



The Book of Genesis

Lesson Number 38



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), GSNT=Goodspeed (1923), 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=Literary 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.

ABRAHAM TAKES KETURAH TO WIFE, AND LATER DIES

Gen 25:1 "Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah. ² And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah. ³ And Jokshan begat Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, and Letushim, and Leummim. ⁴ And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Epher, and Hanoch, and Abidah, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah. ⁵ And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac. ⁶ But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country. ⁷ And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years. ⁸ Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people. ⁹ And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre; ¹⁰ The field which Abraham purchased of the sons of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife. ¹¹ And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac dwelt by the well Lahairoi." (Genesis 25:1-11)

INTRODUCTION

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

Following Isaac's marriage to Rebekah, Abraham again marries, taking Keturah to be his wife. Confirming that the strength to beget children remained with him forty years after Isaac's birth, he begets six sons through Keturah. However, his rightful heir was Isaac, and the time came

when the other sons, like Ishmael, had to leave the house.

Abraham is declared to have given "all that he had" to Isaac. He then gave gifts to the sons of his concubines, and "sent them away from Isaac his son."

Having fulfilled his position in the

purpose of God, and having ordered his household in the favor of Isaac, he died "in a good old age," being one hundred and seventy-five years old. His sons, Ishmael and Isaac, buried him in the cave of Machpela, where Sarah had been buried as well. After the death of Abraham, and in preparation for the continuance of His purpose, God

CONTENTS

- ▶ INTRODUCTION
- ▶ AGAIN, ABRAHAM TAKES A WIFE (25:1)
- ▶ SHE BARE HIM SIX SONS (25:2)
- ▶ MORE OFFSPRING (25:3-4)
- ▶ ABRAHAM GAVE ALL THAT HE HAD TO ISAAC (24:5)
- ▶ THE SONS OF THE CONCUBINES (25:6)
- ▶ ABRAHAM'S LIFE (25:7)
- ▶ ABRAHAM GATHERED TO HIS PEOPLE (25:8)
- ▶ ABRAHAM IS BURIED (25:9)
- ▶ THE FIELD WHICH ABRAHAM PURCHASED (25:10)
- ▶ GOD BLESSED ISAAC (25:11)
- ▶ CONCLUSION

"blessed his son Isaac." Thus, the stage is set for the further development of the nation of Israel, into which the promised Messiah would be born.

I want to again underscore that we are being exposed to the working out of Divine purpose, not to a mere historical account of Abraham. The significance of Abraham is traceable to His call and positioning by God in His "eternal purpose." Before his call (Gen 12:1-3), there is no distinction associated with Abraham, then called "Abram." He was not noted for believing God or being righteous until "righteousness" was imputed unto him about ten years after his call (Gen 15:6; 16:3). The religious background of his family was one of idolatry (Josh 24:2). There is no record that he, or any of his relatives, prayed, sought the Lord, or was in any way consciously associated with the Living God.

Abraham himself is a sterling example of the prophetic word concerning the Gentiles: "I am sought of them that asked not for Me; I am found of them that sought Me not: I said, Behold Me, behold Me, unto a nation that was not called by My name" (Isa 65:1; Rom 10:20). Even though God had placed "all nations" in both time and location in order that

they should "seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:27), **there is no evidence that Abraham had done this.** I suppose it can be conjectured that Abraham did seek the Lord, found Him, and then was called. However, there is no revealed basis for such a supposition. If he had, he would surely have been commended for doing so, like Cornelius was (Acts 10:1-4). The very first apparent commendation of Abraham took place when he "believed in the Lord," and it was that believing that was "counted to him for righteousness" (Gen 15:6).

All of this highlights the working of the Lord, versus the initiative and response of Abraham. When God referred to Abraham's departure from Ur of the Chaldees He said, "**I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it**" (Gen 15:7). Through Joshua, God referred to His working with Abraham, and Joshua said it to the

(Josh 24:3). When Stephen referred to Abraham he said, "**The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee . . . And He gave him the covenant of circumcision**" (Acts 7:2-3,8).

The prophet Isaiah said the Lord "redeemed Abraham" (Isa 29:22). Again he wrote, "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him" (Isa 51:2). It is clear that Abraham is preeminently a person God called, and with whom He worked. **He is a significant introduction to the way God works, and the people He recognizes.**

All of Scripture approaches the records of key people and events from this vantage point. Whether it is Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David,

GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE

"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph 3:10-11)

"Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified." (Psa 40:16)

people of Israel. "And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood [Nile River], and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac"

the prophets, or the twelve apostles and Paul, it is what God is doing that is the occasion for mentioning them.

All of this postulates that God is

over all, and that His purpose is the driving impetus behind human history. It requires that He be Sovereign, unchanging, righteous, and essentially good. It also necessarily implies that man is, at the very best, a secondary consideration, and that he is now, and will eventually, on the day of judgment, be evaluated in strict accordance with his harmony with the revealed purpose of God.

Thus far in Genesis, we have witnessed the hand of God in:

- ➔ Creation
- ➔ Dealing with joint sin (Adam/Eve).

Dealing with individual sin (Cain).

- ➔ Attitude toward faith (Abel, Abraham).
- ➔ The power of His grace (Noah).
- ➔ Dealing with global sin (flood).
- ➔ Dealing with pride (Babel).
- ➔ How His will provokes His promises (Abraham).
- ➔ How He directs men to fulfill His purpose (Abraham).
- ➔ How those dissociated from His

purpose are excluded from His blessing (Ishmael).

All of this is directly associated with His purpose – a purpose that was determined before the world was created, and without consultation with anyone else, or considering the reaction of anyone else. None of the above were disconnected with His purpose. If it were not for that purpose, there would have been no Law, no Scripture, and no Redeemer. This is what makes it so wrong to be wrapped up in self, or to think of man as being primarily a free agent to do whatever he wills. This is, after all, God's world, together with all that is in it.

AGAIN, ABRAHAM TAKES A WIFE

Gen 25:1 "Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah."

THEN AGAIN

"Then again . . ." Other versions read, "Abraham again," ^{NKJV} "Now," ^{NASB} and "and." ^{ASV}

The words "then again" are translated from a single Hebrew word: **וַיִּשְׁבַּע** YACAPH {YAW-SAF} MEANING: 1) TO ADD, INCREASE, DO AGAIN, TO ADD, INCREASE, DO AGAIN. TO JOIN, JOIN ONESELF TO, TO BE JOINED, BE ADDED TO, TO CAUSE TO ADD, INCREASE. TO DO MORE, DO AGAIN.

As God considers things, this is the next key event in Abraham's life. Recent recorded events are:

- ➔ Abraham tested when God commanded him to offer Isaac for a burnt offering to Him (Gen 22:1-19). – Age
- ➔ The death and burial of Sarah (Gen 23:1-19). – Age 137 (10 years younger than Sarah).
- ➔ The dispatching of his chief servant to obtain a wife for Isaac (Gen 24:1-9). – Age 140 (Isaac 40, born when Abraham was 100).
- ➔ Abraham's death at the age of one

hundred and seventy five (Gen 25:7).

In Abraham we have a view of how God regards the life of those whom He has chosen. **There is a sense in which His daily attention is given to the saints. Some examples are:**

- ➔ He cares for them (1 Pet 5:7).
- ➔ He hears their prayers (1 Pet 3:12).
- ➔ He directs their way (Prov 21:39).
- ➔ Jesus intercedes for them (Heb 7:25).
- ➔ The Spirit makes intercession for them (Rom 7:26-27).
- ➔ He works all things together for their good (Rom 8:28).
- ➔ God and Jesus fellowship with them (1 Cor 1:9; 1 John 1:3).
- ➔ They enjoy the communion of the Holy Spirit I(2 Cor 13:14).
- ➔ Jesus teaches them (Eph 4:20-21; 1 John 5:20).

- ➔ He provides their food, clothing, and shelter (Matt 6:31-33).

ESTIMATED AGE OF ABRAHAM AT KEY TIMES	
WHEN ABRAHAM LEFT HARAN.....	75
<hr style="border: 0.5px solid black;"/>	
AT THE TIME SARAH GAVE HAGAR TO ABRAHAM.....	ESTIMATE 85
<hr style="border: 0.5px solid black;"/>	
WHEN ISHMAEL WAS BORN.....	86
<hr style="border: 0.5px solid black;"/>	
AT THE TIME ISHMAEL WAS CIRCUMCISED (13 YEARS).....	89
<hr style="border: 0.5px solid black;"/>	
WHEN THE TIME OF ISAAC'S BIRTH WAS CONFIRMED.....	99
<hr style="border: 0.5px solid black;"/>	
WHEN ISAAC WAS BORN.....	100
<hr style="border: 0.5px solid black;"/>	
AT THE TIME ISAAC WAS WEANED (3 YEARS).....	ESTIMATE 103
<hr style="border: 0.5px solid black;"/>	
WHEN HE WAS COMMANDED TO OFFER ISAAC.....	ESTIMATE 121-130
<hr style="border: 0.5px solid black;"/>	
AT THE TIME SARAH DIED.....	137
<hr style="border: 0.5px solid black;"/>	
WHEN SERVANT SENT TO GET ISAAC A WIFE.....	140
<hr style="border: 0.5px solid black;"/>	
ABRAHAM MARRIES KETURAH.....	??
<hr style="border: 0.5px solid black;"/>	
ABRAHAM DIES.....	175

There is a sense in which all these things are general. It is not like the Lord becoming personally involved in all of

the details of one's life – **at least not at the cognitive level.** This is not to suggest that God, at any time, leaves His people to operate on their own. **However, sometimes it does appear as though that is the case.** During such times, men must live by faith, knowing that the Lord is a *"very present help in the time of trouble"* (Psa 46:1).

Our lives are to be ordered in strict accord with God's revealed purpose – not the purported objective for our lives, but what He has purposed in Christ

nationality is not known. She has been, as someone has once said, "LOST TO HISTORY."

In First Chronicles 1:32, she is called *"Abraham's concubine."*

SOMETHING TO BE SEEN

For those who teach there is some inherent worth in men, scripture regularly faces us with the fact that there are people who are nowhere associated with worth, value, or lasting significance. Thus far in Genesis those

that Hagar was *"an Egyptian"* (Gen 16:1,3; 21:9) – and the fact that she was Sarah's handmaid could probably be traced back to the time Abraham spent in Egypt, for Pharaoh had given him *"maidservants"* (Gen 12:16). It is possible that Hagar was one of them. But not even this amount of information is given concerning Keturah – and she bore six children to Abraham!

Men may not like to acknowledge it, but God does have a favored people – a people that are favored above all others, like Isaac was above Ishmael and his other half-brothers. In his generation, Noah is the only one who *"found grace in the eyes of the Lord"* (Gen 6:8). In his generation, Abraham is the only one who was chosen, called, and given a promise of blessing that would extend to his seed.

When it comes to a people – a generation in the flesh – Israel stands unique among all the peoples of the world.

Jesus. **The more men become involved in their daily routines, advantages, and troubles, the more they will be distracted from main things.**

The record of Abraham's life is an excellent example of this. So far as events that occurred in Abraham's life, we know relatively few of them.

ABRAHAM TOOK A WIFE

" . . . Abraham took a wife . . ."

Other versions read, *"took another wife,"* ^{NASB} *"had taken him another wife,"* ^{GENEVA} *"married again,"* ^{GWN} *"Abraham addeth and taketh a wife,"* ^{YLT} *"married another woman,"* ^{GNB} and *"married a second time."* ^{MSG}

The Time Of This Is Uncertain

We do not know Abraham's age at this time, or the events that may have taken place from the time of Isaac's marriage to Rebekah until he married Keturah.

HER NAME WAS KETURAH

" . . .and her name was Keturah."

Keturah's name means, *"TO MAKE THE INCENSE TO FUME."* ^{HITCHCOCK} The only personal things we know about her is what the Scripture says: Abraham married her, and she gave birth to six sons. Her

falling into this category include Cain, Nimrod, the entire world of Noah's day, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the households of Pharaoh and Abimelech, the king of Sodom, Hagar, Ishmael, etc. These people were all incidental. None of them were in any sense "saved" or delivered. With the exception of Hagar (Gen 21:12,13,18,20), God made no commitments to them, nor did He give them any direction. **The only reason they are mentioned is that they intersected with the people of God, and what He was doing in the earth.** That intersection, however, did not result in a significant blessing for them.

In the text before us, we have Abraham associated with three women – all of them bearing one or more children: Sarah, Hagar, and Keturah. These women, however, are by no means equals. Only the single offspring of Sarah received the blessing immediately associated with the *"eternal purpose"* of God. Hagar and her son were thrust from the house because it was not proper for Ishmael to be raised in the same house as Isaac, who was Abraham's appointed heir.

Now, we have Keturah mentioned – but that is all that may be said of her: she was mentioned. It was revealed

In a stirring statement Moses told the people, *"For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved YOU, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt"* (Deut 7:6-8). Again he reminded them, *"For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto Himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth"* (Deut 14:2).

Through Amos the Lord reasoned with Israel, telling them why He would not tolerate their iniquity: *"You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities"* (Amos 3:2). It is true that God chose them because of His consideration of Abraham. **The point, however, is that some people are favored, and some are not.** There is no other reason attributed to this choice

other than the fact that God wanted to do it. Further, He wanted to do it because of someone other than themselves.

The Parallel In Redemption

Now, in this day of salvation, God favors the people who believe the record He has given of His Son. He values them above all other people. They are the only ones to whom He gives eternal life (John 10:27-28). They are the only ones who are given the Holy Spirit (John 7:39; 1 John 3:24). They are the only ones to whom holy angels minister (Heb 1:13-14). And, they are the only ones for whom Jesus

intercedes (Heb 7:25).

Why has something as significant as this been swept under the institutional rug? Why are not the saints of God reminded often of their cherished status before the Lord. What has kept men from tracing salvation back to God, His choices, and His preferences?

However, the whole story must be told. Israel was told that because they had a favored status, they would be punished for their iniquities (Amos 3:2).

The same principle applies to the

church. Peter well said, *“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?”* (1 Pet 4:17). God will be more strict with sinful Jerusalem than with sinful Rome! He will be even more strict with the church that is being prepared to be His Son’s wife. The modern church may have grown accustomed to sin, and even to being forward to welcome those enslaved to it into the church. However, this is not descriptive of God, or of the Lord Jesus Christ, or of the salvation that has been provided!

SHE BARE HIM SIX SONS

“² And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah.”

<p>1-Zimran: (“wild sheep, wild goat”). No descendants mentioned.</p> <p>2-Jokshan: (meaning unknown). Sons Sheba and Dedan appear to have been the ancestors of the Sabaeans and Dedanites that peopled a part of Arabia.</p> <p>3-Medan: (“contention”) He and his brother Midian are believed to have peopled the country of Midian, east of the Dead Sea. It has been supposed, from the similarity of the name, that the tribe descended from Medan was more closely allied to Midian than by mere blood-relation, and that it was the same as, or a portion of, the latter.</p> <p>The tribe and its place remain unidentified, and the conjecture that the name may be connected</p>	<p>with the Midianites is unlikely from the fact that in the list of the sons of Abraham and Keturah Midian is mentioned alongside of Medan. ISBE</p> <p>4-Midian: (“strife”) The fourth son of Abraham by Keturah, and the progenitor of the Midianites. No personal history.</p> <p>5-Ishbak (“learner”) They settled in the region east of the Arabah, in and near Mount Seir, and southward in the peninsula of Sinai (Genesis 37:28, 36; Exodus 3:1; Numbers 31:9, 10). The settlements of this people are very obscure.</p> <p>6-Shuah: (“jackal”) Last named of the six sons of Abraham by Keturah (Genesis 25:2; 1 Chronicles 1:32).</p>
--	---

Keturah was the mother of 6 sons representing Arab tribes South and East of Palestine (Genesis 25:1-6), so that through the offspring of Keturah Abraham became *“the father of many nations.”* Isaac only begot one nation – Israel.

In secular history, it is said of Keturah, *“SHE WAS THE ANCESTRESS OF SIXTEEN TRIBES, AMONG WHICH WERE ARABIAN AND MIDIANITE ONES.”* JEWISH ENCYCLOPEDIA

At least forty years before this, just before Abraham beget Isaac, it was said of him, *“(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb”* (Rom 4:17-19). And again, *“Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable”* (Heb 11:12).

Now, at least forty years later, maybe more, his capacity to beget children continues. In fact, he appears robust, begetting six sons – one at a time. **Herein is a commentary on the nature of life that comes from God.**

DIVINELY GIVEN LIFE AND CAPACITIES

DO NOT EASILY PASS AWAY
Life and capacities, or abilities, that is given by God does no diminish easily. Take, for example, Adam and

<p>DEATH WAS IMPOSED, BUT IT TOOK A WHILE FOR MEN TO DIE</p>
<p>Adam lived 930 years (Gen 5:5). Seth lived 912 years (Gen 5:9). Enos lived 815 years (Gen 5:11). Cainan lived 910 years (Gen 5:14). Mahaleel lived 895 years (Gen 5:17). Jared lived 962 years (Gen 5:20). Methuselah lived 959 years (Gen 5:27). Lamech lived 777 years (Gen 5:31). Noah lived 950 years (Gen 9:29) Shem: lived 600 years (Gen 11:10-11).</p>
<p>AFTER THE FLOOD–Rapid Decline</p>
<p>Arphaxad: lived 438 years (Gen 11:12-13). Salah: lived 433 years (Gen 11:14-15). Eber: lived 454 years (Gen 11:16-17). Peleg: lived 239 years (Gen 11:18-19). Reu: lived 239 years (Gen 11:20-21). Serug: lived 230 years (Gen 11:22-23). Nahor: lived 148 years (Gen 11:24-25). Terah: lived 205 years (Gen 11:32). Abraham lived 175 years (Gen 25:7). Isaac lived 180 years (Gen 35:27). Jacob lived 147 years (Gen 47:28). Joseph lived 110 years (Gen 50:22). Moses lived 120 years (Deut 34:6). Joshua lived 110 years</p>
<p>The standard life-span is specified Declared by Moses as 70-80 (Psa 90:10).</p>

the next few generations. Even after death had been imposed, upon them, it took 700-900 years for those generations to die.

PERTAINING TO SPIRITUAL LIFE

Spiritual life is stronger than life in the flesh, and does not easily die, or conclude for the individual. When Jesus said to the church *“Strengthen the things that are ready to die”* (Rev 3:2), they had been in a state of decline for some time.

Although Judas was *“the son of perdition”* (John 17:12), while he was in the presence of Jesus, the power Satan exerted over him was evidently limited to some extent. This was all done *“that the Scripture might be fulfilled”* (John 17:12). Jesus was to be

betrayed by someone close to Him. As the Psalmist prophesied, *“Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me”* (Psa 41:9).

However, on the evening of his betrayal of Jesus, *“Satan enter into him”* (John 13:27), apparently being given full control over him. Until that time, his transgression were not open, as he pilfered from the treasurer’s bag now and then (John 12:6). But it appeared to have been growing worse and worse.

When dealing with backsliders, this must be remembered: their condition did not develop overnight. They were in a state of deterioration for some time before they departed from

the faith. This is why Jesus was able to warn five churches in Asia of their unacceptable condition. It had not yet reached its apex, but was growing worse and worse. Yet, it apparent was not detected by themselves or those around them.

All of this helps us give glory to God for Abraham’s strength. **While nature steadily declined, he apparently became stronger and more robust than he had ever been before.** The normal process was, so to speak, reversed, confirming that God has total control of life: its genesis and conferment, its sustenance, its productivity, and its culmination. In every sense, God *“giveth to all life, and breath, and all things”* (Acts 17:25). **He can abbreviate or extend human life at will.**

MORE OFFSPRING

“³ And Jokshan begat Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, and Letushim, and Leummim. ⁴ And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Epher, and Hanoch, and Abidah, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah.”

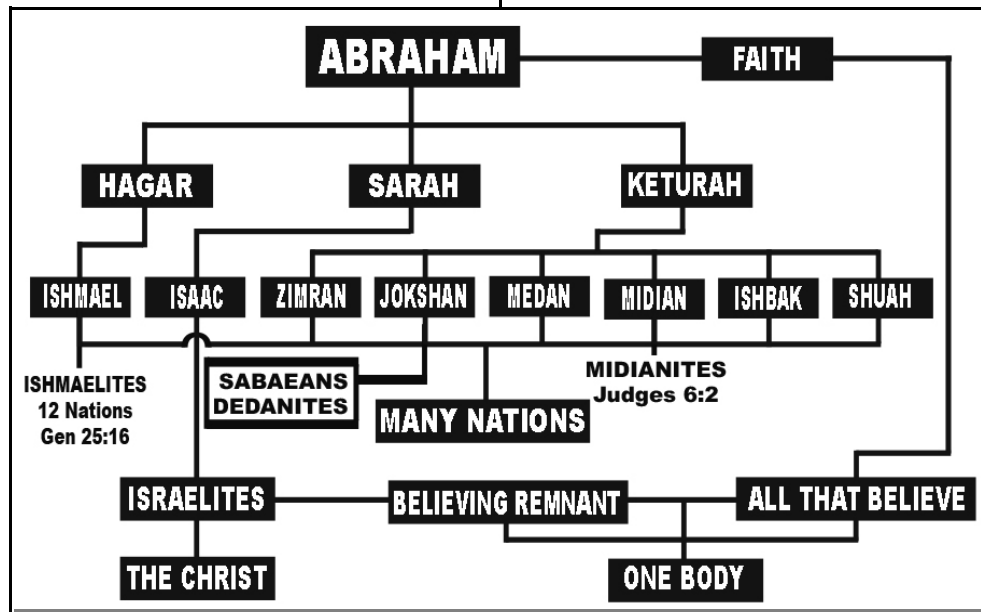
“As for Me, behold, My covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I

These nations were not promised to either Isaac of Jacob. That promise was given only to Abraham.

Through Rebekah, Isaac beget *“two nations”* (Gen 25:23), as compared to Abraham’s *“many nations”* – and only one of the nations would be blessed by God. The generation of Jacob.

God promised Jacob, *“And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed”* (Gen 26:4). That *“seed”* was a single nation: the Israelites. Later, the Lord again spoke to Jacob concerning the multiplication of his seed: *“And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed”* (Gen 28:14).

The Lord also promised Hagar a multiplication of *“seed”* through Ishmael. *“And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be*



God had promised Abraham he would be the father of *“many nations.”*

will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of the” (Gen 17:4-6).

numbered for multitude" (Gen 16:10). "Twelve princes" would be begotten by Ishmael (Gen 17:20).

- ➔ To this point, "many nations" are promised to come from Abraham's seed (Gen 17:4).
- ➔ In addition to this, Ishmael's seed would be multiplied greatly under the leadership of twelve princes (Gen 17:20).
- ➔ There will also be nations comes from the children of Keturah (Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.) (Gen 25:2)
- ➔ Now mention is made of Keturah's grandsons (Sheba, Deda, Abidah, and Eldaah), and great-grandsons (Asshurim, Letushim Leummim) (Gen 25:3-4).

SOME SUPPOSED ASSOCIATIONS

The following are associations derived from various sources.

- ➔ **SHEBAH**– Sabians (Job 1:15; Isa 45:18).
- ➔ **DEDAN** – Dedanim or Dedanites, spoken of with the Arabians (Isaiah 21:13).
- ➔ **ASSHURIM** – Ashurites (2 Sam 2:9).
- ➔ **LETUSHIM** – Tasm, Arabian tribe (no Scriptural ref).
- ➔ **LEUMMIM** – Arabian tribe (no Scriptural ref).
- ➔ **EPHAH** – Connected with Midianites, Keturahite SHEBA, and the Ishmaelites (Isa 60:6-7).
- ➔ **EPHER** – Arabian Tribes (no Scriptural ref).
- ➔ **HANCOCK** – Located in Arabia (no Scriptural ref).
- ➔ **ABIDAH** – Arabian Tribe (no Scriptural ref).
- ➔ **ELDAAH** – Located in Arabia (No known associations) McCLINTOK 7 STRONG'S and JOHN GILL

SOME THINGS TO BE SEEN

This brief biographical excursion is an elaboration of God's promise to

Abraham concerning "many nations" coming from him. It is the apparent reason for this vast expansion of Abraham's generations that must be seen.

God Strategically Separated the Nations

Later, Moses records that God dispersed the people in the world with Israel mind. "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" (Deut 32:8). Other versions read, "He had the limits of the peoples marked out, keeping in mind the number of the children of Israel,"^{BBE} and "He set the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the Israelites."^{AMPLIFIED}

I gather this refers to the positioning of land in which Israel was Divinely located. It is regarded as the

appropriate time: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa 11:9). And again, "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab 2:14).

Key Nations Will Be Joined Together

The extent of this is staggering to consider. *There will even be key nations joined together in the Lord.* In his elaboration of the prophecy that the knowledge of the Lord would cover earth as the waters cover the sea (Isa 1:9), Isaiah continued, "And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt" (Isa 11:16).

The Gentiles Will Inquire of the Jews

Again, Isaiah prophesied, "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and

Zechariah prophesied of a time when the Jews would be viewed as the ones who were familiar with, and blessed by, the Living God.

crossroads of the world, where the knowledge of God could be more easily disseminated.

Nations Located for a Purpose

This parallels a statement made by Paul to the Athenian philosophers: "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:26-27).

The Knowledge of the Lord Will Cover the Earth As the Waters Cover the Sea

All of this was done with a grand purpose that God will fulfill at the

kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee" (Isa 60:3-5).

Zechariah prophesied of a time when the Jews would be viewed as the ones who were familiar with, and blessed by, the Living God. "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that **ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt**

If the removal of “some of the branches” of Israel meant the massive spread of the Gospel among the Gentiles, what will the grafting in of them accomplish?

of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: **for we have heard that God is with you**” (Zech 8:23).

Israel Will Be Grafted In Again

Paul alluded to this extraordinary explosion of life in his letter to the Romans. *“Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; **how much more their fulness?**”* [THINK WHAT AN ENRICHMENT AND GREATER ADVANTAGE WILL FOLLOW THEIR FULL REINSTATEMENT! ^{AMPLIFIED}]. *“For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, **what shall the receiving of***

them be, but life from the dead?” [WHAT WILL THEIR ACCEPTANCE AND ADMISSION MEAN? [IT WILL BE NOTHING SHORT OF] LIFE FROM THE DEAD! ^{AMPLIFIED}] (Rom 11:12-15).

If the removal of “some of the branches” of Israel meant the massive spread of the Gospel among the Gentiles, what will the grafting in of them accomplish?

WE ARE WITNESSING A DIVINE PREPARATION FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF THESE PROPHECIES

These prophecies about “many nations,” and the listing of the progenitors of various nations, reveals how **God is preparing the world for the latter harvest**. The “*day of salvation*” commenced with a great firstfruits

harvest, preceded by the “*early rain*” (James 5:7; Joel 2:23; Zech 10:1). However, there is coming a glorious “*latter rain*” that will precede a grand ingathering of the people, fulfilling the prophecy of the progeny of Jesus: *“Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: **for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD**”* (Isa 54:1). This word followed the prophetic lament of Jesus being “*cut off*” without having any apparent generation (Isa 53:8; Acts 8:33). This by no means meant He would have no generation!

Although all of the offspring of Hagar and Keturah were Gentiles, and excluded from the promise of heirship, yet their progeny shall be harvested for the glory of God, thus fulfilling the promise of the universal knowledge of God. Our text has shown how the Lord is going about to prepare for that harvest. Satan will be thoroughly defeated on the field of battle. It will be a public defeat, where the Word of God will triumph. Of that you may be sure!

ABRAHAM GAVE ALL THAT HE HAD TO ISAAC

“⁵ And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac.” Other versions read, *“Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac,”* ^{NIV} *“But Abraham gave all his possessions to Isaac his son,”* ^{SEPTUAGINT} *“Abraham deeded everything he owned to Isaac,”* ^{LIVING} *“he left everything to Isaac.”* ^{CEV}

It is possible for someone to know the will of God, then act in contradiction of it. The nation of Israel stands as a premier example of this, and is held forth as an example of disobedience (2 Kgs 18:12; Rom 11:20; Heb 3:12,19). God had informed them of what they were to do, and they simply refused to do it. However, this will not be the case with Abraham.

ABRAHAM WAS RICH

When the Lord first called

Abraham He promised, *“I will bless thee, and make thy name great”* (Gen 12:2). After God had tested him by commanding him to offer Isaac as a burnt offering to Himself, He again promised, *“I will bless thee”* (Gen 22:17).

That “*blessing*” was exceeding large in scope, including the following:

- ➔ His name being made great (Gen 12:2).
- ➔ Blessing those who blessed him, and cursing those who cursed him (Gen 12:3).
- ➔ The multiplication of his seed (Gen 16:10; 17:2,20; 22:17).
- ➔ Making “*many nations*” through him

(Gen 17:4-5).

- ➔ The possession of the land of Canaan (Gen 17:8).
- ➔ The whole world being blessed through his Seed (Gen 12:3; 22:18).

Because of the nature of this blessing, Abraham became a wealthy man. It was not so much for his sake alone, but because of the broadness of the scope of his calling. **The key nation that would come from him, Israel, would not, when they occupied Canaan, be sustained by other nations.** When in God’s favor, they were more of an exporting nation than an importing one. They would have a certain independence from all other nations that would necessitate the overt blessing of the Lord. That kind of

blessing commenced with Abraham.

- ➔ When Abraham came out of Ur, no mention is made of the possessions he had.
- ➔ While in Haran, Abraham obtained “*substance*” and “*souls,*” or servants (Gen 12:5).
- ➔ When Abraham went up out of Egypt, he was “*very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold*” (Gen 13:2), having obtained from Pharaoh “*sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels*” (Gen 12:16).
- ➔ After an episode with Abimelech, king of Gerar, Abraham was given “*sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and womenservants*” (Gen 20:14).
- ➔ When Abraham’s servant was at the house of Rebekah, he told her brother and father, “*the LORD hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses*” (Gen 24:35).
- ➔ Speaking of Abraham’s “*increase,*” the prophet Isaiah told Israel, “*Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him*” (Isa 51:2).

Abraham’s wealth was not traced back to his business acumen, or his ability to amass a fortune. It was God who made Abraham “*rich.*” He apparently was not rich when he was called.

HE KNEW ISAAC WAS THE HEIR

One of the telling evidences of true wisdom is how a man distributes

One of the telling evidences of true wisdom is how a man distributes any wealth he may have. In the case of Abraham, he had eight sons: Ishmael, Isaac, Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah" (Gen 16:16; 21:3; 25:2). Will he divide the inheritance among them, giving each an equal share? Indeed not!

any wealth he may have. In the case of Abraham, he had eight sons: Ishmael, Isaac, Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah" (Gen 16:16; 21:3; 25:2). **Will he divide the inheritance among them, giving each an equal share? Indeed not!**

God had made clear to Abraham that his “*heir*” was Isaac, and Isaac alone (Gen 15:41; 21:12). As his manner was throughout his life, he will order his life in strict accord with the Word of the Lord. This is what faith does, and thus Abraham, a man of faith, lived in accordance with that faith, setting the example for us.

It is clear that Isaac could not be the heir if he did not receive **all** that Abraham had. He could not be called his “*heir*” if his lands and possessions were equally distributed among all of his children. When it came to what Abraham owned, there was no “*portion*” reserved for the other sons. They would receive “*gifts,*” like Laban and Bethuel, but nothing more.

Now, Abraham shapes his life around the revealed status of Isaac, giving him all that He had. He does this without any apparent reluctance – either that he has given everything to Isaac, or that he has excluded all of his other sons. **This is an excellent example of doing the will of God** (Matt 7:21; 1

John 2:17).

The Type Declared

There is a marvelous type of Christ seen here. He is the “*appointed Heir of all things*” (Heb 1:2). John the Baptist said, “*The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand*” (John 3:35). Jesus Himself knew, the Scriptures affirm, “*that the Father had given all things into His hands*” (John 13:3). Again, Jesus said, “*All things are delivered to Me of My Father*” (Luke 10:22).

At this point, the Reality soars beyond the type. Isaac was Abraham’s heir, and did not share that heirship as long as he was alive. But with the Lord Jesus, it is different. Those who are “*the children of God*” are called “*joint-heirs with Christ*” (Rom 8:17). Now, in this world, they are told, “*all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s*” (1 Cor 3:21-23). And, when referring to “*the world to come,*” it is said of the overcomers, “*He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son*” (Rev 21:7). “*Beautiful for situation,*” indeed (Psa 48:2). Enough has not been made in the professing church concerning this marvelous and abundant circumstance.

THE SONS OF THE CONCUBINES

“⁶ But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country.”

Being a righteous man, Abraham will treat his non-heir sons in as just manner. He apparently did not do this for Ishmael. When he and Hagar were expelled from the house, he sent them away with *“bread and a bottle of water.”* However, God had promised him earlier, *“And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation”* (Gen 17:20). **God would bless Ishmael independent of Abraham’s goods** – and it would be done by God Himself in a righteous manner that did not contradict His commitment to Abraham.

SONS OF THE CONCUBINES

“But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had . . .”

According to Scripture, the only women that Abraham married, and through whom he had children, were Sarah, Hagar, and Keturah. Some have concluded that Hagar and Keturah are the concubines of reference. Keturah is categorically called *“Abraham’s concubine”* in First Chronicles 1:32, even though both Hagar and her are also called *“wife”* (Gen 16:3 25:1).

Owing to the limited revelation on this matter, I must confess that I have no desire to probe further into why the word *“concubines”* is used here. If it does refer to Hagar and Keturah, then this is a summary statement covering both Ishmael and the six sons of Keturah.

It seems to me that the accent here is on the revealed purpose of God – that He, according to His own purpose, had determined Isaac, the miraculous child, to be Abraham’s heir. **The rest of Abraham’s children were never in the Divine equation for heirship.** Their role was a subsidiary one – providing further populous for the great ingathering of souls in the latter time. They will be in the lineage referred to as *“many nations”* and *“all families,”* to be ultimately benefitted by the real *“Seed”* of Abraham. The benefit, or blessing, however, will come through

Isaac alone.

ABRAHAM GAVE GIFTS

“Abraham gave gifts . . .” Other versions read, *“gave offerings,”*^{BBE} *“made grants,”*^{NAB} and *“presents.”*^{GNB}

The word *“gifts”* denotes minor possessions, as compared with the totality of the inheritance: the estate, the rights, etc. These gifts were apparently sufficient to get them started as progenitors of nations, but they were not sufficient for them to become a blessing, like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

In this *“day of salvation,”* their *“gifts”* might be compared to *“life, and breath, and all things”* (Acts 17:25), and making the *“sun to rise,”* and *“sending rain”* upon the just and the unjust (Matt 5:45). Only the tokens of temporal blessings are given to those who are not *“heirs according to the promise”* (Gal 3:29).

In view of this circumstance, it is a sin of the greatest magnitude to offer health and wealth to people in the name of Christ. Those who proclaim such things have, in fact, pushed the promise of an *“eternal inheritance”* (Heb 9:15) into the background. What a serious error that is!

SENT THEM AWAY FROM ISAAC

“ . . . and sent them away from Isaac his son . . .”

This is the same thing that happened to Ishmael – he too was removed from the presence of Isaac, for, by virtue of heirship, they could not dwell together in the same house.

At some point, those who are heirs and those who are not, have to be separated. Ultimately, the complete separation will take place at the coming of the Lord. In preparation for judgment, the wicked will be gathered together out of the world, as well as the righteous, at which time they will, in the aggregate, be separated (Matt 13:41; 24:31; 25:32).

However, as with the sons of

Keturah, in this world, it sometimes becomes necessary to separate the unacceptable from the acceptable. This was true of the fornicator in Corinth (1 Cor 5:15), and with Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10). Those in Christ are to not be *“unequally yoked together with unbelievers.”* They are solemnly admonished, *“Come out from among them, and be ye separate”* (2 Cor 6:14-17). They are to *“have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness”* (Eph 5:11). Concerning Babylon the Great, the saints are commanded, *“Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues”* (Rev 18:4).

HE SENT THEM INTO THE EAST COUNTRY

“ . . . eastward, unto the east country.” Other versions read, *“the country of the east,”*^{NKJV} *“the land of the east,”*^{NASB} and *“the land of Kedem”* (a transliteration of the Hebrew word).^{CJB}



This is generally understood to be *“Arabia in the widest sense,”* to the southwest of Canaan. **This was outside the borders of Canaan.**

It would not be appropriate for these sons and their progeny to be located in the land of Canaan. The land itself had been given to Israel only – the line of sons through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Abraham understood what God meant when He promised, *“unto thy seed will I give this land”* (Gen 12:7). And again, *“For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever”* (Gen 13:15). And again, *“Unto thy seed have I given*

this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates" (Gen 15:18). And yet again, "And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God" (Gen 17:8).

A person without understanding might reason that "seed" included Ishmael, Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. After all,

they were Abraham's children. **But when it came to the covenants and promises of God, Abraham's "only son" was Isaac** (Gen 22:2,12,16).

WHILE HE YET LIVED

" . . . while he yet lived . . . "

To ensure that the will of the Lord would be done, Abraham transferred everything he had to Isaac **before** he died. He was acutely conscious of his stewardship, as well as the future God had divulged to him concerning his

progeny (Gen 15:12-21).

He left all that he had to Isaac, knowing full well that he did not have a parcel of land in Canaan on which to live – not so much as to "set his foot" (Acts 7:5; Heb 11:9). **Yet the promise of the land was part of what bequeathed to Isaac.** Whatever God had promised Abraham, that had not yet been fulfilled, belonged to Isaac. Now, Isaac would conduct his life in faith, knowing that as well.

ABRAHAM'S LIFE

" ⁷ And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years."

THE DAYS OF THE YEARS OF ABRAHAM'S LIFE

ESTIMATED AGE OF ABRAHAM AT KEY TIMES	
WHEN ABRAHAM LEFT HARAN.....	75
AT THE TIME SARAH GAVE HAGAR TO ABRAHAM.....	ESTIMATE 85
WHEN ISHMAEL WAS BORN.....	86
AT THE TIME ISHMAEL WAS CIRCUMCISED (13 YEARS).....	89
WHEN THE TIME OF ISAAC'S BIRTH WAS CONFIRMED.....	99
WHEN ISAAC WAS BORN.....	100
AT THE TIME ISAAC WAS WEANED (3 YEARS).....	ESTIMATE 103
WHEN HE WAS COMMANDED TO OFFER ISAAC.....	ESTIMATE 121-130
AT THE TIME SARAH DIED.....	137
WHEN SERVANT SENT TO GET ISAAC A WIFE.....	140
ABRAHAM MARRIES KETURAH.....	??
ABRAHAM DIES.....	175

We only have some information about the latter one hundred years of Abraham's life. No details are provided

concerning the first seventy years, with the single exception of being called to leave to a land God would show him along the way. There are several milestones mentioned during Abraham's life. They are not many for a period of one hundred years. During them the following episodes are recorded.

- ➔ The Lord promised to give the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed (Gen 12:7).
- ➔ Abraham encountered a famine in Canaan, and spent some time in Egypt. There he had an encounter with Pharaoh in which the Lord protected Abraham and Sarah, and made it clear He was on the side of Abraham (Gwen 12:10-20).
- ➔ Upon the return to Canaan, the land could not sustain both Abraham and Lord, and they were forced to separate, with Abraham remaining in Canaan (Gen 13:5-12).
- ➔ Abraham takes his trained servants and pursues four conquering kings and their armies, delivering Lot and bring back the stolen possessions (Gen 14:14-16).
- ➔ Abraham is blessed by Melchizdek, king of Salem and high priest unto God (Gen 14:18-20).
- ➔ God makes a covenant with Abraham, telling of the coming

bondage of his seed in a strange land, their deliverance, and their possession of the land of Canaan.(Gen 15).

- ➔ The events leading up to the birth of Ishmael (Gen 16).
- ➔ When he was ninety-nine years old, the Lord confirmed that Isaac would be born the next year, with Sarah giving birth to him. He also makes the covenant of circumcision with Abraham (Gen 17:1-127).
- ➔ The Lord appears to Abraham in the form of three men, and informs him of the coming birth of Isaac through his wife, Sarah (Gen 18:1-16).
- ➔ God divulges to Abraham His purpose to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, and Abraham pleads for the righteous to be spared (Gen 18:17-33).
- ➔ Abraham encounters Abimelech, king of Gerar, who takes Sarah to be his wife. The Lord appears to the king, telling him he is a "dead man" because he has taken another man's wife. He sides with Abraham, and he and Sarah remain safe (Gen 20).
- ➔ The Lord visits Sarah as he promised, and Isaac is born (Gen 21:1-5).
- ➔ Isaac is weaned, and Hagar and

Ishmael are expelled from the house (Gen 21:8-21).

- ➔ God makes a covenant with Abimelech to deal truthfully and kindly with him (Gen 21:22-34).
- ➔ Abraham is tested by God, being commanded to offer up Isaac as a burnt offering to the Lord (Gen 22:1-24).
- ➔ The death of Sarah, and Abraham purchases the cave of Machpela as a burying place (Gen 23:1-20).
- ➔ Abraham sends his servant to his home country to obtain a wife for Isaac from among his kindred. (Gen 24:1-67).

- ➔ Abraham takes Keturah to be his wife, and she bares him six sons (Gen 25:1-4).
- ➔ Abraham gives all that he has to Isaac, and some time later dies, being buried by Isaac and Ishmael (Gen 15:5-10).

That is a Divine summation of a man who lived one hundred and seventy-five years! It is a report that underscores the faithfulness of God, and the faith of His servant Abraham. As you can see, his life was not the summation of a lot of little details. That is not how God summarizes one's life.

For the individual, every incident that occurs in life is not itself significant. Certain experiences are not designed for the spotlight, and men ought not to speak of them as though they were. Some experiences are tests, or trials, making **the outcome** of the experience the most important thing.

The incidents of one's life will be uncovered, together with every idle word during the day of judgment. At that time, the details will correctly sum up to what the Lord says – whether *"Well done,"* or *"Depart from Me."* **It is good to learn now to evaluate life after the Divine manner.** It is also good to form the practice of assessing saints of the past in this manner.

ABRAHAM IS GATHERED TO HIS PEOPLE

"⁸ Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people."

ABRAHAM GAVE UP THE GHOST

"Then Abraham gave up the ghost . . ." Other versions read, *"breathed his last,"* ^{NKJV} *"came to his death,"* ^{BBE} *"took his last breathe,"* ^{CSB} *"expired,"* ^{DARBY} *"yielded up the spirit,"* ^{GENEVA} *"Failing,"* ^{ABP} *"decaying,"* ^{DOUAY} *"grew weak,"* ^{ERV} *"passed away,"* ^{ISV} *"Abraham's spirit was released,"* ^{AMPLIFIED} and *"and he-is-expiring and he is dying."* ^{INTERLINEAR}

The words *"gave up the ghost"* are translated from a single Hebrew word: **נָפַח** — **GAVA'**, **GAW'-VAH'**; A PRIMITIVE ROOT; TO BREATHE OUT, I.E. (BY IMPLICATION) EXPIRE: — DIE, BE DEAD, GIVE UP THE GHOST, PERISH. ^{STRONG'S}

Other academic definitions include the following.

- ➔ *"TO CEASE CLINGING TO LIFE; TO DIE."* ^{WIKTIONARY}
- ➔ *"TO YIELD CONTROL OR POSSESSION OF."* ^{MERRIAN-WEBSTER}

As with all Scriptural words, the

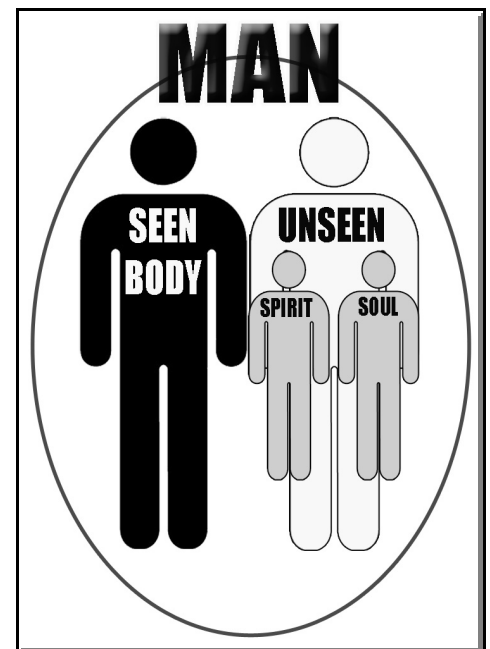
authoritative definition is the result of doctrine, not academic definitions. This is because many Scriptural words have to do with things that cannot be observed by the human senses. **In the matter of death, the composition of man must be known – and that is only affirmed in Scripture.** Man consists of a seen part and an unseen part.

➔ **IN CREATION.** *"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul"* (Gen 2:7). Essentially, man is **not** a body. He is rather *"a living soul"* not a living body.

- ➔ The essential persons are the unseen parts, which dwells in *"houses of clay"* (Job 4:19).
- ➔ *"There is a spirit in man"* – that is, in what can be seen of man (Job 32:8).
- ➔ The *"spirit of man"* is the part that is enlightened by God (Prov 20:27).
- ➔ The seen part is dependent upon the unseen part, and not vice versa–

i.e., *"the body without the spirit is dead"* (James 2:26).

➔ **SUPERIOR REVELATION.** In Christ it is revealed that the unseen part of man consists of two parts, so that man is a tripartite being: spirit, soul, and body (1 Thess 5:23). Only the Word of God can make a clear definition between the spirit and the soul (Heb 4:12).



The phrase “gave up the ghost” must be comprehended in the greater light of things Moses was **not** given to see with the clarity now available to us.

The Error of Viewing Death from the

remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?” (Psa 6:5).

➔ *“Wilt thou show wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise thee? Selah. Shall thy lovingkindness*

“And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived” (1 Kgs 17:22).

➔ **JAIRUS’ DAUGHTER RAISED FROM THE DEAD.** *“And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat”* (Luke 8:55).

The phrase “gave up the ghost” must be seen in the light of greater revelation. A proper view of the text is seen in some of the versions: *“yielded up the spirit,”* ^{GENEVA} *“Abraham’s spirit was released.”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

I understand this to mean that Abraham recognized the time of departure had come, resigned himself to it in faith, and died willingly – even though hardly anything was known at that time concerning the status of man after death. It appears that his knowledge was intuitive, not cognitive.

We do understand from an account given by the Lord Jesus Himself, that more than a millennium after his death, **Abraham knew about the state of the dead, the writings of Moses, and the writings of the prophets** (Lk 16:25-31). He obviously was not sleeping while he was *“absent from the body”* (2 Cor 5:9).

DIED IN A GOOD OLD AGE

“ . . . and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years . . . ”

Well over eight-five years prior to his death, God had promised Abraham, *“And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age”* (Gen 15:15). It came to pass, precisely as God had spoken.

WAS GATHERED TO HIS PEOPLE

“ . . . and was gathered to his people.” Other versions read, *“put to rest with his people,”* ^{BBE} *“joined his ancestors in death,”* ^{GWN} *“added to his people,”* ^{SEPTUAGINT} *“taken to his kinsmen,”* ^{NAB} *“joined his ancestors,”* ^{NET} *“went to be with his people,”* ^{ERV} *“was buried with his family.”* ^{MESSAGE} The majority of the versions read, *“gathered*

Man is alive as long as his seen and unseen parts are together. It is when the essential part – the unseen part – leaves, that death occurs.

Standpoint of writers With Lesser Light

It is the tendency of some to view death from the vantage point of those with lesser light. While there was a certain sense of life beyond the grave held by some, namely Job and David (Job 19:27; Psa 23:6), the actual experience of death was somewhat cloudy. There was also a certain knowledge of the resurrection of the dead (Job 14:12; Psa 16:9-10; 17:15; Isa 25:8), although it was limited by way of comparison with what has been made known in Christ. That is why Paul wrote, *“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel”* (2 Tim 1:9-10).

Ponder some of the statements made concerning death by those who were not given the revelation now received through Christ Jesus and the Gospel.

➔ *“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest”* (Eccl 9:10).

➔ *“For in death there is no*

be declared in the grave? or thy faithfulness in destruction? Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?” (Psa 88:10-12).

➔ *“For the grave cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth”* (Isa 38:18-19).

These are all valid statements from the standpoint of appearance, but they are not total view of death. Those who subscribe to the soul-sleeping heresy appeal to these texts as though they were the ultimate revelation on death. They were not, nor were they intended to be.

Death Is A Separation of the Seen and Unseen Parts of Man

Man is alive as long as his seen and unseen parts are together. It is when the essential part – the unseen part – leaves, that death occurs. This is seen in some descriptions of death recorded during the times prior to Christ.

➔ **THE DEATH OF RACHEL:** *“And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin”* (Gen 35:18).

➔ **THE RESURRECTION OF A CHILD BY ELIJAH:**

to his people.”

The word “gathered” has the following lexical meaning: **QNN'ACAPH** {AW-SAF} **MEANING:** 1) TO GATHER, RECEIVE, REMOVE, GATHER IN 1A) (QAL) 1A1) TO GATHER, COLLECT 1A2) TO GATHER (AN INDIVIDUAL INTO COMPANY OF OTHERS) 1A3) TO BRING UP THE REAR 1A4) TO GATHER AND TAKE AWAY, REMOVE, WITHDRAW 1B) (NIPHAL) 1B1) TO ASSEMBLE, BE GATHERED 1B2) (PASS OF QAL 1A2) 1B2A) TO BE GATHERED TO ONE'S FATHERS 1B2B) TO BE BROUGHT IN OR INTO (ASSOCIATION WITH OTHERS.” ^{STRONG'S}

There is a sense in which the grave is a kind of gathering place – at least for the body. When Joseph heard the false report of his brother, saying that Joseph had been killed by a beast, he said, “I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning” (Gen 37:35). However, I would hardly use this as a standard expression denoting one being “gathered unto his people.” Remember, “life and immortality” had not yet been “brought to light, as it has been through the Gospel (2 Tim 1:10). Now, more light has been shed on this subject.

Some Who Went to Be With Their People

**** Lazarus ****

Jesus spoke of Lazarus dying, and he was surely gathered to his people, being found “in Abraham’s bosom” (Lk 26:22).

**** Souls That Were Beheaded ****

John saw “the souls of them that were slain for the testimony which they held,” and they had been gathered together “under the altar” (Rev 6:9). Later he saw “the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands,” and they were gathered together (Rev 20:4).

**** Spirit of Just Men Made Perfect****

For that matter, we have been joined to an assembly of departed spirits – “the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb 12:23). They are not sleeping in the grave, separated from one another, but are part of a great

assembly. They were gathered, so to speak, to their people.

So Abraham was, apparently in a conscious way, gathered unto his people – those who has shared the same faith as he. These would have include Abel, Adam, Seth, Enos, Enoch, Noah, Sarah, and others – and perhaps his brothers Haran and Nahor.

We know this is the case because, as Jesus said, after speaking of the departed Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, “For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him” (Luke 20:38).

Some of those with whom Abraham was gathered were in no way identified with him upon the earth. They were his people by virtue of their common faith in the Living God.

Others Who Were Gathered to Their People

➔ **ISHMAEL:** “And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died; and was gathered unto his people.” (Gen

➔ **AARON:** “Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah.” (Num 20:24). “And die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people; as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people.” (Deut 32:50)

➔ **MOSES:** ““And the LORD spake unto Moses that selfsame day, saying, Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession: And die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people . . .” (Deut 32:48-50)

➔ **THE GENERATION OF JOSHUA’S TIME.** “And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.” (Judg 2:10).

There is a very real sense in which we are developing associations now that will be continued and expanded when, being “absent from the body,” we will be gathered to our own kind of people.

25:17)

➔ **ISAAC:** “And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.” (Gen 35:29)

➔ **JACOB:** “And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.” (Gen 49:33)

➔ **THE KING OF JUDAH.** God said to him, “Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same. So they brought the king word again.” (2 Chon 34:28).

There is a very real sense in which we are developing associations now that will be continued and expanded when, being “absent from the body,”

we will be gathered to our own kind of people.

SOME FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Nations and cities, will be judged. The “nations” will be gathered before the Lord (Matt 25:32). It appears as though cities will also in some way be

judged in the aggregate (Matt 11:24; 12:41). While it is really just a thought, it is quite possible that in the interim, between death and the resurrection, departed spirits are clustered together with those with whom they were identified on earth. **Our intimate associations will not end**

here.

As I have already mentioned, there are some specific statements in Scripture concerning those who, after death, were found among “their people” (under the heading, “**Some Who Went to Be With Their People**”).

ABRAHAM IS BURIED

“⁹ And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre. ¹⁰ The field which Abraham purchased of the sons of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife.”

HIS SONS ISHMAEL AND ISAAC BURIED HIM

“And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him . . .”

According to the record, the sons

because he is thy seed” (Gen 21:13). Now he joins Isaac in honoring his father with a proper burial.

In Scripture, the common way of handling the dead was to bury them. God Himself “buried” Moses (Deut 34:4-6). Part of the Gospel is that Jesus was “buried” (1 Cor 15: 4). These days (2012), because of the suppression of Scriptural knowledge and the promotion of worldly wisdom, cremation has become common – even among professing Christians. **I have**

(Gen 50:13). This was done at his request before he died (Gen 49:29-30). Isaac, Rebekah, and Leah were also buried there (Gen 49:31). Thus, all of the fathers (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), were buried there together with their wives – with the exception of Rachel, who died giving birth, and “*was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem.*” (Gen 35:19).

The point is that Abraham made the first decision, and Jacob also articulated his choice, to be buried in the promised land. These patriarchs never realized the possession of the land, as their progeny would do. **Yet their hearts were there, for God had given them the deed to the land.** Thus it is said of them, “*By faith he [Abraham] sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God*” (Heb 11:10). They chose never to live anywhere else, remaining in the land of promise all of their lives – even though they had to do so as strangers and pilgrims.

These patriarchs never realized the possession of the land, as their progeny would do. Yet their hearts were there, for God had given them the deed to the land.

Abraham had through Keturah did not participate in this burial. They had been sent into the east country, and apparently did not maintain any contact with Abraham, or Isaac. **On the other hand, Ishmael apparently did stay in contact. After all, God had blessed him for Abraham’s sake.** When Abraham sought non-covenantal favor for Ishmael, God replied, “*And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation*” (Gen 17:20). Later He said of Ishmael, “*And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation,*

included an article on creation at the conclusion of this lesson.

THE CAVE OF MACPELAH

“ . . . in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre. ¹⁰ The field which Abraham purchased of the sons of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife.”

Thirty-eight years earlier, when Sarah died, Abraham had purchased the plot of ground on which “*the cave of Machpelah*” was located (Gen 23:9-20). Now, a second body will be interred in that cave. When Jacob died, his sons buried him in the same cave

The Parallel

The parallel of the life of those in Christ Jesus is not coincidental. They too are living in a promised land, while themselves being separate from it. Jesus promised, “*The meek shall inherit the earth*” (Psa 37:11). Yet, at the present time, the earth is defiled with heathen, like Canaan was at the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Still, we continue our pilgrimage

through the land, journeying as “strangers and pilgrims,” all the while abstaining “from fleshly lusts that war against the soul” (1 Pet 2:11). We, like those ancient “fathers,” are also looking “for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker

is God” (Heb 11:10). Like them, it may be said of believers, we have “not received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb 11:13).

While we remain in the world, we choose to live in isolation from it. Our companions are fellow believers, and we choose to continue to occupy the place where God has seated us – in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:6).

GOD BLESSED HIS SON ISAAC

“¹¹ And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac dwelt by the well Lahairoi.”

GOD BLESSED ISAAC

“And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac . . .” Other versions read, “the blessing of God was with Isaac,”^{BBE} “God poured out rich blessings upon Isaac.”^{LIVING}

God also blessed Ishmael, as he promised Abraham He would (Gen 17:20) – but not as He did Isaac! The blessing of Isaac was special, and being an extension of the blessing conferred upon Abraham. It was a different kind of blessing, involving much more than the increase of earthly possessions, and the addition of posterity.

Isaac’s blessing included dwelling in safety, his possessions and posterity being protected by the Almighty God. Ishmael was a nomad without a promise, but Isaac was a pilgrim with a promise (Gen 26:24)

The Parallel

In Christ we realize a parallel situation. There are general blessings that are enjoyed by all men. As Jesus said, “That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matt 5:45). The Psalmist well said, “The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works” (Psa 145:9). And again, Paul told the heathen in Lystra, “Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good,

and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:17).

But what is that to compare with the blessings that are realized in Christ Jesus.

➔ “Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.” (Acts 3:26)

To be more specific, when we received some understanding of why Jesus died, and what was accomplished by that death, the blessing of God commenced to increase!

➔ “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph 1:3)

The blessings of the saints far transcend the blessings that are common to all men. Those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb are surely to be thankful for all things. But their greatest thanksgiving is for the transcendent blessings that are realized in Christ Jesus.

Another Parallel

Our text states that Isaac was blessed “after the death of Abraham.” This does not mean that Isaac was not blessed before Abraham’s death. He was given preferential treatment over Ishmael. He received a wife who

comported with the purposes of God. He was preferred above his half-brothers, born through Keturah. He was given all that Abraham had before he died. However, the greatest and most extensive blessing took place after Abraham died.

And, when did our great blessing take place. When were those redeemed by God most greatly benefitted? It was after Jesus Christ died! For the redeemed, that is when the spoils were

distributed. As it is written, “He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong. . . .” (Isa 53:12).

To be more specific, when we received some understanding of why Jesus died, and what was accomplished by that death, the blessing of God commenced to increase!

ISAAC DWELT BY THE WELL LAHAIROI

“ . . . and Isaac dwelt by the well Lahairoi.” Other versions read, “lived near,”^{NIV} “lived by,”^{NASB} “dwelt by the well of the vision,”^{SEPTUAGINT} “settled at,”

^{NRSV} and “dwelt at Beer-lahai-roi [A well to the Living One Who sees me].” ^{AMPLIFIED}

Isaac was familiar with this well, having come from there when he met Rebekah (Gen 24:62). This was the well where the angel of the Lord found Hagar, when she was at the [peak of discouragement, having prematurely fled from Sarah. (Gen 16:7-14).

It was a well bearing a name that spoke of God’s seeing eye and gracious provision, and Isaac chose to live there

– close to that specific well.

Yet Another Parallel

The Scriptures speak of “*the wells of salvation*” – “*Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation*” (Isa 12:3). This speaks of the abundance of salvation, and of the great “thirst” for that abundance that is possessed by “*the elect of God*” (Col 3:12). These wells are not a mere stopping point as the saints move about here and there. Rather, they take up residence by these wells, like Isaac

took up residence by “*the well Lahairoi.*” Here they obtain satisfaction and great refreshment. During their pilgrimage to the promised land

Many a professing Christian is living in spiritual poverty because they have chosen to live at a distance from the refreshing “*wells of salvation.*” However, if they will take up residence where spiritual resources are provided, they will soon be flying with the wings of an eagle, and soaring above the difficulties and vicissitudes of life.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 8/10/12. We will continue our series of lessons in the book of Genesis. The thirty-ninth lesson will cover verses 12 through 27 of chapter twenty-five: “THE GENERATIONS OF ISHMAEL AND ISAAC.” The generations of both Ishmael and Isaac are listed. All of Ishmael’s progeny were outside of the promises God made to Abraham that pertained to His redemptive promise. The progeny of Isaac, from a human point of view, was not possible, for his wife, Rebekah, was barren. Isaac took the matter to the Lord, and Rebekah gave birth to two sons – one was accepted as the legal heir, and the other rejected. The 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.

2012 Refreshing Waters Renewal, #23

July 31, August 2, 2012
Diamond Grove Christian Church
Diamond Grove, Missouri

Theme: THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST

An exposition of the reality of, and purpose for, the Exaltation of Christ. The implications of this exaltation will also be affirmed with Gospel power.

WHAT ABOUT CREMATION?

By Given O. Blakely

INTRODUCTION

Cremation, as a valid alternative to burial, is growing in popularity. Some decades ago, few believers in Christ considered it to be proper. Because of the pressure of the times, some professed believers are now uncertain about this procedure, while others are convinced it is proper.

SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLES

There are examples of the burning of "corpses" in Scripture (II Kgs. 19:35; Isa. 37:36; Nab. 3:3; Mk. 6:29). It is written of Achan, who coveted the forbidden treasures of Jericho, and his family. "And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones" (Josh. 7:25). This action was the culmination of a curse, and is by no means considered a precedent.

The bodies of King Saul and his sons were taken "from the wall of Bethshan," and removed to Jabesh. It is said that the valiant men "burnt them there." They were not totally consumed, however, because "they took their bones and buried them under a tree at Jabesh" (I Sam. 31:12-13). Again, this was not a Divinely recommended procedure. Examination of the text suggests that this action was taken to insure that the bodies of Saul and his sons would not be subjected to further Philistine maltreatment.

Josiah, reforming king of Israel, "slew all the priests of the high places that were there upon the altars, and burned men's bones upon them" (II Kgs. 23:20). Again, the burning of the bones was associated with a curse, and was not a revealed procedure.

On the other hand, God punished Moab because "he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime" (Amos 2:1).

Other references to consumption by fire generally refer to the heathen custom of sacrificing their children to false gods (i.e. Jer. 7:31).

THE HISTORY OF CREMATION

Throughout history, cremation has been identified with heathen nations. Historians tell us that "with the rise and spread of Christianity, which taught belief in the resurrection of the human body, cremation was discontinued in those countries which embraced the new religion" (The Universal Standard Encyclopedia). We find this to be a consistent response to the Gospel throughout the world. Cremation reflects a spirit of hopelessness, contradicting the "hope of the resurrection." In its implications, it is basically out of harmony with the revealed view of death.

It is further observed that after the Jewish exile, interment was the sole method of disposing of the dead among the Jews. In the Talmud, cremation is condemned as a heathen practice.

WHY IS BURIAL PREFERRED?

Cremation is not categorically condemned in Scripture. Believers in Christ, however, have traditionally preferred burial. Of itself, of course, tradition is not a valid basis for custom. If, however, it has been based upon godly reasoning, we owe it to ourselves to consider it. We are not speaking of a view to be bound upon people, and that is not the purpose of this article. It is necessary, however, that our actions be performed "unto the Lord" and that includes the disposition of our bodies.

The practice of the godly

Among individuals and peoples having a covenantal association with God, burial has been consistently practiced. Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Leah, Miriam, Aaron, Joseph, and David were "buried" (Gen. 25:10; Num. 20:1; Deut. 10:6; Josh. 24:32; Acts 2:29). When leading Israelites died, it was often said they were "buried

with their fathers"(I Kgs. 14:31; 15:24; 22:50; II Kgs. 8:24; 12:21; 14:20; 15:7, 38; 16:20).

God buries Moses

When Moses died, God Himself "buried him in a valley in the land of Moab ..." (Deut. 34:5-6). It is difficult to conceive of a stronger recommendation for burial.

The case of Stephen

When Stephen, the first martyr for Christ, died, his body was "carried to his burial" (Acts 8:2). Although there was a scriptural record of the burning of bodies, such a thought, in this instance, did not occur to early believers. We owe it to ourselves to consider why this circumstance occurred.

Jesus was buried

The Lord Jesus Himself was "buried," according to the Gospel (I Cor. 15:1-4). During His earthly ministry, his "burial" was the focus of a timely deed performed by a woman of discernment a deed for which she was commended (Matt. 26:12). It is difficult to conceive of a similar action that could be associated with cremation.

Referring to His death and burial, Jesus said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground..." (John 12:24). When a key part of Christ's doctrine is based upon burial, why would anyone try and contend for cremation?

If there were no other considerations, these alone would be sufficient to convince me of the preference of burial. But there is more.

"UNTO DUST THOU SHALT RETURN"

When sin entered into the world, death also entered (Rom. 5:12). A description of the post-death activity of the body is vividly described by God Himself. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, til thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return" (Gen. 3:19).

It is not my objective to create a law in favor of burial. It is, however, difficult to consider any other procedure in view of this Divine pronouncement. I understand that finespun "scientific" arguments can be concocted to justify cremation, but such arguments cannot be justified by this text! I personally consider cremation as a standard means of disposing of the body, to have been originated by Satan. He doubtless intended to turn the hearts of men away from the Divine pronouncement. Both the origin and destiny of man's body is denied by the act of cremation whether intentional or not.

CONSIDERING THE RESURRECTION

In areas permeated by the Gospel, the "hope of the resurrection" has become preeminent (Acts 23:6). Although his present tabernacle of clay is appropriately called a "vile body", we live in expectation of its change. It shall "be fashioned like unto His glorious body" (Phil. 3:20).

In Paul's argument for the resurrection, he refers to the interment of our bodies as a sowing (I Cor. 15:36, 37, 42, 43, 44). It is "sown" or placed into the earth from whence it came, knowing that "the earth shall cast out her dead" (Isa. 26:19).

Even before the risen and enthroned Christ began mediating the New Covenant, Martha knew of the hope of the resurrection. In response to our Lord's statement that "Thy brother shall rise again," she said, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at fine last day" (John 11:23-24). Without imposing any law on our readers, it ought to be obvious that burial is more in harmony with the concept of resurrection than is cremation.

In burial - particularly that of believers - we sow the body in hope of the resurrection. We submit to the Divine pronouncement, letting earth claim its own once again. But, bless God, we also look for the removal of the curse! "There shall be a resurrection!"

I find it difficult to harmonize these observations with the act of cremation. The fact that such a custom is more prevalent among the heathen ought to tell us something. I personally could not approve of the act because it appears to me to conflict with God, Christ, and the Gospel.

As a final consideration, we are told that the body is for the Lord, and does not really belong to us (1 Cor 6:13-20). Both the resurrection of the dead, and holiness of life are mentioned in this text. The fact that the Lord has purchased our bodies, and that they belong to him. By no means suggests that ownership passes to the relative of those who die, who may make a decision to cremate the body. The fact that He will raise the dead indicates that He has not relinquished ownership when a person dies.

CONCLUSION

Early saints buried their dead. God Himself buried Moses. Jesus was buried. Paul argues for the resurrection in view of a burial. These considerations have convinced me of the preference of burial over cremation.

Notwithstanding these remarks, there is no law on the matter in the Kingdom, and we refuse to make one. We do, however, recommend to all believers the contemplation of what God has done and said in regards to this subject, fully persuaded that you will arrive at the same conclusion.

The real question that should be asked here is not, “Is cremation wrong?” It is rather, “Is cremation right? – particularly in view of the fact that men are handling something that really belongs to God.”