the Lord.*” AMPLIFIED

Understand that the word “*in*” is in the Hebrew text, and is an accurate translation—i.e. “*Believed IN the Lord.*” That, in my understanding, is of greater weight than “*believed the Lord.*” **It signifies that Abram trusted in the Lord who made the promise, and therefore was able to heartily embrace the promise.** This equates to believing that God “*IS and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him*” (Heb 11:6).

All that Abram could believe was what God had revealed of Himself, for in matters pertaining to God, revelation is the circumference within which true knowledge is obtained.

Considering how comparatively little Abram knew about God, this is truly a marvelous thing. **It teaches us that there is more of God in what He promises than most men have dared to believe.** Of course, if a person minds the things of this world, he will not be able to see what Abram saw, even though better and greater promises have been given to us through Christ Jesus.

This is faith matured. Abram believed God when he left Ur of the Chaldees. As it is written, “*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).

Abram’s faith did not increase by beholding some great work – like obtaining part of the land. **Faith was rather made stronger by Divine affirmation.** This was a most excellent confirmation that “*faith cometh by hearing*” (Rom 10:17).

There is a tendency in the natural man to require God to do something extraordinary before one will trust in Him. Thus men look for signs, and outward confirmations that God is dealing with them. Faith, however, does not come by beholding, but by hearing. It is not the result of a powerful Divine manifestation that violently throws unbelief to the ground, leaving no other alternative but to believe. Like the ravens brought bread and flesh to Elijah (1 Kgs 17:1-6), so the Word of God brings faith to those with an ear to hear (Rom 10:14-17).

When our text says that Abram “*believed in the Lord,*” it is not referring to something Abram said – like, “*now I believe . . .*” **This is a Divine affirmation of something that God saw in Abram.** Technically, it is not a confession of faith, but a statement of what God saw in Abram.

This Text Quoted by Paul and James

Both Paul and James quote this text in their writings.

➔ **PAUL:** “*For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness*” (Rom 4:3; “*Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness*” (Gal 3:6).

➔ **JAMES:** “*And the scripture was*

With Lot separated from him, and a necessary battle having been fought, God appears in a confirming vision to Abram – Given O. Blakely

fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God" (James 2:23).

PAUL

Paul's use of the text is found in his teaching concerning the means by which men are made righteous in the eyes of the Lord. To this day, this subject is hotly debated in the Christian community – whether a man is justified by believing, or by doing.

Paul affirms that justification precedes doing, pointing out that Abraham was justified before he was circumcised. "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also" (Rom 4:11). Had Abraham been made righteous after circumcision, he could not be the father of all who believe – only of the Jews.

JAMES

James uses the text to confirm that those who are justified, having faith, will show forth evidence of that justification. He maintains that a claim of identity with the Lord is not enough. It must be made known in the godly conduct of the individual. He says the statement was "fulfilled" when "he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar" (James 2:21). The word "fulfilled" carries the idea of verification or confirmation. James makes the point that there is no such thing as a justified person who lives in contradiction of God. In our parlance, anyone claiming to be a Christian who lives after the ungodly manner of the world, has lied. Paul teaches the same thing in his discourse about "a form of godliness" that denies the power thereof (2 Tim 3:1-5).

According to His Faith

According to this text, as well as

the exposition of Paul in the fourth chapter of Romans, **Abram's faith is what moved God to count him to be righteous.**

HE COUNTED IT TO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

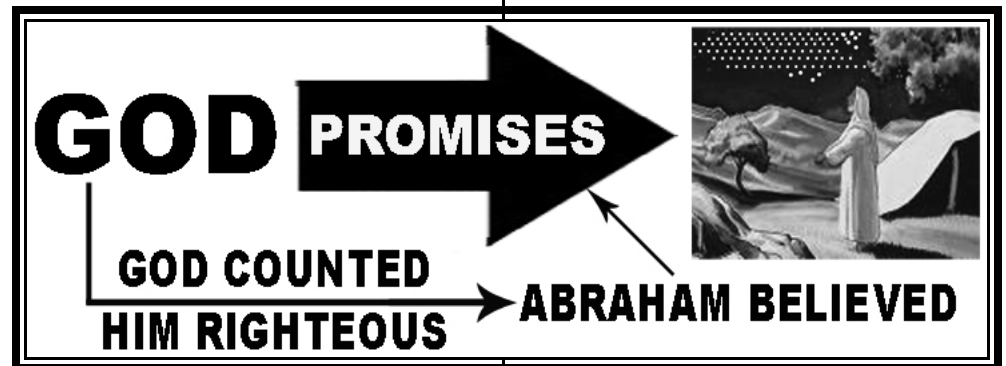
" . . . and He counted it to him for righteousness. Other versions read, "accounted it to him for righteousness," NKJV "reckoned it to him for righteousness," NASB "credited it to him as righteousness," NIV "it was put to his account as righteousness," BBE "reputed to him unto justice," DOUAY "regarded that faith to be his approval of Abram," GWN "credited it to him as an act of righteousness," NAB "considered his response of faith as proof of genuine loyalty," NET "counted him as righteous because of his faith," NLT "He reckoned it to his merit," TNK "considered him righteous on account of his faith," LIVING "imputed to him for righteousness," ABP "the LORD was pleased with him," CEV "accepted him as one who has done what is right," ERV "was pleased with him and accepted him," GNB "declared him "Set-Right-with-God," MESSAGE "counted it to him as righteousness

justification.

Much of our understanding of this text hinges on the meaning of the word "counted." Alternative translations use the word "accounted," NKJV "reckoned," NASB "credited," NIV "put to his account," BBE "reputed," DOUAY "regarded," GWN "considered," NET "imputed," ABP "accepted," ERV "pleased with," GNB and "set-right-with-God." MESSAGE

If we approach this matter academically, no real satisfaction will be realized. Lexically the word translated "counted" is as follows: **כָּשַׁב** CHASHAB {KHAW-SHAB'} MEANING: 1) TO THINK, PLAN, ESTEEM, CALCULATE, INVENT, MAKE A JUDGMENT, IMAGINE, COUNT 1A) (QAL) 1A1) TO THINK, ACCOUNT 1A2) TO PLAN, DEVISE, MEAN 1A3) TO CHARGE, IMPUTE, RECKON 1A4) TO ESTEEM, VALUE, REGARD 1A5) TO INVENT 1B) (NIPHAL) 1B1) TO BE ACCOUNTED, BE THOUGHT, BE ESTEEMED 1B2) TO BE COMPUTED, BE RECKONED 1B3) TO BE IMPUTED 1C) (PIEL) 1C1) TO THINK UPON, CONSIDER, BE MINDFUL OF 1C2) TO THINK TO DO, DEVISE, PLAN 1C3) TO COUNT, RECKON 1D) (HITHPAEL) TO BE CONSIDERED. STRONG'S/THAYER

This is a record of how God regarded Abram believing in Him. Abram had left Ur of the Chaldees as



(right standing with God).” AMPLIFIED

As you can see by the various versions, **this is not a simplistic statement.** Further, because it is something God Himself is said to have done, we cannot afford to be wrong in our conclusions. **This is particularly true since this statement is the basis for extended apostolic doctrine – particularly concerning the matter of**

God commanded – **but that was not counted to him for righteousness.** He had arrived in Canaan and built an altar to the Lord – **but that was not accounted to him for righteousness.** When the Lord appeared to him and said He was going to give this land to his seed, Abram moved to a higher place, built an altar, and called upon the name of the Lord – **but the Lord did not count that to him for righteousness.** After spending some time in Egypt

during a famine in Canaan, Abram returned to Bethel, to the place of the altar, and again called upon the name of the Lord – **but the Lord did not account that to him for righteousness.** After hearing of the capture of Lot, Abram took 318 of his trained servants, pursued four kings and their armies, slaughtered them, and returned with all of the people who had been captured and their goods – **but the Lord did not account that to him for righteousness.** After returning from the triumph, Abram was met by Melchizedek. After being blessed by him, Abram gave tithes to everything to Melchizedek – **but the**

that could confirm this was the truth, establishing it by two or more witnesses. **No promise like this had ever been given to anyone else.**

Now, the fact of faith is set squarely before us. **This is an example of how faith moves those who possess it to reason.**

Not Left to Guess

We are not left to guess about this matter. *“(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*

“when there was nothing left to hope for,” ^{GWN} *“though there seemed to be no hope,”* ^{NJB} *“even though such a promise just couldn't come to pass!,”* ^{LIVING} *“Under utterly hopeless circumstances,”* ^{WEYMOUTH} *“even when there was no reason for hoping,”* ^{GNB} *and “[For Abraham, human reason for] hope being gone.”* ^{AMPLIFIED} THERE SIMPLY WAS NO MERE HUMAN REASONING THAT COULD MOVE ABRAM TO REST IN THE TRUTH OF WHAT GOD HAD SAID. BUT FAITH IS NOT SO RESTRICTED. ABRAM *“BELIEVED IN HOPE”* –I.E. HE BELIEVED AND COMMENCED TO LIVE IN THE EXPECTATION OF THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S PROMISE.

From the human point of view, this was an absolute impossibility. So far as human aptitude is concerned, there is no way that this could happen. There was no way to rejuvenate a body that, so far as procreation is concerned, was “dead.”

Lord did not account that to him for righteousness.

Now, after clarifying to Abram that his “seed” would not be reckoned as Eliezer, his lead steward, the Lord tells the patriarch that he himself, though past age, would beget the promised seed. His own begotten son would be the heir of the promise that was given to him.

From the human point of view, this was an absolute impossibility. So far as human aptitude is concerned, there is no way that this could happen. There was no way to rejuvenate a body that, so far as procreation is concerned, was “dead.” There was no historical precedent that would confirm this could be done. The best physicians would have rejected the idea that this was possible. There was no other prophet

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. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness” (Rom 4:17-22).

I hardly see how the matter could be more plainly stated.

Things Abram Did

➔ **AGAINST HOPE BELIEVED IN HOPE.** Other versions read *“contrary to hope,”* ^{NKJV} *“hoping against hope,”* ^{NRSV} *“without reason for hope,”* ^{BBE}

➔ **WAS STRONG IN FAITH.** Other versions read, *“strengthened in faith,”* ^{NKJV} *“waxed strong through faith,”* ^{ASV} *“made strong by faith,”* ^{BBE} *“became strong because of faith,”* ^{GWN} *“empowered by faith,”* ^{NAB} *“His faith and trust grew stronger,”* ^{LIVING} *“became mighty in faith,”* ^{WEYMOUTH} *“empowered in the belief,”* ^{ABP} *“his faith filled him with power,”* ^{GNB} *“He plunged into the promise and came up strong,”* ^{MESSAGE} *and “grew strong and was empowered by faith.”* ^{AMPLIFIED} ABRAM'S FAITH WAS NOT FEEBLE, FOR A WEAK FAITH CANNOT SUSTAIN A PERSON – IT WILL NOT KEEP PETER WALKING ON THE WATER, SO TO SPEAK. ABRAM'S FAITH WAS NOT “WEAK,” BUT STRONG. IT WAS NOT “LITTLE” BUT GREAT.

➔ **GIVING GLORY TO GOD.** Other versions read, *“gave glory to God,”* ^{NIV} *“giving honor to God,”* ^{GWN} *“brought glory to God,”* ^{NLT} *“praised God for this blessing before it happened,”* ^{LIVING} *“gave God glory,”* ^{MONTGOMERY} *“gave all the credit to God,”* ^{CEV} *“just praised God,”* ^{ERV} *“ready for God,”* ^{MESSAGE} *“gave praise and glory to God.”* ^{AMPLIFIED} GOD WAS GLORIFIED BECAUSE ABRAM'S FAITH DREW ATTENTION TO HIS COMMITMENT, AND TESTIFIED OF GOD'S GREATNESS AS WELL.

➔ **WAS FULLY PERSUADED THAT WHAT GOD HAD**

PROMISED, HE WAS ABLE TO PERFORM. Other versions read, *“fully convinced,”* NKJV *“fully assured,”* NASB *“being certain,”* BBE *“most fully knowing,”* DOUAY *“absolutely confident,”* GWN *“full certified,”* PNT *“completely sure,”* LIVING *“absolutely certain,”* WEYMOUTH *“Full assurance,”* WILLIAMS and *“Fully satisfied and assured.”* AMPLIFIED THERE WAS NO DOUBT IN ABRAM – NO QUESTIONING OF THE PROMISE ITSELF. HIS ONLY CONCERN HAD BEEN HOW THE PROMISE WOULD BE FULFILLED. HOWEVER, NOW THAT GOD HAD PLAINLY SAID HE WOULD BEGET THE PROMISED SEED, ABRAM RESTED IN THE PALACE OF FAITH.

Things Abram Did NOT Do

➔ WAS NOT WEAK IN FAITH. Other versions read, *“not being weak in faith,”* NKJV *“without becoming weak in faith,”* NASB *“without weakening in his faith,”* NIV *“did not weaken in faith,”* NRSV *“not being feeble in faith,”* BBE *“his trust did not waver,”* CJE *“without weakening in the faith,”* CSB *“was not sickly in his faith,”* MRD *“did not shake his faith,”* NJB *“fainted not in the faith,”* PNT *“faith didn’t weaken,”* IE and *“never weakened in faith”* WILLIAMS

➔ CONSIDERED NOT HIS OWN BODY, NOW DEAD SO FAR AS PROCREATION WAS CONCERNED. Other versions read, *“he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead,”* NIV *“did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body,”* NRSV *“though his body seemed to him little better than dead,”* BBE *“neither did he consider,”* DOUAY *“Through faith he regarded the facts,”* GWN *“was not sickly in his faith, while contemplating his inert body,”* MRD *“Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead,”* NIB and *“not having been weak in the faith, he did not consider his own body.”* YLT

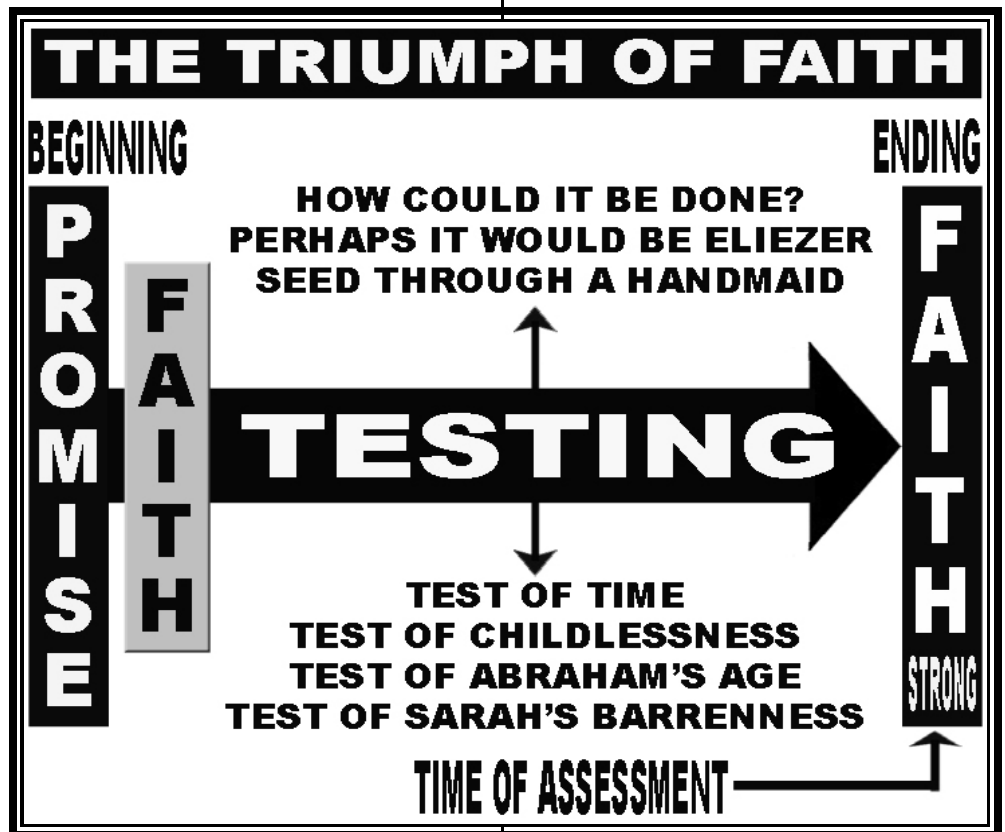
Two differing views are reflected in these versions. First, that Abraham did not consider his own frailty because he was not weak in the

faith. Second, that he maintained his faith even though he did consider his own frailty. I am persuaded the first is the proper view. **Because Abraham’s faith was strong, he did not review his natural capability.**

➔ DID NOT CONSIDER THE DEADNESS OF SARAH’S WOMB. *“Sarah’s womb was already dead,”* NIV *“the barrenness of Sarah’s womb,”* NRSV and *“was past childbearing.”* TNT AS ABRAM REASONED ON THE PROMISE OF GOD, HE DID NOT THROW THE FACT OF SARAI’S BARRENNESS

PROMISE OF GOD WAS GREAT – FAR SUPERIOR TO ANY PROMISE VOUCHSAFED TO MEN AT THIS POINT IN TIME – IT DID NOT CAUSE ABRAM TO STAGGER THROUGH UNBELIEF.

Two things are made quite clear in this inspired assessment of Abraham. First, his faith was absolutely consistent. Second, unbelief or doubt did not interrupt his faith. I do not know how any other conclusion can be reached concerning this assessment.



INTO THE EQUATION.

➔ DID NOT STAGGER AT THE PROMISE OF GOD THROUGH UNBELIEF. Other versions read, *“did not waver,”* NKJV *“No distrust made him waver,”* RSV *“did not give up faith,”* BBE *“hesitated not,”* DARBY *“He didn’t doubt God’s promise,”* GWN *“he did not doubt or disbelieve,”* NJB *“never doubted,”* LIVING and *“no unbelief or distrust made him waver (doubtingly question).”* AMPLIFIED ALTHOUGH THE

A DIVINE MANNER

There is a certain Divine manner that is made known here. **Faith is assessed after it has been tried – not before.** This has proved confusing to many, who are intent upon assessing the faith of people of Scriptural record prematurely. Thus some view Abram’s faith as wavering when he considered his own childlessness, or of the possibility of Eliezer being the “seed,” or when Sarah gave him her handmaid as a means to obtaining the promised seed. It makes perfect sense to the

flesh to reason in such a manner. And, I suppose, were it not for a revelation on the subject, this might appear to be proper. **However, there is revelation on the matter, and such reasoning is not proper.**

Faith Is Always Tested

Faith is always tested, and that testing is to be considered vital. Peter wrote *Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ* (1 Pet 1:6-7). “That is the ultimate view of faith, but it also applies to certain times of testing.

Jesus once told Peter that Satan had desired to have him, to sift him as wheat. Satan’s intent was to destroy Peter’s faith. However, Jesus said, *“But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren”* (Luke 22:32). That very night the sifting of the devil took place, God having given him permission to do his dreadful work. During that time of great testing, Peter denied Jesus three times. However, before that night of trial was over, after his third denial, *“the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly”* (Luke 22:62).

Peter’s faith did not fail, even though he was, so to speak, knocked down. As Paul would say it, “struck down, but not destroyed” ^{NKJV} (2 Cor 4:9). The Living Bible reads, *“knocked down, but never knocked out.”* That incident, as bitter as it was, was never held against Peter. I do not doubt that he oft remembered it with great sorrow, but God did not! **It was a time of testing, and Peter ended up with the faith, not without it.**

Let all men cease and desist from finding fault with men while they were being tested. Wait until the test is over. Paul did, and moved by the Holy Spirit he testified to the strength of Abraham’s faith, not is weakness. The reason? He assessed the faith of the patriarch at the proper time: AFTER it had been tested and proved to be genuine. It is good for us to strive to reason in such a manner.

A BOLD TEXT

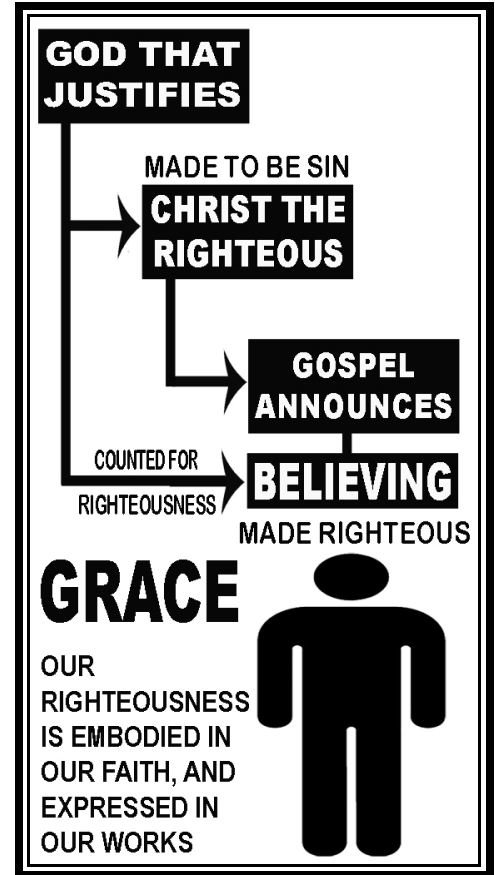
Now our text states the case as boldly as it can be stated: *“And he believed in the LORD; and He counted it to him for righteousness”* (Gen 15:6). **And how does God regard such faith? He reckons the person who has it to be righteous – and when it comes to appearing before God, that is everything!**

THE RELEVANCE OF THIS

The relevance of this text is confirmed by the exposition of Paul the apostle. Faith is still the appointed means through which the status of *“righteous”* is obtained.

How are sinners made righteous? The immediate answer is, they are **pronounced “righteous”** by God Almighty. However, a number of things had to take place for this to be accomplished. First, the real question is, **“How can a righteous God justify sinners, and remain righteous in doing so?”** This is foreshadowed in the case of Abram. Although, like all of Adam’s offspring, Abram was a sinner, it is not his sinnerhood that is emphasized in Scripture. Rather, it is his faith; Just as Paul’s sinful past is not emphasized, but his apostleship.

Justification by faith is compared with justification by works. **Works, however, cannot altar a person’s character, nor can they expunge guilt, or remove the fact of sin.** No amount of works, regardless of how arduous and thorough they may appear can make men harmonious with God in their thoughts and ways. Even if men are given all of the particulars relative to



doing, or working, they will find that what God requires exceeds all natural aptitude. 1,500 years of Law – precise God-given Law – confirmed that this was the case.

Sin Had to be Judged

In order for God to pronounce men free from the guilt of sin, sin had to be judged and condemned, for God can by no means *“clear the guilty”* (Ex 34:7), or *“acquit the wicked”* (Nah 1:3).

Therefore, God announced through Isaiah that He would take *“the iniquity of us all”* –i.e. sin in the aggregate– and lay it upon a solitary man (Isa 53:6). There, as the Christ bore our *“sins in His body on the tree”* (1 Pet 2:24), God would *“condemn sin in the flesh”* of Christ (Rom 8:3). In this transaction, God is said to have *“made Him [Jesus] to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him”* (2 Cor 5:21). This was also the occasion when Jesus *“was made a curse for us,”* redeeming us from the curse of the Law: *“Cursed is*

every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal 3:10).

Now, with the penalty created by sin paid, and sin itself being put away. God counts one’s faith for righteousness. Further, by that faith, the believer, through the Spirit, waits for “the hope of righteousness” (Gal 5:5). When Jesus returns, and shouts the dead from their graves, the saints will rise from the grave, and those alive will be changed instantly, ridding them of the infirmity of a mortal body. At that time, there will be no part of our being that is unrighteous. We will no longer be in a “vile body” (Phil 2:20-21). No more will we have a law in our members, warring against the law of our minds (Rom 7:23). We shall once and for all be delivered from “the body of this death” (Rom 7:25).

Until that time our faith is, in fact, our righteousness. This, however, does



not ignore the matter of human conduct. **While our righteousness is embodied in our faith, it is expressed in our works** – which is the point that James makes in his epistle to professed believers that were friends with the world (James 4:4).

The reckoning of a person being righteous is the outcome of grace, not of works. As it is written, “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” (Rom 4:3-5). Paul continues by calling David to the witness stand: “Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness **without works**, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are **forgiven**, and whose sins are **covered**. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord **will not impute sin”** (Rom 4:6-8).

All of those glorious benefits are in the bud of Genesis 15:6! Abram was bold and confident to believe God would do what He promised, and God was gracious and forthright enough to call him “righteous” because He did. Righteousness has always been received “by grace through faith!” – from Abel to this very day. Abram is the first extended example of this.

I AM THE LORD THAT BROUGHT THEE OUT OF UR

“⁷ 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.”

As is characteristic of the Lord, He now speaks to Abram concerning what He has done in his life. This is done to strengthen his faith, as well as to discourage any improper assessments of his condition.

I AM THE LORD

“And He said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees . . .”

The Scriptures do not pinpoint the exact time Abram came out of Ur of the Chaldees. The historical record reads in this way: “**And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son’s son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram’s wife; and they went forth**

with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there. And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran” (Gen 11:31-32).

Reasoning upon this passage, some novices have charged Abram with being disobedient – not separating from family, as God told him to do. Some are even bold enough as to say Abram launched out in his own wisdom.

What will such beginners say when they read what the Almighty God has said? “**I brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees!**” Other versions read, “**who brought you from.**”^{NRSV}

The Lord brought Abram out of Ur just as surely as He brought Israel out of Egypt (Ex 13:3; 16:6; 19:36; Lev 22:33; Num 15:41; Deut 7:8; 13:5;

Josh 24:5). According to appearance, it did not look like God brought Israel out of Egypt. It appeared as though they simply walked out, with the Egyptians anxious to have them leave, and even paying them to do so. A modern newsman on the scene would have reported it was a most unusual scene, but would no doubt have made no connection of God with the event.

Nehemiah also declared that God brought Abram out of Ur: “**Thou art the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham”** (Neh 9:7). This statement was made about 1,500 years after Abram left Ur of the Chaldees. **You see how a proper perspective had been passed down from generation to generation.** Oh, that such faithfulness characterized our generation – that God’s works would be passed along.

With Lot separated from him, and a necessary battle having been fought, God appears in a confirming vision to Abram – Given O. Blakely

Something to Note

This kind of maintenance of the knowledge of God is nearly unknown in our time. In our day there has been a staggering loss of Scriptural knowledge within the professed church. Rarely are godly perspectives of the past articulated. In the last fifty years, a whole new mindset has been cultured within the modern church. It has gone from even rudimentary Bible knowledge to an arresting level of ignorance

than waiting for Terah to die, and in order to get to the land at the time of the famine, He led Abram out with his father appearing to be the header. When Terah died in Haran, Abram was more free to continue the appointed trek to the land God promised.

Something to Consider

When we think of the time we passed from death unto life, it is best to give the credit to the Lord. It is He who

In other words, before Abram could be given the intended gift, he had to get where it was. In doing this, Abram would become familiar with the land, and grow accustomed to living there. He would learn to serve God in an acceptable environment, even though it was not the intended ultimate environment. The Lord wanted Abram to see the land, and behold its glorious sufficiency. If he was to pass the promise down to succeeding generations, it was necessary for him to be familiar with the lay and manner of the land.

When we think of the time we passed from death unto life, it is best to give the credit to the Lord. It is He who put us into Christ

The Lord's Manner

This is still the Lord's manner. **He brings people to the place where they can enjoy what He has promised them.** Therefore we read that He has raised us up, and made us to sit together with Christ in heavenly places (Eph 2:6). That is where He has place *"all spiritual blessings"* (Eph 1:L3), and the firstfruits of them are all accessible to us. No wonder the Psalmist cried out, *"O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him"* (Psa 34:8).

concerning the wonderful works of God. All of this has taken place under the watch of multitudes of preachers, teachers, and a vast array of academic religious professionals. I seriously doubt that many professing Christians could pray after the manner of the Levites in Nehemiah's day. Preaching and teaching that produces such circumstances cannot possible be true! When the proper results are not yielded by the **embrace** of a doctrine, both the perpetrator of the teaching and the teaching itself is to be questioned.

put us into Christ (1 Cor 1:30). He raised us to walk in the newness of life (Rom 6:4), and quickened us when we were dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1-2). He gave us repentance (Acts 5:31), delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son (Col 1:13). He called us (2 Pet 1:3). He drew us to Jesus (John 6:44,65). We are washed, sanctified, and justified by the Holy Spirit (21 Cor 6:11). God added us to the church (Acts 2:47).

If you want the good things God has prepared for them that love Him, you must get to the distribution center where they can be handled and tasted. So many professing Christians live outside the perimeter of the *"Jerusalem that is above,"* or the *"heavenly places,"* where God has *"blessed us with all spiritual blessings"* (Eph 1:3). Like God brought Abram to the land of promise, so, in Christ, He has brought to the place where the promised benefits can be perceived, and are obtained and relished. Those who prefer environments where the goods things of God are not being distributed are not living in fellowship with Christ – a fellowship into which we have been called by God (1 Cor 1:9; Gal 1:6).

Abram's Departure from Ur According to Appearance

On the surface, or according to appearance, it seemed as though Terah led the expedition out of Ur (Gen 11:31). **Actually, however, it was God bringing Abram out of the Ur, to the land He had determined to give to him and his seed** – appearance notwithstanding.

Oh, there were things we did, just as surely as there were things Abram did. But when it gets right down to real causes, us being in Christ is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes! Believers should exercise themselves to see these realities and glory in them.

TO GIVE THEE THE LAND

" . . . to give thee this land to inherit it." After reminding Abram that He had brought him forth out of Ur, God again stated the intention of His direction: to give Abram the land in which he now stood.

It appears to me that the Lord knew it was going to take a while to get to the land of promise – some 1,500 miles away. Therefore, rather

WHEREBY SHALL I KNOW?

“⁸ *And he said, Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?* ⁹ *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.* ¹⁰ *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.* ¹¹ *And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.”*

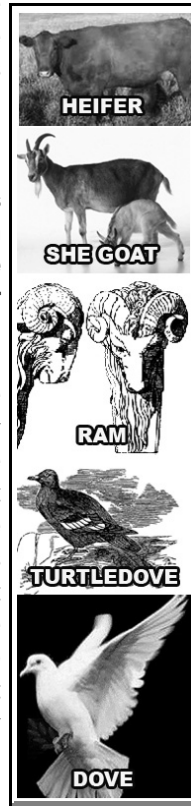
It is important to keep before us the sparse amount of revelation that had been given to Abram to this point. I say this because the question that he asked is almost identical to the question of Zecharias concerning the promised birth of John the Baptist. After hearing the word of Gabriel the angel, he asked, “*And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years*” (Luke 1:18). The angel answered, “*I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season*” (Luke 1:19-20). This is certainly not the manner in which the Lord responded to Abram’s request. What was different about Abram’s question?

The amount of revelation that God had given to Abram, and everyone before him, was exceedingly small. At the time of Zecharias there was the testimony of Moses, who have a history of God’s dealings with Abraham. There were also numerous prophecies about the coming Savior, and even of John the harbinger who was to be born to Zecharias and Elizabeth (Isa 40:3-5). There were numerous prophecies fulfilled, and the written testimony of Moses and the Prophets. In addition to this a special angel named Gabriel was sent to Zecharias to declare what was

going to happen, and what Zecharias was to do. In an environment like that, with such a plentitude of revelation, the reaction of Zecharias was inexcusable.

Something to be Seen

When God has revealed an abundance, men are responsible for knowing it. An ignorance of what God has said cannot be justified, particularly when He has sent the message throughout the world. If one generation did not pass it on to the next generation, the responsibility of men to know it is not removed. Generally speaking, and especially among American “Christians,” the understanding of these things is not at an acceptable level.



years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon . . .”

Five living creatures were to be taken for the Lord – “for Me.” Three larger animals were to be taken: a heifer (a cow that had calved), a she goat, and a ram (a male sheep) – each was to be three years old. Two fowls were included: a turtledove (Dove) and a pigeon (young dove). Certain suggested traits are associated with these creatures. These qualities, in my judgment, depict human traits that are to be given to the Lord.

- HEIFER. Mature and productive. (Hos 10:11)
- SHE GOAT. Capable of reproduction.
- RAM. Strength.
- TURTLE DOVE. Singing (Song 2:12).
- DOVE. Purity and sensitivity. (Song 6:9).

It is interesting to note that Abram understands that the creatures given to God are to slain. They were not kept in a pen of some sort, but their lives were forfeited. **This is the root of the concept of sacrifice – the forfeiture of natural life.** The only exception to this were the living sacrifices of the scapegoat (Lev 16:20-21), and the living bird associated with the cleansing of a leper (Lev 14:1-7).

Strictly speaking, this does not appear to have been a sacrifice – at least, not as ordinarily perceived. There is no mention of the use of their blood, placing them on an altar, or burning these carcasses.

HE DIVIDED THEM

“*And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another . . .*” Other versions read, “*cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other,*” ^{NKJV} “*cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other,*” ^{NIV} and “*cut them in two, laying each half over against the other,*” ^{NRSV}

HE SAID UNTO HIM

“*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*

There is no clear explanation of this action. Many have speculated about why this was done, but speculations are powerless, and often distracting.

The prophet Jeremiah makes mention of a practice that appears to be reflected in this text. *“And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof”* (Jer 34:18). The NIV reads, *“The men who have violated my covenant and have not fulfilled the terms of the covenant they made before me, I will treat like the calf they cut in two and then walked between its pieces”* (Jer 34:18).

Jeremiah indicates that a covenant was made while walking between the pieces of a calf that had been cut in two. Failure to honor that covenant would result in the violators being cut in two like the calf of reference.

If this correlation is proper, it indicates that **God was underscoring the surety of the covenant he would make with Abram** – like swearing with an oath. This was not owing to any possibility that God would not carry out His promise, but was intended to assist Abram in believing the word of the Lord. It confirmed to him that God was not only fully able to carry out His word, but was fully intent upon doing what He said.

THE FOWLS HE DIVIDED NOT

“ . . . but the birds divided he not.”

Here we see that the spirit of the Law was in the heart of Abram. About five hundred years later, the Law would specify that fowls that were sacrificed to the Lord were not to be divided. *“And if the burnt sacrifice for his offering to the LORD be of fowls, then he shall bring his offering of*

turtledoves, or of young pigeons. And the priest shall bring it unto the altar, and wring off his head, and burn it on the altar; and the blood thereof shall be wrung out at the side of the altar: And he shall pluck away his crop with his feathers, and cast it beside the altar on the east part, by the place of the ashes: And he shall cleave it with the wings thereof, but shall not divide it asunder: and the priest shall burn it upon the altar, upon the wood that is upon the fire: it is a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the LORD” (Lev 1:14-17).

Some are of the opinion that God directed Abram to do this. I have no

refused to allow them to be consumed by birds of prey. He would not allow them to be violated or in some way further dismembered. What belonged to the Lord would not be shared with birds of prey – so Abram drove them away.

The thing to be seen here is that what is offered to God is not to be shared with anyone else. This is what Paul indicated when he wrote, *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service”* (Rom 12:1). Our bodies belong to God, like those carcasses before Abram belong to God.

When the devil’s birds of prey swoop down upon the saints, eager to employ them in the devil’s work, they are to be driven away, and not given access to what has been given to God.

trouble with that assumption, but cannot offer satisfactory proof of the thought.

HE PROTECTED THE CARCASSES

“ . . . And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.”

These fowls were obviously birds of prey – like vultures, drawn to dead things. As men are wont to do, they have speculated on the meaning of this text declaring that it is a symbol of one thing or another. I must confess that I am not drawn to such approaches to Scripture.

It appears to me that having prepared these carcasses for the Lord, as the Lord command him to do, he

When the devil’s birds of prey swoop down upon the saints, eager to employ them in the devil’s work, they are to be driven away, and not given access to what has been given to God. In Christ matters have been even further clarified. We have been bought with a price, and we are not our own (1 Cor 6:19-20). **No believer has a right to give himself to anyone but God.** All other legitimate relations are subordinate to our identity with the Lord through Christ Jesus and by faith. If, like birds of prey, peers demand that less of ourselves be given to the Lord, and more be given to them, it is our business to drive them away. They are spiritual vultures that seek to exploit the people of God, and the saints must not yield to them.

KNOW OF A SURETY

¹² *And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.* ¹³ *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.*”

I want to keep before your minds the depth of the experience here recorded, coupled with the sparse amount of revelation that had been vouchsafed to men at that time – and only to a very few men at that: Adam,

AMPLIFIED

It is apparent from the different versions that the language here transcends normal human thought. This was not terror like that induced by natural phenomenon. This was a supernatural darkness, for which nature had no explanation.

God has often induced a deep sleep upon those with whom he was dealing. By “deep sleep,” I gather that they, at that time, were delivered from every form of extraneous distraction.

and seaeth their instruction, That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man” (Job 33:14-17).

➔ When Gabriel appeared to Daniel, the prophet testified, *“Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright”* (Dan 8:18). Later he said, *“Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground”* (Dan 10:9).

A immense level of sobriety and attentiveness were upon Abram at this time. All other considerations, whether conscious or subconscious were flushed from his mind. **That is the proper posture of hearing!** Many people have feared and trembled in the presence of the Lord.

- ➔ Israel at Sinai (Ex 19:16).
- ➔ David (Psa 119:120).
- ➔ Habakkuk (Hab 3:16).
- ➔ Moses (Acts 7:32; Heb 12:21).
- ➔ The centurion at Jesus’ death (Matt 27:54).

While I can only speak for myself, **I am deeply concerned for the lack of godly fear that I perceive exists in the modern church.** It indicates a near-total lack of awareness of the presence of the Lord. It is ever true that working out of our salvation with fear and trembling is to be done *“with fear and trembling”* (Phil 2:12).

GOD SAID TO ABRAM

“ . . . And He said unto Abram...”

When God speaks to anyone, it involves a revelation of something that was before basically unknown. I have heard people glibly say that God speaks to them every day. I think I know what they mean, but it is not stated with

Were the most advanced believer of our time to experience the things we are reading concerning Abram, I do not doubt that a fear and quaking would fall upon such that transcends all explanation.

Enoch, Noah, and now Abram. **Add to that the fact that lesser revelation tends to produce more fear in the presence of God, and this whole incident becomes even more remarkable.** Were the most advanced believer of our time to experience the things we are reading concerning Abram, I do not doubt that a fear and quaking would fall upon such that transcends all explanation.

A DEEP SLEEP FELL UPON ABRAM

“And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him” Other versions read, *“horror and great darkness,”* ^{NKJV} *“terror and great darkness,”* ^{NASB} *“a thick and dreadful darkness,”* ^{NIV} *“deep and terrifying darkness,”* ^{NRSV} *“a dread and great darkness,”* ^{RSV} *“a dark cloud of fear,”* ^{BBE} *“darksome horror seized upon him,”*; ^{DOUAY} *“terrifying darkness enveloped him,”* ^{NAB} *“great terror overwhelmed him,”* ^{NET} *and “a horror (a terror, a shuddering fear) of great darkness assailed and oppressed him.”*

- ➔ A *“deep sleep”* came upon Adam when God made Eve from one of his ribs (Gen 2:21).
- ➔ When David took a spear and a jug of water from king Saul, he was undetected because *“a deep sleep from the Lord was fallen upon him”* (1 Sam 26:12).
- ➔ Eliphaz told Job, *“Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof. In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake”* (Job 4:12-14).
- ➔ Job said, *“For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; Then he openeth the ears of men,*

godly precision.

KNOW OF A SURETY

“ . . . Know of a surety . . . ” Other versions read, “know certainly,” ^{NKJV} “know for certain,” ^{NASB} “truly,” ^{BBE} “know thou beforehand,” ^{DOUAY} “know for sure,” ^{GWN} “surely know,” ^{SEPTUAGINT} “you can be sure,” ^{NLT} “know well,” ^{TNK} “in knowing you will know,” ^{ABP} “thou shalt surely know,” ^{Brenton}, “you should know this,” ^{ERV} and “know positively.” ^{AMPLIFIED}

When it comes to our association with the Lord and His promises, it is important that certitude characterize the believer. Abram has already been clearly identified as a believer (Gen 15:6). Now the Lord adds certainty to Abram,

This being true, it makes known why many professing Christians stagnate, appearing incapable of learning anything. It also unveils the error of seeking to hear something that is assessed as “relevant to our lives now.”

which is an ultimate aspect of faith. There is a such a thing as “weak” faith (Rom 4:19; 14:1), that allows a person to sink in he water because they are not certain (Matt 14:30). However, no person can afford to be content to remain in such a condition. **The salvation of God is calculated to bring a person into a state of certainty and confidence.**

THY SEED

“ . . . 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.”

Remember, Abram does not have any seed yet, and already the Lord is speaking of several centuries in the future. However, as it is written, “Abram believed in the Lord.” Therefore, God can reveal additional

information to him. Further, it takes a man of faith to live expecting something God will do five hundred years in the future.

Something to Note

The Scriptures indicate that if a person does not believe what God has said, further insight will not be granted. In the case of Israel, because they did not hearken to God’s word, He poured lout the spirit of deep sleep upon them (Isa 29:10). Paul wrote that if any person did not receive the love of the truth, He would “send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thess 2:11-12).

A Possible Discrepancy

Critics of Scripture cite a possible discrepancy here. The twelfth chapter of Exodus states that Israel dwelt in Egypt for four hundred and thirty years. “Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was **four hundred and thirty years**. And it came to pass at the end of the **four hundred and thirty years**, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt” (Ex 12:40-41). “Why then,” they reason, “does this text say ‘four hundred years?’”

First, our text does not say that Abram’s seed would dwell in Egypt for four hundred years, but that they would be “**afflicted four hundred years**.” When Jacob and the rest of the Israelites came into Egypt, Jacob was one hundred and thirty years old (Gen 47:9). He died when he was one hundred and forty-seven years of age, having lived in Egypt for seventeen years (Gen 47:28). During that entire period, the Israelites experienced favor, and were not slaves.

Some time after than, a Pharaoh came into power “*which did not know Joseph*” (Ex 1:8). Under his rule, the Israelites became slaves, having taskmasters set over them (Ex 1:11). **That is when the four hundred years of bondage began.** The seventeen Jacob spent in the land the Israelites were not in bondage. That leaves thirteen years unaccounted for. We assume these were the additional years of favor Israel enjoyed, until the tyrannical Pharaoh arose to oppress them. In my own understanding, there is no discrepancy between the promised issued to Abram and the historical record. **God accentuated the duration of Israel’s bondage to Egypt rather than the number of years they dwelt there.** When God led Israel out of Egypt it was not simply to live some other place, but to go to the land God promised Abram, which related to the coming Messiah.

This being true, it makes known why many professing Christians stagnate, appearing incapable of learning anything. It also unveils the error of seeking to hear something that is assessed as “relevant to our lives now.” What God is revealing to Abram certainly would not fall into such a category, yet it was vital that Abram have an understanding of these things.

God reveals that the people who would have their origin in Abram would be in a “*strange land*” – not the one in which Abram was now located – and would be slaves for four hundred years to a people who would afflict them.

That nation would be Egypt, although it is not specified in this revelation.

I WILL JUDGE THAT NATION

“¹⁴ And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.”

THAT NATION I WILL JUDGE

“And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge . . .”

Behold the amount of details that God is revealing to Abram!

The Lord does not reveal the name of the nation. It is not necessary to do so at this point. It might even impact the children of Abram wrongly if they knew the name of the nation ahead of time. However, when the time arrives, the identity of this nation will be glaringly apparent, and key Israelites will know very well what is going to happen. Now, many years before the judgment of that nation takes place, Joseph will be able to put this prophecy together with the circumstances in which they find themselves (Gen 50:25).

To ensure that the people will not credit their escape from Egypt to some lesser cause, God tells faithful Abram that it will be owing to His judgment, not a set of unique circumstances. Additionally, coming out of Egypt will also be accompanied by various signs and wonders that will confirm it was a work of God, not of men.

The record of the deliverance states that in Israel’s exodus from Egypt, it was the gods of Egypt that were being judged, as well as the nation who served them (Ex 12:12).

THEY SHALL COME OUT WITH GREAT SUBSTANCE

“ . . . and afterward shall they come out with great substance.” Other versions read, *“great possessions,”* ^{NKJV} *“many possessions,”* ^{NASB} *“great wealth,”* ^{BBE} *“great property,”* ^{DARBY} *“belongings much,”* ^{ABP} *“many good*

The Lord does not reveal the name of the nation. It is not necessary to do so at this point. It might even impact the children of Abram wrongly if they knew the name of the nation ahead of time.

things with them,” ^{ERV} and *“loaded with plunder.”* ^{MESSAGE}

This prophecy was particularly fulfilled and described at the time of the exodus. When God first called Moses to deliver Israel, He told him, *“And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: But every woman shall borrow of her neighbor, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians”* (Ex 3:21-22).

Just before the deliverance took place, God spoke to Moses. Prior to the last plague, in which the firstborn in every house of Egypt died, it is written: *“And the LORD said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether. Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbor, and every woman of her neighbor, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold. And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh’s servants, and in the sight of the people”* (Ex 11:1-3).

When they came out of Egypt it is written, *“And the children of Israel did*

according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians” (Ex 12:36). The Psalmist wrote, *“He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes”* (Psa 105:37). The gold, silver, and jewels would be used in the construction of the Tabernacle and the various vessels associated with it (Ex 23:5,11-13,17-18,24,26,28, 29,31,36, 38,39; 26:19,21,25,29,32, 37; 27:10, 11,17; 31:4; 35:5,22,24,32; 37:13,24, 26,30,34,36,38; 37:2,3,4,6, 7,11,12, 13,15,16,17,22,23,24,26,27,28; 38:10,11,24,25,27).

From a practical point of view, this might be viewed as past wages, for the laborer is worthy of his hire. Considering the Tabernacle, the provisions were in order that the Israelites might give what they had for the building of the Tabernacle, and not have to obtain needed materials from outside resources.

Also True of Those in Christ

Although the parallel is not exact, he saints, who were spiritually impoverished while in captivity to sin, came out with great wealth, with *“all things”* being theirs (1 Cor 3:21-22; 2 Pet 1:3), and *“all spiritual blessings”* (Eph 1:3).

With Lot separated from him, and a necessary battle having been fought, God appears in a confirming vision to Abram – Given O. Blakely

THOU SHALT GO TO THY FATHERS IN PEACE

“¹⁵ And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.”

The Lord had told Abram He would be his “Shield” (Gen 15:1). Now He confirms that this is true, and Abram will live to a ripe and productive old age.

THOU SHALT GO TO THY FATHERS

“And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace . . .” Other versions read, *“you will die in peace,”* ^{GWN} *“join your fathers in peace,”* ^{NAU} *“comest in unto thy fathers,”* ^{YLT} *“depart to thy fathers,”* ^{BRENTON} *“be buried with your family,”* ^{ERV} and *“die a good and peaceful death.”* ^{MESSAGE}

The language here testifies to the existence of “the fathers,” even though they had died. If this is not the case, then it would make no sense to identify Abram’s death with his fathers. In death there would be an identity with all men, for all men die. Some present the view that it referred to where he was buried. However, his father was buried in Haran, not Canaan.

The book of judges speaks of a whole generation that was “gathered unto their fathers” (Judges 2:10). God spoke to the king of Judah regarding

being gathered to his people, and to the grave as well, *“Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace”* (2 Kgs 22:20). Several people are said to have been “gathered to their people:” Abraham (Gen 25:8); Ishmael (Gen 25:17); Isaac (Gen 35:29); Jacob (Gen 49:29,33); Aaron (Num 20:24); and Moses (Num 31:2; Deut 32:50).

There is some sense in which death is a gateway to being with the people with whom a person has become identified in life. It is a pleasant thought for those in the Lord, and ought to be a fearful one to those who are not.

Even the resurrection of the dead, though occurring simultaneous, will consist of two distinct groups. Jesus said, *“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation”* (John 5:28-29).

BURIED IN A GOOD OLD AGE

“. . . thou shalt be buried in a good old age.”

Abraham died at the age of one

hundred and seventy-five (Gen 25:7). Notice that this described as a “good old age.” Yet, it was but a fraction of the age of earlier saints: Adam–930 (Gen 5:5); Seth–912 (Gen 5:7); Enos–905 (Gen 5:10); Cainan–910 (Gen 5:13); Mahalaleel–875 (Gen 5:16); Jared–962 (Gen 5:19); Methuselah–969 (Gen 5:26); Lamech–777 (Gen 5:30); Noah–950 (Gen 9:28); Shem–602 (Gen 11:10-11); Arphaxad–438 (Gen 11:12-13); Selah–433 (Gen 11:14-15); Eber–464 (Gen 11:16-17); Peleg–239 (Gen 11:18-19); Reu–239 (Gen 11:20-21); Serug–230 (Gen 11:22-23); Nahor–148 (Gen 11:24-25); Terah–205 (Gen 11:32).

Once again, I draw attention to the steady decline of age. This is confirmation of the dominancy of death following the transgression of Adam and Eve. Not only did all people die, with the exception of Enoch and Elijah, but the average life-span continued to decline.

The faith of Abram was the thing that enabled God to reveal so much to him. Let it clear that God always honors faith, and never respects unbelief. If a person will give due consideration to those facts, it will promote sobriety.

IN THE FOURTH GENERATION

“¹⁶ But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.”

The details revealed to Abram are most impressive. They confirm that superior knowledge does not always pertain to the here and now. They also drive home the point that relevancy is

not limited to the here and now. **People who insist on tailoring their religion for present circumstances have made a serious error in judgment.** The revelation given to Abram suggests that. The fact of the day of judgement shouts it into our ears.

IN THE FOURTH GENERATION

“But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again . . .” Other versions read, *“In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here,”* ^{NIV} and *“And in the ^bfourth generation they [your descendants] shall come back here [to Canaan] again.”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

Four generations commenced with

With Lot separated from him, and a necessary battle having been fought, God appears in a confirming vision to Abram – Given O. Blakely

Isaac, then Jacob, then the twelve sons of Jacob, and finally the twelve tribes.

The reckoning of the generations commenced with Isaac, the first of Abram's seed. Jacob was the next, with his twelve sons being the next. From them came the twelve tribes, which came out of Egypt (Gen 49:28; Ex 24:4). **The revelation of this fact would enable discerning Israelites to calculate the time of their deliverance as it began to draw near – much like Daniel was able to discern the time during which the Babylonian captivity would end** (Dan 9:2). Those familiar with Scripture may have wondered why Moses was able to think of himself as delivering Egypt, even before the Lord had called him – *“For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not”* (Acts 7:25).

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| 1 | ISAAC |
| 2 | JACOB |
| 3 | TWELVE SONS |
| 4 | TWELVE TRIBES |

From one point of view, it was during this fourth generation that the number of the people would have multiplied sufficiently to begin occupancy of the promised land. Perhaps, knowing that he was in that fourth generation, and considering his position in Egypt, he may have entertained such thoughts.

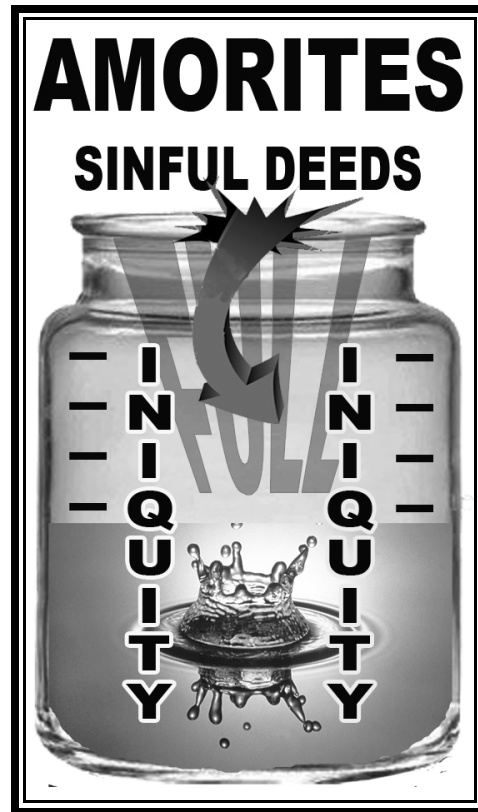
However, there was a particular reason revealed to Abram for the seeming delay. **God's righteousness was involved in this matter.** It would be a long time before the expulsion of the heathen nations could be fully justified.

THE INIQUITY OF THE AMORITES

“ . . . for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. Other versions read, *“is not yet complete,”* ^{NKJV} *“has not yet reached its full measure,”* ^{NIV} *“ripe for punishment,”* ^{CJB} *“will not have run its course until then,”* ^{GWN} *“reached its full extent,”* ^{NJB} *“the sins of the Amorites do not yet warrant their destruction,”* ^{NLT} and *“will not be ready*

for punishment until then.” ^{LIVING}

The Amorites were some of the descendants of Canaan (Gen 10:15-17). They were among the most distinguished of the nations in Canaan (Exodus 3:8; 13:5; 33:2), and are first mentioned as being conquered by Chedorlaomer (Gen 14:17). The famous giant king Sihon, who was defeated by Israel, was *“the king of the Amorites”* (Num 21:21; Deut 1:4). The *“Amorites”* are mentioned seventy-three times in Scripture, and never in a good sense.



The Amorites were noted in heaven for their iniquity – which confirms that God does take note of nations that have no formal affiliation with Him.

It is said that the *“cup of their iniquity”* was not yet full – and would not be so until the time came to possess their land. At least two things are noted here. First, there is the capacity to sin, or descend to new depths of sin. **Second, there is a point at which God will no longer tolerate sin.**

For example, when the world became filled with violence during Noah's day, God's patience no longer would endure the situation. His Spirit ceased to strive with men, and he focused His loving attention on Noah alone, and those identified with him.

The builders in Shinar also reached a level where their pride could no longer be endured by the Lord. Thus they were scattered, their hopes blasted, and their building terminated.

Sodom and Gomorrah also reached a point where their cup was full, and God would no longer endure their defiling presence on His earth.

In rejecting the Lord Jesus, the generation of that time was no longer allowed to live in the holy city, but were consigned to the Romans for judgment, and their city to destruction.

Paul spoke of the Jews who opposed the preaching of the Gospel, forbidding him to preach to the Gentiles. Of that circumstance he wrote, *“Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost”* (1 Thess 2:16). About eighteen years after he wrote that letter, the Roman armies began their invasion of Jerusalem in one of the greatest holocausts of human history. History records that over one million Jews were killed, and 95,000 taken captive. **The cup of their iniquity had been filled!**

There is an idea about of God being disseminated today that does not allow for this view of Him, whose name is *“Jealous”* (Ex 34:14). For those with eyes to see, the cup of our country is rapidly filling, and its future is becoming more and more uncertain. Yet, like the Amorites, the professing church is asleep, unaware of the dangerous precipice on which it is standing. This is a time when the knowledge of God is sorely needed, yet is at a premium.

THE COVENANT IS MADE

“¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ 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: ¹⁹ The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, ²⁰ And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, ²¹ And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.”

This is one of the most arresting accounts of Scripture – the first of its kind. In order that Abram not be consumed by Divine glory, he is swathed in darkness, and put into a deep sleep for his preservation. Yet, he will be more alert, perhaps, than he has ever been before. That is because the Lord is controlling the circumstance.

A SMOKING FURNACE

“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.” Other versions read, *“a smoking oven and a burning torch,”* ^{NKJV} *“a smoking firepot and a blazing torch,”* ^{NIV} and *“a smoking brazier [fire holder for refining brass] with a blazing torch.”* ^{NIB}

A furnace for heat and forging, and a torch for light and seeing. The nighttime was like a black cloth on which a diamond of revelation was made known.

Remember, the word of the Lord has come to Abram in a vision. Yet, he was not asleep, having obtained the living creatures the Lord specified, dividing all but the fowls in half, and laying the halves side by side. I assume what is now being reported was seen by Abram, else there would appear to be



no significance to the report.

As Abram beheld, a furnace and a torch appear, and they pass between the pieces of the creatures he had assembled on the ground. This is a covenantal procedure in which the promise of God is confirmed. It is to accommodate the frailty of man, not establish the unwavering faithfulness of God.

THE SAME DAY THE LORD MADE A COVENANT

“In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram . . .”

This is 24 hour day, versus the light segment of the day. The language suggests that this vision was not spread over a short duration. Extended exposure to any mortal would present no problem. **However, being in the presence of the Almighty for a prolonged time is something else.** Even when His presence is veiled with darkness and the similitude of other things like a smoking furnace and a

blazing torch, the contrast between God and flesh causes fear and trembling.

UNTO THY SEED HAVE I GIVEN THIS LAND

“saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land . . .”

This is the *“seed”* of which the Lord has just spoken to Abram. He is not referring to Isaac, although Isaac will be in the land – but only as a stranger and sojourner (Heb 11:9).

THE BORDERS OF THE LAND

“. . . from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates . . .”

The area described in this text appears to be the area Abram traveled when he first came into Canaan, went down into Egypt, and returned to the land after its famine. If this is true, everyplace he placed his foot is represented. The fertility of the land is seen by the waters adjacent to and with it. The Euphrates River on the North, the Mediterranean Sea on the

With Lot separated from him, and a necessary battle having been fought, God appears in a confirming vision to Abram – Given O. Blakely

West, the River of Egypt on the South, and the Jordan River within.

THE DISPLACED NATIONS

“The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites,²⁰ And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims,²¹ And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.”

These are the ten nations displaced by Israel. The emphasis here is on the territory they occupied.

- ➔ Kenites.
- ➔ Kenizzites.
- ➔ Kadmonites.
- ➔ Hittites.
- ➔ Perizzites.
- ➔ Rephaims.
- ➔ Amorites.
- ➔ Canaanites.
- ➔ Girgashites.

➔ Jebusites.

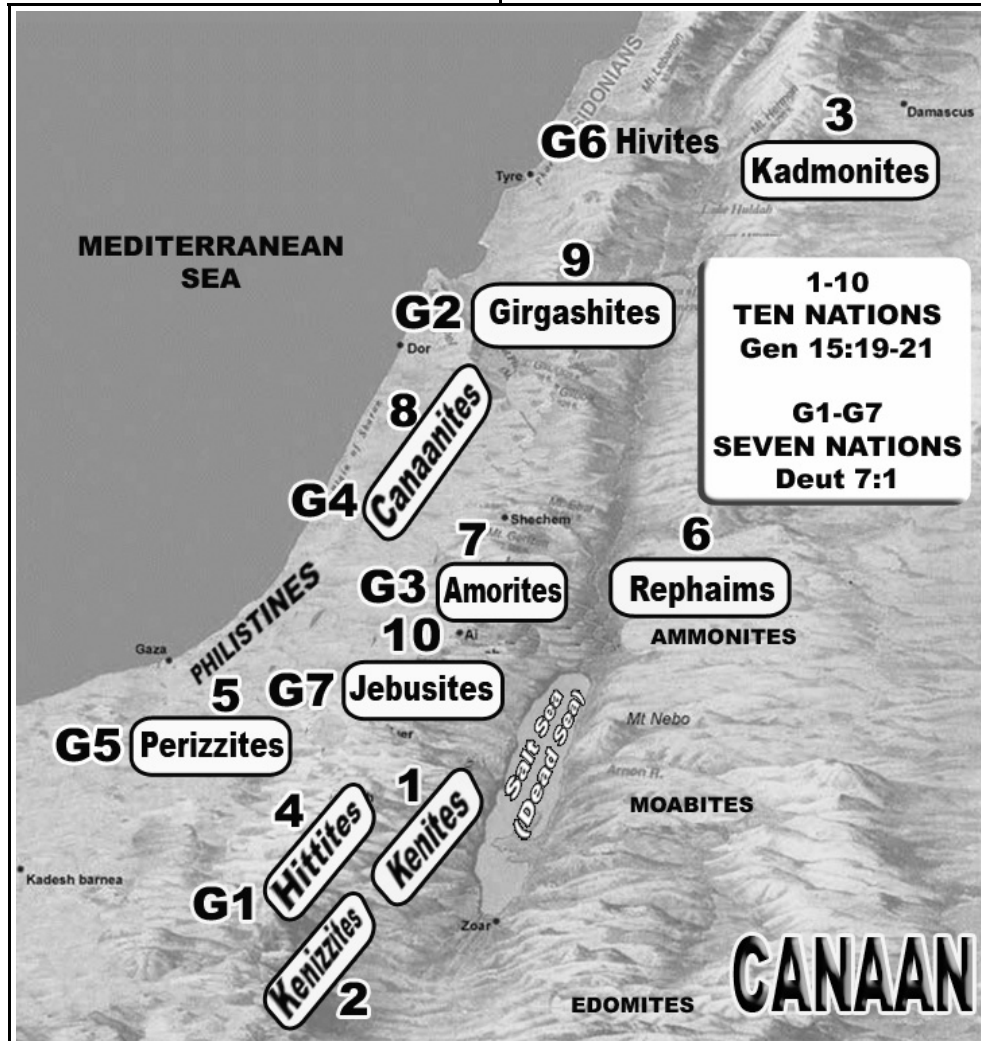
Years later Moses told Israel they were going to cast out seven nations that were greater in number than themselves. *“When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou”* (Deut 7:1).

The ten nations refers to territories, while the seven refer to peoples.

The difference in the listing of nations given to Abram, and those announced by Moses should not be a stumbling block to the student of Scripture. First, Abram was told of the

“the land,” and those who occupied certain territories. The emphasis of Moses’ words were the occupants of those territories that were to be driven out. This particular view was necessary for the Israelites were now to enter the land and commence driving out those who then occupied it. The promise delivered to Abram had more to do with the territory that had been given to him and his seed. It was about five hundred years from the promise until Moses prepared the people to enter the land. The territory remained the same, but the population of the nations probably changed. At any rate, the circumstances were not identical at the time of possession.

Moses mentioned the seven nations that were each larger in population than Israel. That was his particular emphasis.



The Reason for Dispossessing the Nations

God had given to Abram a major reason for Israel driving out the existing nations. It involved *“iniquity”* – particularly that of the Amorites. However, the Amorites were not the only nation noted for their iniquity. Later, as the revelation concerning the land was unfolded to Moses, he spoke of the justness of Israel taking over the land. *“Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you: And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants . . . That the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you”* (Lev 18:24-25,28).

And again, *“When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, (Or*

a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do” (Deut 18:9-14).

And again, *“Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee”* (Deut 9:4).

This land especially belonged to God all along, and these heathen nations had defiled it. Early in history, when the Lord divided the nations, this land was a central consideration. As it

is written, *“When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the LORD’S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance”* (Deut 32:8-9).

Thus we see that God is righteous in all of His dealings with humanity. As Ezekiel said, He does nothing “without cause” (Ezek 14:23).

CONCLUSION

Thus God has revealed to Abram an inheritance that he himself would never experience in this world. He first told him, *“Unto thy seed will I give this land”* (Gen 12:7). Later the Lord said of the land, *“I will give it unto thee”* (Gen 13:17). Yet, during his entire lifetime, Abram never advanced beyond being a stranger in the land of promise (Heb 11:9).

To the modern churchman God’s promise to Abram would have had no relevance at all, because it did not deal with day-to-day life, and the here and the now. One of the things that is seen in these Scriptural accounts is that those who walk with God and are accepted by Him are not self-centered. They are called away from that kind of life to involvement in the purpose of God.

Faith acclimates those who possess it to this kind of life. There is no record of Abram ever experiencing discontent with the will of God. In fact he journeyed in the promised land itself “as in a *“strange country.”* He was in such accord with the God who had called him that *“he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God”* (Heb 11:10). He seemed to sense that the *“Lord God”* who made heaven and earth had plans

for him that were transcendent to this world. Therefore, he and others who had faith, *“confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth”* (Heb 11:13). They desired *“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”* (Heb 11:16).

Lest we forget, think of the major revelations that took place AFTER the death of Abraham.

- Things of God were revealed in the exodus of Israel from Egypt, included power, provision, and faithful direction (Exodus through Deuteronomy).
- The giving of the Law, through which men gained the knowledge of sin (Rom 3:20).
- The judgment of Israel’s unbelief, when they failed to believe they could take the land of promise as they were commanded to do.
- The entry of Israel into the promised land, and their success in subduing its inhabitants (Josh 24:17-18).

- Psalmic ministry of David.
- The wisdom of Solomon (Proverbs).
- The ministry of the Prophets (Isaiah through Malachi).
- The ministry of John the Baptist.
- The Ministry of Jesus Christ, as He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed of the devil.
- The Day of Pentecost, and the announcement of repentance and the forgiveness of sins.
- The apostles’ doctrine, who expounded the Gospel.
- The ministry of Paul to whom the mystery of God’s will was revealed.
- Jesus’ assessment of the seven churches in Asia.
- The revelation given to John on the Isle of Patmos.

How will those who have not attained to the state of Abraham explain their miserable condition on the

day of judgment? Can it be that some think Abraham was given more, or had more advantages than those who are in Christ Jesus? Who would dare to entertain such an absurdity? The fact of

the matter is that more is expected of those who in Christ, because infinitely more has been given to them! That is why such strong exhortations have been delivered to them.

This is *“the day of salvation”* and *“now is the accepted time”* (2 Cor 6:2). May our lives justify the kind of investment God has made in us!

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 1/13/12. Owing to the Watch Service on Saturday, we will not have a Hungry Saints meeting on 12/30/11. We will continue our series of lessons in the book of Genesis. The twenty-fifth lesson will cover verses 1 through verse 16 of chapter Sixteen: “THE BIRTH OF ISHMAEL.” The promise of a “seed” being given to Abram, and a significant period having passed without Sarai bearing a child, Sarai conceives a way through which Abram can have offspring. The result is Ishmael. 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.

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THE WORD OF TRUTH FELLOWSHIP

WORD OF TRUTH FELLOWSHIP Website: <http://wotruth.com/wotf/wotindex.htm>

A place where believers can meet, fellowship, be edified, and express themselves.

Additional Website for Word of Truth Fellowship: <http://www.forministry.com/USMOINDPTWOTFW>

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BROTHER BLAKEY'S ON-LINE COMMENTARIES

COMMENTARY on Nehemiah: <http://wotruth.com/nehindex.htm>

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

COMMENTARY on Hosea: <http://wotruth.com/hoseaindex.htm>

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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>