

**THE BIBLE AS HISTORY**  
**A SURVEY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT**

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**The Ridge in Jerusalem over Which the Scapegoat was Sent  
Leviticus 16**

**The Bible as History**  
**A Survey of the Old Testament**  
**Creation to Ruth**

## **The Bible as History**

### **A Survey of the Old Testament**

#### **Chapter 1**

##### **Genesis**

###### **Genesis 1:1**

*“In the beginning, God...”*

#### **Introduction: The Dawning of a New Day**

Nowhere does the Bible ever try to prove the existence of God. The reason for this is simple. Whatever evidence would be offered, as confirmation of the Divine presence, would be of greater value than God Himself. This point is presented in part by the Lord's appearance to Moses when the reluctant leader asked for a sign to prove to others that the Lord had spoken to him. *“And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you”* (Exodus 3:14). God appealed to His own essence and to His own self-existence as the greatest evidence of Divine reality.

It has been said that, if a person can believe the first four words of *Genesis*, all the rest of the Bible will be easy to receive: *“In the beginning, God...”* The author of Hebrews (11:6) declares that fundamental faith in the actuality of God is the basis for all Divine fellowship. *“But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”*

One way that God rewards those who believe in Him and seek after Him is by declaring the way of salvation. In the Bible we have the revelation of God to man, and the responsibility of man to God. In the Bible we have the Divine plan of human redemption, and the establishment of God's kingdom upon the earth. The kingdom of God, embodied most fully in the spiritual seed of Abram, was ordained to survive in the midst of other nations such as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Phoenicia, Syria, Arabia, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. That it did survive is the great story of Bible History.

#### **The Eleven Commandments of Creation**

Having decided according to the good pleasure of His own sovereign will to create mankind (Ephesians 1:11), it was necessary that the Lord establish a habitation for man to dwell within. And so we read, *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth”* (Genesis 1:1). While skeptics mock the simplicity of the Divine narrative, no philosopher or scientist has ever provided a logical alternative to the wonderful truth that God created the heaven and the earth. God spoke and by His omnipotent power the world sprang into existence. At least eleven times we read, *“and God said”* and it was done. (Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 28, 29)

This biblical revelation of creation stands in opposition to materialism, which argues that matter is eternal. No, the heaven and the earth and the matter out of which they were formed were created. As materialism is refuted by creationism so is evolution. The sun, moon, and stars, the plants and animals, and finally man himself did not come into existence by time plus space plus chance. There was no fortuitous concourse of atoms arranging and re-arranging themselves by some cosmic accident. But there was God who, "*In the beginning*" created all things. And notice there were not many gods but only the one true God who created all things. In this manner polytheism is discredited, as is dualism (two gods). There is no god of Light and god of Darkness. There is only God. Monotheism is established.

### **Creation and Cosmology (World View)**

One vital point which gives validity to the Genesis account of creation is the way in which the story is told. The Bible reveals that Moses was "*learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians*" (Acts 7:22). Moses was familiar with the popular mythologies and cosmologies of his day and still he wrote the words he did to form the simplicity of the Scriptures. Later, David expressed his belief in the Mosaic account of creation (Psalm 33:6-9), as did Paul (Hebrews 11:3), and Christ Himself (Matthew 19:4 cf. Genesis 1:27). For conservative Christians, the Lord's endorsement of the Genesis narrative settles all discussion concerning the ultimate origin of the universe.

### **The Creation of Man**

The crowning act of creation was man who was made in the image of God. "*In the image of God created he him; male and female created he them*" (Genesis 1:27). This final work of God was very good (Genesis 1:31) for man was made upright (Ecclesiastes 7:29). It was not in the Lord's exact image that man was made for there are some attributes of God that cannot be communicated to anyone: sovereignty (ultimate power), omniscience (all knowing), omnipotence (unlimited power), and omnipresence (universality). The image of man was limited to those Divine attributes that can be communicated: intellectual power (to reason and discern), natural affections (love, joy, happiness, grace, and mercy), and moral freedom to choose (1 Corinthians 11:7; 15:49).

The honor that God has bestowed upon the creation of man is best expressed in the incarnation of Christ (Hebrews 5:7) and in His resurrection. The Lord has promised that all who follow Him shall share in resurrected glory (1 Corinthians 15 cf. John 14:1-4; Romans 8:18-19). Therefore, the essential glory of man according to original creation, Divine redemption, and ultimate restoration, should not be diminished by belief in superior aliens in other parts of the universe. It is true that man is not alone in the universe. There are angels, and the souls of those who have died dwell in heaven. It is also true that man is the crowning act of creation for he has been made in the image of God.

## Is Evolution an Alternative to Creationism?

As the Biblical account is read in Genesis 1 and 2, the free flow of the narrative indicates that God's initial creative acts were accomplished in one literal week of seven days. It is to be noted that while Chapter 1 provides a general and chronological account of creation, Chapter 2 records a specific and topical narrative.

Summary of the Creation Week	Genesis
• Day One Light was divided from darkness	1:2-5
• Day Two An expanse of the heavens was formed separating the waters	1:6-8
• Day Three Dry land was separated from the water and there was the creation of plant life	1:9-13
• Day Four The sun, moon, and stars were made as they are now and adjusted to the earth to measure time	1:14-19
• Day Five The creation of fish and fowl	1:20-23
• Day Six The creation of land creatures and man	1:24-31
• Day Seven The day of rest	2:2

The Hebrew word for day is “*yom*” and refers to a literal 24 hour period. The numerical adjective used with the word day also indicates a definite period of time. Additional support for a literal 24-hour period is found in the Law (Exodus 20:11; 31:17). It would have been nonsensical for God to appeal to the creation week for a day of rest on the Sabbath if there were great expanses of time between the “*days*”. It is enough to say that vast eons of time are not in view in Genesis 1 nor in Genesis 2. Until the nineteenth century, the Judeo-Christian community was satisfied that in seven literal days God created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them (Genesis 2:1). In 1859 everything changed. In that year Charles Darwin challenged the Christian faith by suggesting that man might have a common ancestor with the animal kingdom. His radical theories on the origin of the species led to the conclusion that evolution, not God, could be the true explanation for the cause of all that is upon the earth.

Bowing towards the altar of science and philosophy many Christians tried to compromise between the “scientific” evidence that was being offered and the Scriptures. A new concept of creation was considered in the Church and then embraced. It was called Theistic Evolution. This belief purported to teach that God used the evolutionary process to form all plants and animals including man. Following the Scopes Monkey Trial in Dayton, Tennessee in 1925, Biblical Creationism was quietly but systematically set aside in public education in favor of a new system of knowledge, Evolutionary Creation (note Colossians 2:8). In the name of science the world turned from the Creator to the creation (Romans 1:21-25).

### The Gap Theory

To complicate matters and confuse the Christian community even more, another sensational teaching arose at the turn of the century called The Gap Theory. According to this view, there is a “*gap*” between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. In this gap the alleged geological ages of the past and pre-historic man found a resting-place. Then, it was argued, what the verses following Genesis 1:2 really teach is a *reconstruction* of the earth, not the initial acts of creation.

What happened to pre-historic man? What happened to the pre-Adamic race? The answer came: *“It was destroyed and the earth was judged so that it became without form, and void.”* Advocates of the Gap Theory or the Reconstruction Theory contended for the following points.

- The word *“replenish”* in Genesis 1:28 suggests a prior inhabited world than the present one.

**Response.** This word does not indicate that the world was previously occupied with anything, let alone cave men and dinosaurs. The Hebrew word, *ma-lee*, means simply *“to fill”* (Exodus 40:34; 1 Kings 18:33; Psalm 107:9).

- The Bible says that there was *“darkness upon the face of the deep”* (Genesis 1:2). Darkness speaks of judgment.

**Response.** This word does not mean a judicial judgment. Darkness is simply used in this text for the absence of light. Sometimes darkness is good (Psalm 104:20, 24).

- There is a difference between the words *“created”* (Hebrews *bara*) and *“made”* (Hebrews *asah*).

**Response.** These words are used interchangeably. *“And God created (bara) the great sea monsters...”* (1:21). *“And God made (asah) the beast of the Earth...”* (1:15). *“Let us make (asah) man in our image...”* (Genesis 1:26). *“So God created (bara) man in his own image”* (1:27).

- Genesis 1:2 could be translated to read that the earth *“became without form, and void”*.

**Response.** The verb *“was”* is correctly and consistently translated in the Authorized Version from the Hebrew word *hayetha* (*was*). Of the 264 times *hayetha* is found in the Pentateuch, it is translated *“was”* 258 times.

- The phrase *“without form and void”* indicates that something terrible must have happened to the original creation because God cannot make anything less than that which is perfect.

**Response.** While it is true that God cannot make anything less than that which is good when He begins to work, He and He alone decides how He will work. In the creative week the Lord worked in stages. The phrase *“without form, and void”* simply refers to the lifelessness of the Earth and the emptiness of space before God began to shape it according to Divine design (Job 26:7; Deuteronomy 32:10; Job 6:18; 12:24; Psalm 107:40). There is no need to believe in a “gap” between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. There is no need to teach about a pre-Adamic race or a Reconstruction Theory of creation. There is no purpose for any generation to try and accommodate the Bible to contemporary science, for one thing is certain, science will change but the Word of God lives and abides forever (Psalm 119:89; Matthew 5:18). In six literal days God made heaven and earth and all that is in them. And on the sixth day God made man.

## **Going to the Garden**

Having been made in the image of God, the whole nature of man was adequately provided for: body, soul, and spirit. The Bible says that the Lord took the first man, Adam (Hebrews *reddish tint*), and placed him in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15). Created outside this special place of Paradise, Adam was put where there was work for his body, creative wisdom to use in his labors, and spiritual sensitivity to the sovereign Lord. In all of this his purpose for existing was established. Man was to know God and enjoy him forever.

## **A Marriage Made by the Master**

To enhance Adam's capacity for life in Eden, the Lord graciously created a helper that was "meet" or suited for him. Causing a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, the Lord took (lit. ripped or seized) a rib from his side and formed a woman called Eve (living). When presented to Adam she was perfect in every way and immediately loved. Matthew Henry observed that "*the woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.*"

## **A River Runs Wide**

Despite a very specific reference to a river that "*went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads*" (Genesis 2:10), the location of the Garden of Eden (Hebrew, "*a delight*") has mystified Biblical students for centuries. "*The great rivers of Europe, Asia, and Africa have in turn done service as the Pison and Gihon of Scripture, and there remains nothing but the New World wherein the next adventurous theorist may bewilder himself in the mazes of this most difficult question*" (*Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*, article, *Eden*).

Among the many places suggested for the site of the Garden of Eden, one particular general location holds special interest. In the highland of Armenia the Euphrates and the Tigris rise along with two other great rivers: the Kizil-Ermak [largest river of Asia Minor, 715 miles long] and the turbulent Araks [60 miles long]. The Kizil-Ermak flows into the Black Sea not far from an ancient region known as Colchis. Colchis was well known for its rich gold deposits. Also, onyx and bdellium [pearl, or beryl] and other precious stones have been found in abundance in Colchis (Genesis 2:11-12).

There is something else. The Biblical reference to "*the land of Ethiopia*" (Genesis 2:13) encompassed by Gihon is better-translated "*the land of Cush.*" Cush was a grandson of Ham. His descendants scattered to populate vast regions of the earth including the area of Colchis (Genesis 10:8-10). There was much attraction to this area for it is full of beautiful valleys and fertile plains yielding lush crops of grapes, apples, peaches, oranges and other fruits. The climate is moderate and the sky clear and bright. Mt. Ararat (Turkey), where the ark built by Noah came to rest, is nearby.

## **A Choice Between Two Trees**

While the search for the exact site of Eden continues, the Scriptural narrative speaks of two special trees that the Lord planted in the garden. There was “*The Tree Of Life in the midst of the garden*” and there was “*The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil*” (Genesis 2:9). Concerning the *Tree Of Life*, Dr. David Livingston thought it might be a fig tree. “*It is a sacred tree,*” he wrote, “*all over Africa and India; and the tender roots which drop down toward the ground are used as medicine--a universal remedy. Can it be a tradition of its being like the Tree of Life.*” (*Livingston's Last Journals in Central Africa*, Vol. 1). No one can be certain. Of the two trees, the fruit of “*The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil*” was forbidden. The design of this divine prohibition was to investigate the obedience of man. Though created in positive holiness, this original state was subject to negative change or positive confirmation. What would man do with the command of the Creator? Time and testing would tell.

## **The Serpent is Satan: The Entrance of Evil**

The lovely creation account and the establishment of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is suddenly given over in the Biblical narrative to the entrance of evil into Paradise. Evil already existed in the universe and was alluded to by the naming of a special tree, “*The Tree Of The Knowledge of Good And Evil.*” Adam might have wondered about the meaning of evil for he had no intimate knowledge of it. Any experiential acquaintance with evil would have to come with a personal act of sin. The opportunity to sin was being arranged. According to Divine permission Adam and Eve would be tempted in a subtle way by the Devil who would appear in the form of a serpent. The serpent was the chosen instrument of Satan whose mysterious personage suddenly emerged in the garden. There are several things to remember about Satan.

- Satan was once an exalted and majestic angel in heaven (Ezekiel 28:12-19).
- Satan rebelled against the Lord (Isaiah 14:12-15).
- Satan is the author of intellectual and religious sins (John 8:44). Sensual sins are said by Christ to issue forth from the heart of man (Matthew 15:19).
- The devices of Satan can be known (2 Corinthians 2:11). When leading Adam and Eve into sin, Satan operated according to a specific plan.
- Satan placed the Divine prohibition in a negative light as he cast doubt upon the Word of God. “*Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*” (Genesis 3:1)
- Satan contradicted the truth and substituted his own words. “*Ye shall not surely die*” (Genesis 3:5)
- Satan insinuated that God was jealous and therefore He was not good. If only Adam and Eve would eat of the forbidden fruit, they would be as God because they would know good and evil. It would be to their personal advantage to do what God has said not to do. *Genesis 3:5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*



Being deceived by the religious rhetoric (1 Timothy 2:14) Eve reached forth her hand to eat of the forbidden fruit. She did not fully understand the implications of her actions, but Adam did (1 Timothy 2:14) which is why the Scriptures declare, *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”* (Romans 5:12). In a moment of time, all of creation was suddenly changed. Death became the new heritage. The body became subject to decay. The soul lost its desire and capacity to enjoy communion with God. It died spiritually. There was an immediate separation of spiritual life from God. Instead of running to meet the Lord in the cool of the evening (Genesis 3:8), man would run from God. The fall from Divine delight to the depths of darkness and depravity was great.

### **The Grace of the Gospel**

Because God is righteous and just, Divine discipline had to be administered. In accordance with His holiness and integrity the Lord decided that Adam and Eve would be driven from the garden and a cherub would wield a flaming sword to guard the Tree of Life. There would be sorrow in childbirth for the woman. The serpent would crawl upon its belly forever. The earth would be cursed. All of nature would be bathed in blood, tooth and claw. Thorns and thistles would grow among the lovely flowers. All of creation had come under the curse. And yet, in the midst of this intense judgment, God remembered to have mercy. Divine love and grace found a way to offer hope to the hopeless and light to the blind. The Seducer of the souls of men, the serpent, would be crushed by a wounded Saviour. A promise was made. *“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”* (Genesis 3:15). *“Heaven, did you hear that? Man shall rise again. Fallen angels come close and listen. One day, My crowning act of creation will judge you. I will see to that for I will send My Son to crush the life out of this cosmic rebellion instigated by Satan. The battle will be intense but I shall be victorious! One day man will re-enter Paradise (Luke 23:43). The story of redemption is just beginning!”*

### **East of Eden**

Though Adam and Eve would know the grace of God, and the provision of a Divine covering for their nakedness (Genesis 3:21), they would still be banished from the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24). Reluctant to leave Paradise, the guilty couple had to be driven from the Garden of the King. To guard a re-entrance into Eden, the Lord placed cherubims near the main entrance, one of which wielded a flaming sword. In this manner the Tree of Life was guarded to stop anyone from eating of the fruit and living forever in a fallen state. While the Tree of Life was no longer available, the Lord had not completely withdrawn all of His favors or His presence. There was a special place appointed for worship of which the children of Adam and Eve would become aware (Genesis 4:14). At this sanctuary, offerings were presented.

## **The Birth of two Boys**

Following the expulsion from the Garden, the *Bible* says that Adam “*knew*” his wife Eve in an intimate way. In due time, a child was born named Cain (lit. possessed, acquired). He became a tiller of the ground (Genesis 4:2) which means he became a farmer. His brother Abel (lit. vapor, weakness, breath) became a shepherd. As there was a difference in their occupations so there was a difference in their hearts reflected in the sacrifices they brought before the Lord. Abel made a sacrifice on the basis of faith (Hebrews 11:4). He relied upon the promises of God (Hebrews 12:24) which indicates that he had an apprehension, if not a full comprehension, of the truth that “*without shedding of blood, there is no remission*” of sin. Because of his faith, the sacrifice of Abel was received by the Lord (Genesis 4:4) while the offering made by Cain was rejected.

## **A Moment of Murder**

Realizing that God (Genesis 4:5) was not accepting him, and moved by Satan, Cain killed his brother in a religious jealous rage. One dark day while alone in the fields with Abel, Cain rose up with furious rage and took the life of another. Perhaps Cain picked up a stone and crushed the skull of his brother. Perhaps he took a sacrificial knife and slew Abel by slicing his throat [Study 1 John 3:12. The word for “*slew*” is *sphazo* which means to butcher, especially an animal for food in sacrifice.] What is certain is that while the blood of Abel soaked into the ground (Matthew 25:35 cf. Hebrews 11:4), Cain callously continued to work until his conscience was arrested by the holy God of heaven. “*Cain, where is Abel thy brother?*” the Lord asked. God was not looking for information, as He was insisting upon personal accountability. Cain was not to go unpunished. No sin or sinner shall ever go unpunished.

## **The Curse of Cain**

With his sin ever before the eyes of the Living Lord, Cain was cursed for his cruelty. He would be driven from the visible presence of the Lord, and he would be forced to leave the fellowship of society manifested in his other brothers and sisters. They were no longer safe in his presence. [Note Genesis 5:4. There is an eastern tradition that credits thirty-three sons and twenty-seven daughters to Adam and Eve.] Cain's life would be spared but he would never again know happiness or peace. So it was that “*Cain went from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the East of Eden*” (Genesis 4:16). In the land of Nod, Cain established a city that he called Enoch (lit. destruction). There is an old myth among the Jews that teaches Cain went insane near the end of his life so that he roamed the land like a wild beast until the day he died.

## **A Son named Seth**

To replace the godly line of Abel, when Adam was one hundred and thirty years old, the Lord gave him another son named Seth. In the generations to come, the descendants of the Father of the Human Race would gravitate to either Cain or Seth. Like two great branches of a tree, the lines of each would develop, but in opposite directions. Cain would produce an ungodly seed, while Seth would raise up a holy seed unto the Lord.

## **The Secular and the Sacred**

With their hearts close to this world, the descendants of Cain developed the arts, and produced products that were very practical. Jabal, for example, introduced the tent, allowing mobility for men to follow cattle as they grazed. This freedom of movement permitted great herds to be raised. The long lonely nights of watching herds of animals were broken by the entertainment which Jubal, the brother of Jabal, could provide. Jubal was skilled in musical instruments. He is to be honored as the Father of the Art of Music (Genesis 4:21). Tubal-Cain (tu'-bal-cain; iron smith), the half-brother of Jabal and Jubal, was also a gifted man in crafts. He was able to hammer all kinds of cutting things in brass and iron (Genesis 4:22). Jewish tradition says that Naamah, the sister of Tubal-Cain, conceived the concept of placing ornaments on women's apparel.

In contrast, the line of Seth is not credited with any worldly inventions. Godliness received the pre-eminent attention. Holiness of life was revealed in such men as Enoch, who walked with God and then was translated before he died (Hebrews 11:5). Then there was Noah, whose faith would be manifested by the building of an Ark in obedience to the revealed will of the Lord.

## **The Progress of Primitive Societies**

One of the most prevailing myths of modern education is that the human race emerged from a state of barbarism to a highly complex civilization. The biblical narrative of skilled craftsmen and musicians indicates otherwise. The Word of God challenges the concept that mankind passed from a Flint Age, to a Bronze Age, and then on to an Iron Age. There are two main thoughts to consider by way of response, the first of which is that if the Bible teaches anything, it teaches a form of “*devolution*”, not evolution. Man came from the hand of God full of intelligence and creative genius. Sin entered into the heart of man to touch every facet of his soul in a downward direction. Affected by the Fall, the will of man no longer chooses that which is holy, just, and good. The intelligence of man is not what it once was. He does not think clearly. The emotions of man have been perverted. Sin has given him the capacity to hate, grow bitter, express anger, jealousy, and envy. In short, sin has made the soul of man totally depraved. “*By this we mean, on the one hand, the lack of original righteousness or of holy affection toward God, and on the other hand, the corruption of the moral nature, or bias toward evil.*” (A. H. Strong) [Study John 5:42; 2 Timothy 3:4; Malachi 1:6; 2 Timothy 3:2; Romans 8:7; Ephesians 4:18; Titus 1:5; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 7:18].

In addition to teaching the devolution of man, the Bible also reveals that civilization has not always been in a state of forward progress. Nations rise and fall. Cultures ascend and are destroyed. Speaking in a technological sense, America, in the year 1998. In contrast, in some parts of Russia the technological year is 1945. In many African nations, the year is much earlier. Therefore, to find fossil remains suggesting a primitive civilization in one part of the globe does not mean that all men everywhere on earth at that time were in the same state of advancement. “*There is really nothing in the true history of civilization to impair, but much to confirm, the Scripture account that man was made in a state of simple civilization, with the whole world of invention and discovery lying before him; and that while some fell, and fell deeply, others rose in the knowledge both of nature and of the arts*” (William Garden Blaikie, February 5, 1820-June 11, 1899; a Scottish divine, writer, biographer, and temperance reformer).

## **The Longevity of Life**

One of the more interesting facts of the biblical account of early man is the longevity of life attributed to him. Adam lived nine hundred and thirty years. Methuselah, the longest age recorded, died at nine hundred and sixty nine years. While much could be said on this subject, the first century historian Josephus makes an interesting comment when he writes, *“Let no one, on comparing the lives of the patriarchs with our lives and with the few years that we now live, think that what we have said of them is false; for those ancients being beloved of God, and made recently by God himself, and because their food was then fitter for the prolongation of life, might well live so great a number of years: and besides, God afforded them a longer time of life on account of their virtue, and the good use they made of it in astronomical and geometrical discoveries, which would not have afforded the time of foretelling unless they had lived six hundred years, for the great year is completed in that interval. Now I have witnesses to what I have said all those that have written Antiquities, among both the Greeks and the barbarians.”* (*Antiquities of the Jews*, I. iii. 9)

For students of the ancient world, the remarkable thing is not how long the Bible says men lived, but how short their life span is said to be. The Babylonians, Egyptians, and Chinese exaggerated the longevity of life and declared it be into *thousands* of years. The Greeks and the Romans were more circumspect and limited life between eight hundred and one thousand years.

Scientifically, there is hope that the time will come when individuals can live longer than the present average age. Advances are being made in reading the genetic code, and controlling, or eliminating, diseases that lead to premature deaths. The success of modern medicine is reflected in the fact that 10 percent of the American population is over 65 years of age.

It should be remembered that originally the body was not designed to be subject to death. And even after the Fall, the power of decay was not swift. The bloodline was still free from the pollution of hereditary diseases and other causes that shorten life. In addition, the food was better and the harmful rays of the sun probably did not penetrate the atmosphere as they do now. One day, the saints of God will enjoy a glorified resurrection body in a restored Paradise where death and diseases and the agonies of aging will be no more (1 Corinthians 15; Revelation 22).

## **The World that Perished**

Despite the grace of God in allowing long life to those who lived in the ancient world, the time was not used wisely. The goodness of God was designed to lead men to repent. Instead, wickedness prevailed. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, predicted a coming judgment (Jude 1:14-15), only to be ignored. People laughed. They were secure in their knowledge and civilization. And so, there was no *“power to purify the heart, or to preserve society from corruption”* (Blaike). Every imagination of the heart was only evil continually (Genesis 6:5). Lamech, a descendant of Cain, introduced the practice of polygamy (Genesis 4:19). In social intercourse the godly line of Seth succumbed to the ungodly line of Cain with the result that interfaith marriages took place (Genesis 6:1-2). In the absence of spiritual standards and social accountability, all of society became a polluted fountain spewing forth moral corruption while spreading structural chaos. Death stalked the land as violence erupted among self-centered individuals. Murder was common. Blood flowed freely. Men boasted of their exploits (Genesis 6:4) while forgetting God.

Finally, the Lord had enough. He was sorry that He had even created man (Genesis 6:6). His heart was grieved and His holiness was outraged. There was only one just thing to do. The world must be destroyed. The world must perish in judgment.

### **The Nobility of Noah**

As the Lord prepared His creation for Divine justice, there was one man the Lord noticed. His name was Noah (lit. rest). The Bible declares that, “*Noah was a just man and perfect in his generation, and Noah walked before God*” (Genesis 6:9). Noah, the son of Lamech, was one of three people mentioned in Scripture as walking before the Lord [see Enoch, Genesis 5:22; David, 1 Kings 9:4; and Hezekiah, Isaiah 38:3]

At birth, his godly father Lamech had predicted that Noah would be a source of comfort. Six hundred years later that prophecy was to be fulfilled for Noah was chosen to be the Second Father of Mankind. He would be saved from the wrath to come. Moved by faith (Hebrews 11: 7), the Bible says that Noah prepared an Ark designed by God.

<b>Six Prominent Persons</b>	<b>Chapters</b>
Adam	1-3
Noah	6-9
Abram	11-25
Isaac	17-35
Jacob	25-49
Joseph	30-50

### **A Majestic Vessel**

When Noah was four hundred and eighty years old, God told him that He was determined to destroy the earth within one hundred and twenty years if people did not repent and reform. Therefore, to preserve himself, his family, and many animals, Noah was to build an Ark. The length of the Ark was to be four hundred and fifty feet long, seventy-five feet wide, and forty five feet high. Within this Ark, Noah, his wife, their three sons, and their wives were to dwell with all the different species of beasts and fowls and creeping things, seven of each of the clean species, and two of the unclean (Genesis 6:19-20). Enough food was to be stored for all.

### **One Dark Day**

When the Ark was completed and the animals had been gathered aboard, when the food was stored, and the last gospel appeal was made (note 2 Peter 2:5), the Bible says that God Himself shut Noah in (Genesis 7:16). People outside the Ark smiled in mirth at the old man and his family with all the animals inside the wooden box. But they stopped smiling when suddenly the familiar blue skies turned dark. Many came outside to see this strange happening in the heavens. With faces upturned, hearts began to pound when wet drops hit their faces. The heavens were dripping with water! Before anyone could consider a proper understanding of the water from the skies, there was a tremor under the earth. The ground moved. Buildings began to collapse.

Then the world came apart. The ground opened up and from deep subterranean passages water gushed forth everywhere. One dark day all the fountains of the deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened (Genesis 7:11). Women screamed. Children cried. Grown men ran in terror. People fled to higher ground while water was rushing at their feet determined to suck them into a watery grave. Those who fled to rooftops, those who scampered up the sides of mountains found that there was no hiding place. God had come to judge the earth.

The world that would not repent found that it could not repent. As the water crashed against the side of the Ark, people caught up in the swirling water beat on the side of the Ark. *“Noah! Open the door!” “Noah! Help us!”* But there was to be no help. Not from man and not from God. Those who had ignored the witness of nature (Romans 1:19, 20) now found that nature was a witness against them. Those who had hardened their conscience (Romans 2:14, 15) realized that their conscience had grown cold and callous. They should have called upon the name of the Lord in the day of Divine visitation through His gospel ministers (2 Peter 2:8). Those who had shown no respect to the promise of a Redeemer (Genesis 3:15), and who had failed to offer acceptable sacrifices (Genesis 4:4), those who paid no attention to the words of warning of Enoch (Jude 1:14, 15) were destined to perish. It is a terrible thing to resist the strivings of the Holy Spirit (Genesis 6:3). And so it was to be: the world would perish.

### **A New Beginning**

The Flood that began in November (Genesis 7:11) in the six hundredth year of Noah's life would not abate until judgment was complete. For forty days and forty nights the winds howled, the rain fell, and the waters of the deep churned. There was universal death by drowning as souls were crushed, the earth was cleansed, and the principle was established that it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God (2 Peter 3:3-7). In time the rains did end and the waters began to subside. Finally, after three hundred and seventy one days, Noah opened the door of the Ark and looked upon a new world.

### **Genesis: A Book of Beginnings**

Earth	1:1
Man	1:26, 27
Sabbath	2:1-3
Marriage	2:21-25
Sin	3:1-7
Salvation	3:15
Home	4:1
Culture	4:16-21
Government	9:1-6
Civilizations	10:1-32
Languages	11:1-9
Racial Israel	12:1

## A Covenant to Keep

Seven months after Noah entered the Ark, the vessel landed on Mt. Ararat [in modern day Turkey]. Several more months passed before there was evidence that the waters had subsided and it was safe to leave the Ark. Finally, the day of departure from the safety of the Ark came and Noah stepped out on dry land. After surveying the scene around him, Noah built an altar and made a sacrifice unto the Lord. *“He took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar”* (Genesis 8:20). Being pleased with this action, the Lord entered into a new covenant with Noah. There were specific provisions.

- Never again was the earth to be destroyed by a universal flood. To confirm this part of the covenant, the Lord appointed the rainbow to be a reminder that there was a covenant to keep (Genesis 8:21). The Scottish poet Thomas Campbell (1777-1844) has tried to capture that magical moment.

“When o'er the green undeluged earth  
Heaven's covenant Thou didst shine,  
How came the world's gray fathers forth  
To watch thy sacred sign!

And when its yellow luster smiled  
O'er mountains yet untrod,  
Each mother held aloft her child,  
To bless the brow of God.”

- Mankind was to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth (Genesis 9:1, 7).
- All of the animal kingdom was to be subject to the will of man (Genesis 9:2).
- For the first time the flesh of animals could be eaten provided no blood was consumed (Genesis 9:3-4).
- Capital punishment was to be visited upon a known murderer (Genesis 9:5-6).

In this manner, according to the terms of this new covenant with Noah, the blessing of God rested. There was to be a fresh start. There was to be Divine protection. There was to be the actuality of daily provisions, and there was to be protection of personal existence through the strong act of retributive justice.

## **The Dispersion: From the Flood to the Birth of Abram**

### **Genesis 9 - 11**

#### **Drinking and Drunkenness**

It is a tragic truth that the best of saints are altogether subject to moral failure. Noah, who knew so much about the goodness and grace of God, found himself one sad day in a drunken condition. It is unlikely that Noah was not familiar with the effects of fermentation. The Ante-Diluvian world was destroyed because of heinous transgressions, including drunkenness. Noah must not be viewed as an innocent victim. He planted the vineyard, he cultivated the fruit, and he produced the product that would leave him inebriated.

It has been argued that whether or not a Christian drinks intoxicating beverages is a matter of culture and conscience (Romans 14:1-13). That is true. It is also true that the Christian has a responsibility not to cause anyone else to stumble in their Christian faith (Romans 14:21). Since the first drink has never been taken by anyone with the idea of becoming a confirmed drunkard, wisdom would counsel abstinence lest sin take advantage of the situation (Study: Proverbs 31:6-7; 1 Timothy 5:23; Matthew 26:27-29; Mark 14:23; John 2:9-10 cf. Daniel 1:5, 8, 16; Judges 13:4-5; Proverbs 31:4; Deuteronomy 29:6; Genesis 19:32; 1 Samuel 25:36; 2 Samuel 13:28-29). The deliberate drinking of Noah that led to his drunkenness forever changed the world. Like all sins, the behavior of Noah had far reaching consequences for sin is like an octopus with long tentacles; they reach out in many directions to touch others with tragic results.

#### **A Curse on Canaan**

Lying in a drunken condition, Noah lost all self-control and self-respect with the result being that he was “*uncovered in his tent*” (Genesis 9:21). When Ham, Noah’s second son (Genesis 5:32), discovered his father in his helpless and shameful condition, he called his two brothers to come and witness the sad spectacle. Ham thought it was humorous. Shem and Japheth were not amused. They were embarrassed. Graciously they took a garment and, walking backwards, they covered the nakedness of their father (Genesis 9:23).

Later, when Noah awoke from his drunken stupor, the Bible indicates that a spirit of prophecy came upon him. In an instant Noah knew what had been “done” to him and immediately assigned to his three sons and their descendants a just judgment for their deeds. Shem and Japheth were given great rewards. In particular, it was declared that the descendants of Shem would prosper materially and spiritually. God would dwell in their tents (Genesis 9:26), and the Canaanites would be their servants. Fulfillment of this prophecy is found in the fact that Abram, Isaac, and Jacob descended from Shem and ultimately Christ.

In like manner, the descendants of Japheth were to enjoy prosperity as they spread over the face of the earth. In October of the year 538 BC the greatest fulfillment of this prophecy began to be realized. It was then that Cyrus the Great of Persia, a descendant of Japheth, defeated Belshazzar, the leader of the Babylonian empire (Daniel 5). The powerful Semitic capital fell and the Japhethic race ascended to a leadership role where it has been entrenched ever since in various countries of the world.



And Ham? His descendants would be cursed. “*Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.*” (Genesis 9:25). The question arises as to why a curse was placed, not directly on Ham, but on his son Canaan. One solution that has been suggested is that the phrase “*his younger son*” is better-translated “*his youngest one,*” thus referring to Noah's youngest grandson, which was Canaan. Confirmation for this concept might be found in Genesis 5:32 where Japheth is listed as Noah's youngest son, and not Ham.

Still, the mystery remains. “*Why was Canaan cursed when it was Ham who laughed at his father?*” “*What was the horrible sin which prompted a curse?*” The answer may be that two sins are in view here. The sin of disrespect by Ham to his father and another sin committed by Canaan. The Bible says that Noah awoke from his sleep and knew that something had been “*done*” unto him. “*What had been done unto Noah?*” Some students of the Bible believe the crime involved here was the heinous sin of homosexuality. The basis for this belief is found in the fact that in Leviticus 18 and 20 the phrase “*nakedness of his father*” is identified with sexual immorality (Genesis 9:22). Also, Canaan, as the son of Ham, became the progenitor of the Canaanite people who were notorious for their sexual indiscretions (Study Genesis 10:19; Genesis 19:1-11; 1 Kin. 14:24; and Romans 1:24-27). While these points are not conclusive, it does seem that something very serious was “*done*” unto Noah that provoked a prophetic judgment.

## **The Table of Nations**

### **Genesis 10**

#### **The Descendants of the Sons of Noah**

##### **The Sons of Noah**

- Shem
- Ham
- Japheth

##### **The Sons of Japheth who was a Son of Noah**

- Gomer
- Magog
- Madai
- Javan
- Tubal
- Meshech
- Tiras

##### **The Sons of Gomer who was a Son of Japheth**

- Ashkenaz
- Riphath
- Togarmah

##### **The Sons of Javan who was a Son Japheth**

- Elishah
- Tarshish
- Kittim
- Dodanim

##### ***Special Note***

By these descendants from the line of Japheth were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations.

##### **The Sons of Ham who was a Son of Noah**

- Cush
- Mizraim
- Phut
- Canaan

### **The Sons of Cush who was a Son of Ham**

- Seba
- Havilah
- Sabtah
- Raamah
- Sabtecha
- Nimrod

### ***Special Note***

Nimrod began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord. The beginning of his kingdom was:

- Babel
- Erech
- Accad
- Calneh

in the land of Shinar (modern Iraq). And out of that land of Shinar went forth Asshur and builded

- Nineveh
- Rehoboth
- Calah
- Resen (which was located between Nineveh and Calah). The same, Resen, is a great city.

### **The Sons of Raamah a Son of Cush who was from the Line of Ham**

- Sheba
- Dedan

### **The Sons of Mizraim who was a Son of Ham**

- Ludim
- Anamim
- Lehabim
- Naphtuhim
- Pathrusim
- Casluhim (out of whom came Philistim)
- Caphtorim

### **The Sons of Canaan who was a Son of Ham**

- Sidon (the firstborn)
- Heth

### *Special Note*

The descendants of these sons of Canaan formed the following tribal families.

- The Jebusite
- The Amorite
- The Girgasite
- The Hivite
- The Arkite
- The Sinite
- The Arvadite
- The Zemarite
- The Hamathite

### *Special Note*

After these tribal nations were established the families of the Canaanites spread abroad. Specific borders were established. The border of the Canaanites was from Sidon, as thou comest to Gerar, unto Gaza; as thou goest, unto Sodom, and Gomorrah, and Admah, and Zeboim, even unto Lasha. These are the sons of Ham, after their families, after their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations.

### **The Sons of Shem who was a Son of Noah**

#### *Special Note*

Shem was the father of all the children of Eber. As a son of Noah, his elder brother was Japheth. With that in mind, observe that these are the sons of Ham, after their families, after their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations.

#### **The Sons of Shem**

- Elam
- Asshur
- Arphaxad
- Lud
- Aram

#### **The Sons of Aram who was a Son of Shem**

- Uz
- Hul
- Gether
- Mash

**The Son of Arphaxad who was a Son of Shem**

- Salah

**The Son of Salah who was the Son of Arphaxad from the Line of Shem**

- Eber

**The Sons of Eber who was the Son of Salah from the Line of Shem**

- Peleg

*Special Note*

**In his days was the earth divided.**

- Joktan

**The Sons of Joktan who was a Son of Eber from the Line of Shem**

- Almodad
- Sheleph
- Hazar-maveth
- Jerah
- Hadoram
- Uzal
- Diklah
- Obal
- Abimael
- Sheba
- Ophir
- Havilah
- Jobab

*Special Note*

The descendants of Joktan, from the line of Shem, dwelt in the land from Mesha, as thou goest unto Sephar a Mount of the east. These are the sons of Shem, after their families, after their tongues, in their lands, after their nations.

*Conclusion.*

These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations: and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood.

## **They Talked in Tongues**

With the inhabitable earth orderly divided, an essential unity was enjoyed through a common language (Genesis 11:1). The unity was soon destroyed due to pride. In the Mesopotamian plain called Shinar, a wicked plot was conceived as men said to one another, “*Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth*” (Genesis 11:4). The proposed project was probably a temple-tower or ziggurat with stairways leading from one level to the next. Houses for habitation would be constructed at its base to create a city of culture and commerce.

The sin involved in this situation was not the building of a large super-structure, but rebellion against the known will of God which was to replenish or fill the earth (Genesis 9:1). Rather than continue to move in ever expanding concentric circles in a concerted effort to please God, a conscious decision was made to contain the family and national units.

After coming down, “*to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded,*” (Genesis 11:5) the Lord decided to frustrate this fantastic human effort to avoid following His Divine design. The Lord decided that He would cause individuals to speak various languages thereby causing social unrest and forcing separation of people along linguistic lines. “*So the Lord scattered them abroad from there upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore, the name of it is called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth, and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth*” (Genesis 11:9-10).

## **Two Ancient Civilizations**

Having scattered the people “*abroad upon the face of the earth,*” two early empires emerged. The Chaldeans grew strong on the banks of the Euphrates and the Tigris, while the Egyptians prospered in the plain on the banks of the Nile. The founder of the Chaldean Empire may be traced to Nimrod, a descendant of Ham who excelled as a hunter. Reigning from Babel, the cities he founded included Erech, Accad, and Calneh in the land of Shinar. The history of the Egyptians is more difficult to trace for much is shrouded in myth and mystery. Part of the ancient tradition is that first the “gods” ruled over Egypt and then came a dynasty of demi-gods. More accurately is the history of Egypt, written about 250 BC by Manetho, an Egyptian priest. Most of his work perished but the reliable Jewish historian Josephus has preserved some fragments. Manetho recorded that thirty dynasties of kings’ sovereignty reigned over Egypt in succession.

From the first, the Egyptians were a great people. They were able to construct large buildings and colossal super-structures such as the pyramids. In war they were fierce and without mercy as reflected in their recorded exploits on monuments. In time, the history of Israel and the history of Egypt would be forever bound together. Unfortunately, neither the Chaldeans nor the Egyptians retained a pure form of worship. The creature began to be worshipped rather than the Creator. The sun, moon, and stars became objects of wonder and adoration. The Chaldeans bowed before Anu, lord of the heavens; Bel, lord of the visible world; and Hea, lord of the sea and the regions beyond the dead. In Egypt, the cat and crocodile and other animals were honored. Other nations emerged to pay homage to many gods. Only one kept faith with the Creator and that was the nation of Israel.

## **The Hebrew Fathers: The Appearance of Abram**

In Genesis 11:10-32, a genealogy of Shem, the first son of Noah, is given. Special attention is focused upon Terah and his three sons, Abram, Nahor, and Haran (Genesis 11:26) and the place they all lived, Ur of the Chaldeans. The cultured and prosperous city of Ur was given over to the worship of the moon god that was also called by the same name. This particular deity was viewed as being masculine in contrast to the sun god, Shamas, which was presented by the Babylonians as being feminine. In the plains close to the idolatrous city, two thousand years before Christ was born, Terah, the eighth generation from Noah, watched over his flocks with his sons. Then, tragedy struck the family for Haran died. No longer did Terah want to stay where he was. He would move elsewhere. Terah had heard of a place called Canaan. Perhaps it would be better there. The journey began with Terah, his son Abram and his wife Sarai, and an orphaned grandson named Lot. The journey progressed as far as Haran and then sadness sought out the nomadic family once more. Terah died being two hundred and five years of age.

For a while, Abram, now the leader of the family unit stayed in Haran. Then, one day the word of the Lord came again to him. The God of the universe condescended to come down and speak to a shepherd-farmer whom he had already blessed with tremendous resources. “*Abram,*” said the Lord. “*Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee*” (Genesis 12:1). There was good reason for Abram to leave his father's house. Terah himself was among those who worshipped idols (Joshua 24:2, 14).

Abram must leave the place of idolatry. He must go to a new land. If Abram obeyed the voice of the Lord, specific promises would be realized. “*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*” (Genesis 12:2-3).

### **Leaving all for the Lord**

By faith (Hebrews 11:8-10) Abram departed, “*as the Lord had spoken unto him*” (Genesis 12:4). He would leave Haran at age seventy-five with, “*Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls [slaves] that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came*” (Genesis 12:5).

### **The Journey of Abram: Coming into Canaan**

As Abram had left Ur of the Chaldees, so he left Haran in obedience to the known will of the Lord. It was not an easy move for many factors were involved. There were thousands of sheep and goats, oxen and asses, hundreds of camels, a number of servants, tents and furnishings. All of these things and more had to be carried across the hot burning Syrian Desert that took its toll on human endurance. Still, Abram “*went forth, not knowing whither he went.*” “*And, into the land of Canaan they came*” (Genesis 12:5).

If a traditional trade route of antiquity was traveled, Abram and his large caravan of faithful followers passed through the luscious green orchards of Damascus after reaching the northern frontier of Palestine [lit. *Land of the Philistines*, a Greek sea faring people]. After pausing to water his livestock at the river Pharpar or Abana, Abram would have traveled to a section of Mt. Hermon towards the hope of his heart. From the lofty heights on Mt. Hermon, Abram's eyes would have viewed for the first time The Land of Milk and Honey which the gracious God of the universe had promised would be the inheritance of his descendants.

The soul of Abram swelled with gratitude as his panoramic view continued. The sight of the land fulfilled his greatest imaginations. On the right, was the mighty mountain range of Lebanon, standing as a natural fortress against enemy forces. On the left, were the pleasant pastures of Gilead leading into the emerald green forests of Bashan. Abram knew that domesticated animals would grow fat in this grazing area. In front of his view Abram would have seen the deep blue waters of the Sea of Galilee from which flowed the Jordan, winding its serpentine way through plains reminiscent of the Garden of Eden. Beyond the Jordan lay “The Great Sea”, the Mediterranean. All of this was much different than the level land leading to the banks of the Euphrates, which Abram left behind.

### **Lord of the Land**

Abram continued to journey southward until he came to a place called Shechem in the midst of the land. Here, in the plain of Moreh, Abram built his first altar unto the Lord and worshipped. Here, in the fertile vale, Abram received the promise that the land all around him would be the inheritance of his seed.

“*And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land.*” (Genesis 12:7). From Shechem, Abram continued to travel southward towards the Negev, a dry region of 4,500 sq. miles, from Beersheba to the high lands of Sinai.

### **The Testing of Faith by Famine**

Though Palestine was in many ways a pleasant place, it was subject to changes in weather patterns. There came the time when there was a famine in the land (Genesis 12:10). Faced with hunger, Abram “*went down into Egypt to sojourn there.*” By moving out of the geographical will of God, Abram exposed himself and others to needless spiritual temptations. While in Egypt, he led his wife to lie about their relationship. Sarai was to tell others that she was Abram's sister and not his wife. Abram feared that his lovely wife (Genesis 12:14), at age 65 (she would die at age 127), would be coveted by the Egyptians. Abram was afraid that he would be killed so that others could take Sarai. The fears of Abram were not without reason. The British Museum contains one of the oldest writings in existence. The papyrus comes from Egypt and tells the “*Story of Two Brothers.*” According to the narrative, the Pharaoh of the land sends his soldiers to bring beautiful women to the court by murdering their husbands. While the narrative is that of a novel romance, it does indicate Abram had good reason for concern. Nevertheless, Abram had no right to mislead anyone and so, in the providence of the Lord, the lie was exposed. No retribution came to Abram other than he was asked to withdraw from the area, which he gladly did (Genesis 12:14-20). There is a spiritual lesson to be observed. The Christian who “*goes down to Egypt*” – a symbol of the world – exposes himself and others to sin, all the while bringing dishonor to the Lord. Faith is the victory that overcomes the world (James 5:17, 18).



## **The Departure of Lot**

After being expelled from Egypt, Abram returned to Canaan where he settled at Bethel (Genesis 13:1-3). Unfortunately, the pasture area was too small to contain the domestic prosperity that had come to Abram and through him to his nephew Lot. When the herdsmen of the two almost came into open civil conflict, a godly solution was settled upon (James 3:17-18). The families would separate and Lot would be given first choice as to where he wanted to go. Surveying the land between Bethel and Ai, Lot chose to move towards the well-watered plains of the Jordan near the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Time alone would reveal that this secular decision would lead to Lot's spiritual downfall. From *looking* towards a physical area saturated with moral filth of the flesh (Genesis 13:10-11), Lot *lodged* near the evil savors of sin (Genesis 13:12-13), until he finally succumbed to *living* in the midst of human depravity (Genesis 19:1). By degrees Lot compromised his convictions though internally challenged by a troubled conscience (2 Peter 2:7).

## **A Covenant Re-affirmed**

Following Abram's separation from Lot, the Lord appeared again to Abram. His attention was directed once more to take a panoramic view of all that he saw below him from the heights of Bethel. "Abram," said the Lord, "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art north-ward, and south-ward, and east-ward, and west-ward: 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 the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee" (Genesis 13:14-17).

## **At Home at Last**

Following the gracious visitation of God at Bethel, Abram journeyed back to Hebron. The remainder of his life would be spent here or at Beer-sheba just a few miles away to the southwest. Shepherds valued Beer-sheba for the gentle slopes of its well-watered green pastures. Historically, Hebron is one of the oldest cities of the world, "seven years older than Zoan in Egypt" (Num. 13:22). Mizraim, a son of Ham, once lived in here before resettling southward where he establish Zoan, the earliest capital of Egypt. The attractions for Mizraim and many others were the rich fields on the banks of the Nile River. Each year the Nile would overflow its banks to leave behind a rich soil deposit suitable for farming. Long ago it was noted that Egypt should be called, "The Gift of the Nile".

Returning to Hebron, it should be noted that the Cave of Machpelah is located nearby. Abram purchased this particular cave from the Hittites to be a family burial vault. Today, a Turkish mosque covers the place wherein lies the dusty remains of Abram, Isaac, and Jacob. It does not matter. While Hebron and Beer-sheba remain honored tourist attractions for people of different faiths, the Bible is careful to remind the Church that Abram, Isaac and Jacob were at home at last in another city, "that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11:16).

## **Fighting for the Family**

While dwelling under the oak of Mamre, Abram received word that a tragedy had occurred. His nephew Lot had been taken as a captive of tribal conflict. The king of Sodom and the cities nearby had been attacked and defeated by the powerful forces of Chedorlaomer and a confederacy of kings from the plains of Mesopotamia.

### **A four nation confederation from Mesopotamian consisting of**

Chedorlaomer	King of Elam
Amraphel	King of Shinar
Arioch	King of Ellasar
Tidal	King of nations

### **made war with**

Bera	King of Sodom
Birsha	King of Gomorrah
Shinab	King of Admah
Shemeber	King of Zoboim
Unknown	King of Bela (Zoar)

### **in the Vale of Siddim, which is the Salt Sea**

Bera, Birsha, Shinab, and Shemeber were defeated by the Mesopotamia coalition and were forced to pay tribute for twelve years to the leader of the alliance, Chedorlaomer (Genesis 14:4a). After years of servitude Bera and his allies decided to revolt against the tyranny (Genesis 14:4b). It was a grave political mistake. Within a year, Chedorlaomer moved to consolidate and expand his power, first, by making war against a new six nation confederation in the area, and second by putting down the revolt of his longtime subjects (Genesis 14:5).

### **The Six-Nation Confederation**

Rephaims	in Ashteroth Karnaim
Zuzims	in Ham (Egypt)
Emims	in Shaveh Kiriathaim
Horites	in Mount Seir
Amalekites	in En-mishpat (Kadesh)
Amorites	in Haz-e-zon-ta-mar

### **was no match for Chedorlaomer**

The battle was short, their conquest was certain. Victorious over this united opposition, Chedorlaomer turned his attention back to the revolt of his longtime subjects.

Bera	King of Sodom
Birsha	King of Gomorrah
Shinab	King of Admah
Shemeber	King of Zoboim.
Unknown	King of Bela (Zoar)

History repeated itself (Genesis 14:3). Once more a battle was fought in the Valley of Siddim (Genesis 14:8) with disastrous results for the rebels. Once more Chedorlaomer easily defeated the five-nation coalition. A brief description of the people and places involved in the battle may be helpful.

- Admah (ad'-mah; red earth; fort) was located in the vale of Siddim (Genesis 10:19). Its king was Shinab. The town was eventually destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24; Deuteronomy 29:23).
- Amraphel (am'-raf-el; keeper of the gods) was a Hamite king of Shinar, who with other kings took the nephew of Abraham prisoner.
- Arioch (air'-ih-ock), was the king of Ellasar, a city probably located in Southern Babylon. He became an ally of Chedorlaomer in his attempt to control the rebellious kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, and Belah (Genesis 14:1-9).
- Bela (be'-lah), Belah, was another name for the city of Zoar.
- Bera (be'rah; son of evil), was a king of Sodom when the five kings of the area, led by Chedorlaomer, invaded.
- Birsha (bur'-shah; with wickedness), was a king of Gomorrah who ruled during the time of Abraham, c. 2050 BC
- Canaan (ca'-na-an; merchant or trader), refers to a region along the Mediterranean Sea. During the time of the invasion of the Israelites Canaan was occupied by the Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, who were known collectively as the Canaanites.
- Chedorlaomer (servant of Lagamar; Lagamar being one of the main gods of the Elamites), was the king of Elam which territory was probably part of Persia and Media.
- Egypt (e'-jipt; black), a country in the NE of Africa. The common name in the Bible is "Mizraim."
- Elam (Susiana) refers to the region beyond the Tigris, E of Babylon.
- Ellasar (el-lay'-sar; revolting from God), was a Mesopotamian country mentioned in association with Abraham. The king of Ellasar was Arioch.

- Gomorrah (guh-mor'-ruh; submersion), was one of the five “*cities of the plain*” located in the Valley of Siddim (Salt Sea or Dead Sea). The other cities were Sodom, Admah, Zeboim, and Zoar (Genesis 14:2-3).
- Hebron (hee'bruhn; alliance), refers to a city located 19 miles southwest of Jerusalem on the road to Beersheba.
- Jordan (jor' dun; descending, flowing river), Plain of, refers to the lovely valley of the Jordan which is a rift more than one hundred and sixty miles long. In this area Lot dwelt (Genesis 13:10).
- Lot (veil), was the son of Haran and nephew of Abraham.
- Mamre (mam'-re), is the plain near Hebron where Abraham dwelt and where he was promised a son (Genesis 18:1, 10, 14).
- Perizzite (per'-iz-zite), refers to a tribe in the Land of Promise west of the Jordan (Genesis 34:30; Exodus 33:2).
- Shemeber (lofty flight), was the king of Zeboim in the days of Abraham. He was an ally of the king of Sodom when attacked by the NE coalition under Chedorlaomer, c. 2050 BC
- Shinab (shi'-nab), was the king of Admah. He lived in the days of Abraham.
- Shinar (shi'-nar; country of the two rivers), refers to the alluvial plains of Chaldea and Babylon (Genesis 10:10; 11:2; Daniel 1:2). It is the Jewish name which Abraham brought with him to Canaan.
- Siddim (sid'-dim). The Vale of Siddim refers to a valley in the region of the Dead Sea.
- Sodom (vineyard, burning), was one of the five major cities of the Plain of Jordan (Genesis 13:10). Lot settled here. The city was to be destroyed by divine judgment (Genesis 19:1-29). The ruins of Sodom lie beneath the S part of the Dead Sea.
- Tidal (ti'-dal), was a king under Chedorlaomer, and called “*a king of nations*”.
- Zeboim (ze-bo'-im), was one of five cities of the plain or circle of the Jordan. Shemeber was the king. The general cite of these cities was around Sodom.
- Zoar (zo'-ar; little, smallness), was located south of the Dead Sea.

In addition to winning all of the strategic and tactical military victories, Chedorlaomer and his forces were able to capture others who happened to be in the area of conflict, such as Lot (Genesis 14:12). When word reached Abram concerning the fate of his nephew (Genesis 14:14), he did not hesitate. Abram moved out to fight for his family.

Arming 318 servants of his household, Abram crossed the Jordan River to pursue the eastern coalition of kings up the stream of water. In the vicinity of Dan, Abram was able to surprise and scatter the forces of Chedorlaomer. With the enemy fleeing in panic, Abram pressed his advantage as far as Damascus where he took from them the spoils of war. Lot could be rescued as well as his companions (Genesis 14:10-16).

### **The Majesty of Melchizedek**

Returning home after the magnificent military victory, Abram was met by Melchizedek [lit. King of Righteousness], King of Salem [lit. King of Peace] and priest of the most high God. Because Melchizedek had no recorded parentage he becomes a wonderful representative of Jesus Christ who is also the King of All Righteousness and the Prince of Peace. Compelled by grace to honor Melchizedek, Abram gave to this unusual personage “*tithes of all*” (study Hebrews 7:1-17).

### **Believing God**

Soon after returning from the slaughter on the field of battle and the spiritual encounter with Melchizedek, Abram received another Divine visitation (Genesis 15:1-21). Once more God came to make a covenant with Abram. The promise was made that Abram would have a son, a seed, and a stately possession of land. If Abram could count the stars in the heavens he could then count the number of descendants he would have. And “*Abram believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness*” (Genesis 15:6 cf. Galatians 3:6). Abram did not hesitate to accept by faith all that the Lord impressed upon his heart. Because of this faith, “*righteousness was imputed [charged] to him*” (Romans 4:22).

### **Sealed with a Sacrifice**

To confirm this renewed promise, a great sacrifice was offered which included an heifer, a she goat, a ram, a turtle dove, and a pigeon (Genesis 15:9). To protect the sacrifice until it was consumed, Abram drove away the fowls of the air (Genesis 15:11). Finally, exhausted with his efforts, Abram fell asleep. While he slept, the Lord shared with him that his seed must suffer for four hundred years until the iniquity of the Amorites was full (Genesis 15:16 cf. Matthew 23:32). In a Divine confirmation of the covenant, the Lord caused to pass through the sacrificial pieces, “*a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp*” (Genesis 15:17). The furnace and burning lamp symbolized the two leading facets of the history of the future of the descendants of Abram (note: the furnace in Jeremiah 11:3,4ff; the burning lamp in 2 Samuel 22:29; Psalm 119:105; and Isaiah 62:1). The furnace of affliction was still in the future when Abram awoke from his sleep. For the present, there were immediate tribal enemies to contend with (Genesis 15:19-20).

- Amorites (am'-o-rite; mountaineers; the high one). At the time of Abraham, the Amorites dwelt on the W shore of the Dead Sea (Genesis 14:7, 13). They expanded their conquest to the E of the Jordan (Num. 21:26-30) and took possession of the land from the Arnon river and wadi to Mount Hermon, and from the wilderness to the Jordan (Deuteronomy 3:8; 4:48; Joshua 2:10; 9:10; Judges 11:22).

- Canaanites (ca'-na-an; merchant or trader), was the son of Ham and the grandson of Noah. His descendants formed distinctive tribes, such as the Jebusites and the Zemarites which became known collectively in later years as the Canaanites. They settled in the region along the Mediterranean Sea occupied by the Canaanites before it was taken and settled by the Jewish people (Genesis 11:31; Joshua 5:12).
- Girgashites (ghur'-gash-ite), refers to a member of an ancient tribe that dwelt in Canaan prior to the Hebrews (Joshua 3:10). The Girgashites may be the same as the Gadarenes.
- Hittites (hit'-tites), were the descendants of Heth (Genesis 15:20), which dwelt near Hebron on the plateau of Anatolia between 1900 and 1200 BC. The name Hittite comes from Hatti, which is another name for Anatolia, the capital of which was Hattushash. Esau married Hittite wives (Genesis 26:34-35). After rising to become a great civilization, sometime between 1250-1150 BC, the Hittite empire began to decline. The Philistines overthrew the Hittites.
- Jebusites (jeb'-u-sites), refers to the descendants of Ham by his son Canaan. From the first, they controlled the city of Jerusalem until the days of David (Genesis 10:10; 15:21). When the Israelites invaded Palestine under the leadership of Joshua, the Jebusites were ruled by Adoni-Zedek (Joshua 10:1,3), one of five Amorite kings who resisted the Hebrew conquest. These five kings were defeated and slain by Joshua (Joshua 10:16-27). But the Jebusites were not driven out of Jebus (Jerusalem).
- Kadmonites (kad'-mo-nites; men of the East), is a reference to a tribe mentioned only once as a nation conquered by Israel (Genesis 15:19).
- Kenezite (ken'-e-zite), was one of the tribes in or near Canaan during the days of Abraham (Genesis 15:19). The chief of the tribe was known as Kenaz (Genesis 36:11, 15, 40-42). Gerharashim was one of the descendants of Kenaz (1 Chronicles 4:14), suggests that the Kenizzites lived in the Valley of Smiths, which may be the same as the Wadi el-'Arabah. Individuals of the tribe married with the sons of Jacob. Jephunneh the Kenizzite married a woman of the tribe of Judah, and Othniel, the Kenizzite, became the first judge of Israel after the Hebrew invasion.
- Kenites refers to a people who dwelt east of the Dead Sea, and extended into Arabia Petraea (Judges 1:16).
- Perizzite (per'-iz-zite), refers to a tribe in the land of Promise west of the Jordan which the Hebrews encountered when they entered into the land. Abraham and Lot settled in the land where the Perizzite dwelt (Genesis 13:7; 34:30; Exodus 33:2; Deuteronomy 20:17; Judges 1:5; Nehemiah 9:8).
- Rephaims (re-fa'-im; strong), refers to a people living in Palestine before Abraham, considered by some to be giants (Genesis 14:5; Deuteronomy 2:11, 20; 3:11; Joshua 17:15).

## **The Issue of Ishmael**

Despite being called, “*The Father of the Faithful*”, there came a time when Abram violated the fundamental principle of faith by not waiting on the Lord to honor His promises. The day came when Abram listened to the voice of his wife Sarai who encouraged him to take as a second “*wife*” (Genesis 16:3) Hagar, an Egyptian bondmaid. There were only tragic results from the illicit relationship that ensued as Sarai came to despise Hagar (Genesis 16:4) for her ability to conceive. The hatred of Sarai for Hagar led to attempt murder as Sarai tried to destroy the object of her wrath by driving the woman into the desert who was greatly pregnant with child.

It was a terrible thing which Sarai did. Sin was added unto sin until it was all subdued by the Sovereign Saviour (Genesis 16:10-11). The Lord came to give some specific instructions for Hagar who had fallen by a fountain of water in the wilderness on the way to Shur (Genesis 16:7). Hagar must return to Abram. She must be submissive to Sarai. But, Hagar does not have to return alone. She can go back with a Divine promise and the promise is this. Hagar, you shall bear a son, “*and shalt call his name Ishmael [lit. God heareth]; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction*” (Genesis 16:11). There was more. Ishmael was to be a wild man, “*his hand will be against every man, and every man’s hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren*” (Genesis 16:12).

The foolish counsel of Sarai to Abram, the more foolish consent of Abram to the counsel, the hatred of Sarai for Hagar, and the innate hostility that was produced in the descendants of each continues to the present hour. There is blood in the sand of the Middle East. It flows from the fact that long ago, for a brief time, Abram violated his convictions. What might the story of civilization have been if Abram had not broken the perfect law of the Lord (Genesis 2:24)?

## **The Sign and Seal of the Covenant**

Fourteen years passed following the birth of Ishmael to Hagar and Abram. These were long years of waiting and watching for the promise of God for Sarai and Abram. Then, when Abram was ninety-nine years old, God came to visit once more and said unto him, “*I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly*” (Genesis 17:1-2). As on previous occasions, the conditions of the covenant were reviewed. Abram was to have a son, a seed, and a stately land possession. But then, something else was added. Abram (Lit. Father of high places) was to change his name to Abraham (lit. *father of a multitude*) (Genesis 17:5). Moreover, he was to receive in his body the physical sign and seal of the covenant. Abraham was to be circumcised.

## Doctrine of Circumcision

1. In Genesis 17:11 God established the ritual of male circumcision with Abraham as a sign of the covenant.
2. Circumcision was to take place on the eighth day after birth (Genesis 17:12).
3. Abraham was to circumcise: his own children, descendants, any purchased slaves, and any proselytes (Genesis 17:13).
4. The uncircumcised were to be considered as being “cut off” from the covenant of spiritual blessings.
5. Provisions were made for all that wanted to be part of a covenant relationship with God in that the poor, and those outside the racial distinctive of the Hebrew race, could be included. However, God had to be met according to His terms and His terms included: blood suffering, humility, and a sacrifice of self (Genesis 17:27).
6. In the Old Testament the circumcision of the body was symbolic of the need for a special circumcision of the heart (Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6). The image is that the heart has become surrounded with the disease called sin. As a surgeon must cut away fatty tissue or unnatural growth, so the heart must be spiritually circumcised. In particular greed must be cut away, idolatry must be cut away, anger must be cut away, and hatred must be cut away.
7. The physical tool used to circumcise the body was a sharp knife. The spiritual tool used to circumcise the heart is the *Word of God* as per Hebrews 4:12. “*For the Word of God is quick [alive] and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*”
8. While human responsibility is involved (Jeremiah 4:4), the spiritual circumcising of the heart requires a Divine ability. God must circumcise the heart (Deuteronomy 30:6).
9. When the Lord circumcises the heart of His elect people there will flow a natural love for God and new spiritual life (Deuteronomy 30:6).
10. God never intended for man to forget that the physical act of circumcision was only a ritual to represent the spiritual circumcision of the heart.
11. The obedience of Abraham (Genesis 17:11), Moses (Exodus 4:25), and Joshua (Joshua 5:2, 4) to perform the bloody ritual of physical circumcision, reflected a spiritual heart of obedience, love, and devotion.
12. With the passing of time, people paid less attention to the spiritual dimensions of the act of circumcision and gloried only in the physical mark, which led Paul to argue against placing confidence in the flesh (Philippians 3:1-9).



13. In John 7:22 Jesus argued from the act of physical circumcision that it was right to perform miracles on the Sabbath. The point the Lord made was simple and powerful. If the Law allowed the cutting of the flesh on the Sabbath to symbolize the keeping of the covenant and minister to the soul, why should anyone become angry when someone was healed or made whole on the Sabbath?
14. With the resurrection of Christ the ceremonial ritual of circumcision could be abolished and emphasis focused exclusively upon the circumcision of the heart.
15. Not everyone understood the transition that had taken place from the physical to the spiritual (Acts 15:5).
16. Even the apostle Paul found the transition difficult, reflected in the situation recorded in Acts 21:21.
17. As time passed as Paul ministered more and more to the Gentiles, as the apostle understood the gospel more clearly, circumcision of the flesh gave way to the true spiritual circumcision of the heart whereby Paul affirmed that the church consists of those who are of the true circumcision. We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh (Philippians 3:3).

### **The Language of Laughter**

As Abraham received a change of name, so did Sarai. She was to be called Sarah (Lit. Princess) for the Lord was determined to bless her. *“I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her”* (Genesis 17:17). While the waiting on the Lord to fulfill His promises continued, the time drew near for Sarah to conceive and bear a child. The practical spiritual problem was that Sarah no longer believed that it was possible for her to give birth to a baby. One day, the Lord of Glory concealed Himself in order to appear to Abraham, *“in the plains of Mamre as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day”* (Genesis 18:1). By means of theophany [a personal manifestation of God] Christ came to Abraham (note John 8:56). When the Divine Guest announced to Abraham that within a year Sarah would conceive and bear a baby (Genesis 18:10), she laughed. Sarah, listening to the conversation behind the curtains of the tent *laughed in unbelief* at what was being said (Genesis 18:12-15).

Now Abraham also laughed at the idea of bearing a child in old age (Genesis 17:17), but his was *the laughter of faith* (study Romans 4:20), and a lesson is learned: there is a difference in the language of laughter. Laughter may be the language of faith or faithlessness when the promises of God are in view.

### **The Sins of Two Cities**

Departing from the presence of Abraham (Genesis 18:19), the Lord announced His determination to depart in order to evaluate and destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, *“because their sin is very grievous”* (Genesis 18:20). The particular sin of these dens of iniquity was that of homosexuality. The Word of God is very harsh in condemning this sin of the human soul.

## FIFTEEN TERMS FOR THE SIN OF HOMOSEXUALITY

1. Sodomy	Genesis 19:4-10; 1 Kings 14:24; 15:11, 12; Deuteronomy 23:17, 18
2. Abomination	Leviticus 18:22; Deuteronomy 22:5
3. Vile affections	Romans 1:26, 27
4. Burning with lust	Romans 1:27
5. Dishonoring the body	Romans 1:24
6. Wickedness	Genesis 13:13; 19:7; Judges 19:23
7. Against nature	Romans 1:26
8. Shameful	Romans 1:27
9. Going after strange flesh	Jude 1:7
10. Filthy dreamers	Jude 1:7, 8
11. Abusers of themselves	1 Corinthians 6:9
12. Effeminate	1 Corinthians 6:9
13. Defilers of themselves	1 Timothy 1:10
14. Inordinate affections	Colossians 3:5,6
15. Reprobate	Romans 1:28

The terrible power of sexual sins over the soul is manifested in that it destroys all vestige of righteousness to the point that intercessory prayer is no longer effective (Jam. 5:16 cf. Genesis 18:23-33). Moreover, even after the judging fire of heaven falls and is clearly witnessed, sensual sins continues (Genesis 19:1-29 cf. 19:30-38).

### The Fear of God

Following the destruction of Sodom and Gomorra, Abraham journeyed to a city of the Philistines near Beersheba called Gerar. Faced once more with the temptation to lie, Abraham committed another offence against truth as he had violated it in Egypt (Genesis 20:1-2 cf. 12:11-20). When confronted with his transgression, Abraham gave an unusual answer as to his motive. *“And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing? And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife’s sake”* (Genesis 20:10-11).

## Exhortations to fear God

1. The exhortation to learn to fear God comes from the greatest of saints. David said, “*O fear the Lord, ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear him*” (Psalm 34:9). It is said of Obadiah that he “*feared the Lord greatly.*”
2. Every true saint does fear the Lord but not every saint fears the Lord in the same degree.
3. Those who fear God the most are properly motivated to do so. The motives that cause the Christian to fear the Lord are many.
  - Is not the reason why you are saved and have a confidence of going to heaven is because of sovereign grace? God has declared, “*I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy*” (Romans 9:15). What would be your fate if God had not decided to show special love to you? Does that not make your heart tremble?
  - The many privileges that are bestowed upon those who know the fear of God should motivate the heart to grow in the grace of fear. *Time Magazine* once asked Billy Graham why he was so successful. “*I will have to ask the Lord that when I get to heaven,*” he responded. Part of the answer is this: the man fears God as did John Calvin, Martin Luther, and countless others.
  - The person that grows in the grace of fear will escape many difficulties that come upon other people. Joseph suffered fewer hardships in prison than others with him because he feared God and did what was right. With eternity in view it can be said that part of the New Covenant is that God's people will be kept from final apostasy. Jeremiah 32:40: “*I will put my fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from me.*”
  - To grow in the grace of fear is the way to be kept in a conscientious performance of Christian duties. Sometimes a watch is perfect in structure but does not keep time well because the main spring is damaged. Sometimes a Christian does not act properly. The proper motive of fearing God has been lost. Fear of God will repair the mainspring.
  - Growing in the grace of fear is the spiritual way to be wise. Proverbs 14:16 says that, “*A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil.*” Biblical wisdom is knowing how to act in a given situation. Is it not wise to flee from attitudes and actions that lead to death and destruction? It will be possible to do that when God is feared.
  - The desire to honor the Lord is also a proper motive to grow in the grace of fear. Children who fear their parents honor them. So people who fear the Sovereign of the universe honor Him.
  - To fear God is to bring honor to oneself. Hose 13:1 declares that, *When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel.* Proverbs 31:30 teaches that, “*A woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.*” The Lord promises in 1 Samuel 2:30, “*Them that honor me, I will honor.*” To advance in the grace of fear is to be entrusted with more responsibilities. Joseph was made a master in Egypt.

Obadiah became a steward of Ahab's house. Daniel, Mordecai, and the three children of Israel were made rulers over the province of Babylon. God looks to discover, not who has natural ability, but who fears Him.

- Growing in the grace of fear allows for a perfecting of the faith. 2 Corinthians 7:1 commands, *“Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”* What is perfecting holiness if it is not growing in faith, hope, love, and the fear of God? As our faith and love should be greater with the passing of time, so should our fear of God.
- Growing in the grace of fear provides great boldness with God and man. Job feared God and boldly spoke to Him. He wanted to find the Lord so that he could argue his case as a man to a man. Nehemiah prayed, *“O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name”* (1:11).
- Learning to fear the Lord stimulates the desire to have spiritual labors blessed to the saving of the souls of others. It was said of Levi that he feared the Lord. *“The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity”* (Malachi 2:6). Wives can win their unbelieving husbands to the Lord by exercising godly fear according to the apostle Peter: *“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear”* (1 Peter 3:1-2).
- The fear of the Lord will give occasion to be delivered by God from many dangers in life. The midwives feared God and did not kill the Hebrew babies according to Exodus 1:17. The Lord honored such fear and gave them houses. *“And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses”* (Exodus 1:21).
- The longing to be free from embracing false doctrines is a motive for learning to fear God. One of the judgments of God against a people is to withdraw His word and to leave people in their ignorance and spiritual darkness. The continents of Africa and Asia testify to the horrible consequences of people who do not fear God. Those who fear the Lord will be allowed to know more about Him even to the salvation of the soul. *“Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant (Christ), that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.”*
- To be owned of God is a great motive to learn to fear Him. Malachi 3:16, 17 says that, *“Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”* (*The Doctrine of Fear* is extracted in part from the teachings of Al Martin)

## **The Child of the Covenant**

In the fullness of time, according to Divine promise, *“the Lord visited Sarah as he had said,”* (Genesis 21:1) and a child of the covenant was born. He was called “Isaac” which means *“laughter.”* Each day of his life Isaac was a living reminder to Sarah that she must never laugh at God’s promise but believe at all times (Genesis 21:1-8).

## **Between Rhetoric and Reality**

As might be expected, Ishmael became jealous of Isaac and expressed his cruelty when the opportunity arose (Genesis 21:9). Moved by a mother’s protective instinct, Sarah persuaded Abraham that he must send Hagar and her son away (Genesis 21:10). The rhetoric of sin is manifested in this maternal but selfish demand. Once Sarah was determined to consider Ishmael her son (Genesis 16:1-2). Now, she calls him, *“the son of this bondwomen.”* Once Sarah had schemed to have her way. When she had what her wicked imagination devised (Proverbs 6:18), it was detested. A way had to be found to cover her foolishness. The evidence had to be put out of sight. The actions of Sarah reflect that there is always a large gap between the rhetoric of sin and the reality of the consequences it brings. Always a weak man in the matter of women, Abraham listened to Sarah and sent the son he loved (Genesis 17:18) and his mother into the wilderness, perhaps to die with little provisions (Genesis 21:14). By an act of sovereign grace (Genesis 21:15-21) neither Ishmael nor Hagar perished in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. The child grew to manhood, settled in the extreme south of Arabia, and became the progenitor or father of the Arabians.

## **The Sacrifice of a Son**

The Bible says that, *“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). By typology, the temporal life of Abraham anticipated this display of Divine love for Abraham was willing to sacrifice his own son according to the will of the Lord. God came to His servant and said, *“Abraham...Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of”* (Genesis 22:1-2 cf. Galatians 3:8)

Without any argument, *“Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place which God had told him”* (Genesis 22:3). After three days of travel Abraham and Isaac came to a place of burnt offering on Mount Moriah where, many Bible scholars believe, the Temple of Solomon was to be built.

Preparations were made for a sacrifice. Then, the moment came when Father Abraham raised his hand against his only beloved son in whom he was well pleased. The hand of the father was raised, not in anger, nor in judgment, for the son had done no wrong. Rather the son was to be smitten in an act of gospel obedience. He was to be a picture of future spiritual realities.

Like the Christ he portrayed, Isaac was innocent of any known sin. Like Christ, Isaac was a willing sacrifice. Josephus says that he was now twenty-five years old when this event took place. In the strength of his youth Isaac could have resisted his father but, like Christ, he submitted himself to the terrible ordeal trusting that everything would be as it should in the end. Augustine said that as Isaac's life had been supernaturally given, it would be supernaturally restored if taken (Genesis 22:5 cf. Hebrews 11:17-19).

At the last moment, the Angel of the Lord stopped the hand of Abraham from harming the one in whom so much hope and promise had been placed. The eyes of Abraham were directed to "*a ram caught in a thicket by the horns*" (Genesis 22:13). The ram was to be offered instead of Isaac for the supreme love of Abraham for God was now fully manifested. He who had given up home and country, he who had given up family members and foolish, fleshly plans, was also very willing to give up his own son when asked. It was enough. Abraham was indeed "*The Friend Of God.*" When the Lord said, "*Give me thine heart*" (note Proverbs 23:26), Abraham said, "*My heart is thine.*" Fanny J. Crosby wrote,

"I am Thine, O Lord,  
I have heard Thy voice,  
And it told Thy love to me;  
But I long to rise in the arms of faith;  
And be closer drawn to Thee.

Draw me near-er, near-er, blessed Lord,  
To the Cross where Thou hast died;  
Draw me near-er, near-er, near-er blessed Lord,  
To Thy precious blessed bleeding side."

### **The Passing of a Princess**

As Abraham knew the triumph of faith, he also knew the agony of personal tragedy, for there was the passing of his Princess. At age one hundred and twenty seven Sarah died in Kirjath-arba (Hebron). After he had purchased a place of burial from the Hittites, Abraham laid to rest--until the resurrection--his beloved wife. He would join her later, as would other family members. J. D. Burns has written about this *Cave of Machpelah* where the bodies of *Old Testament* saints are buried and the sand has become a sacred spot.

"The Eden of their earth lay all around  
Machpelah: there God came down, in the cool  
Of even to walk with them, and all the ground  
Was therefore holy—therefore beautiful;  
And their free spirits panted for the time  
When they should soar to an unwithering clime.

To them it ceased to be a place of death;  
 It was the porch within whose solemn glooms  
 They stood till the temple opened; the sweet breath  
 Of heaven here soothed their hearts; the lovely blooms  
 Of that fair land refreshed their drooping eyes;  
 And glimpses came to them from other skies.”

Vision of Prophecy, and other Poems

**The Making of a Remarkable Marriage**

As Abraham honored the Lord, so he honored his own son by providing godly counsel. Isaac must not marry any of the daughters of Canaan (Genesis 24:3). He must find a woman of faith who would help to preserve the purity of family life through religious rituals and devotion to God. With that purpose in mind, Abraham called for his most trusted servant (24:2). Eliezer must go to Padan-aram in Mesopotamia to find a wife for Isaac. Eliezer was not confident that the mission of the master would succeed, but Abraham was. Abraham believed that God would direct in a providential manner the making of a marriage (Genesis 24:7). He was right. In a wonderful way the Lord guided and directed the path of Eliezer towards a lovely young damsel named Rebekah. She would return with him to be the bride of the son of his master (24:10-61). When the eyes of Isaac and Rebekah initially met, there was love at first sight (24:63-66). *“And Isaac brought her [Rebekah] into his mother Sarah’s tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death”* (Genesis 24:67).

**The Death of a Saint and a Sinner**

Having provided for the emotional needs of Isaac, Abraham himself married again (Genesis 25:1). Six sons were born to him by his new wife, Keturah (lit. incense). His six sons in turn produced many grandchildren (Genesis 25:3-4). There were other sons of Abraham by his concubines which were not recognized but were given gifts and sent away (Genesis 25:6).

**THE SONS OF ABRAHAM**

<u>Hagar (concubine)</u>	<u>Sarah (wife)</u>	<u>Keturah (wife)</u>	<u>Concubines</u>
Ishmael	Isaac	Zimram Joksham Medan Midian Ishbak Shuah	many sons

After reaching the mature age of one hundred and seventy five, Abraham “*was gathered to his people*” (Genesis 25:8). His two sons, Isaac and Ishmael came together to bury their father beside Sarah, in the cave of Machpelah (Genesis 25:9). The virtues of Abraham, as well as his audacious vice of maintaining intimate relations with various concubines, forces the heart to remember the goodness of God who is longsuffering to those who are nothing but sinners, saved by grace. The final word in the Divine narrative at this time says that, “*Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years*” (Genesis 25:8). He had traversed the land but never settled it permanently for he looked for a city whose maker was God. Such was the journey of faith. “*Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints*” (Psalm 116:15).

### **The Sins of the Parents**

While the life of Isaac is not as dramatic or as detailed as that of his father, several distinct incidents do emerge because of the similarities that exist between Abraham and his son. For example, both Abraham and Isaac knew the ravages of famine (Genesis 12:10 cf. Genesis 26:1). Both were tempted to go down into Egypt to find relief (Genesis 12:10 cf. 26:2). However, while Abraham moved from The Land of Promise to the Land of Bondage, Isaac did not (Genesis 26:6). Both Abraham and Isaac encountered a ruler named Abimelech whom they feared and lied to concerning their wives. Abraham said that Sarah was his sister and the sin of the parent was visited upon the child for Isaac said that Rebekah was his sister (Genesis 26:7). As the lie of Abraham was exposed, so the deceit of Isaac was discovered when Abimelech looked out a window one day and saw Isaac and Rebekah engaged in sensual passion (Genesis 26:9). When confronted with his lie, Isaac, like his father immediately confessed and was sent away (Genesis 26:10).

### **A Passion for Peace**

Unlike Abraham, Isaac was not a warrior. While possessing his father’s reverence and respect for the Lord (Genesis 26:23-25), Isaac did not inherit Abraham’s energy and dynamic personality for action. When a dispute arose over the wells of Gerar, Isaac immediately conceded the territory and moved to another location (Genesis 26:17-22). In the end, it turned out well as the Philistines sought Isaac out in friendship (Genesis 26:26-33). One of the characteristics of a spiritual leader is that he must be gentle (Titus 3:2) and not a brawler (1 Timothy 3:3).

### **Parental Disrespect**

Like other godly parents Isaac and Rebekah had a wayward son in Esau. As a mature man of forty, Esau deliberately disregarded the counsel of his parents to marry two daughters of the Hittites thereby uniting with the pagan practices of idolatry and polygamy, both of which was common among the tribal-nations of Canaan (Genesis 26:34,35).



## **A Family Feud**

With the passing of years, Isaac grew older and his eyesight dimmed. The time came when he *thought* he was going to die. Actually, he would live for thirty more years (Genesis 35:27-29), but there was a moment when Isaac thought he was going to die. Therefore, he acted accordingly and turned once more to embrace his favored son Esau (Genesis 27:1-4). Despite the profaneness of past actions, Isaac still wanted Esau to receive the family blessing, but Rebekah did not. After discerning what her husband intended, Rebekah moved to frustrate his plans for Esau favored Jacob. Desperate to exalt her beloved son at the expense of another son, Rebekah conceived of a plan to deceive her blinded husband. Though Jacob was fearful of being exposed in this whole matter (Genesis 27:11-12), Rebekah was not to be denied. Sin has strength and a power of its own. Upon herself Rebekah was willing to receive any curse of judgment if the fateful plot failed (Genesis 27:13). Reluctantly, Jacob agreed to the circumstances and the daring deception took place as planned (Genesis 27:14-29).

## **The Disaster of Deceit**

Just as Jacob feared, things did not go well in that Esau was enraged after discovering that his twin brother had tricked him once more out of something valuable. Vowing to avenge himself after the death of their father (Genesis 27:30-42), Jacob felt forced to flee. But where could he go to be safe? Rebekah knew. Jacob was to go to her brother Laban who lived in Padan-aram. Twenty years would pass before Jacob would be able to return home. Twenty years would pass before Jacob would be able to look upon the face of Esau again. Kissing his mother goodbye, probably for the last time, Jacob set out upon the journey of a lifetime (Genesis 27:43-28:7).

## **When Heaven Came Down**

Weary with his hasty travel, Jacob laid down to rest when he dreamed a dream. There was a ladder reaching from heaven to earth with the angels of God ascending and descending upon it. The New Testament interprets the vision of the ladder as being Christ Himself (John 1:51). Jesus is, *“the One who spanned the infinite gulf which separated heaven from earth, and who has in His own person provided a Way whereby we may draw near to God. That the ‘ladder’ reached from earth to heaven told of the complete provision which Divine grace has made for sinners. Right down to where the fugitive lay, the ladder came, and right up to God Himself the ‘ladder’ reached!* (A.W. Pink)

## **Deceiving the Deceiver**

During his twenty years in Haran, Jacob was married to Leah by trickery (Genesis 29:1-25) and to Rachel by love (Genesis 29:26-28). He who had deceived another was himself the object of deception by a devious father-in-law. Nevertheless, the Lord was gracious and Jacob prospered. As his material wealth increased, so did his family. Twelve sons and one daughter were born to The Supplanter (Genesis 29:31-31:16).

## **Covenant with a Careful Man**

As God had called Abraham to go to Canaan, so the Lord spoke to Jacob calling him back to the Land Of Promise (Genesis 31:1,2). Not wanting to create undue concern with an emotional man such as Laban, Jacob gathered up all of his possession and departed in silence (Genesis 31:17). One possession that was taken which should have been left behind was the teraphims or household idols (Genesis 31:30). When Laban discovered that Jacob was gone he was annoyed. When it was told that the teraphims were also gone, Laban was enraged and pursued his son-in-law in order to retrieve the treasures of his heart—the teraphims.

Overtaking Jacob and company at Mount Gilead in the eastern part of Palestine, Laban demanded an explanation for his sudden departure and the return of the teraphim (Genesis 31:25-31). While Jacob was able to share the reason for his secrecy (Genesis 31:31), he had no knowledge of the idols (Genesis 31:32, 33). But Rachel did (Genesis 31:34, 35). It was Rachel who concealed the tarnished treasures from her own father.

After protesting the integrity of his possessions and having it upheld in the presence of many witnesses, Jacob turned in righteous indignation upon Laban who perceived the immediate danger he was now in (Genesis 31:36-42). Accusing a man without proof was a serious offense. And to make matters worse, the meek and mild Jacob was for the first time in twenty years showing a measure of manly courage in the presence of his family. Surprised and alarmed Laban slyly decided that a covenant should be made to bring calmness to the situation. Laban would save a measure of self-respect as best he could and let Jacob go (Genesis 31:43-55).

## **Is the Enemy Esau?**

Having successfully avoided a violent confrontation with Laban, Jacob still faced a potential foe in the person of Esau who was now dwelling in Mount Seir, in the land of Edom, located in the south (Genesis 31:3). One hundred miles away on the banks of the Jabbok, close to the Jordan River, Jacob pondered what to do next. He could cross the Jordan and encamp at Shechem or at Bethel and risk the chance of his brother not finding out. Or, Jacob could send news to Mount Seir of his return to Canaan. Jacob chose to send messengers of his arrival. Soon, the word came back. Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men! (Genesis 32:6) The heart of Jacob leaped with fear. Was it possible that an absence of twenty years had not pacified the passions of Esau? Was he still an enemy? Ever the schemer, Jacob decided to discourage his brother from doing bodily harm by placing a series of buffers between himself and the advancing forces of Esau (Genesis 32:7, 8). Next, Jacob began to pray (Genesis 32:9-12) after which he returned to plotting his own safety (Genesis 32:13-21). As the moments passed and the approach of Esau drew near, fear swelled inside the soul of Jacob. Sending his family away so that he could flee in haste if necessary, Jacob was left alone (Genesis 32:24).

## **A Stranger in the Night**

In the stillness of the midnight hour, the straining ears of Jacob heard something move. Desperate with nervous energy Jacob attacked the first person that came his way and began to wrestle until the breaking of the day.

Finally, enough was enough. “*Let me go, for the day breaketh,*” said the Stranger in the night. And Jacob answered, “*I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.*” In some way, Jacob had begun to perceive that the Personage he held in his arms was Someone special. Jacob was right for he held God in his arms (Genesis 32:30). Wounded by grace, Jacob lost his fear of man after the midnight battle. His faith grew as he walked in the future leaning on the Lord (Genesis 32:31, 32).

### **Brother to Brother**

As so often happens in life, the fears of Jacob were without any real foundation. When the two brothers met after twenty years of separation, compliments and gifts were exchanged. After the moment of reconciliation, Esau returned to Mount Seir while Jacob paused at Succoth before crossing the Jordan River and settling at Shalem in the vale of Shechem (Genesis 33:1-2).

### **The Slaughter of the Shechemites**

Jacob’s stay at Shechem was suddenly ended when two of his sons, Simeon and Levi, avenged through treachery the improper conduct of Shechem, prince of the city, towards their only sister Dinah (Genesis 34:1-31). Jacob felt compelled to relocate and so he moved back to Bethel (Genesis 35:1) where the Lord had previously appeared to him with great and glorious promises.

### **Travel and Tragedy**

From Bethel, Jacob traveled southward, past the sloping hills of Jerusalem (Genesis 35:2-15). Coming close to Bethlehem, tragedy struck. First, there was the death of the faithful nurse Deborah (Genesis 35:8). Then, laboring in child birth, Rachel died as Benjamin was born (Genesis 35:16-20). There was more mental and emotional anguish for Jacob when his eldest son Reuben brought disgrace to the family by sleeping with his father’s concubine, Bilhah (Genesis 35:21-22). Shame and sorrow came to the soul of the Schemer saved by sovereign grace.

### **THIRTEEN CHILDREN OF JACOB**

LEAH <i>Wife</i>	RACHEL <i>Wife</i>	BILHAH <i>Concubine</i>	ZIPAH <i>Concubine</i>
1. REUBEN	12. JOSEPH	5. BILHAH	7. GAD
2. SIMEON	13. BENJAMIN	6. NAPHTALI	8. ASHER
3. LEVI			
4. JUDAH			
9. ISSACHAR			
10. ZEBULUN			
11. DINAH			

*\*The number indicates the order of birth*

There was to be more tragedy in life for Jacob as Isaac was finally gathered to his fathers at the advanced age of one hundred and eighty years; *“and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.”* (Genesis 35:28-29). *“Poor Jacob! Sorrows came upon him thick and fast, but the hand of Divine chastisement is soon to fall still heavier. Jacob is touched now in his tenderest spot—Joseph, his favorite son, is taken from him, and mourned as for dead.”* (A.W. Pink) Though all of his sons and daughters tried to comfort Jacob, he vowed that he would go down into the grave mourning for his son (Genesis 37:34-35).

### **The Strange Journey of Joseph**

In the providence of the Lord, the son for whom Jacob mourned was not dead. His brothers had sold him into slavery out of jealousy. When Joseph shared with them the dreams he had of the day that would come when they would bow down before him (Genesis 37:5-11), the brothers rose up in wrath and plotted first his destruction (Genesis 37:18-22) and then settled upon his departure from their presence by selling him into slavery (Genesis 37:23-36). Though their treatment was harsh, God was going to use the sin of the sons of Jacob to sustain His seventeen-year-old servant. Joseph would be brought by the traveling Midianites (or Ishmaelites) to Egypt and resold as a slave. In Egypt, Joseph would be trusted by Potiphar, an officer in the army (Genesis 39:1-4). A faithless wife would tempt him (Genesis 39:5-19). He would be treated cruelly though innocent (Genesis 39:20) of wrongdoing until the day of his Divine deliverance (Genesis 39:21-41:38). In the day of vindication, Joseph was exalted over all others until he became the ruler of Egypt, second only to the Pharaoh (Genesis 41:39-45). In just thirteen short years, Joseph went from the pit to the palace for he was, *“thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt”* (Genesis 41:46).

### **Famine and a Family Reunion**

When famine came to Palestine relief was sought by many in the land of Egypt. Having anticipated the situation according to Divine revelation, adequate provisions were made to help the multitudes. Among those who came to Egypt for assistance were the brothers of Joseph. No longer did they recognize him, but he recognized them and, according to prophecy saw them bow down in his presence (Genesis 42:1-43:26). It was then that Joseph was in a position to help those who could no longer help themselves, and he did (Genesis 43:26-44: 48:22). In all of his life, his trials and triumphs, Joseph illustrates the living Lord of whom he was a type. Some of the similarities are worthy of consideration.

### **The Death of Joseph**

The death of Joseph brings an end to *Genesis*. It is a tragic ending symbolically. The record of the origin of all life is also the record of death. With the death of Joseph the Hebrew people faced a harsh and uncertain future. They would be faced with many challenges not the least of which was to have faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Competing for their religious affection and devotion was the religion of their captors, the Egyptians.

## The Religion of Egypt

According to Herodotus, a Greek historian, the Egyptians were “*religious to excess, far beyond any other race of men.*” The priests taught the people there was one supreme God. However, this doctrinal belief was diminished by the practice of deifying the individual attributes or qualities of God, such as His creative power and His wisdom. The result was giving divine honor to plants and animals. The cat, the crocodile, and the ibis were worshipped. This in turn led to the acceptance of the belief of lesser gods of three ranks or orders.

- **First Order**

- ❖ Amun, the great god of Thebes. He was equivalent to the Greek god Jupiter.
- ❖ Pthah, the father or maker of gods, equivalent to Vulcan.
- ❖ Khem, the god of nature, equivalent to Pan.

- **Second Order**

- ❖ Ra (Phrah), the Sun god.
- ❖ Thoth, the intellectual god and equivalent to Mercury among the Greeks.

- **Third Order**

- ❖ Osiris. According to legend Osiris was originally a king of Egypt. Though he was a magnanimous ruler. His brother Typhon, who cut his body in pieces and threw them into the Nile River, murdered him.
- ❖ Isis. The wife of Osiris was Isis. After discovering the body of her murdered husband she joined her son to exact revenge on Typhon and reclaim control of the throne. Herodotus notes that Osiris and Isis were the only gods worshipped by all the Egyptians.
- ❖ Seth (Typhon).

In the cities of Egypt there was one main deity who was the object of worship and who served as the guardian of the people in that place. But each city also had local triad or a cluster of three gods, of whom the third proceeded from the other two.

### Trying to be Blessed by a Bull

Because the Egyptians deified plants and animals the worship of Apis was able to arise. Apis was the sacred bull of Memphis. This animal, under whose form Osiris was worshipped, was distinct. Herodotus says that his hair was black, on his forehead was a white triangular spot, on his back an eagle, under his tongue was a beetle, and the hair of his tail was double. A magnificent temple was built to Apis with worship services regulated by priests. When “Apis” died his body was embalmed and was carried in a royal divine procession. The priest wore clothes made from the skins of leopards. The body of the bull was carried to a tomb cut out of a rock where it was laid in a splendid marble coffin.

## Egyptian Temples and Worship

The temples which the Egyptians reared to their gods were magnificent and strong enough to endure the ravages of the centuries. The priesthood was a large, educated, wealthy, and privileged class with the king at the head of the order. The sacred rituals were full of color, ceremony, and sights that appealed to the senses of those who worshipped. One prevalent doctrine in the theology of the Egyptians was future retribution. The concept of reward or punishment in the world to come served to check improper impulses that would destroy society.

## Egyptian Customs

While in Egypt the Jews would be exposed to many foreign customs reflected in the Biblical narrative.

- Men carrying baskets on their heads Genesis 40:16
- Men shaving their beards Genesis 41:14
- Prophesying with the cup Genesis 44:5
- Embalming the dead and placing them in a sarcophagus Genesis 41:1,2,3,26
- Making baskets from papyrus covered with asphalt Exodus 2:3
- Favorite foods of Egypt Numbers 11:5
- The mode of watering Deuteronomy 11:10-11
- The mode of whipping Deuteronomy 25:2,3

## The Land of Goshen

Once in the land of Egypt the descendants of Abraham dwelt in the land called Goshen along the Nile. Goshen was a fertile district able to support many flocks and herds. Fishing was prosperous. Later the children of Israel would miss the delicacies they enjoyed in the land of Goshen.

- *Numbers 11:5 We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick:*
- *Numbers 20:5 And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? It is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink.*

## Peace and Prosperity

For almost 50 years after settling in Egypt the Hebrews enjoyed domestic tranquility. During this period they prospered greatly. The population of the people increased along with the number of livestock. Their fields waved with full crops blessed by God. Their gardens were lovely with flowers. Their government was their own. Communities were ruled over by elders, like other nations for the Egyptians had elders (Genesis 50:7) as did the Midianites (Num. 22:4,7), and the Gibeonites (Joshua 9:11).

## **Small Skirmishes**

At times the tranquilly of the Hebrews was broken when raiding parties took cattle (cf. Exodus 13:17). But for the most part the Israelites were left to themselves. Certain families specialized in linen or pottery. Others cultivated plants and hedges (cf. 1 Chron. 4:21, 23). In time to come, in a different time and place, one of the Hebrew men married Bithia, a daughter of the king and by her had a large family (1 Chron 4:18).

## **Eyewitness to History**

By staying four hundred and fifty years in the land of Egypt the Hebrews became witness to and part of many monumental historical events. They witnessed for example the rise and fall of the Hyksos, the shepherd kings who challenged the authority of Egypt and established the XV-XVIII dynasties. They were a northwestern Semitic (Canaanite or Amorite) people who entered Egypt sometime between 1720 and 1710 BC and subdued the pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom. They used Avaris-Tanis in the Nile delta as their capital rather than the Egyptian capital of Thebes. Under their dominion, which lasted over a century, the Hyksos established a powerful kingdom that included what became Syria and Palestine. They maintained peace and prosperity in their territories. They introduced the horse-drawn chariot and the composite bow, and their successful conquests were furthered by a type of rectangular fortification of beaten earth used as a fortress. Archaeologists have uncovered examples of these mounds at Jericho, Shechem, and Lachish.

The most important contribution of the Hyksos was the introduction into Egypt of Canaanite deities and Asian artifacts, which were instrumental in destroying the despotism and isolationism of the Old and Middle kingdoms. The Hyksos were crushed by Amasis I at the battle of Tanis in 1550 BC.

## **The Bible as History**

### **A Survey of the Old Testament**

#### **Chapter 2**

##### **Exodus**

###### **A King who Knew not Joseph**

While being eyewitness to exciting men and movements in history the Hebrews did not forget to keep covenant with God. To ensure their loyalty and dependency on Him God allowed the hearts of Egyptian rulers to enact a policy that would enslave the Hebrews. The Bible says there arose a king “*who knew not Joseph*”(Exodus 1:8) and so felt free to turn against the Israelite.

###### **Persecution of a Peaceful People**

Several reasons might be noted for a different treatment of the Hebrews.

- The Pharaoh wanted his people to be racially pure.
- The Pharaoh needed a cheap slave labor supply to build his temples, but not the pyramids for they had been built long before Abraham visited Egypt.
- The Pharaoh had no knowledge of the God of Joseph’s father and thus no respect for religious freedom.
- The Pharaoh may have felt his rule was being threatened by the presence of foreigners.

###### **A Ruler Named Rameses II**

The identity of the ruler “*who knew not Joseph*” is uncertain. It is possible that this new Pharaoh was Rameses II. He might have been the Pharaoh of the oppression, and the father of the unnamed princess who found baby Moses floating in the bulrushes on the bank of the rivers.

- Rameses II (19th dynasty), son of Seti I, was around thirty years old when he became king of Egypt - and then reigned for 67 years. He had many wives, among them some of his own near relatives, and was the father of about 111 sons and 51 daughters.
- As was usual in those days, the threat of foreign aggression against Egypt was always at its greatest on the ascension of a new Pharaoh. Subject kings no doubt saw it as their duty to test the resolve of a new king in Egypt. Likewise, it was incumbent on the new Pharaoh to make a display of force if he was to keep the peace during his reign. Therefore, in his fourth year as pharaoh, Rameses was fighting in Syria in a series of campaigns against the Hittites and their allies. The Hittites, however, were a very strong foe and the war lasted for twenty years.



- On the second campaign, Rameses found himself in some difficulties when attacking “*the deceitful city of Kadesh*”. This action nearly cost him his life. He had divided his army into four sections: the Amon, Ra, Ptah and Setekh divisions. Rameses himself was in the vanguard, leading the Amon division with the Ra division about a mile and a half behind.
- He had decided to camp outside the city - but unknown to him, the Hittite army was hidden and waiting. They attacked and routed the Ra division as it was crossing a ford. With the chariots of the Hittites in pursuit, Ra fled in disorder - spreading panic as they went. They ran straight into the unsuspecting Amon division. With half his army in flight, Rameses found himself alone. With only his bodyguard to assist him, he was surrounded by two thousand five hundred Hittite chariots.
- The king, realizing his desperate position, charged the enemy with his small band of men. He cut his way through, slaying large numbers as he escaped. “*I was,*” said Rameses, “*by myself, for my soldiers and my horsemen had forsaken me, and not one of them was bold enough to come to my aid.*”
- At this point, the Hittites stopped to plunder the Egyptian camp - giving the Egyptians time to regroup with their other two divisions. They then fought for four hours, at the end of which time both sides were exhausted and Rameses was able to withdraw his troops.
- In the end neither side was victorious. And finally - after many years of war - Rameses was obliged to make a treaty with the prince of the Hittites. It was agreed that Egypt was not to invade Hittite territory, and likewise the Hittites were not to invade Egyptian territory. They also agreed on a defense alliance to deter common enemies, mutual help in suppressing rebellions in Syria, and an extradition treaty.
- Thirteen years after the conclusion of this treaty in the thirty-fourth year of his reign, Rameses married the daughter of the Hittite prince. Her Egyptian name was Ueret-ma-a-neferu-Ra: meaning “*Great One who sees the Beauties of Ra*”.

**Note.** It is important to observe that not all *Bible* students agree Rameses II was the Pharaoh of the oppression and his daughter discovered Moses. There is another possibility.

### **Who is the Surrogate Mother of Moses?**

Recent scholarship has identified the famous Hatshepsut (1504-1384) as the daughter of Pharaoh who discovered Moses who was born c. 1525 BC.). The father of Hatshepsut was Thutmose I (1525-1508). Hatshepsut was the only daughter of Thutmose. She became queen after his death and married a half-brother Thutmose II (1508-1504 BC). After his death she ruled Egypt for nearly 20 years. In time her stepson Thutmose III (1504-1450 BC) was allowed to reign.

## **The Life of Moses in Miniature**

Moses was the son of Jochebed, wife of Amram, of the family of Levi. He was delivered from the royal Egyptian edict for the midwives to destroy the Hebrew male infants by the resourcefulness of his mother and the protecting watchful care of his sister Miriam. Placed in a basket not many days after his birth Moses was discovered by the daughter of the Pharaoh who took and reared him as a royal son. Trained in the “*wisdom of the Egyptians*” and a gifted orator “*mighty in words*” (Acts 7:22) Moses came to maturity. After committing a murder in defense of another Hebrew, Moses felt compelled to flee to the land of Midian in the Sinai peninsula (Exodus 2:15) being about 150 miles at its greatest breadth, and 200 miles in length. The northern part of the peninsula is hilly, rather than mountainous; but the mountains rise precipitously in the southern section to staggering heights of 9,000 feet.

While in the land of the Midians Moses married Zipporah the daughter of Jethro (Reuel). After forty years in exile Moses met God at the burning bush on Mount Sinai (Exodus 3:1-12). The Lord instructed him to return to Egypt to lead the Hebrews out of the Land of Bondage and into the Land of Promise. With divine authority to perform miracles, Moses would compel Pharaoh to allow the children of Israel to leave Egypt. Once in the desert God met again with Moses in the wilderness of Sinai where the Law was given. In the Law instructions were provided for the building of the Tabernacle, the institution of feasts and offerings, and the moral code of conduct. After guiding the nation for 40 years Moses viewed the land from Mount Nebo and then died. He was buried by God in the land of Moab at age 120 (Deuteronomy 32:48-52; 34:1-8). Moses died as the great Lawgiver, Prophet, and author of the Pentateuch (*Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy*).

## **The Ten Plagues**

When Moses returned to the court of the Pharaoh after a 40-year absence he discovered the Hebrew people to be ambivalent towards him. As a whole they were inclined to trust him but at the slightest setback there was a general outcry of despair. They were ready to turn against Moses calling him an enemy and a traitor. Nevertheless, Moses continued on his divine commission to tell Pharaoh the God of the Universe commanded him to let the children of Israel go. When Pharaoh was reluctant to comply with the mandate ten plagues covered the land. While the two court magicians Jannes and Jambres (cf. 2 Timothy 3:8) were able to counterfeit some of the miracles the presence of the Lord was established.

- The water of the Nile River was turned to blood
- Frogs invaded the land
- Lice or gnats became a great pestilence
- Flies or beetles were found crawling everywhere
- Murrain broke out as a disease upon the livestock
- Boils covered bodies
- Hail fell from heaven
- Locust sprang up from the ground to torment everyone
- Darkness covered the land in a terrifying way
- The first born of all the children of Egypt died in a single night

## The Purpose of the Plague

The purpose of the ten plagues upon Egypt served several purposes.

- The plagues upon the Egyptians manifested the power of God while bringing the people to a place of repentance and reliance upon Him. This was true of the Exodus generation and it would be true of later generations as well.

*Deuteronomy 26:8 And the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders: 9 And he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey. 10 And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land, which thou, O LORD, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the LORD thy God, and worship before the LORD thy God:*

*Daniel 9:15 And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly. 16 O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us.*

- The plagues upon the Egyptians inspired confidence in the Lord. Young people were to be told the story of the Exodus in order to magnify the sovereignty of God.

*Exodus 13:14 And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? That thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage: 15 And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem. 16 And it shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes: for by strength of hand the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt.*

- The plagues upon the Egyptians manifested the supremacy of the God of the Hebrews over all the false gods of the land illustrated by Nilus and Apis.
  - ❖ The god of the Nile. Nilus was the sacred god of the great river. Worship of Nilus rivaled the worship of the true God of heaven for it was said he watered the land without cloud or rain.
  - ❖ The god Apis. Representing the livestock of Egypt was the sacred bull of Memphis. God's view of the veneration of animals was diminished when the livestock were afflicted with murrain and boils. *Note.* Murrain may refer to an epizootic, whose germs were carried by flies causing a fever and the cattle to die.

## **The Night of the Passover**

As terrible as the first nine plagues were, the tenth judgment of God which fell upon the land of Egypt was worse because the firstborn in Egypt died in a single night. In contrast the Hebrew children did not die because the Israelites responded in a positive manner to the way of salvation provided. On the night before they left their state of slavery in Egypt the Hebrew people made a sacrifice. The blood of an innocent lamb was smeared on the doorposts of their homes. In the middle of the night a Death Angel came. But when he saw the blood he passed over the dwelling places and the firstborn was protected. The night of the Passover anticipated the death of the Messiah. Mary's first-born Son would die at a place called Calvary. Her Son would become the great Lamb of God "*that taketh away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29). When the blood of Christ is applied to the door of the heart by faith the Eternal Death Angel passes over. John G. Foote invites the Church to sing of this redemption.

“Christ our Redeemer died on the cross,  
Died for the sinner, paid all his due.  
All who receive Him need never fear,  
Yes, He will pass, will pass over you.

When I see the blood,  
when I see the blood,  
When I see the blood,  
I will pass, I will pass over you.

Chiefest of sinners, Jesus can save;  
As He has promised, that He will do.  
Oh sinner, hear Him, trust in His word,  
Then He will pass, will pass over you.

Judgment is coming, all will be there,  
Who have rejected, who have refused?  
Oh, sinner, hasten, let Jesus in,  
Then God will pass, will pass over you.

O great compassion! O boundless love!  
Jesus hath power, Jesus is true;  
All who believe are safe from the storm.  
Oh, He will pass, will pass over you”.

## **A Divine Rescue at the Red Sea**

With cries of agony upon their hearts for the death of their children the people of Egypt were anxious to see the Israelites leave their land. As fast as they could they gave treasures to the departing foreigners hoping that the God of the Hebrews would be placated and future judgment would be averted. Laden with newfound wealth and amazed at the power of God the Israelites left the land of Bondage.

To guide them in their wilderness journeys the Lord prepared a pillar of cloud to guide them by day and a pillar of fire to guide them by night. All the people had to do was to follow the Lord and all would be right. From Rameses to Succoth and then to Etham on the edge of the desert the people moved and then on to Ph-hahiroth, near the shore of the Red Sea.

### **Faith and Fear**

Following the initial decision to let the Hebrew people leave the land Pharaoh had a change of heart. He decided to bring the Israelites back into bondage and send his army to force the people to return. What a terrifying experience the Hebrews faced. With the Red Sea before them, mountains around them, and Pharaoh's army in pursuit they were placed in a hopeless and helpless situation. And suddenly God could be God. Slowly and majestically the pillar of cloud and fire that had gone before them moved as a protective screen between them and the hostile army. During the night a Divine east wind blew causing the waters of the Red Sea to part. A path was made through the waters which divided north and south. By faith people put their feet on the path God had provided. Step by step they moved. *"Faster. Faster still. Hurry people. Hurry."*

### **The Destruction of the Damned**

When Pharaoh realized that the children of Israel were escaping he immediately pursued the same path. But the unrighteous cannot follow the same path God's people follow. Suddenly the waters that had parted came crashing down. Pharaoh and his army were drowned in the floodwaters of divine judgment (Exodus 14:21-31). Six hundred Egyptian chariots were destroyed. To celebrate this miraculous deliverance a song was composed and sung.

### **The Song of Moses**

#### **Exodus 15**

"I will sing unto the LORD,  
for He hath triumphed gloriously:  
the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.

The LORD is my strength and song,  
and He is become my salvation: He is my God,  
and I will prepare Him an habitation;  
my father's God, and I will exalt Him.

The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is His name.  
Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath He cast into the sea:  
his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea.

The depths have covered them:  
they sank into the bottom as a stone.

Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power:  
thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.  
And in the greatness of thine excellency

Thou hast overthrown them that rose up against Thee:  
thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble.

And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together,  
the floods stood upright as an heap,  
and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.

The enemy said, "I will pursue,  
I will overtake, I will divide the spoil;  
my lust shall be satisfied upon them;  
I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them."

Thou didst blow with thy wind,  
the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.

Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods?  
Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?

Thou stretchedst out thy right hand,  
the earth swallowed them.  
Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people  
which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided  
them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.

The people shall hear, and be afraid:  
sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestine.  
Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed;  
the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them;  
all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.

Fear and dread shall fall upon them;  
by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone;  
till thy people pass over,  
O LORD, till the people pass over,  
which thou hast purchased.

Thou shalt bring them in,  
and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance,  
in the place, O LORD,  
which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary,  
O Lord, which Thy hands have established.  
The LORD shall reign forever and ever.

For the horse of Pharaoh went in with His chariots  
and with His horsemen into the sea,  
and the LORD brought again the waters of the sea upon them;  
but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea.”

Safe on the Shores of Sinai the people worshipped the Lord.

### **A Great Multitude**

When the Lord made His covenant with Abraham he promised him that his family would be multiplied. When the children of Israel first arrived in the Land of Promise the number of males was about seventy. Following the years of Egyptian bondage (Exodus 12:40; Acts 7:6 cf. Galatians 2:17) the Hebrews returning to Palestine numbered six hundred thousand who were able to bear arms.

### **The Problem of the Heart**

As challenging as it was to get Israel out of Egypt it was not easy to get Egypt out of Israel. In many ways the Hebrews had become corrupted by the religion and worldly character of the people they had been with for so long. Initially the Hebrew people upon entering Egypt had kept the faith. At the dwelling place of each chief of a tribe there would have been an altar consecrated to the Lord. Each seventh day the families would have assembled around the altar; the burnt-offering would be led out; the tribal leader would have killed the animal and poured out its blood before the Lord. On the altar the animal parts would have been placed to be burned. Devout parents would have instructed their children in the great events of world history. The old stories would have been told—of the Fall, the Flood, the Tower of Babel, and the call of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The children would learn to look for a Messiah and most of all to love God who had said to Abraham, *“I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee”*.

### **The Simplicity of the Saints**

Unlike the formal religion of the Egyptians, the worship of the Israelites was simple. There were no temples, only plain altars. There were no elaborate dresses, no images, and no imposing processions. However, with the passing of time, the religious ideas and practices of the Egyptians found their way into the hearts of the children of Israel. This would become painfully clear during the wilderness journey with their readiness to worship a golden calf, reminiscent of the honor paid to Apis.

### **The Wisdom of Egypt**

While the sojourn in Egypt would lead to temptation to forsake the Lord for a corrupt form of worship the lessons learned in other areas would serve the Hebrew people well. Many of the arts and sciences and cultural systems including various forms of government would be incorporated in the daily life of the Israelites.

## The Golden Calf

The cultural influence of Egypt upon the Israelites is reflected in the event involving the golden calf. According to Exodus 32 Moses went to commune with God. When he was gone for forty days a change took place in the hearts of the people. A desire of their hearts was revealed. The people wanted to go back to Egypt. As if to prepare them mentally, emotionally and spiritually for a return journey they took action to institute a form of worship familiar to the Egyptians (Acts 7:39). In particular the Egyptians worshipped the Apis, or black bull at Memphis. Appealing to Aaron to approve their actions the people gave up their golden earrings and ornaments, which had been given to them when they left Egypt. After melting these toys of time a golden calf was produced. The bull was designed to represent certain powers (strength and endurance) of the Egyptian god Osiris who was the god of the dead. Fashioning the image in the form of a young ox, denoting strength, and made from gold, signifying richness and splendor the Israelites found spiritual comfort in a physical object.

## The Jealousy of Jehovah

So angry was the Lord with the attitude and actions of the people He was determined to destroy the nation in the wilderness.

- *Exodus 32:9-10) “And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people: 10 Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.”*

In a wonderful display of magnificent priestly intercession Moses appealed to the Lord not to destroy the people. Of particular concern to Moses was that the integrity of the Lord would be brought into question if the Hebrews were destroyed.

- *Exodus 32:11-13 And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? 12 Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. 13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.*

The voice of reason in the voice of Moses was honored.

- *Exodus 32:14 And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.*



## **The Story of Strange Fire**

After disciplining the people by grinding the calf into powder and pouring it into the water the Israelites had to drink (Exodus 32:20), Moses moved to root out all rebellious people. Before the day of divine judgment had ended three thousand souls died the sin unto death (Exodus 32:28). At another time and on another occasion other souls would have to die as a consequence of defying divine authority. In Numbers 3:4 the story is told of two men who offered “strange fire” before the Lord. Disregarding the divine order two of the sons of Aaron received the ultimate form of divine discipline, premature death. *“And Nadab and Abihu died before the LORD, when they offered strange fire before the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai, and they had no children: and Eleazar and Ithamar ministered in the priest's office in the sight of Aaron their father”*.

## **A Dialogue with the Divine**

With divine judgment behind them and divine guidance just ahead the Israelites were given a second chance by the Lord to receive His law. Moses was instructed to take two tables of stone like unto the first so that the Law could be recorded once more by the finger of God (Exodus 34:1). In the conversation that followed Moses pleaded with the Lord to walk in the midst of the people while forgiving sin (Exodus 34:9). The Lord was pleased with this request and made great and wonderful promises of what He would accomplish on behalf of His chosen people (Exodus 34:10,11). But the Hebrews had to do something as well. The people were not to enter into any alliance with the people of Palestine (Exodus 34:12). In addition the Israelites were to destroy every idol they found (Exodus 34:13) lest the children become corrupt with various forms of false worship (Exodus 34:14-17). After providing additional information concerning His will in specific areas (Exodus 34:18-35) Moses was dismissed from the presence of the Lord. But as he made his way back to the people it was obvious to all that Moses had been face to face with the Lord for his own countenance took on the glory of God (Exodus 34:35).

## **A Place for Worship**

Despite their moments of faithlessness the Lord remained faithful to His people. In matchless grace He provided a place for worship where they could meet with Him. The commandment for the construction of a sacred Tabernacle had been given prior to the Golden Calf incident. Now the Tabernacle would be built according to divine instruction. The resources for the Tabernacle would come from the free-will offerings of the people. Entrusted with the pattern (Exodus 35-40) was Bezaleel who was to be its chief builder (Exodus 31:2; 35:30). The Tabernacle was to have an outer courtyard and an inner sanctuary comprised of two parts. There was to be a Holy Place and an innermost sanctuary called the Most Holy Place. An Ark of the Covenant was to be placed in the Holy of Holies containing the Tablets of the Law. Above the Ark of the Covenant was a Mercy Seat, on which, once a year on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would sprinkle blood. On the Mercy Seat knelt, face to face and wing tips touching, two golden cherubim. The Ark of the Covenant with the Mercy Seat on which blood would be sprinkled spoke of divine propitiation for sins so that fellowship between God and man could take place.

## **Rich Symbolism**

In the outer sanctuary or Holy Place, separated from the Holy of Holies by a curtain, were various pieces of furniture: the Altar of Incense, the Table of Shewbread, and the Golden Candlestick. It was here in the Holy Place the priest came to offer incense with the daily sacrifices. In the Courtyard outside the Tabernacle stood the Altar of Burnt Offering on which the daily sacrifices were presented in the sight of the people who had gathered for worship. There was also the Laver of Brass containing water for the sacred rituals of washings. The Tabernacle was covered with costly curtains of rare beauty. It was a simple structure the Lord told His people to build. It was unlike the ornate temples in Egypt and so a principle is established. The Lord is seeking individuals to worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23). Simplicity and spirituality are acceptable qualities in worship for they speak of Christ who became flesh to “*tabernacle*” among men (John 1:14).

## **The Bible as History**

### **A Survey of the Old Testament**

#### **Chapter 3**

##### **Leviticus \* Numbers**

###### **The Subsequent History of Sinai**

The Israelites had been encamped at Mount Sinai for about a year, so that the Law might be received and the Tabernacle constructed. But then one day the Pillar of Cloud began to move again. It was moving away from Sinai in Arabia to go in the direction of the Promised Land. When the Lord departed from the area of Sinai and Horeb it was not His intention to return in any significant manner. In fact, only once more in Bible history is Horeb mentioned and that was during the days of Elijah (1 Kings 19). As far as Sinai, Paul in Galatians 4 uses it in a negative way as part of an allegory (Galatians 4:24-25). In the centuries to come the Jews did not seem to care to visit Sinai but early Christians did. Sinai became a hiding place for persecuted believers in Christ. According to legend, angels carried Catherine of Alexandria, who suffered martyrdom, to the top of the mountain that now bears her name in the form of a monastery. It was in this convent that Professor Tischendorf, in 1859, discovered the manuscript of the Greek New Testament now known as the Codex Sinaiticus, one of the oldest manuscripts in existence.

###### **Following the Cloud**

When the Israelites left Sinai they followed the Pillar of Cloud until they came to a place called Kadesh-barnea in the land of Edom. While there is no consensus it is possible that Kadesh-barnea is located about twenty-five miles north-west of Petra. It was while they were at Kadesh-barnea that the children of Israel began to collectively crave animal food. They had grown weary of the manna. By means of a flight of birds called quails the people got what they wanted. But instead of having their hunger satisfied the nation became ill (Num. 11:31-35). Sometimes what we lust after and crave the most will make us the sickest we have ever been.

###### **Revolt against Established Authority**

Soon after the quail incident Miriam, the sister of Moses, along with Aaron spoke against Moses because he had married an Ethiopian woman (Num. 12:1). Of course, this surface cause of their anger was a cover for the real issue which was a personal lust for unauthorized power. "*And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it*" (Num. 12:2). The Lord heard what was said and was not pleased at this revolt against His established authority. As a measure of divine discipline Miriam was smitten with leprosy (Num. 12:9-10). Only through the intercessory prayers of Moses was she cured (Num. 12:11-16).

## **Loss of Faith in the Face of Fear**

While still at Kadesh God commanded that twelve men, one man from each of the tribes of Israel, go into the Land of Promise to survey it. The purpose of the survey was to bring back a positive report on the lay of the land, the products of the same, and the people who inhabited it. Moving in a northward direction the spies went as far as Rehob at the foot of Mount Lebanon and returned by the way of Hebron. From Eschol a bunch of grapes were brought back to the main camp being carried on a staff between two men (Numbers 13:23). One of the spies named Caleb was excited about what he had seen in the land and wanted to go up at once and possess what God had promised (Numbers 13:30). Only Joshua concurred for ten of the spies opposed Caleb's counsel and began to instill apprehension in the hearts of God's people to the point they began begging to die in the desert. There was loss of faith in the presence of fear and the end result was divine judgment. Those twenty years of age and over would not be allowed to enter into the Land of Promise. They were to perish in unbelief in the desert (Numbers 14:26-40).

## **Presumptuous Sinning**

When the judgment of God against the people was pronounced there was an immediate change of attitude. Suddenly the Israelites wanted to repent but even their repentance needed to be repented of. God was through with the Exodus Generation. Nevertheless, in a presumptuous attempt to force their way into the Land of Promise war was waged against the Canaanites and Amalekites. The Israelites were put to flight at Hormah, near the southern border of the land (Num. 14:40-45). There is a great principle here, which is that the God of grace is also the God of judgment. Once the Lord turns against a people no one can successfully go against His will.

## **Drudgery in the Desert**

Finally convinced they would not be allowed to enter the Land of Promise the Hebrews turned back to a life of drudgery in the desert. The wages of sin was to be death (Romans 6:23). Instead of entering to enjoy a land flowing with milk and honey the Israelites faced a future that was almost destitute of flowers, trees, animals, and natural beauty. If there was any relief from the oppression of monotony it was to be found in fellowship with the Lord. Despite their being under divine discipline the Lord would still fellowship with His people. They would learn patience and the next generation would learn what was expected of them (Num. 15:1-31). The people would also learn to seriously keep the law even to the point of not picking up sticks on the Sabbath (Num. 15:32-36). As a visual object of the need for gospel obedience fringes were to be made on the borders of garments with a strand of blue. Every time a Hebrew saw the cord of blue it was a reminder to remember and keep all the commandments of the Lord (Num. 15:37-41).

## **Running by the Red Sea**

Perhaps the only moment of relief from the desert wanderings came when the nation camped by the Red Sea (Num. 14:25). The part of the sea the nation encamped by was the Gulf of Akabah on the eastern arm of the Red Sea. Around the head of the Gulf of Akabah is a place called Ezion-geber. In the centuries to come Ezion-geber would be known as a flourishing sea port in the time of Solomon and after him during the days of Jehoshaphat.

There was a navy, which traded to Ophir and Tarshish (Spain) according to 1 Kings 9:26 (cf. 22:48). The Gulf of Akabah was rich with shells and coral. It is not hard to imagine the children running in delight by the Red Sea.

### **Rebellion against Righteousness**

One of the constant dangers of leaders is to have the people revolt against reason and undermine authority. Three men united together to rebel against Moses. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram wanted to deprive Moses and Aaron of their leadership role (Numbers 16:1-2). Tragically, two hundred and fifty "*princes of the congregation*" united with them against Moses. In a miraculous manner the Lord established the position of Moses and Aaron as leaders by causing the ground to open up to swallow Dathan and Abiram and their families. Fire consumed the two hundred and fifty princes including Korah. Fourteen thousand seven hundred more people died by a plague because of their participation in this great sin (Numbers 16:49).

### **The Budding of Aaron's Rod**

To visibly signify the place of Moses and Aaron the Lord caused a miracle to take place. Twelve rods were laid in the tabernacle of the congregation, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. The next morning it was discovered that only the rod of Aaron had budded and brought forth blossoms to produce almonds. The divine appointment of the family of Aaron to function as priests was once more beyond doubt (Numbers 17: 1-13).

### **Back to the Future**

After thirty-eight years the people returned to Kadesh, on the borders of Edom, where they had been when the twelve brought back their report. Three events took place here. First, Miriam died and was buried (Numbers 20:1). Second, Moses brought forth water from the rock after the people complained (Numbers 20:2-11). Tragically, the anger of Moses overwhelmed him to the point that he struck the rock in anger. For this great sin God disciplined Moses. He would not be allowed to go into the Land of Promise with the people (Numbers 20:12). The *New Testament* explains why the anger of Moses in striking the rock was so wrong. The rock was a picture of Jesus. "*And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ* (1 Corinthians 10:4). It is interesting to note that Moses did eventually get into the Land of Promise but not in the flesh. The story of Moses in Palestine is told in Matthew 17: 1-3. "*And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, 2 And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. 3 And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.*" Third, the people were instructed to ask permission of the king of Edom to pass peacefully through his borders on the way to Palestine. Despite their reasonable request permission was refused. The Israelites were forced to make a weary circuit in order to reach their own land without passing through Edom. The Lord would not forget this insult to His people.

## **The Land of Edom (Idumea)**

The land of Edom or Idumea stretches along the sides of a rocky ridge called Mount Seir, which extends from the Gulf of Akabah almost to the Dead Sea. In the center of the ridge Mount Hor rises in majesty not far from Petra, or Sela, the capital of the kingdom. Esau had moved to this area after his brother Jacob ran away to Padan-aran. The descendants of Esau inhabited the land but they lived in bitterness against the descendants of Jacob. Though David subdued the Edomites the people survived to become a powerful nation during the days of Nebuchadnezzar in the sixth century BC. The Romans subdued the Edomites and treated the people as part of Judea. The prophets had predicted that Edom would one day be utterly destroyed. A once populous and productive kingdom was reduced by Divine decree to shifting sands and rocky mountains and barren highways (read Obadiah 1:1-21). .

- *Genesis 27:39 And Isaac his father answered and said unto him [Esau], Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above;*
- *Jeremiah 49:10 But I have made Esau bare, I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself: his seed is spoiled, and his brethren, and his neighbours, and he is not.*

## **The Death of Aaron**

Before the children of Israel left Edom, the Lord called Aaron to his heavenly home. Instructed to go to the top of Mount Hor along with his third son Eleazar and Moses, the priestly robes were placed on Eleazar and then Aaron died (Numbers 20:28, c 1452). A Muslim chapel has been built on the spot where tradition says Aaron died. But he died in faith believing the promises of God would be fulfilled. Great faith would be needed for Mount Hor is as bleak and desolate as Sinai. It is without grass, trees, or shrubbery. As Aaron looked out over the land there was nothing that he could see by sight to be impressed with. But the land had been promised and so it would be possessed.

## **Freedom through Military Victory**

With a heavy heart Moses left the body of his brother Aaron and descended Mount Hor. The work of the ministry must go on. It was his intention to take the people of Israel around the southern border of Mount Seir and advance eastward in order to reach the east of Palestine without passing through the land of Edom. However, before that could be done the trumpet of war sounded. Arad, a king in the south of Canaan, moved his forces against the Israelites. By the grace of God and the power of a strong military defense Arad was defeated in battle (Num. 21:1-3).

## **The Journey Continues**

The movement of the Israelites would now lay southward through the Wady el Arabah, a dry valley of sandy hills but with excellent pasturage. While the Edomites looked down on them in scorn from their black mountains, the Hebrews trudged on. But the people were tired and in their weariness they began to complain.

They complained about leaving Egypt for the hardships of the dessert. They complained about the food they had to eat. They complained against Moses as a leader. They complained about the constant quest for water (Numbers 21:1-5). Finally, the Lord had enough and sent fiery serpents to discipline the people (Numbers 21:6-10). When the people repented of their sin of murmuring the Lord provided a divine remedy for their affliction.

*“And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. 9 And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived”* (Numbers 21:8-9). Turning to the New Testament the means of cure miraculously provided in the brazen serpent is presented as a wonderful illustration of salvation from sin's deadly poison in the soul. *“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:”* (John 3:14).

### **A Well without Water**

Soon after the incident of the fiery serpents the Israelites were again destitute of water. Once more the people were faced with utter dependence upon the Lord to test their faith. This time they did not fail. Gathering at Beer where water had been promised, the people broke forth in a song, *“Spring up, O well!”* (Numbers 21:16-18). The princes dug the wells and water sprang forth! A lifetime of training in the dessert had not been in vain.

### **The Slaughter of the King of Sihon**

Having traveled by way of the Red Sea (Numbers 21:14) the Israelites advanced along the eastern side of Mount Seir. There was no opposition to their advancement until they reached the brook Arnon where the Amorites under their king, Sihon, opposed them. As they requested peaceful passage through Edom so they once more requested a peaceful passage (Numbers 21:23). *“And Sihon would not suffer Israel to pass through his border: but Sihon gathered all his people together, and went out against Israel into the wilderness: and he came to Jahaz [modern El Belka], and fought against Israel”* (Numbers 21:23).

The Amorites were a warrior people. They had successfully taken the lush area of Jazer from giants (Deuteronomy 2:20). In addition the Amorites had driven the Moabites and the Ammonites from the territories now occupied by them. Why should the Amorites not defeat these Hebrews? But things were different now. The Amorites were not making war only upon the Israelites but upon their God—and so their defeat was certain. Encouraging the hearts of His people the Israelites boldly attacked a formidable enemy and won the military victory. Sihon himself was killed in action. The victory was so complete that all the land that had belonged to Sihon between the Arnon and the Jabbok, with Heshbon its capital, Aroer, and all its other cities now fell under the dominion of the Israelites (Judges 11:12-27 cf. Psalm 135:11).

## **An Ominous King Named Og**

The military victory over Sihon brought the Hebrews into contact with a more formidable foe in the person of Og, king of Bashan. Og ruled over a vast territory extending north and then east of the Amorites. The territory was populated with sixty cities and a people trained in warfare. The king himself was of gigantic stature for his iron bed was no less than nine cubits long and four cubits wide. Og may have been close to 13 feet tall! Nevertheless, when the battle was fought at Edrei the Israelites won the victory. *“And the LORD said unto Moses, Fear him not: for I have delivered him into thy hand, and all his people, and his land; and thou shalt do to him as thou didst unto Sihon king of the Amorites, which dwelt at Heshbon. 35 So they smote him, and his sons, and all his people, until there was none left him alive: and they possessed his land”* (Num 21:34-35).

## **Amazing Sights to Behold**

The initial part of Bashan of which the Hebrews possessed was the district of Argob [modern Lejah]. What a sight the territory was to behold after being in the dessert for forty years. Black basaltic rock met their gaze. It seemed as if a dreadful fire had at one time raged through the area. Perhaps Moses was influenced by Argob when he described the divine wrath in the closing days of his prophetic ministry. *“For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains”* (Deuteronomy 32:22). Even more remarkable to the nomadic Hebrews might have been the houses in the cities of Argob for they were constructed of massive blocks of black basalt, in some instances four feet thick. Stone rafters were also made of black basalt and stone doors consisting of thick slabs. They swung upon pivots fixed into sockets and fastened by great iron bars. Truly, it seemed, only giants could have built such homes. And yet the Israelites had defeated the strongholds of their most severe enemy but only because the Lord was on their side.

“A mighty fortress is our God,  
A bulwark never failing;  
Our helper He amid the flood  
Of mortal ills prevailing;  
For still our ancient foe  
Doth seek to work us woe;  
His craft and pow’r are great,  
And armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not His equal

Did we in our own strength confide,  
Our striving would be losing;  
Were not the right Man on our side,  
The Man of God’s own choosing;  
Dost ask who that may be?



Christ Jesus, it is He;  
Lord Sabboth, His name,  
From age to age the same,  
And He must win the battle.”

Martin Luther

### **The Greatness of Gilead**

To the east of Argob [Lejah] is a range of mountains which stretches north and south. It is called today the Jebel Hauran. An Oak Forest, for which Bashan was famous, grows in this region. One of the mountains of this range [Shekwet-el-Khdur] rises upward five thousand feet. (*Psalms 68:15 The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan; an high hill as the hill of Bashan.*) To the west of Argob are the fertile plains of the East in Hauran, which has been called “*the granary of Damascus.*” The beauty of the land seems to have inspired Moses in his farewell song and prophecy. From the land of Bashan Moses gathered his images for he saw Israel “*riding on the high places of the earth,*” even “*the high hill of Bashan*”; “*eating the increase of the fields*” of the

Haurin all the while “*sucking honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock*” [the black basalt of Lejah] “*butter of kine [cow], and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat*” (Deuteronomy 32:13,14).

### **A Time to Remember**

The ancient Hebrews regarded the conquest of the kingdoms of Sihon and Og as a tremendous accomplishment equal to the destruction of the army of Pharaoh during the days of the Exodus. Sihon and Og were not small kings or chieftains but *were “mighty kings,” “great kings,” “famous kings,”* ruling over great wealth and armies (cf. Psalm 135, 136). Nevertheless, they were not equal to the outstretched hand of God that protected His people and gave them great victories. The conquest of the Sihon and Og was not soon forgotten in Hebrew history.

### **The Mountains of Moab**

After defeating Og, king of Bashan, the Israelites moved into the territory of Moab which consisted of three parts.

- The first part called the “*country of Moab*” (Ruth 1:1-2), refers to an area enclosed by natural fortifications. On the N there is the chasm of the Arnon while on the west there are rocky cliffs that rise almost perpendicularly from the shore of the Dead Sea. Looking toward the south and east there is a semicircle of hills which open up for the Arnon River (*lit. rushing torrent*). This body of water rises in the mountains of Gilead, east of the Jordan, and reaching the Dead Sea through a stony and precipitous chasm of red and yellow sandstone (*The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*).
- The second part called “*land of Moab*” refers to the more open country from the Arnon north to the hills of Gilead.

- The so-called “*plains of Moab*” (Num 22:1) is a sunken district in the tropical depths of the Jordan Valley.

The king of the Amorites had taken over most of the territory traditionally occupied by the Moabites and had confined them to the mountainous part south of the Arnon and east of the Dead Sea. This conquest along with the Israelites defeat of Sihon and Og left the people of Moab in a weakened condition. They could no longer vigorously oppose by themselves the advance of the Hebrews into the Land of Promise. What the people could and did do was to unite with the Midianites or Ishmaelites in an attempt to destroy the Israelites.

### **The Bad Union of Balak and Balaam**

Not believing the promise of God that the nation and people of Moab would not be destroyed or not believing the Hebrews would spare them according to the known will of God (Deuteronomy 2:18,19) Balak, king of Moab enlisted the services of a prophet named Balaam. Balaam was a Chaldean (Babylonian) wise man with a renowned reputation. His curses and blessings were reported to produce extraordinary results. The thought came to Balak to secure Balaam's prophetic gifts in order to do irreparable damage to the Israelites. (see Doctrine of Balaam).

### **The End of the Moabites and the Ammonites**

Because they were descendants of Abraham's family through his nephew Lot God had determined to show mercy to the Moabites and the Ammonites. In Deuteronomy 2:18-19 God told Moses, “*Thou art to pass over through Ar, the coast of Moab, this day: 19 And when thou comest nigh over against the children of Ammon, distress them not, nor meddle with them: for I will not give thee of the land of the children of Ammon any possession; because I have given it unto the children of Lot for a possession.*” But the people of Moab did not appreciate the mercy of God and embraced the idolatry that had its universal headquarters in Babylon and Nineveh. They worshipped Baal-peor and so were sentenced to utter destruction. Following the Babylonian captivity the people disappeared from history. They were completely absorbed by the Arabs.

### **Moses and the Midianites**

Having dealt with the Israelites for their sins the Lord moved against the Midianites. The divine command came to make war against them for their part in enticing the Israelites to sin. *Numbers 25:16 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 17 Vex the Midianites, and smite them: 18 For they vex you with their wiles, wherewith they have beguiled you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a prince of Midian, their sister, which was slain in the day of the plague for Peor's sake.* Selecting a thousand men from each tribe of Israel Moses waged war against the Midianites and completely destroyed them. Caught up in the conflict was Balak (Numbers 24:25) who was killed with them on the field of battle (Numbers 31:8).

## **The Spoils of Victory**

Having neutralized their enemies the Israelites were free to occupy the lands of Sihon and Og in the will of the Lord. Because the land was suited for pasturing animals and because the tribes of Reuben and Gad had large flocks permission was asked to remain on the east side of the river and settle the land along with the half tribe of Manasseh (Numbers 32:1-19). Permission was granted provided the men of war crossed the Jordan to help in the conquest of the land (Numbers 32:20-42; Deuteronomy 3:1-13 cf. 1 Chron. 12:37). Once the Land of Promise was conquered the citizen-soldiers would be free to return to settle on the green slopes of Gilead and on the plains in the forests of Bashan.

## **The Cities of Refuge**

While he was still in the land of Moab God instructed Moses to provide six cities of refuge, three on one side of the Jordan and three on the other side. Into these cities of refuge individuals could flee who had unintentionally killed someone. *Numbers 35:9-15 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 10 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come over Jordan into the land of Canaan; 11 Then ye shall appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you; that the slayer may flee thither, which killeth any person at unawares. 12 And they shall be unto you cities for refuge from the avenger; that the manslayer die not, until he stand before the congregation in judgment. 13 And of these cities which ye shall give six cities shall ye have for refuge. 14 Ye shall give three cities on this side Jordan, and three cities shall ye give in the land of Canaan, which shall be cities of refuge. 15 These six cities shall be a refuge, both for the children of Israel, and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them: that every one that killeth any person unawares may flee thither.* The purpose for providing these cities of refuge was to establish justice and to make a distinction between murder and accidents that would invite unjustified retaliation. God would have His people do right by all.

## **The Movement of Moses to the Master**

After the destruction of the Midianites, the great work of leading the nation of Israel was almost done for Moses (Numbers 31:1-2). Having been directed to appoint Joshua as his successor, Moses prepared for his own departure. He was going to move from earth to heaven. He was going home to the Master he has served so well. While not permitted to enter the Land of Promise in the flesh Moses would one day get there in the spirit (cf. Matthew 17:3). Going to the top of Mount Pisgah Moses was given a final view of the place to which he had been privileged to lead the people to. After giving a public charge to Joshua and a lengthy address to the people below him on the plain of Moab Moses was buried by God. His final words constitute the book of Deuteronomy. *“These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this side Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain over against the Red sea, between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Dizahab (Deuteronomy 1:1).*

## **A Battle for the Body**

Where the Lord put the body of Moses has never been determined. What is interesting is that there was an angelic battle for the corpse. Apparently Lucifer wanted to take the body of Moses, energize it and return to the camp of Israel as the Devil incarnate. What havoc the Evil One would have performed had he been allowed to do this. But the Lord sent Michael to protect the body of Moses and to resist the devil. In his resistance Michael did not rely upon his own powers but rebuked Satan in the name of the Lord. *“Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee” (Jude 9).*

## The Bible as History

### A Survey of the Old Testament

#### Chapter 4

#### Deuteronomy

##### The Final Message of Moses

As the people camped on the plains of Moab the elders and princes assembled to listen to the final message of Moses so that they in turn could go and tell the people what the great leader of the Lord had said. Soon Moses was going to die. He was not going to be allowed to go in the Land of Promise. And so the people gazed upon Moses with great intensity to preserve whatever memory they could in their minds. From generation to generation the great moments of his life would be retold. Children would hear afresh how his mother Jochebed placed him with loving but trembling hands in the ark of the bulrushes during the dark days of living in Egypt. The story would be retold how he killed an Egyptian when he came of age in order to protect his people. Then there would be the narrative of his flight from the face of the Pharaoh and forty years later his return to tell the ruler of the land, *“Let my people go!”* He who had been chosen by God to form the nation of Israel and led it through the wilderness had seen the face of God. He had been found a faithful leader and now he was about to die. So the people gathered to listen to his last message, a message about God.

##### Summary of a Long Sermon

At great length Moses told the people how they were to live. He provided for them a Social Law of Conduct, a Ceremonial Law of religious worship, and a Moral Law to guide their relationship to God. Moses reminded the people of all that God had commanded in detail and all that God had done for the nation according to His providential care. He pointed the people to the Great Prophet [i.e., the Messiah] that was to arise among them. *Deuteronomy 18:15 “The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.”* The people were to listen to the Prophet and all the lesser prophets as well. They were to keep the law of God or face fearful consequences. Those who listened to God and kept His commandments would know great blessings. *Deuteronomy 11:26-28 Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; 27 A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: 28 And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.*

##### The Last Look

When his farewell address was ended Moses moved to take a last look upon the Land of Promise. On the east side of the Dead Sea is a range of mountains that form a dark wall that rises at some point to three thousand feet. From somewhere on Mount Pisgah Moses stood and looked to where the Israelites were to live. As he looked out eastward he would see the hills and plains of Judah in which area lay Hebron, the cave of Machpelah, and the stronghold of Jerusalem.

Turning his eyes northward Moses would have seen the Jordan, winding like a serpent through the tropical plain. In the extreme northern border which the tribe of Naphtali would inhabit are the snow clad peaks of Hermon and Lebanon. In the area between are the fertile plains and sheltered ravines. As Moses looked, the covenant promise given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would be upon his mind. Closing his eyes in death, angels came to escort his soul to heaven while unseen hands laid his body in an unknown tomb.

### **On the Verge of a Great Inheritance**

Because they had been wandering in the desert the Israelites could not have been a highly developed people in the arts of building, weaving, pottery, painting, or poetry. The life of a nomad in the dessert is difficult. With some exceptions such as the construction of the tabernacle and its furniture by such men as Aholiab and Bezaleel and the making of robes for the priests and sacred garments the highest skills of craftsmanship were not needed. In some respect this was good for the cultural influence of the Egyptians was diminished. The day would come when time and attention could be given to art and literature and culture especially during the days of David and Solomon.

### **A Written Law**

During the days of dwelling in the wilderness there was one great change that took place in that the Word of God was committed to writing. An oral tradition gave way to a written tradition. Furthermore, the family of Aaron was set apart for the priesthood. Best of all, in types and symbols the Lord Jesus Christ was set forth in the minds and hearts of the people. To what extent the Hebrews understood the shadows of the Savior is hard to determine but the *New Testament* reveals that every event in the history of the nation spoke of Christ. A few illustrations can be noted.

- **The manna or bread, which the Israelites enjoyed, was a type of Christ the true Bread from heaven.**

John 6:47-51 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. 48 I am that bread of life. 49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. 50 This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. 51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

- **The rock that Moses struck to get water was a type of Christ.**

*1 Corinthians 10:4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.*

- **The high priest and all the various bloody sacrifices were types of Christ.**

*Hebrews 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.*

*John 1:29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*

In many visual ways God the Father prepared the people to receive His Son and the Saviour of the world. But spiritual darkness descended over the people so that it would be said when the Messiah appeared *“The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. 17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:16-17).*

### **The Character of the Second Generation**

It is not often that a succeeding generation is more righteous than the one that preceded it but there are exceptions. Pride, impatience, unbelief, and constant rebellion characterized the Exodus Generation, which was also prone to idolatry. Stephen says *“they took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of their god Remphan” (Acts 7:43)*. As a result the people were severely disciplined. The punishment was effective for despite the idolatry of surrounding nations the Second Generation was not given to idolatry. The bones of their fathers served to remind them that the way of the transgressor is hard. And now the journey of a lifetime was about to begin. God was going to keep His covenant promises.

## **The Bible as History**

### **A Survey of the Old Testament**

#### **Chapter 5**

##### **Joshua**

###### **Second in Command**

The death of Moses placed Joshua in command of the nation of Israel. Exhorted to study the *Book of the Law* (Joshua 1:8) in order to have spiritual success Joshua prepared his heart and mind to serve the Lord. With great faith he encouraged the people to go into the land to possess it. The people would cross the Jordan near Gilgal.

###### **Names of the Country**

The place to which God had led the Hebrews is known by a variety of names. To the Egyptians it was called the land of Ruthen, or Rutenna. The Bible calls it the land of Canaan before it was inhabited by the Hebrews and the land of Israel after that (cf. Genesis 11:31; 1 Samuel 13:19). The Greeks and Latin referred to this section of earth as Palestine or “land of the Philistines”. The Philistines were Greek sea faring people who had settled part of the coast. “*The Holy Land*” is used only once in the Bible (Zechariah 2:12) but the popularity of the name has stood the test of time.

###### **The Boundaries of the Land of Promise**

In Acts 17:26 the declaration is made that God is the one who determines the boundaries of the nations. “*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.*” For those who have been taught to fear the future of a one-world government this passage should be of great comfort. It was the will of God to give to Abraham and his descendants the land of Canaan with boundaries stretching from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates. Genesis 15:18 “*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.*” Later the specific place marking the northern boundary would be identified as being beyond Lebanon at “the entering in of Hamath.” Joshua 13:5 “*And the land of the Giblites, and all Lebanon, toward the sunrising, from Baal-gad under mount Hermon unto the entering into Hamath.*”

###### **A Promise Kept**

There have been many debates whether or not God gave the totality of the land to the people or whether the Jews shall one day possess the land with the ancient boundaries during a millennial reign of Christ. The following passages indicate that Israel did receive the land they were promised.



- *Joshua 11:23 So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war.*
- *Joshua 21:41 All the cities of the Levites within the possession of the children of Israel were forty and eight cities with their suburbs. 42 These cities were everyone with their suburbs round about them: thus were all these cities. 43 And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. 44 And the LORD gave them rest round about, according to all that he swore unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand. 45 There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.*
- *Joshua 23:13 Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you. 14 And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof. 15 Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you, which the LORD your God promised you; so shall the LORD bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you. 16 When ye have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you.*
- *Nehemiah 9:8 And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous:*
- *Nehemiah 9:21 Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing; their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not. 22 Moreover thou gavest them kingdoms and nations, and didst divide them into corners: so they possessed the land of Sihon, and the land of the king of Heshbon, and the land of Og king of Bashan. 23 Their children also multipliedst thou as the stars of heaven, and broughtest them into the land, concerning which thou hadst promised to their fathers, that they should go in to possess it. 24 So the children went in and possessed the land, and thou subduedst before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands, with their kings, and the people of the land, that they might do with them as they would. 25 And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and olive yards, and fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness.*

- *1 Kings 4:21 And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life.*
- *1 Kings 8:56 Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant.*

### **The Provision for Keeping the Land of Promise**

Long ago a condition was placed upon the Jews getting the land and being able to stay in it. That condition was repentance and gospel obedience. Notice the language of Deuteronomy 4:27-28, 30-31.

- *Deuteronomy 4:27 And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you. 28 And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell.*
- *Deuteronomy 4:30 When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice; 31 (For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them.*

### **Judgment upon Jericho**

The first city the Hebrews had to conquer after crossing the east bank of the Jordan where they were encamped was the city of Jericho. The city was strategically located and so had to be taken by conquest. Two spies were sent to examine the fortifications (Joshua 2:1). Though their presence was detected by the king they were not captured for a prostitute named Rahab, moved by faith in God, and concealed their identity. In the *New Testament* Rahab is honored in two ways. First, she is listed in the genealogy of Christ. *Matthew 1:5 And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse.* To have any woman listed in a Jewish genealogy was remarkable. To have a prostitute is matchless grace. Second, the faith of Rahab and not her sin is remembered in Hebrews 11:31. *“By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.”* Rabbinical tradition teaches that Rahab was one of the four most beautiful women in the world and was the ancestor of eight prophets, including Jeremiah and the prophetess Huldah.

### **Crossing the Jordan**

In the process of crossing the Jordan the children of Israel witnessed a miracle for the bed of the river dried up. The descending waters gathered at Adam, beside Zaretan, several miles to the north, while the waters below were carried down to the Dead Sea (Joshua 3:16). In a solemn process the priests carried the Ark of the Covenant to the middle of the river and remained with the Ark until the people had crossed the Jordan

The people were once more comforted that God was in their midst and would do great things on their behalf. A memorial of stones was established as a visible reminder of the faithfulness of God to His people (Joshua 4:19-24).

## **Legal Obedience**

Coming up out of the water on the tenth day of the first month the people camped at Gilgal (lit. *rolling*, or *winding*) where the ritual of circumcision was administered to the males. Circumcision was the sign of the covenant made with Abraham and his descendants. While the Exodus Generation had been circumcised, their descendants had not been given the sign of the covenant. This legal obedience had been neglected for forty years during the wilderness journey. Now the deed would be done and the reproach “*rolled away*” (Joshua 5:9). It was also here at Gilgal the children of Israel kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month (Joshua 5:10).

### **A Study of the Rite of Circumcision**

1. God established the ritual of male circumcision with Abraham as a sign of the covenant.
  - *Genesis 17:11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.*
2. Circumcision was to take place on the eighth day after birth.
  - *Acts 7:8 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs.*
3. Abraham was to circumcise: his own children, descendants, any purchased slaves, and any proselytes.
4. The uncircumcised were to be considered as being “*cut off*” from the covenant of spiritual blessings.
5. Provisions were made for all who wanted to be part of a covenant relationship with God in that the poor and those outside the racial distinctive could be included. However, God had to be met according to His terms and His terms included: blood-suffering-humility-a sacrifice of self.
6. In the *Old Testament* the circumcision of the body was symbolic of the need for a special circumcision of the heart. The image is that the heart has become surrounded with the disease called sin. As a surgeon must cut away fatty tissue or unnatural growth so the heart must be spiritually circumcised. In particular greed must be cut away, idolatry must be cut away, anger must be cut away and hatred must be cut away.
  - *Deuteronomy 10:16 Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked.*

- *Deuteronomy 30:6 And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.*
7. The physical tool used to circumcise the body is a sharp knife. The spiritual tool used to circumcise the heart is the *Word of God*.
    - *Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*
  8. While human responsibility is involved (Jeremiah 4:4) the spiritual circumcising of the heart requires a Divine ability. God must circumcise the heart (Deuteronomy 30:6).
    - *Jeremiah 4:4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.*
  9. When the Lord circumcises the heart of His elect people there will flow a natural love for God and new spiritual life.
    - *Deuteronomy 30:6 And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.*
  10. God never intended for man to forget that the physical act of circumcision was only a ritual to represent the spiritual circumcision of the heart.
  11. The obedience of Abraham (Genesis 17:11), Moses (Exodus 4:25), and Joshua (Joshua 5:2,4) to perform the bloody ritual of physical circumcision, reflected a spiritual heart of obedience, love, and devotion.
  12. With the passing of time, people paid less attention to the spiritual dimensions of the act of circumcision and gloried only in the physical mark which led Paul to argue against placing confidence in the flesh (Philippians 3:1-9).
    - *Philippians 3:1-9 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. 2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. 3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. 4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: 5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

*7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:*

13. In John 7:22 Jesus argued from the act of physical circumcision that it was right to perform miracles on the Sabbath. The point the Lord made was simple and powerful. If the Law allowed the cutting of the flesh on the Sabbath to symbolize the keeping of the covenant and minister to the soul, why should anyone become angry when someone was healed or made whole on the Sabbath?
  - *John 7:22 Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers ;) and ye on the Sabbath day circumcise a man.*
14. With the resurrection of Christ the ceremonial ritual of circumcision could be abolished and emphasis focused exclusively upon the circumcision of the heart.
15. Not everyone understood the transition that had taken place from the physical to the spiritual.
  - *Acts 15:5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.*
16. Even the apostle Paul found the transition difficult to implement.
  - *Acts 21:21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.*
17. As time passed as Paul ministered more and more to the Gentiles, as the apostle understood the gospel more clearly, circumcision of the flesh gave way to the true spiritual circumcision of the heart whereby Paul affirmed that the church consists of those who are of the true circumcision.
  - *Philippians 3:3 We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*

## **The Angel of Jericho**

Having completed the legal duties of circumcising the males and keeping the Passover the nation of Israel was posed to begin the conquest of the land. It was at this moment that the Angel of the Covenant appeared to Joshua in military dress as the Captain of the Lord's Host (Joshua 5:14). Theologically this is known as a theophany or a personal manifestation of God. The worship offered by Joshua and his willingness to comply with the command to take off his shoes for he was on holy ground indicates that this was a most sacred Person.

## **And the Walls Came Down**

With the Captain of the Host in the midst of the people an unusual march was made around the city. The Ark of the Covenant was carried around the walls of the city for six consecutive days. On the seventh day the wall of Jericho collapsed when the people gave a great shout of victory (Joshua 6:1-16). All the citizens of Jericho were put to death with the exception of Rahab and her family (Joshua 6:17). The city was razed to the ground and a curse was pronounced on any one who would venture to rebuild it. *“And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the LORD, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it. 27 So the LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was noised throughout all the country”* (Joshua 6:26-27). The prophetic curse found fulfillment during the days of King Ahab, the seventh king of Israel in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC for we read that *“In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in [the death of] Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in [the death of] his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun”* (1 Kings 16:34).

## **Insightful Military Strategy**

Having destroyed Jericho, Joshua moved to secure the whole country on the west. This could be more easily done because the land had been cut in two. An initial central or middle campaign prevented the northern tribes of Canaan from uniting with the southern tribes. By establishing his presence in the middle, Joshua compelled his enemies to fight in a defensive manner.

## **Advance to Ai**

Having taken Jericho by the power of God, Joshua was ready to move against Ai. A select body of men was sent to secure his stronghold but to their surprise the first assault by the Israelites was repulsed. The question was why? It was discovered there was sin among the saints. A single act of disobedience had led to military defeat. A man named Achan had hidden stolen spoils of war taken from Jericho despite the divine commandment not to. When the offender was executed the authority of God was once more established and His righteousness satisfied. Soon thereafter Ai was taken and the valley of Achor opened up to the Israelites as a door of hope for a brighter future. *Hosea 2:15 And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.*

## **A Commandment to Keep**

Following the victory at Ai, Joshua took the military campaign of conquest twenty miles north to Mount Ebal, close to Shechem, which was the first residing place of Abraham in the land. Here the Friend of God received a promise of God. Here Abraham constructed the first altar to the Lord. In this fertile plain Jacob had also settled. A well, which bore Jacob's name, had been dug and the parcel of ground he had given to his son Joseph was here.

The purpose of Joshua in going to Shechem where the bones of Joseph were buried was to fulfill the solemn command of Moses that, as soon as they should come into the land, the blessings of the Law were to be proclaimed from Mount Gerizim, and the curses of the Law were to be sounded from Mount Ebal before the whole congregation of Israel. *“And it shall come to pass, when the LORD thy God hath brought thee in unto the land whither thou goest to possess it, that thou shalt put the blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon mount Ebal” (Deuteronomy 11:29).*

## **The Mountains of Law and Grace**

The two hills of Shechem, Gerizim on the south and Ebal on the north, rise to about six hundred feet each and are separated by a valley. Six of the tribes gathered on the side of one hill, and six on the other side; the priests and Levites stood in the valley below to read the words of the Law. The tribes on Gerizim shouted *“Amen”* to the blessings while those on Ebal shouted an *“Amen”* to the curses. In the midst of spiritual leadership in the valley was the Ark of the Covenant for God must have the focal point in life, not in theory but in visual and practical application. Surrounding the Ark of the Covenant were the elders, officers, and judges with Joshua at the head of the procession. The banners of the tribes blew in the wind marking their different position as God had appointed them. When the people of the Lord shouted, *“Amen”*—men, women and children—the sound shook the rocks and trees swelling the earth with majestic praise unto the Lord God of heaven.

## **A Desperate Deceit**

Having kept the command of Moses to read the Law of the Lord, the children of Israel prepared to move out for more military conquests. Their next target would have been Gibeon, a powerful tribe of Hivites whose fortification stood on the top of a small hill surrounded by a rich plain in central Palestine. In time Gibeon would be the place where Abner would be defeated and Amasa killed, in the days of David (2 Samuel 2 and 20). Here too Solomon would ask for wisdom from the Lord (1 Kings 3). For the moment, Gibeon became infamous by the desperate but clever deceit of its leading citizens who tricked Joshua into sparing them from destruction.

*“And Joshua called for them, and he spake unto them, saying, Wherefore have ye beguiled us, saying, We are very far from you; when ye dwell among us? 23 Now therefore ye are cursed, and there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen, and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God. 24 And they answered Joshua, and said, Because it was certainly told thy servants, how that the LORD thy God commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you, therefore we were sore afraid of our lives because of you, and have done this thing.*

25 And now, behold, we are in thine hand: as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do. 26 And so did he unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not. 27 And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the LORD, even unto this day, in the place which he should choose” (Joshua 9:22-27)

### **Conquering the Capitals of the South**

Having defeated the citizens of Jericho and Ai and having absorbed the Gibeonites into the cultural life of the nation, Joshua turned his attention to the capitol cities of the south that had formed an alliance. Led by Ad-on-i-ze-dec (lit. *just lord*) five kings gathered their forces at Gibeon. The respective warriors represented Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon. Though it was a formidable force that gathered to oppose the Israelites, Joshua was not afraid. He believed in God and he was committed to the conquest of the land. Spiritually, every believer should be committed to the conquest of the enemies within the soul of which Canaan is symbolic.

There should be no doubt of spiritual victory against a great enemy for the Lord has given His promise of a certain conquest provided individuals be faithful soldiers. In spiritual warfare patience is needed to conquer the enemies of the soul just as it took time and patience to subdue the land of Palestine. “*Canaan was not to be conquered in a day. God had said that by little and little he would drive out the Canaanites, Exodus 23:30. He that believeth will not make haste, or conclude that the promise will never be performed because it is not performed so soon as he expected*” (Matthew Henry). In addition to time and patience, both spiritual and natural warfare demands courage and movement. Joshua had the courage to move out against his enemies. So the believer must engage the enemies of the soul and Savior.

### **An Advance in Faith**

Marching his troops under the cover of darkness from Gilgal, Joshua attacked unexpectedly the forces of Adonizedec, king of Jerusalem, Hoham, king of Hebron, Piram, king of Jarmuth, Japhia, king of Lachish and Debir, king of Eglon. There was a tremendous slaughter as Joshua marched his army by night from Gilgal. The engagement took place on the green plain of Gibeon. The soldiers from the confederation of five cities were driven over the summit of the plateau and down the western of Beth-horon into the valley that stretched out before them. In order to be able to complete his victory the sun and moon were arrested in their natural courses.

“*Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. 13 And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day. 14 And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel*” (Joshua 10:12-14). In the valley of Ajalon, Joshua had his great victory.



## Utter Death to the Enemies of God

From that conquest Joshua led Israel to the various cities of his enemies.

- Makkedah           Joshua 10:28-30
- Libnah             Joshua 10:31-32
- Lachish            Joshua 10:33
- Eglon              Joshua 10:34
- Hebron             Joshua 10:36-37

The strongholds were taken and the inhabitants utterly and ruthlessly destroyed. The Israelites took possession of the whole southern portion of Palestine (Joshua 10:28-43). Spiritually, if Christians are to deal effectively with sin in the soul then the enemy has to be pursued and no prisoners taken for the good of the heart and for the glory of God.

## Divine Mercy for Israel at Merom

Having subdued the southern and central part of the land attention was turned to the northern or Galilean district. It would not be easy to conquer the powerful confederacy of native tribes that had united to stop the advance of the army of Israel. Jabin, king of Hazor, led the coalition. The various tribal leaders whose sphere of influence was around the Sea of Chinneroth (Lake of Galilee) and the Mountains of Lebanon came together to defend their land and their way of life. But they could not escape the judgment of God. A pitched battle was fought near the water of Merom and the northern coalition was utterly defeated. The conquest of the various cities and territories was afterwards certain. *“So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war”* (Joshua 11:23).

## Dividing the Land

Having subdued the land according to divine promise, Joshua divided the territory among the twelve tribes of Israel after the sons of Jacob with the assistance of the high priest Eleazar and the tribal chiefs. *“Now the sons of Jacob were twelve”* (Genesis 35:22-26).

### *The sons of Leah*

Reuben  
Simeon  
Levi  
Judah  
Issachar  
Zebulun

*The sons of Zilpah  
Leah's handmaid*

Gad  
Asher

*The sons of Rachel*

Joseph  
Benjamin

**The sons of Bilhah  
Rachel's handmaid**

Dan  
Naphtali

**The Southern Tribes**

**The Tribe of Judah**

The tribe of Judah was the first to be assigned a land. The area allotted to this tribe extended westward from the Dead Sea and then northward from the southern wilderness. Out of this division, on the northwest, a section was given for Simeon with Dan on the north. The districts allotted to Simeon and Dan included the territories inhabited by the Philistines who would make war with these tribes for centuries until the time of David. The larger Philistine cities were Ekron, Gath, Ashdod, Askelon and Gaza.

**The Tribe of Benjamin**

The territory assigned to Benjamin was immediately north of Judah. Though the region was not as large as that given to Judah many important events took place within its borders.

- The tribe of Benjamin would give Israel its first royal ruler in the person of King Saul. As king Saul made Gibeah his capital.
- In the territory assigned to Benjamin was Beth-el from whose lofty heights Abraham initially gazed upon the Land of Promise and where Jacob dreamed a dream.
- Jericho and Gilgal were also in this region but so was Ramah, where great weeping would one day be heard for the time would come when Ramah would serve as a deportation center for Jews going into exile.
- Bethany was in the territory where the Lord Jesus would spend many peaceful hours.
- There is more history associated with the tribe. In one of the deep passes, on the east side of Benjamin's territory, Joshua engaged in a great battle for Ai.

- At Beth-Horon, in the valley of Ajalon, on the western side of the plateau, while the sun and the moon lingered in the heavens, Joshua finished defeating a coalition of kings.
- The Assyrian king Sennacherib would one day pass through Michmash, a well-known town in the tribe of Benjamin.
- During the days of the Maccabees, Judas Maccabeus gained his first victory at Beth-boron. Fifteen hundred years after the days of Joshua, the Roman legions were defeated and driven down the pass of Beth-horon just as the confederate kings had been.
- Almost a thousand years after the death of Christ the Crusaders tried to reach Jerusalem by the pass of Beth-horon. The English king Richard the Lionhearted was defeated in the Valley of Ajalon.
- The Mount of Olives was located in the tribe of Benjamin. Many of the scenes in the ministry of the Lord took place in the tribe of Benjamin.
- Though Benjamin was little among the tribes of Israel in spiritual matters it rivaled them all. Out of Benjamin came the great apostle to the Gentiles, Paul who was an “*Hebrew of the Hebrews, of the tribe of Benjamin*” (Philippians 3:5).

## **The Central Tribes**

### **The Tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh**

Laying to the north of Benjamin the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh enjoyed a terrain with wider plains and fertile land. For a long period of Hebrew history Ephraim was the main tribe.

### **Important Cities of Ephraim**

- Shechem. Shechem served as the civil capital of the country in the time of Joshua having become famous in the days of Abraham and Jacob.
- Shiloh. One day, Shiloh would serve as the first ecclesiastical center of Israel where the ark was kept.
- Samaria. Under Omri, the seventh king of Israel, Samaria would become the capital of the kingdom of the ten tribes.

### **Important People of Ephraim**

- Joshua. The second leader of Israel was from the tribe of Ephraim while Gideon with his seventy priestly brothers came from the adjacent tribe of Manasseh.
- Deborah. Though she was from a northern tribe Deborah dwelt in Ephraim.
- Samuel. The last judge of the nation was from Ramathaim-zophim of Mount Ephraim.

## **Cultural Impact of Ephraim**

Because of its importance, during the days of Gideon and again in the days of Jephthah the men of Ephraim were very jealous when they believed they had been neglected or placed in an inferior position (Judges 8:1 cf. 12:1ff). Later the people of Ephraim were humiliated when David, from the tribe of Judah, was appointed as king. The revolt of Ephraim with allied tribes during the days of Rehoboam reflects the wounded jealousy. The rugged mountainous terrain of Ephraim served as the rallying place for the nation in times of crisis or conflict. Along the sea coast of this tribe lay Joppa which served for many years as the sea port of Palestine. Later, under the Romans, Caesarea would become the capital of the country.

## **The Tribe of Issachar and the Valley of Megiddo**

The hills that fix the boundary for Manasseh on the north incline downward to a most famous plain called in *Scripture* Jezreel (Joshua 17:6) or Megiddo (2 Chronicles 35:22). Today it is known as the Plain of Esdraelon. The plain is located in the tribe of Issachar. The New Testament district of Galilee begins here. The plain is twelve miles abroad. The southern boundary length is fixed between the hills of Central Palestine and the mountains of Lebanon on the north. The width of the plain spreads from the valley of the Jordan on the Southeast to the Great Sea (Mediterranean) on the Northwest. The ancient Kishon River waters the plain.

## **People and Places Associated with the Tribe of Issachar**

- King Ahab built a palace in Jezreel.
- In Shunem the prophet Elisha restored a boy to life.
- King Saul consulted with the witch of Endor.
- The bodies of King Saul and his sons were nailed to the wall of Beth-shan.
- King Josiah was killed on the plains of Megiddo.
- On the top of Mt. Carmel the prophet Elijah contested the gods of Baal.
- Early Church tradition held that Jesus was transformed on Mt. Tabor though it might have been Mt. Hermon at the beginning of the Jordan Valley.

## **Famous Battles at Armageddon**

On the plains of Megiddo some of the greatest battles in history have been fought. Jezreel has been the great battlefield of Palestine. Jewish and Gentile soldiers, Saracens, Crusaders, Egyptians, Persians, Druses, Turks, Arabs and French warriors from every nation under heaven have tramped upon the plain of Esdraelon and unfurled their banners.

- Pharaoh Thotmes III defeated the Khita prior to the Hebrews entering the land.
- Barak defeated the Canaanites in a battle in the valley of Jezreel.
- Gideon put to flight the Amalekites and the Midianites in the valley of Megiddo.
- During the days of Eli the Philistines defeated the Israelites and took the ark of the Lord from them.

- King Saul was killed in a battle at Armageddon along with his sons on the mountains of Gilboa.
- King Josiah was also killed in a great battle at Armageddon fighting the Egyptians.

It is not surprising that the tribe of Issachar is overshadowed by the great battles that were fought on a small piece of land in the territory. The prophetic words of “*The strong ass, couching between two burdens*” (Genesis 49:14) pales into insignificance in the midst of a scene of some of the greatest military conflicts on record.

## **The Northern Tribes**

### **The Tribes of Zebulun, Asher, and Naphtali**

The tribes of Zebulun, Asher and Naphtali were located north of Issachar. Because of their isolated position these tribes avoided much involvement in the conflicts of the nation.

- Zebulun. The tenth of Jacob’s twelve sons, Zebulun was the sixth and last son of Leah (Genesis 30:19-20; 35:23; 1 Chronicles 2:1). Zebulun was the father of Sered, Elon, and Jahleel (Genesis 46:14; Numbers 26:26-27). The land allotted to Zebulun following the conquest of Canaan was bounded by Issachar and Manasseh on the south, by Asher on the west, and by Naphtali on the north and east (Joshua 19:10-16, 27, 34). The territory was fertile reflected in the northwest corner of the fertile Plain of Esdraelon, better known as the Valley of Jezreel.
- Asher. In poetic language it had been foretold that Asher was to be blessed. He would “*dip his foot in oil*” or be abundant with olive groves. His feet would be “*shod with iron and brass*” from the mines in Lebanon (Deuteronomy 32:24, 25).
- Naphtali. Naphtali was to be “*like a hind let loose*” (Genesis 49:21). “*Though we find not this prediction so fully answered in the event as some of the rest, yet, no doubt, it proved true that those of this tribe were, 1. As the loving hind (for that is her epithet, Proverbs 5:19), friendly and obliging to one another and to other tribes; their converse remarkably kind and endearing. 2. As the loosened hind, zealous for their liberty. 3. As the swift hind (Psalm 18:33), quick in dispatch of business; and perhaps, 4. As the trembling hind, timorous in times of public danger. It is rare that those that are most amiable to their friends are most formidable to their enemies. 5. That they should be affable and courteous, their language refined, and they complaisant, giving goodly words*” (Matthew Henry). In the New Testament Naphtali was visited by an angel who told Mary of Nazareth about the birth of Christ. The larger part of the Lord’s earthly life was spent in Naphtali. Despite this honor Christ pronounced woes on Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum and other cities in which His great works were accomplished. These cities were located in Naphtali.

## **The Tribe of Dan**

The area allotted to Dan included the towns of Aijalon, Ekron, Eltekeh, and Zorah in the west central part of Canaan (Josh 19:40-46; 21:5, 23-24). In the town of Dan Jeroboam set up a calf to be worshiped and later in Caesarea Philippi, Philip the tetrarch built a palace. It was near Caesarea Philippi that Jesus asked His disciples “*Whom say men that I am?*” (Luke 9:18). Somewhere in this region, on some part of the northeast, on Mt. Hermon or Sirion, Christ was transfigured. After resting in this area Jesus set His face with determination to go up to Jerusalem to die (Luke 9:51).

## **Phoenicia: Tyre and Sidon**

To the northwest of the tribe of Asher stretches the narrow and rocky strip of land of Phoenicia with the “*coasts of Tyre and Sidon*” (Matthew 15:21). Unlike the other inhabitants of the land of Canaan the Sidonians were not specifically destined for extermination. For the most part the Israelites were able to dwell with them in peace and enjoyed commercial exchange of goods and services. The region knew the grace of God. It was to Zarephath, a Phoenician town that Elijah was sent in days of a famine to minister to a needy widow (1 Kings 17:9ff).

## **Syria**

A few miles north of Tyre is the land of Syria characterized by a fertile plain. Before the conquering armies of Joshua the Canaanites fled to this region. After growing in number, during the days of Deborah and Barak the Canaanites in this region moved southward to recapture the land. They terrified the Israelites with their use of chariots and iron (Joshua 17:16). In this plain stood Riblah, a town with sad memories for the Jews as it became a departure point prior to the Babylonian exile. Here Jehoahaz, king of Judah was put in chains by the king of Egypt (Jeremiah 23:33). Later, his brother Zedekiah had his eyes put out by the king of Babylon but not before he was forced to watch his children being murdered (2 Kings 25:7).

## **Damascus**

Between the eastern side of Hermon and the northern territory of Bashan were several city nations that are associated with Hebrew history. There was the small kingdom of Geshur, where Absalom was banished from Jerusalem by David (2 Samuel 13:38). Absalom’s mother was from Geshur (2 Samuel 3:3). The most important kingdom in this area was that whose capital was Damascus, a very ancient city. Abraham’s servant Eliezar was from Damascus (Genesis 15:2). It has been called a “*pearl in the midst of emeralds.*”

## **The Eastern Tribes**

In the district east of the Jordan the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh settled.

## **The Tribe of Reuben**

Reuben occupied the most southern part, which was extensive. However, “*unstable as water*” he did not excel (Genesis 49:4). Among the towns in this district was Ashdod-pisgah in the area of Mt. Pisgah where Moses looked upon the Land of Promise (Deuteronomy 3:27); Bezer, one of the six cities of refuge (Joshua 20:1-8); Heshbon, famous for its fish pools (Song of Solomon 7:4); and Jahaz where Sihon was defeated by Moses (Numbers 21:23-24). During the days of the New Testament this district was the scene of the preaching of John (John 1:28) and where Jesus was baptized and the Holy Spirit descended like a dove.

## **The Tribe of Gad**

To the north of Reuben settled Gad which included Mahanaim where the angels met Jacob (Genesis 32:2). Here Ishbosheth, a son of Saul, resided; and here David fled from the face of Absalom. The region also included Peniel where Jacob wrestled with the Angel. There was Ramoth-gilead where Ahab and Jehoshaphat went to make war with the Syrians. Here Ahab was slain, and later his son Joram was wounded. Jehu, by the command of Elisha was anointed king of Israel.

## **The Ammonites**

To the east of Gad were the territories of the Ammonites with the capital of Rabbah or Rabbath-ammon, later called Philadelphia (Joshua 13:25; Revelation 1:11). Philadelphia was built on both sides of a stream (2 Samuel 12:27).

## **The Half Tribe of Manasseh**

The half tribe of Manasseh absorbed the ancient kingdom of Og. Among its many cities was Jabesh-Gilead whose citizens were killed for refusing to join the war against Benjamin (Judges 21:8). King Saul defeated the Ammonites in battle and saved the inhabitants from captivity (1 Samuel 11). The Lord is believed to have retired “*to the desert place*” in this region in order to spend whole nights in prayer (Mark 6:31). The tribe includes the cities of Gadara and Bethsaida near the Sea of Galilee.

## **The Tribe of Levi**

The only tribe that was not allotted a territorial land was Levi. This tribe was to be devoted to the offices associated with the priesthood. Its inhabitants were to be supported by the tithes and offerings of a grateful people. The Levites were to reside in designated cities within the other tribes. Of special note were the six cities of refuge where persons could flee if they had accidentally taken the life of someone. The main cities were Hebron in Judah, and Shechem in central Palestine, in the valley between mounts Ebal and Gerizim, 34 miles north of Jerusalem and 7 miles southeast of Samaria.

## **A Sanctuary at Shiloh**

As the Lord appointed the location of the various tribes so He appointed a resting place for the Ark of the Tabernacle. The Ark would reside in Shiloh, a town in the tribe of Ephraim, located in the hills to the north of Beth-el. For many years the people of Israel made their way to Shiloh to celebrate the Passover, Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles. There are many precious Biblical scenes associated at Shiloh. It was here that Hannah prayed for a son. Through the narrow valley Eli, with trembling lips and a fearful heart saw the Ark carried out one fatal day on the shoulders of his sons Hophni and Phinehas. God's judgment fell upon Israel through the Philistines. Both sons of Eli were killed, and the ark was captured. And finally, it was at Shiloh that a broken hearted mother died and left the name of Ichabod for the infant that opened his eyes only to see the glory of God departing from Israel.

## **The Church Gathered**

When the saints gathered yearly in Shiloh during the days of Joshua, they did so to celebrate the glory and goodness of God. At each gathering a spiritual legacy was remembered, friendships were renewed and stories would be told to strengthen the faith of all. The divine summary of these events is stated. *“There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken to the house of Israel and it came to pass” (Joshua 21:45).*

## **Danger with the Disruption of Fellowship**

The unity of the Twelve Tribes was jeopardized once during the lifetime of Joshua when it seemed that a rival altar was going to be established on the eastern bank of the Jordan by the tribes that had remained there. The majority of Israelites feared that a rival establishment to worship in Shiloh was being offered, but that was not the case. The report was returned that the new altar was simply a memorial to God's great goodness to the eastern tribes as God had been faithful to the rest of the nation. When the explanation was given and accepted, harmony was restored (Joshua 22:11-30).

## **The Death of Joshua**

When Joshua knew he was going to die he called for the leaders of all the tribes at Shechem and delivered unto them a final message (Joshua 23:1-2). Knowing that he was going *“the way of all the earth” (Joshua 23:14)* Joshua pleaded with the people to be faithful to the Lord and never forsake Him. Such an appeal was needed because Joshua knew how emotional and unstable the Israelites were. He wanted them to make a vow and keep it. To help the people remember their vow a great stone was set up under an oak as a perpetual witness of an oath. Then with his work being done, the Conqueror of Palestine died at the age of one hundred and ten (Joshua 24:29). He was buried with his fathers in Mount Ephraim.



## **Joshua and Jesus**

In the person of Joshua is a type of Christ. His name in Hebrew is equivalent to Jesus in Greek. *Hebrews 4:8* “*For if Jesus [Joshua] had given them rest, then would he [God] not afterward have spoken of another day.*” Joshua was a mixture of courage and gentleness. He was bold as a lion and yet gentle as a lamb. Christ is both the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5) and the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:36). It was the honor of Joshua to guide his people to a place of rest and thus foreshadow Christ who guides His people to that rest which remaineth to the people of God (Hebrews 4:9).

## **The Vindication of Divine Justice**

The taking of the land from the Canaanites and giving it to the Hebrews was done in a severe manner but the judgment of God was just. The Amorites had saturated themselves with sin so that their iniquity was full (Genesis 15:16). There is a principle which individuals and nations must learn from history which is this: in the divine economy sin has a saturation point. The mercy of God is designed to lead to repentance (Romans 2:4).

However, if the goodness of God is spurned the judgment of God will come. The ensuing judgment will be justified. The Hebrews were simply God’s instruments in executing judgment just as the waters of the flood and the fire and brimstone which rained from heaven on Sodom and Gomorrah had been justified.

## **The Bible as History**

### **A Survey of the Old Testament**

#### **Chapter 6**

#### **The Justice of Divine Judgment in the Book of Judges**

##### **A Vacuum of Vital Leadership**

With the death of Joshua the children of Israel experienced a period of uncertainty with regard to national security. People wanted to know who was to lead the fight against the Canaanites. Wisely did they inquire of the Lord what His will might be in the matter. *Judges 1:1* *I Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them?* The divine promise is that if anyone lacks wisdom he can ask of God who will give divine direction. *James 1:5* *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*

##### **The Rise of Judah**

It was the will of God that the tribe of Judah take the leadership position in the matter of national security and go forth to battle the Canaanites. Obedient to the known will of the Lord the men of Judah did not shrink from performing their duty nor did they feel they had to bear the burden of military leadership alone. Appealing to the tribe of Simeon this band of brothers went forth to victory over the Canaanites and the Perizzites. God gave them the victory as they slew in the town of Bezek ten thousand men (Judges 1:4). It was a great victory indeed marred momentarily by the escaping from the sword of justice the leader of the opposing army, Adoni-bezek.

##### **A Great Undergirding Principle**

When Adoni-bezek fled he was pursued and captured. In being captured Bezek was tortured. His thumbs and great toes were cut off. While it was painful it was also just as Adoni-bezek admitted. *Judges 1:7* *And Adoni-bezek said, Threescore and ten kings [70 kings], having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.* In the moral universe which God has ordained one of the great undergirding principles is that what is sown is reaped. *Proverbs 22:8* *He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity: and the rod of his anger shall fail.* *Galatians 6:7-8* *7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*

## **A War and a Wedding**

Having fought successfully against the Canaanites the children of the tribe of Judah set forth on another military campaign against their enemies that dwelt in Hebron where they slew Sheshai, Ahiman and Talmai (Judges 1:10). From there the battle scene moved to the city of Debir, formerly known as Kirjath-sepher. It was at Debir the old warrior Caleb promised one of his daughters in marriage to any brave soldier who could lead in the conquest of the city. A capable soldier named Othniel took up the challenge and sought the reward. In his endeavor he was successful. The fortress Debir fell and Achsah was given to Othniel in marriage.

## **No Ordinary Woman**

It was no ordinary woman whom Othniel received in marriage for Achsah had tremendous business acumen. Achsah compelled Othniel to ask of her father a piece of real estate (Judges 1:14). Caleb honored the request and he gave to her “the upper springs and the nether springs” (Judges 1:15). He gave to his daughter springs of living water. In like manner God the Father will give good gifts to His children. He will give the Spring of Living Water to all that are thirsty.

## **On the March**

From the city of Debir the military marched on to destroy the Canaanite fortress of Hormah. It was a terrible time of death, blood and human carnage. But the dark deed needed to be done so that other victories could follow as the army marched on to take Gaza (Judges 1:18), Askelon and Ekron. Spiritually, the Christian must move against each and every enemy of the soul and destroy it without mercy. Then the divine conquest of the soul must march on until ever darling Canaanite stronghold of the soul is conquered and every soldier of sin is slain – anger, lust, greed, bitterness and hatred.

## **A Difficult Place to Conquer**

In only one area did the children of Israel not fully defeat their enemy. The inhabitants of a particular valley were not defeated because they had “*chariots of iron*” (Judges 1:19). The chariots of iron are a fitting description of the enemies of the soul which are hard to conquer in the heart of the Christian. Despite many spiritual victories elsewhere there are chariots of iron that seem unconquerable. The temptation comes to simply let them live. Let those sins as strong as chariots of iron live unchallenged and undefeated by learning to co-exist with them. That is the temptation.

## **The Counter Attack**

But the problem is the inhabitants with the chariots of iron will launch a counter-offensive to reclaim lost territory and drive the foreign invaders away. The conflict will be unto death. If unmortified the counter attack of the enemy will grow in strength as new allies of evil are found. Those in the valley who had chariots of iron were not defeated nor did the children of Benjamin drive out the Jebusites (Judges 1:21).

## **Lesser Conquests Equals More Enemies**

When the tide of battle turns in the heart of the Christian so that one sin after another is not battled and conquered the enemy finds it has a stronghold which can be exploited. From this vantage point new conquests can be made. In the body life of the children of Israel one spiritual victory after another gave way to one spiritual defeat after another. First Judah failed to conquer the valley because of the chariots. Then the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites from the city of Jerusalem. Next, the tribe of Joseph failed to destroy all within the city of Bethel. *“Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: but the Canaanites would dwell in that land” (Judges 1:27).*

## **An Opportunity Lost Forever**

*“And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out” (Judges 1:28).* The children of Israel could have been more than conquerors through Christ but they failed to destroy their enemies. One tribe after another made either a political alliance with the enemy, showed unfounded mercy to the inhabitants or simply failed to engage the enemy. Before long the Canaanites had not just a stronghold but the force of strength to dictate and determine the behavior of the Hebrews (Judges 1:34). In like manner sin can reconquer the soul to such an extent it forces the Christian to obey. In John 8:34 Jesus told His disciples, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.”* The tribes of Israel committed sin in not destroying the inhabitants of the land and so they became the servants of the same.

## **Breaking the Bands of Bondage**

No matter how often the Lord gives a message it seems that He has to repeat it time and again. Going from Gilgal to Bochim the Angel of the Lord reminded the people of Israel of His covenant promise which He vowed never to break (Judges 2:1). God is more faithful to His people than they are to Him. One reason why people are not faithful to God is they fail to defeat His enemies. They disobey His voice and known will without excuse and enter into a league with the inhabitants of the land (Judges 1:2). As a form of divine discipline the Lord refused to deliver His people from the bondage they were in for a long period of time. *“Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you” (Judges 2:3).* Sometimes Christians wonder why they do not find spiritual freedom. The answer in part is a divine judgment has been passed. The very bondage and life of defeat is designed to produce repentance. *“And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept. 5 And they called the name of that place Bochim [weepers]: and they sacrificed there unto the LORD” (Judges 2:4-5).*

## **Living for the Lord**

After a period of bondage gospel obedience is longed for and when the chance is given to be better, when the opportunity comes to enjoy a victorious Christian life and defeat one's enemies the experience is more glorious. *Judges 2:6-7* "And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land. 7 And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel." Pray for spiritual victory.

## **The Death of a Saint**

Having been faithful to God in the midst of an unbelieving generation, having been a warrior for a just cause, having won great victories and having defeated his enemies and the enemies of the Lord, Joshua, "*the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old*" (*Judges 2:8*). There is great comfort in old age provided that a life has been lived righteously. The objective is to live a life of no regrets.

## **The Next Generation**

With the death of Joshua it seemed that a gospel light went out in Israel for "*there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. 11 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim: 12 And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger. 13 And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal [lit. lord, possessor] and Ashtaroth [lit. to be fertile]*" (*Judges 2:11-13*). When individuals do not know God they will turn to the false gods of this world, the gods of fleshly lusts and illicit passions. Licentious worship was conducted in honor of Ashtaroth.

## **Signs of Sovereign Judgment**

In holy anger God judges individuals by delivering them into the hands of their spoilers (*Judges 2:14*). In spiritual terms this means that the lustful person will become addicted to pornography, the drinking individual will become an alcoholic and the eating person who eats to excess will become a glutton. In the book of the *Revelation* we read of God's final judgment. *Revelation 22:11* "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." One facet of hell is to be abandoned by God to indulge forever a particular sin with no satisfaction. A second form of divine judgment upon sin is spiritual helplessness in overcoming it.

## **Mercy in the Midst of Misery**

Though the way of the transgressor is hard God has been pleased to deliver His people from their oppressors as per *Judges 2:16* "*Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.*"

Here is great mercy in the midst of great misery. The hearts of the people are encouraged. Every Christian who struggles with besetting sin can still hope that God will send a Righteous Judge and divine Deliverer to rescue the soul from the depths of sin.

### **The Strength of Sin**

Unfortunately the strength of sin can bind a soul so that despite some spiritual victories there is a return to evil. *“And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way”* (Judges 2:19). The return to evil brought forth the anger of the Lord. The Lord allowed Israel’s traditional enemies to torment the nation in order to test the hearts of the people (Judges 2:22). Sometimes Christians wonder why God allows compelling sins to be endured in the heart. And the Biblical answer is that the Lord is testing His people. The answer of ultimate longing and loyalty will come when the last self-help book is read, the last preacher is heard, the last human counsel is followed, the last promise of self-reform is made and the last lie of Satan is believed. Then and only then will the heart be in a position to cry out in sincerity, *“Lord, save me! I perish!”* Only when self is saturated with sin and wants to be different and wants God to make that difference can the heart be tested for approval.

### **Sensual Sins of the Saints**

One way Satan has found to do much harm to the church is through sexual sins. The eyes can become full of lust and the body can give itself to expressions of unbridled passions. In times of such passion nothing else in the world matters but the moment of pleasure. Those who believe they cannot be tempted with sensual passions should be especially careful lest they be the first to fall. In Judges 3 the story is told how the Enemy of the Church introduced the Hebrews to the daughters of the world of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. *Judges 3:6 “And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods.”* The results were predictable. God was soon forgotten. The sexual freedom associated with Baalism was embraced (Judges 3:7).

### **Othniel, Nephew of Caleb**

When the sexual sins of the saints were manifested God moved once more to judge His people. They were taken captive by the king of Mesopotamia (Judges 3:8) until they got weary of their bondage and cried unto the Lord. Because the grace of God cannot be exhausted and because His mercy endures forever the Lord raised up Othniel, the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother. With the Spirit of the Lord upon him Othniel went to war on behalf of God’s people (Judges 3:10) and won the victory. When spiritual victories are won there is peace.

### **A Lost Peace**

If spiritual victories are not protected the peace of the soul will be lost. After forty years Israel stopped guarding their hearts. A new generation arose that was willing to do evil in the sight of the Lord and to receive the punishment of the same. As in previous times the Lord delivered His people into the hands of their enemies.

*“So the children of Israel served Eglon the King of Moab eighteen years” (Judges 3:14).* Eighteen years is a long time to be in spiritual bondage. Some have been in spiritual bondage for many years beyond that especially when that bondage is needless. It is instructive to notice that as soon as God’s people sincerely cry out to Him for deliverance from a state of bondage He always moves to deliver them. *“But when the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord, the Lord raised them up a deliverer” (Judges 3:15).* God is faithful. He will find a way to bring His people from bondage.

### **A Determined Deliverer**

In the person of Ehud, the son of Gera, a left-handed Benjamite (Judges 3:15) God was pleased to deliver the children of Israel. While there are some disturbing elements to the narrative of how Ehud murdered Eglon, the king of the oppressive Moabites, the principle is established that evil must be dealt with in a ruthless manner (Judges 3:16-30). Spiritually, not only must Sin as a ruling principle personified be slain like Eglon but the offspring of evil must be put to death as well. Sin produces militant children of vile corruptions which must also be slain (Judges 3:29). Slay them the people of God must so that none escapes to reproduce. When Sin and the offspring of Sin are slain there will be rest for a great period of time. After the death of Eglon Israel enjoyed peace for sixty years (Judges 3:30).

### **Evil Revitalized**

Only in eternity in heaven will the people of God enjoy an eternal rest. In time the Enemy of the soul may depart for a season as he did following the temptation of Christ but then he returns. Despite having peace for sixty years, Israel needed, and found, a new deliverer in the person of *“Shamgar the son of Anath who slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad” (Judges 3:31).* After Shamgar the people turned to *“Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth”* and Barak (Judges 4:1-9). Together these two waged war on Sisera, the captain of a king named Jabin who possessed chariots and a large standing army. But all that did not matter to the eye of faith that saw the promises of God (Judges 4:7). Though the Enemy comes to the Christian with a multitude of temptations to take the heart captive the believer has a triune defense in the Person of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. As Sisera met his match on the bloody field of battle (Judges 4: so Satan met his match at the bloody cross of Calvary. As a simple woman took a tent peg and drove it through the head of Sisera so the weakest Christian can resist the devil and make him flee (James 4:7). Such is the surprising victory over evil.

### **Sing a Song of Praise**

When the Lord gives victory over the Enemy there should be a song of praise for every believer is commanded to be *“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:19).* When Deborah and Barak knew they had conquered Sisera they praised the Lord for avenging His people and invited others to the grand celebration (Judges 5:1-2). In singing praise to the Lord both Deborah and Barak were careful that He received the glory for the great conquest. *“Lord, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water. 5. The mountains melted from before the Lord, even that Sinai from before the LORD God of Israel” (Judges 4:5).* *“To God be the glory”*

## **Spiritual Defeat Yet Again**

When Jesus taught Peter to forgive seventy times seven (Matthew 18:22) He was establishing a principle of showing extensive grace reflecting the heart of God the Father. Seven times it is said in the book of the Judges, *“the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord”* (Judges 2:11; 3:7; 3:12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1). Each time God’s grace was extended to His people. While grace is not cheap it is extensive lest all men be consumed in a moment of divine justice and wrath. In his wrath God remembers to show grace and so we read that after the Midianites had spoiled the Israelites (Judges 6:1-7) God moved to avenge His people. The unlikely instrument of divine deliverance would be a man named Gideon.

## **The Making of a Champion**

To emphasize His own involvement in the process of delivering the Israelites from the oppression of the Midianites God called into service a humble man of a poor family in the tribe of Manasseh. The importance of this call to service is that the promotion came from the Lord. There is a great principle to observe: Christian, if the Lord does not promote you, you are not promoted. If God has set His seal of approval upon your advancement then He will move heaven and earth to accomplish His will through His chosen vessel. Gideon was a chosen vessel (Judges 6:14).

## **Fleshly Faith**

Unfortunately Gideon needed fleshly convincing that God had called him to lead the nation of Israel to victory and so he asked for a sign (Judges 6:17). A sign was given by the Angel of the Lord who touched with the tip of His staff a meal offering and consumed it in a moment and then vanished out of sight (Judges 6:21-22). Suddenly Gideon knew he had been in the presence of the Lord and built an altar and called it Jehovah-shalom, the LORD is peace. Peace comes to the heart that believes in God. Peace comes to the mind that is stayed upon Jehovah. Peace comes when there is sweet communion with the Lord.

## **Sanctification of the Soul**

When a person begins to walk with God they will be commanded to do some things which are difficult but important. Gideon was told to tear down the altar of Baal. He was to destroy not just any altar but the altar that his father had built. While young people are commanded to be obedient to their parents and to honor them, grown children have a responsibility to obey the Lord even to the point of challenging the wickedness of other family members including mother and father. Jesus taught that a man’s enemies would be of his own household. *“And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household. 37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. 39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it”* (Matt 10:36-39). In gospel obedience Gideon *“took ten men of his servants, and did as the Lord had said unto him”* (Judges 6:27). Though he was afraid Gideon obeyed the Lord.



## **Consequences of Gospel Obedience**

When a person begins to obey the Lord there are always consequences. Some of the consequences are good while others are more challenging. The results of Gideon's destruction of the altar of Babel was to bring repentance to his father and a hostile reaction from the men of Ophrah. When the men of the city realized their religious images had been destroyed under the cover of darkness they were furious. Going to the home of Joash, the father of Gideon they demanded his son with the intent to kill him. But Joash, now in fellowship with God defended the actions of Gideon with a series of penetrating questions designed to arrest the conscious while mocking Baal (Judges 6:31).

## **The Courage of Conviction**

It is a simple truth that success encourages the heart. Having met the Lord face to face, having engaged in gospel obedience the heart of Gideon was encouraged to blow a trumpet calling the men of Israel to battle. While warfare may be intrinsically evil God is sovereign over that too and so we read "*the spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon*" (Judges 6:34). When a man is Spirit filled and divinely directed there will be a positive response from the people and so we read the men of the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali "*came up to meet him*" (Judges 6:35).

## **The Fleece and Faith**

Though fortified with a large standing army and ready for battle the faith of Gideon suddenly failed. Clothing his concerns with religious rhetoric Gideon asked the Lord for yet another sign that he would save Israel by his hand. Putting a fleece out Gideon asked the Lord to work a miracle. He wanted God to make the fleece wet and the ground around it dry. The request was granted. But instead of producing great faith it only served to increase Gideon's doubt to the point he asked for another miracle. The fleece was to be dry in the morning and the ground was to be wet. "And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground" (Judges 6:40).

## **A Legitimate Inquiry**

Should Christians, in the spirit of Gideon, lay out fleeces before the Lord? Some Christian teachers feel strongly that Gideon did not live by faith but by sight and so should be condemned in his attitude and actions. In defense of Gideon and this practice consider the following.

- The request of Gideon does not seem to have displeased the Lord. The Lord honored both requests for a sign without a word of reproach.
- Sometimes the Lord commands a person to ask for a sign and is angry when there is no response. Such was the situation with King Ahaz, the 12<sup>th</sup> king of Israel (735-715 BC).

*“Moreover the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying, 11 Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. 12 But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD. 13 And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? 14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:10-14).*

- When a sign is demanded in unbelief in order to prove the veracity of God then such a demand is evil and wicked. Jesus said to people of this persuasion, *“Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas” (Matthew 12:38, 39).*
- The Lord knows that His children are weak. God knows the heart is fearful and needs constant reassurance just as children need to be told often they are loved and wanted. Therefore, it is not always wrong to lay out the fleece.
- The laying of a fleece should not be a trivial matter for selfish entertainment. But there are great moments in life when the heart needs to be reassured the will of God is about to be done. Gideon’s actions were rooted in faith for twice he reminds God of His promise, *“As thou has said” (Judges 6:36, 37).* The Bible teaches *“without faith it is impossible to please God.” (Hebrews 11:6).*
- When laying out his fleece Gideon did not ask God for something easy but for something hard. This too is according to divine invitation. *“I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it” (Psalm 81:10).*

### **The Singleness of God’s Glory**

With assurance of victory well established according to promise Gideon was now willing to march against the Midianites. But before military action could be taken God intervened to tell Gideon his army was much too large. Men would have to be released from their commitment to combat duty lest the coming victory be seen as a victory of the flesh and not of God. In great mercy but also to protect His glory the Lord told Gideon to dismiss anyone who was afraid and did not want to go into battle. Such people could return home without shame and without loss of honor. Twenty-two thousand people took advantage of this divine amnesty (Judges 7:3). Ten thousand soldiers remained.

### **Prepared for Battle**

But again that was too many. More soldiers had to be eliminated and so Gideon was told to take the army down to the water. He was to observe those who cupped their hand into the water and drank from their hands as opposed to those who got down on their knees to drink (Judges 7:5-7). By this simple observation the best warriors were recognized because the ones who cupped the water to their lips were alert. They were not as vulnerable as those who laid down to drink thereby exposing themselves to grave danger and not being able to use their weapons quickly or effectively.

## **The Dream of a Dreamer**

Surrounded with only three hundred men of an initial force of thirty two thousand the heart of Gideon grew fearful again. Such is human experience that Christians sometimes show great faith and sometimes the flesh takes over and we walk by sight again and so need reassurance. To comfort Gideon's heart God sent him to walk in the camp of the enemy in order to overhear the dream of a dreamer. *"And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. 14 And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host"* (Judges 7:13-14).

## **A Great Victory**

Encouraged by what he heard Gideon was ready to move immediately and attack the enemy. On a given single three hundred men holding clay pots, waved their lamps in the darkness and uttered a shout which created terror and then panic among their foes. The Arab host was filled with panic and in their confusion began to kill one another. In the morning mist the remaining Midianites fled toward the Jordan trying to escape to their own country on the other side. But that was not going to happen for Gideon had told the men of the tribe of Ephraim to seize the fords of the river and cut off the retreat.

## **Death to the Enemy**

Caught between two forces the Midianites were slaughtered at a second battle at the ford of Beth-barah, when Oreb and Zeeb, *"the Raven"* and *"the Wolf"*, two minor warlords of the Midianites were killed. Their heads were cut off and brought to Gideon (Judges 7: 24-25). The two greater warlords, Zebah and Zalmunna, did manage to cross the river with fifteen thousand men but escape from God's judgment they could not. Fainting yet pursuing, Gideon and his small army chased the larger Midian force. With dauntless courage and abiding bravery the Three Hundred Champions of Grace penetrated far into the territory of the enemy. In time they were able to locate and attack the Midianites and won the victory as they slew the fugitive warlords (Judges 8:21).

## **The Administration of Justice**

In the course of pursuing the Midianites Gideon and his small band of brothers had been refused aid by their own countrymen as they passed through Succoth and Penuel, towns of Gilead. No doubt the citizens of the towns believed if they aided Gideon the Midianites would return and punish them. The people never expected Gideon to accomplish what he did. Now they were to be the objects of a just judgment. Keeping his promise Gideon destroyed the tower of Penuel (Judges 8:9, 17) and humiliated the princes of Succoth by beating them with thorny branches of the acacia groves of their valley (Judges 8:7, 16).

## Memories of Mighty Men

The “*day of Midian*” became a day of memory in the history of Israel. Centuries passed but the people of God never forgot what the Lord did on behalf of His own during the dark days of the judges. David spoke of the Midianites as did Isaiah the prophet.

- *Psalms 83:9 Do unto them as unto the Midianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison: 10 Which perished at Endor: they became as dung for the earth. 11 Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna:*
- *Isaiah 9:4 For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.*
- *Isaiah 10:26 And the LORD of hosts shall stir up a scourge for him according to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb: and as his rod was upon the sea, so shall he lift it up after the manner of Egypt.*

Wanting to reward Gideon for his leadership the people of Israel invited him to be their king but he wisely refused (Judges 8:22, 23). God alone should be the King of His people. Nevertheless, he would for forty years act as a judge over them.

## The Sin of a Saint

Despite his great faith and great victories on behalf of Israel, Gideon did succumb to sin in that he accepted gold from the defeated Midians with which he made an ephod or priestly robe that he placed in his house. This intrusion into a holy office unauthorized became a snare to him and to the nation and ultimately brought the chastisement of God. There were other sins that Gideon committed such as the multiplication of wives that gave him seventy sons (Judges 8:30). As if this large family was not enough Gideon also had a concubine or mistress that was in Shechem who bore him a son named Abimelech.

## The Death of Gideon

When he died Gideon was buried in the sepulcher of Joash his father, in Ophrah [i.e. Ephraim] of the Abi-ezrites a reference to Abiezer (father of help) the second son of Hammoleketh, sister of Gilead and granddaughter of Manasseh (1 Chronicles 7:17-18). He was the founder of the family to which Gideon belonged, and which bore his name (Joshua 17:2; Judges 6:34); before 1170 BC He is elsewhere called Iezer, and his descendants Iezerites (Numbers 26:30). Without the leadership of Gideon and his commanding presence the children of Israel soon turned from the Lord to worship once more after Baalim and made Baal-berith their god. Soon forgotten was the mercy of God in delivering the nation from the hands of their enemy on every side. Soon forgotten was the memory of Gideon and the good he had done for Israel.

## **The Ambition of Abimelech**

Following the death of Gideon, Abimelech, a son by his concubine of the tribe of Ephraim determined to appoint himself king of Israel. Willing to murder sixty nine of his seventy brothers who were of the tribe of Manasseh (Judges 9:5) Abimelech persuaded the men of Shechem to proclaim him king beside the pillar where Joshua had made the people swear they would serve the Lord (Judges 9:6). Only the half-brother Jotham escaped the family massacre. There is no evidence that the Lord approved of the unholy ambition of Abimelech and the results were tragic. At the end of three years civil war broke out between Abimelech and the people of Shechem led by Gaal, the son of Ebed (Judges 9:26). During the civil conflict that followed Abimelech was mortally wounded by a woman who threw a piece of a mill-stone on his head as he was setting fire to the tower of Thebez. Rather than die at the hands of a woman in battle Abimelech demanded his young armourbearer to slay him with the sword *“that men say not of me, A woman slew him”* (Judges 9:54). The legacy of Abimelech is the story of an unprincipled man who promoted idolatry and so did much harm to himself and his nation. His death was clearly the retribution of a holy Providence for the slaughter of his brothers (Judges 9:56).

## **Invasion from the East**

In the half-century following the death of Abimelech the nation of Israel was again in need of a military deliverer and found one in the person of Tola, the son of Puah from the tribe of Issachar (Judges 10:1). For twenty-three years he judged Israel and then died. He was buried in Shamir.

## **The Judge Named Jair**

Following the death of Tola the nation looked to Jair from Gilead. He judged Israel for twenty-two years. The only distinguishing feature associated with Jair was that he had thirty sons that rode thirty colts. When he died Jair was buried in Camon located on the Plain of Jezreel.

## **Repetitive Sin**

For the sixth out of seven times in the book of the Judges it is recorded the children of Israel *“did evil again in the sight of the Lord and served”* false gods, the gods Baalim and Ashtaroth along with the gods of Syria, Zidon, Moab, Ammon and the Philistines (Judges 10:6). There is a principle associated with sin. It becomes more and more expansive. The jaws of death and hell open wider to receive all the new souls that are swept up in apostasy. Because God is holy His anger does burn against all unrighteousness and is intensified against the goodness He extends which is designed to lead men to repentance.

*Roman 2:4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? 5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”* Those who will not value and embrace the goodness of God will eventually know His hot anger.

## Five Phases of Divine Discipline

As a unique nation entrusted with the dissemination of the gospel, Israel was held to a high level of accountability. Because grace always precedes judgment God warned Israel what her fate would be if she failed to live righteously and communicate the gospel to others. Israel would endure Five Phases of discipline, the final one moving her towards total disintegration as a nation.

- The First Phase of Divine Discipline Leviticus 26:14-15 serves as the introduction to the five cycles of discipline. *“14 But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; 15 And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant: 16 I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. 17 And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you”*. Failure to obey the laws of God due to a fundamental attitude of disrespect brought forth the holy and *“hot anger”* of the Lord. The First Phase of Divine discipline was to be manifested in five forms.
  - ❖ Discipline in the form of illness and disease. Consumptive diseases such as cancer, tuberculosis and AIDS are diseases that bring sudden terror at the mere mention of their name when a person is diagnosed with one. Others diseases such as a fever that wastes the eyes drains away the desire to live.
  - ❖ Discipline in the form of crop destruction.
  - ❖ Discipline in the form of defeat on the battlefield. Poor leadership, immorality, and cowardice undermine the effectiveness of any military organization leading to defeat in battle to the point that soldiers flee where none pursue.
  - ❖ Discipline in the form of disrespect for personal dignity. Those in national authority will hold the citizens of the nation in contempt as being inferior individuals. Instead of serving the nation, the leadership will serve itself, and use government resources to benefit themselves as political power is solidified.
  - ❖ Discipline in the form of sublimation. In the military when the heart is not prepared to fight there is a tendency to run in the day of battle. Outside the military individuals can run away – from reality. Without emotional stability, without a commitment to keep the commandments of the Lord there is a running away in the day of spiritual conflict. A high divorce rate, lack of harmony in the home, church, and work force along with a high drug problem testifies to this flight from reality.

- The Second Phase of Divine Discipline. *Leviticus 26:18 And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. 19 And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass: 20 And your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits.* This phase is a multiplication of the first phase but intensified sevenfold. In this phase of divine discipline the main economic livelihood of the nation is destroyed.
- The Third Phase of Divine Discipline *Leviticus 26:21 And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me; I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins. 22 I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your high ways shall be desolate.* The Third Phase of Divine Discipline multiplies the effects of the second phases by a factor of seven. The Third Phase begins the predominance of the animal kingdom not being able to be subdued or by way of modern analogy the criminal element in society, as the wild animal is a metaphor for crime. In this phase there is a great deal of violence done against children, and against business. Because of the predominance of crime, the roads are deserted, which means there is virtually no commerce.
- The Fourth Phase of Divine Discipline *Leviticus 26:23 And if ye will not be reformed by me by these things, but will walk contrary unto me, 24 Then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you yet seven times for your sins. 25 And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant: and when ye are gathered together within your cities, I will send the pestilence among you; and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy. 26 And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver you your bread again by weight: and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied.* This phase multiplies the effects of The Third Phase of Divine Discipline by a factor of seven. This is the phase of civil war or perhaps border wars but not yet final defeat. The revolt of the anti-establishment element in society will enslave the rest of the people of the nation. In the ancient world, a civil war would often begin in the countryside. Outraged citizens would then surround the city or town where the rulers of the nation lived. A siege would ensue and food became scarce. Trapped in close quarters the potential for widespread disease became great. God said all of this would happen. Divine judgment produces desperate times.
- The Fifth Phase of Divine Discipline *Leviticus 26:27 And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; 28 Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. 29 And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat. 30 And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you. 31 And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savour of your sweet odours. 32 And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it. 33 And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste. 34 Then shall the land enjoy her Sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her Sabbaths.*

*35 As long as it lieth desolate it shall rest; because it did not rest in your Sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it. 36 And upon them that are left alive of you I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursueth. 37 And they shall fall one upon another, as it were before a sword, when none pursueth: and ye shall have no power to stand before your enemies. 38 And ye shall perish among the heathen, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up. 39 And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them.*

This final phase of divine discipline multiplies the effects of the fourth phase by a factor of seven leading to the total destruction of the nation by foreign enemies. In the process of destruction there was to be cannibalism because of food shortages, even cannibalism within the family. There was to be widespread death as people perished at the hands of foreign enemies while participating in their idolatry. Private property would be destroyed along with public projects. The people were told they would be enslaved and deported to foreign countries as slaves. Fear would reside in the hearts of those left behind. For the generation that was the object of this “*hot anger*” of God there would be no room to repent. It would be too late. A spiritual law is that those who do not repent will find one day they cannot repent. It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God who is angry.

### **A Return to Repentance**

Until the Lord administered the Fifth Phase of Divine discipline Israel always had a chance to repent and until 721 BC, did repent in part or as a whole. The nation was not destroyed or fragmented as it would be in 586 BC and in AD 70. The words of Judges 10:15 become almost tender to the heart. “*And the children of Israel said unto the Lord, We have sinned: do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; deliver us only, we pray thee, this day.*” After years of being stubborn in sin and willful in their ways the people of Israel grew weary with the wages of their sin and they wanted to be different. They had served other gods. Time after time God had delivered them from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines (Judges 10:11) to no avail. The Israelites turned to serve other gods. Finally, despite token acts of repentance the Lord said, “*I will deliver you no more. You can stay in your state of bondage. Let your false gods supply your needs, give you comfort and enter into fellowship with you*” (Judges 10:13, 14). Suddenly the children of Israel realized they had gone too far. They had provoked the Holy One of Israel not only to wrath but to abandon them. Their hearts had become so calloused and gospel hardened that the goodness of God designed to lead them to repentance only confirmed them in evil. Nevertheless, the people of Israel were wise enough not to stop pleading. Once more they confessed they had sinned. Beyond that Israel moved to put away the strange gods while entering into a state of gospel obedience. The desired effect was achieved. The God of great mercy was moved “*and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel*” (Judges 10:16).



## **The Second Confession**

By way of personal application within the church of the *New Testament* era are individuals who have acted like Israel of old. Their hearts have turned from the living and true God time after time. They have served other gods—the god of money, the god of greed, the god of power, the god of foolish pleasure, the god of sexual passion. Not liking the consequences of their actions – physical exhaustion, indebtedness, ruined friendships, wasted hours and bondage to sensual temptation followed by a guilty conscience, dulled emotions, and a hardness of heart – the soul begins to call upon God only to discover the heavens are as brass and there is no spiritual commune that is sweet or intimate. In such a state some souls try to draw near to God but they know, and He knows, their hearts are far from Him. Is there any hope? Have they been given over to a reprobate mind? Has the judgment of God passed so that it is said, *I will deliver you no more.*” If so, what can be done? The pattern is found in Israel of old.

First, there must be a second confession acknowledging afresh all that the Lord charges is true.

Second, there must be total surrender to the just judgment of God.

Third, there must be a renewed pleading that whatever form of judgment God’s anger takes, the Arch Enemy will not be victorious.

Finally, there can be new acts of gospel obedience whereby the gods are destroyed that have been loved and worshipped. God will eventually destroy His rivals, but He will first destroy those who turned to His rivals. When these steps are taken it may be that God will yet have mercy and remember the misery of His people. Misery is a good word to describe the Christian who struggles with secret sins of a repetitive nature. Spiritual vitality flees and the soul is left in a cold dark state of emotional deadness and mental exhaustion.

## **The Judge Jephthah**

From the tribe of Manasseh and the family of Gilead a man arose to judge Israel (c. 1105 – 1099 BC) named Jephthah. Though deemed illegitimate in the eyes of the world (Judges 11:1-2) he was highly esteemed in the eyes of God. Because Jephthah was a man of courage and faith his name became listed in Faith’s Hall of Fame (Hebrews 11:32). Like Gideon, Jephthah had to endure the petty criticism from the tribe of Ephraim whose warriors were offended for not having been called forth for battle against the children of Ammon (Judges 12:1).

## **Making Rash Vows**

Having justified making war with the citizens of Ammon (Judges 11:12-27) Jephthah made a very foolish vow unto the Lord. It was a vow of offering a human sacrifice. *“And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, 31 Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD’s, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering”* (Judges 11:30-31). As tragic as the vow was, even more horrific is the strong implication that he carried out his vow and offered his own daughter as a burnt offering (Judges 11:34-40; see Doctrine of the Vow).

## **Brother against Brother**

Despite the success of Jephthah against the Ammonites civil war broke out among the Israelites because the men of Ephraim felt they had been shamed by not being invited to take part in the battle. When individuals feel publically humiliated there is deep seated resentment which turns into anger and then is translated into vindictiveness. With the passing of time this deep hostility must find an expression and does in lashing out at the source of perceived injustice. Jephthah found himself in a civil war with the men of Ephraim even though the accusations against him were false. He had indeed invited the men of Ephraim to join in the great cause but they refused him (Judges 11:2). When Jephthah unilaterally defended himself and his family the Lord gave the victory (Judges 11:3). Why should the men of Ephraim be unhappy with that? The accusations and the attacks on Jephthah were unjustified.

## **Jephthah and Jesus**

By being the object of unjust accusation and unnecessary hostility whereby people wanted to destroy his comfort and take his life (Judges 11:1) Jephthah is like Jesus. The Lord was also accused falsely and treated shamelessly, as shall every Christian if they are to be like the Master. Jesus said, *“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you”* (Matt 5:11-12).

## **A Tangled Tongue**

Unable to stop people from trying to hurt him Jephthah went to battle with the men of Ephraim. He had as his ally the men of Gilead who proved to be effective warriors. Taking control of the Jordan the men of Gilead cut off the escape route of the Ephraimites. The enemy could be detected by their inability to pronounce the word Shibboleth [lit. stream] saying only, *“Sibboleth”*. Before the civil war ended forty two thousand people had died needlessly. Tragedy always results when bitterness in the heart is unresolved. Following the final battle Jephthah judged Israel for six years before he died.

## **Many Children for Ibzan**

Following Jephthah’s death one of his sons name Ibzan arose to judge Israel for seven years. In his memorial it was noted that he had thirty sons and thirty daughters, which was a record of sorts even among ancient tribal families of large numbers. Ibzan was buried in Bethlehem (Judges 12:8-10).

## **Obscure Judges of Israel**

The history of Israel moves rapidly over the next few years. After the death of Ibzan came Elon, a Zebulonite who judged Israel for ten years. Abdon the son of Hillel, a Pirathonite (lit. height, summit located in the land of Ephraim, on the mountains of the Amalekites) in turn followed him. Abdon was distinguished in that he owned 70 ass colts which were rode by his forty sons and thirty nephews. He judged Israel for eight years.

## **Invasion from the Southwest**

As the Israelites knew invasion from the north and the east, so they knew trouble from the southwest for the Philistines came to oppress the people. The Philistines came because the way of transgression is hard. God will judge His people. He will cause them to cry out for forgiveness and mercy. When the Philistines found themselves in a position of power they deprived the people of warlike weapons. Even a forge for sharpening farm tools was not allowed. Nevertheless, the Lord knows how to deliver His people from their bondage. A man named Shamgar arose to lead the people to a great victory. He personally killed six hundred of the enemy with nothing more than an ox-goad (Judges 5:6).

## **The Story of Samson**

Nevertheless, despite the goodness of God, by degrees the hearts of the children of Israel moved away from the Lord once more, which resulted in divine discipline. But at last the prospect of still another deliverer emerged in the person of Samson. His story is compelling. Born of pious parents living in Zorah in the tribe of Dan, Samson was a unique child. For one thing he was a Nazarite, which means he had been separated unto God. Second, he had unusual strength (Judges 13:2-7). The strength of Samson became legendary in his own time. It was the source of great admiration but also terror as he tore a young lion to pieces, killed thirty men of Askelon, used three hundred foxes to set fire to the corn of the Philistines, slew a thousand men at Enhakkore with the jawbone of an ass and carried the gates of Gaza up to a hill near Hebron. In the end the strength of Samson brought his death when he pulled down the temple housing the lords of the Philistines (Judges 15:1-16:31).

## **Passion without Purity**

While Samson is presented as a symbol of the Hebrew nation and a type of the great Deliverer who would give his life for his people he is also presented unlike Christ as a great sinner in need of divine grace and mercy. In particular Samson allowed his great sexual passion to overrule his spiritual judgment. In his youth he married a daughter of the Philistines and after her death another Philistine woman captured his heart and ruined his soul, not for eternity but for useful service in time (Judges 16:6-20). Following his conversion the apostle Paul said, *"I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway"* (1 Cor 9:27). Job wrote, *"I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?"* (Job 31:1). Had Samson kept his body sexually pure, had he made a covenant with his eyes, had he prayed and buffeted his body to bring it under control then perhaps his story might have ended differently. His tragic end is just another example to the saints in general and to young people in particular to be very careful with natural passions *"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity"* (1 Tim 4:12).

## **Life without Law**

In the final chapters of Judges (17-21), there is a recurring theme of life without law. Judges 17:6 says, *“In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes”* (cf. Judges 21:25). Government is designed by God to be a source of blessing and bring stability to a nation. Therefore, prayers and intercessions and the giving of thanks should be made for kings and all in authority (1 Timothy 2:1-2). *“Nothing contributes more, under God, to the support of religion in the world, than the due administration of those two great ordinances, magistracy and ministry”* (Matthew Henry).

Because there was no centralized authority a spirit of lawlessness abounded. A man from Ephraim whose name was Micah, stole money from his mother and took it upon himself to make an ephod, a holy garment and a molten image of God in violation of the second commandment while consecrating one of his sons, who became a priest (Judges 17:1-6). To his credit Micah did restore the money to his mother after he heard she had cursed the one who stole it. Matthew Henry notes, *“It is best not to do evil, but it is next best, when it is done, to undo it again by repentance, confession, and restitution. Let children be afraid of having the prayers of their parents against them; for, though the curse causeless shall not come, yet that which is justly deserved may be justly feared, even though it was passionately and indecently uttered.”*

## **The Languishing Levite**

An interesting story is told in connection with Micah. It is the story of the languishing Levite. As the narrative unfolds, a young man from Bethlehem-Judah of the family of Judah, who was a Levite (Judges 17:7) came to Mount Ephraim and to the house of Micah. The Levite was displaced, for the cities the law gave to the priests of God had not been protected. As a result the ministers of the gospel were forced to relocate and wander from place to place. *“Israel's forsaking God began with forsaking the Levites, which therefore they are warned against, Deuteronomy 12:19. It is a sign religion is going to decay when good ministers are neglected and at a loss for a livelihood”* (Matthew Henry).

## **The Selling of One's Soul**

While good ministers are worthy of support, some will sell their soul for personal security. This the Languishing Levite did. Promised a small salary, but with food, housing and clothing the Levite accepted the terms and stayed in the home of Micah (Judges 17:10). Now that he was duly bought and paid for Micah took it upon himself to consecrate the Levite, though he had no biblical warrant to do so. The Levite would prove to be nothing but trouble. As soon as the presence of the Levite and word of the riches Micah had obtained spread, a movement was made by men from the tribe of Dan to capture both. The Levite was more than willing to help rob Micah (Judges 18:1-21).

## Because there was no King

A second event to crystallize the lawless condition of the Hebrews during this time of their history was the Levite who took a concubine out of Bethlehem-Judah (Judges 19:1). Dedicated to a life of holiness the Levite had no business with a concubine. The divine design is one man for one woman. Genesis 2:24 says, *Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.* 1 Corinthians 7:2 *Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife [not wives], and let every woman have her own husband.*

### The Concept of the Concubine

1. During the Old Testament economy a concubine was a female slave or mistress with whom a man was socially and lawfully permitted to have sexual intercourse.
2. The Mosaic Law protected concubines, so they could not be sold if they were no longer pleasing to the man. The Law of Moses also recognized the rights of concubines and guarded them from various forms of abuse and injustice.
  - *Exodus 21:7-11 And if a man sell his daughter to be a maidservant, she shall not go out as the menservants do. 8 If she please not her master, who hath betrothed her to himself, then shall he let her be redeemed: to sell her unto a strange nation he shall have no power, seeing he hath dealt deceitfully with her. 9 And if he have betrothed her unto his son, he shall deal with her after the manner of daughters. 10 If he take him another wife; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish. 11 And if he do not these three unto her, then shall she go out free without money.*
  - *Deuteronomy 21:10-14 When thou goest forth to war against thine enemies, and the LORD thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive, 11 And seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife; 12 Then thou shalt bring her home to thine house; and she shall shave her head, and pare her nails; 13 And she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month: and after that thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife. 14 And it shall be, if thou have no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go whither she will; but thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not make merchandise of her, because thou hast humbled her.*
3. The first mention of a concubine occurs in Genesis 22:24 where Reumah is described as the concubine of Nahor, Abraham's brother.
  - *Genesis 22:24 And his concubine, whose name was Reumah, she bare also Tebah, and Gaham, and Thahash, and Maachah.*
4. To their eternal shame and temporal regret many of the saints in the *Old Testament* had female slaves.

- *Abraham. Genesis 25:6 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.*
  - *Jacob. Genesis 35:22 And it came to pass, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine: and Israel heard it. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve:*
  - *Eliphaz. Genesis 36:12 And Timna was concubine to Eliphaz Esau's son; and she bare to Eliphaz Amalek: these were the sons of Adah Esau's wife.*
  - *Gideon. Judges 8:31 And his concubine that was in Shechem, she also bare him a son, whose name he called Abimelech.*
  - *Saul. 2 Samuel 3:7 And Saul had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah: and Ish-bosheth said to Abner, Wherefore hast thou gone in unto my father's concubine?*
5. On the basis of these saints having concubines Joseph Smith (1805-1844) instituted the practice of polygamy among the Mormons basing the wicked institution on the doctrine of celestial marriages.

***Special Note.***

While a Mormon would be excommunicated for practicing polygamy today, the command to engage in plural marriage is still included in modern editions of the *Doctrine and Covenants*. Section 132:4 declares: “*For behold, I reveal unto you a new and everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory.*”

According to the introduction to volume 5 of the *Documentary History of the Church (DHC)*, the revelation was written down in order to convince Smith's wife, Emma, of its authenticity. When exactly this “*revelation*” came to Joseph Smith is somewhat confusing. According to the same volume (5:501), Joseph Smith was *given* this revelation on July 12, 1843. However, the heading of section 132 states it was only *recorded* on that date for, “*this revelation had been known by the Prophet since 1831.*” It would seem that the latter would be more correct since D&C 132:52 records a warning to Smith's wife, Emma, to “*receive all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph.*”

Emma never liked the idea of polygamy, and despite a warning in verse 54 saying she would be destroyed if she *did* “*not abide this commandment,*” she lived a full life. Her husband, on the other hand, would be dead within a year.

6. Following the social practice of her day, Sarai gave Hagar, her Egyptian maidservant, to Abram as a concubine so he could father children by her (Genesis 16:2-3). This was not in accord to the known will of God (cf. Genesis 12:7). The consequences of this sinful act are still reverberating down through the centuries to the present hour in the form of the Israeli and Arab conflict.
  
7. By the time of the monarchy in Israel, the practice of keeping concubines apparently was reserved for the kings only. Solomon is especially remembered for his many concubines. *1 Kings 11:3 And he [Solomon] had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart.*
  
8. Many of the concubines were foreign women. They successfully led Solomon to his spiritual downfall, because they brought their pagan religions, which introduced idolatry into the land.
  - *1 Kings 11:1 But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; 2 Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. 3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. 4 For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. 5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 6 And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father. 7 Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. 8 And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods. 9 And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, 10 And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded. 11 Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. 12 Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. 13 Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen.*

## **The Slaughter of a Sinful Woman**

Having taken a concubine, the Levite was determined to love her faithfully and make her a better woman. So great was the love of the Levite that even when the woman played the harlot and then left for her own home she was pursued. There is a type of love that can overlook many transgressions (Judges 19:1-3). But human love cannot conquer all forms of defilement for when the concubine was thoroughly soiled (Judges 19:5-29) the Levite took her home and slaughtered her by cutting her into twelve pieces, and then sent her remains throughout Israel (Judges 19:29-30).

## **Consideration of a Great Crime**

The last sentence of Judges 19:29 invites the reader to “*consider of it, take advice and speak your minds.*” Accepting this word of exhortation, Matthew Henry observes that the judgment upon the woman by the sons of Belial though harsh was just. “*Her punishment answered her sin. Lust was her sin, and lust was her punishment. By the Law of Moses she was to have been put to death for her adultery. She escaped that punishment from men, yet vengeance pursued her; for, if there was no king in Israel, yet there was a God in Israel, a God that judgeth in the earth. We must not think it enough to make our peace with men, whom by our sins we have wronged, but are concerned, by repentance and faith, to make our peace with God, who sees not as men see, nor makes so light of sin as men often do. The justice of God in this matter does not at all extenuate the horrid wickedness of these men of Gibeah, than which nothing could be more barbarous and inhuman.*”

## **Days of Vengeance**

Angered at what had been done to the Levite’s wife and alarmed at the implication the cutting of the body-entailed, civil war came to the Israelites. The men of Benjamin were forced to fight all the other tribes of Israel (Judges 20:12). The battles raged. The blood flowed. The slaughter became great. In the end 26,600 Benjamites died (Judges 20:46-48) and forty thousand from the other tribes.

## **A Just War**

Was it right for the nation of Israel to avenge the death of the unfaithful concubine? When should a nation go to war or engage in a civil conflict? Is it ever right for a Christian to take part in the destruction of property and lives? These are not easy questions to answer and should be considered carefully (Doctrine of War).

## **A Practical Problem**

There is no question but warfare brings violence and death to a nation. Warfare in its rawest form is not glorious but gruesome. Warfare leaves behind a ravaged economy and disrupts society. Children are left without parents. Home and property is destroyed. And there are fewer marriages to take place. Sometimes there is deep regret for all the hostility and passion spent (Judges 21:1-3, 6). Sometimes vows made in emotional madness are grieved over. Such was the situation in Israel following the civil war.



The men of Israel had vowed they would not marry anyone from the tribe of Benjamin. But then events changed. The hearts of individuals softened and the vow that had been made was wept over. But what could be done?

### **The Dance of Delight**

An unknown voice spoke and an idea was acted upon as to how to obtain wives. In the end 400 virgins not slaughtered at Jabesh-gilead were found to be able to marry the 200 Benjamites that were left. At the Feast of the Tabernacles held yearly at Shiloh, when the virgins came out to dance a liturgical dance unto the Lord they were swept away by Benjamite men lying in wait. *“And the children of Benjamin did so, and took them wives, according to their number, of them that danced, whom they caught: and they went and returned unto their inheritance, and repaired the cities, and dwelt in them” (Judges 21:23).*

## **The Bible as History**

### **A Survey of the Old Testament**

#### **Chapter 7**

#### **The Romance of Redemption The Book of Ruth**

##### **Difficult Days**

The story of Ruth is one of the great stories in human history. The drama begins with a famine in the land of Palestine. No matter how hard the people worked, the parched earth would not yield enough food to feed the hungry. During this difficult period, a Bethlehem citizen named Elimelech (*God is my King*), his wife Naomi (*the sweet one*), and their two sons Mahlon (*sickly*) and Chilion (*pinning*) decided to leave the land and find refuge in Moab, (lit. *from father*) located in the territory east of the Dead Sea. Sharply rising hills comprise some of its rugged terrain. From Mt. Nebo in the Abarim range of Moab, Moses was permitted to view the Promised Land that he had been forbidden to enter because of his sin. Elimelech thought there would be work and food in the land of Moab.

##### **Sorrow upon Sorrow**

However, once in the land, more tragedy struck. Elimelech died suddenly and without warning. Naomi was left with her two sons and a depressing future (Ruth 1:1-5). For a little while, life returned to normal for the two sons came of age and married. Naomi was able to find some female companionship in her two daughters in laws, Orpah and Ruth. Then great tragedy came again. Mahlon and Chilion also died. It is possible that these men were never in the best of health as their names indicate. They left behind weeping wives and a distraught mother. Those who have been to the graveside of a loved one know the sorrow that grips the soul. Life does not seem to be worth living. And yet, somehow, in some wonderful way, Naomi found the inner strength needed to make some basic decision about the future. She would leave Moab. She would return to Bethlehem. She would go home. The basis for these decisions was practical. Naomi had heard how the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread (Ruth 1: 6). Herein are some wonderful truths.

##### **Spiritual Lessons about Divine Sovereignty**

First, the Lord is ultimately in control of nature. While there are Laws of Nature, the Laws are simply the manifestation of Divine faithfulness. God can and does sovereignly supply, or withholds, the forces that govern the affairs of man. Agricultural prosperity should be attributed to the blessing of God.

Second, the Lord will visit His people. And God has a “*people*.” It is a humbling truth, but from the sea of humanity, God has a chosen people that He calls His own. It is not a racial people but a regenerated people consisting of all who have received Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour because of electing love. The doctrine of election is one of the great truths of *Scripture*. The *Baptist Confession of 1689* teaches “*By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated or foreordained to eternal life through Jesus Christ.*”

- *1 Timothy 5:21 I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.*
- *Matthew 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:*

The purpose of electing souls to salvation is “*to the praise of His glorious grace.*”

- *Ephesians 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*

Third, the gifts of grace are designed to draw individuals back to the Lord. Naomi wants to go home because she has heard how the Lord has visited His people.

### **The Day of Departure**

Initially, both Orpah and Ruth decided to go with Naomi (Ruth 1:10). However, as the journey progressed, Orpah had a change of heart. The thought of leaving her extended family and friends was too much. She would remain behind. Besides, as Naomi reminded her, it was not practical (Ruth 1:11-13). So Orpah kissed her mother-in-law and departed. But not Ruth. Ruth had grown especially close to Naomi and was determined not to leave her.

### **No Turning Back**

Ruth's decision has given rise to one of the greatest expressions of friendship love in the world (Ruth 1:16-17). And Ruth said, “*Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.*” When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to remain with her, the journey continued. It was a long journey of 100 miles, on foot, over barren treacherous land. Some of the mountains that had to be crossed were over a mile high. Finally, the journey ended. Bethlehem was in sight. But the spirit of Naomi did not rejoice. Her heart had grown hard with the difficulties of life. Disillusioned and distressed, Naomi instructed her former neighbors to call her Mara, which means bitter (Ruth 1:20-22).

## **Bitterness or Blessing**

A spirit of bitterness now saturated Naomi's heart. She no longer found faith in God. She was a very angry woman reflected in the words she spoke and the change in her name. In light of this consider the Doctrine of Bitterness. In contrast to the bitterness of Naomi is the blessed response of Ruth to the adversities of life. There is no record that she became bitter but she did become a source of blessing to her mother-in-law by sharing in her life. Ruth was not just a daughter in law, she was a friend. "A friend is one who helps you bridge the gaps between loneliness and fellowship, frustration and confidence, despair and hope, setbacks and success." Ruth was a friend. She was a blessing to others.

## **From Ruin to Redemption**

Though Naomi returned to Israel in financial ruin, broken in spirit and depressed she would soon rejoice in the redemption of her situation for there was a near kinsman redeemer who came to look after her interests through his love of Ruth. The man's name was Boaz. Spiritually he becomes a type of Christ while Ruth becomes a picture of the church. The analogies between Boaz and Ruth and Christ and the church are full of spiritual lessons.

### **Boaz and Ruth Picturing Christ and the Church**

1. The name Ruth appears at least 12 times in the Bible.

- First Reference. The marriage of Ruth to Chilion [pinning]. *Ruth 1:4 And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years.*
- Second Reference. The faithfulness of Ruth to Naomi. *Ruth 1:16 And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:*
- Third Reference. The journey of Ruth to Bethlehem. *Ruth 1:22 So Naomi returned and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter in law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest.*
- Fourth Reference. The willingness of Ruth to labor for herself and for another. *Ruth 2:2 And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter.*
- Fifth Reference. The first words Ruth heard from Boaz. *Ruth 2:8 Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearst thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens:*
- Sixth Reference. The report of Ruth to Naomi. *Ruth 2:21 And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest.*

- Seventh Reference. A word of exhortation given to Ruth. *Ruth 2:22 And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter in law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field.*
  - Eighth Reference. The boldness of Ruth towards Boaz. *Ruth 3:9 And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman.*
  - Ninth Reference. The cleverness of Boaz on behalf of Ruth. *Ruth 4:5 Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.*
  - Tenth Reference. The marriage of Ruth to Boaz. *Ruth 4:10 Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day.*
  - Eleventh Reference. The birth of a son to Boaz and Ruth. *Ruth 4:13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son.*
  - Twelfth Reference. Ruth in the genealogy of Jesus. *Matthew 1:5 And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;*
2. The name Ruth means, “*friend*.” Initially Ruth was a friend of the world as a Moabitess until she became the friend of a godly young man from Israel and then she became the Friend of God. In like manner those who make up the church were once a friend of this world until they met the Master.
- *Ephesians 2:1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)* 6 *And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*
3. In the providence of God it seemed Ruth was left helpless and hopeless in a hostile world as the church sometimes feels herself helpless and hopeless in a hostile world (Ruth 1:4-5). Her only hope was in the Lord.
- *Psalms 142:4 I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul. 5 I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.*

4. In her darkest hour God was still looking after Ruth and guiding her. “*Behind a frowning providence smiles the face of God.*” The Lord Jesus will never leave the church especially in her darkest hour.
  - *Hebrews 13:5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*
  - *Acts 23:11 One desperate night the Lord stood by Paul and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.*
5. Ruth heard from her mother-in-law Naomi how that the Lord had visited His people, the Jews, in giving them bread in Bethlehem. The church should listen for, and believe in, the word of the Lord. The Lord will visit His people (Ruth 1:6).
  - *Hebrews 13:5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*
6. The heart of Ruth was encouraged by the word of the Lord as the heart of the church should be encouraged in the word of the same.
  - *Psalms 119:103 How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*
  - *Psalms 118:9 It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.*
7. Ruth was willing to go and be geographically where she thought the Lord was; the church should be willing to move in the direction they believe the Lord would have it to go to meet with Him (Ruth 1:7).
8. Ruth was discouraged from going to Israel but could not be dissuaded. The church is sometimes encouraged to go in a different direction than it should. The church should be steadfast, tenacious, and resolute like Christ who set His face like a flint towards Jerusalem and Calvary (Ruth 1:16-18).
9. Once Ruth embraced the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, once Ruth embraced the rules and regulations of Judaism, once Ruth accepted the hope of the Messiah she was loyal to the end. The church should be loyal to Christ.
10. When she was geographically in the will of the Lord, and in the Land of Promise, Ruth was willing to work (Ruth 2:2). The Church should be willing to labor knowing the time will come when that will not be possible. Jesus said, “*the night cometh when no man can work*” (John 9:4).
11. Ruth did not fully comprehend that all which would “hap” (*happen*, Ruth 2:3) to her was rooted in the sovereignty of God. All that happens to the church is rooted in the One who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will (Ephesians 1:11).

12. In the providence of God, Ruth was in the service of the One who would find her first, see her, love her, provide and redeem her (Ruth 2:4ff). The church is seen and loved, provided for and redeemed by Christ (Revelation 1:4).
13. All the words of Ruth were reported to Boaz (Ruth 2:7). All the words of the Church are reported to the Lord and of them the church will be held accountable to be condemned or praised (Matthew 12:36).
14. The character of Ruth emerges to be one of great humility in both words and deeds (Ruth 2:7). The conversation or manner of life of the believer is to be characterized by humility. The words of the church are to be seasoned with grace.
  - *Philippians 2:3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*
  - *Colossians 4:6 Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.*
15. When he first meets Ruth the words of Boaz are designed to show his concern for her safety (Ruth 2:8). When Christ first comes to speak to the soul of the church it is about her safety, “*Repent!*” (Matthew 5:17).
16. Boaz plainly tells Ruth he has already undertaken to make great provisions on her behalf (Ruth 2:9). Christ has told the church He has already undertaken great provisions on her behalf (John 14:1ff).
17. The men in the world were prevented from touching Ruth in an inappropriate way (Ruth 2:9). No one and nothing can touch the church apart from the will of the Lord (Revelation 3:10).
18. The heart of Ruth towards Boaz was one of complete submission reflected in an attitude of gratitude and worship (Ruth 2:10). Knowing how easy it is to forget the goodness and grace shown, the Lord has commanded the church to remember His death until He comes (1 Corinthians 11:24-25).
19. Ruth obeyed Boaz in every particular instruction he gave. The church must strive to obey the Lord in every particular instruction He gives.
  - *Luke 6:46 And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*
20. Boaz provided for every need Ruth had. He anticipated her needs and made provision for them. Christ has provided for every need of His bride. He has anticipated all that will make her happy.
  - *Philippians 4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

21. Ruth was astonished that Boaz would notice her (Ruth 2:10). The church should be astonished that Christ would notice her, for by birth, and by choice, she was once a stranger to him.
- *Romans 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*
22. There were many maidens that worked for Boaz but his special love and affection was set upon Ruth (Ruth 2:5; 2:8ff). There is a special love that Christ has for the church.
- *John 15:16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*
  - *Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.*
23. In the normal activity of living out her life Ruth gained a godly reputation (Ruth 2:11). In the normal activity of living out the Christian life the church will gain a reputation.
- *Romans 1:7-8 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. 8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.*
24. Boaz a type of Christ, was submissive to the Father and understood that all of creation is also under His “wings” (Ruth 2:12). The church rejoices in this truth.
- *Psalms 36:7 How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.*
25. Humility of mind characterized Ruth (2:13). The church is to cultivate a mindset of lowliness.
- *Philippians 2:1-3 If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, 2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*
26. Not only did Ruth have the resources of grace at her disposal but she used them and enjoyed them (Ruth 2:17). The church must not just be surrounded with the gifts of God’s grace but must use the provisions of God to advance His kingdom.
- *Luke 12:48 ...For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.*



27. When Ruth returned home Naomi was curious as to how she did in the field that day (Ruth 2:18-19). The church must remember that others are watching her.
- *1 Timothy 4:12 Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*
28. The spiritual prosperity of one part of the church can spill over to others. There is a principle of blessing by association (Ruth 2:20). Christ would have His people to look after others and be a source of blessing to them.
- *Galatians 6:2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*
29. Material prosperity flows from gospel obedience. Christ taught the church this truth in the Sermon on the Mount.
- *Matthew 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*
30. Boaz as a type of Christ was a near kinsman to Naomi. In like manner Christ was made flesh in order to be a kinsmen for His bride the church.
- *John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... 14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*
31. As Ruth remembered in every detail the words of Boaz (Ruth 2:21) so the church should remember the words of the Lord.
- *John 14:26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*
32. Naomi reinforced the wise counsel of Boaz (Ruth 2:22). The church should always reaffirm and reinforce the instructions of Christ to one another. In principle it is not wrong to exhort others to do what they were going to do already, or exhort them not to do something they had no intention of doing. Ruth was not going to move contrary to the wishes of Boaz, yet Naomi says to her, *"It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with his girls, because in someone else's field you might be harmed"* (NIV). Ruth needed no convincing on that point. She had heard the same words from Boaz himself (Ruth 2:8, 9). Words of exhortation may be irritating and they may even be worded badly but the concept of exhortation is biblical.
- *Hebrews 3:13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

33. Ruth worked hard in the fields of Boaz for herself and for another while being obedient to the wishes of her master. In all matters she was satisfied with divine providence. The church is reminded to give thanks, to be content with the providence of God and to labor to help others.
- *1 Thessalonians 5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*
  - *Matthew 5:42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.*
  - *Eph 4:28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.*
34. As Boaz knew Ruth, so Naomi knew Boaz (Ruth 3:2). The church should give herself to finding out where the Lord is and what He is doing.
35. Having the best interest of Ruth in her heart, Naomi gave some wise counsel in accordance with social customs (Ruth 3:4). The church is wise to seek counsel of others and to listen to that counsel (study Acts 15).
- *Proverbs 15:22 Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counselors they are established.*
36. As Ruth obeyed Boaz, so she obeyed the counsel of Naomi (Ruth 3:6). Those who comprise the church are commanded to be in submission to one another.
- *1 Peter 5:5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. 6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.*
37. By making herself available to Boaz (Ruth 3:9) Ruth pleased him. In like manner the Lord is pleased when the church pursues Him with passion and devotion. Isaiah made himself available to the Lord and was blessed.
- *Isaiah 6:8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.*
  - *Song of Sol 5:8 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.*
38. The heart of Ruth was pure. She was not consumed by inordinate lusts for she was a virtuous woman (Ruth 3:10, 11). The Lord would have His bride to be virtuous.

- *1 Thessalonians 4:3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: 4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; 5 Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God.*
39. Ruth was told to fear not, because Boaz would be faithful to her (Ruth 3:11). The Lord does not want His bride to worry.
- *Luke 12:32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*
40. Ruth had power with Boaz because of her hard work, humility, virtue and willingness to love (Ruth 3:11). The Lord is pleased to do all that we ask as we meet gospel terms.
- *Matthew 7:7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: 8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. 9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? 10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?*
41. While Ruth rested at the feet of Boaz all through the night, he planned how he might be able to help her as a kinsmen redeemer (Ruth 3:12-14). While the bride of Christ rests she can be assured that her Kinsmen Redeemer is working on her behalf day and night.
- *Romans 8:34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*
  - *Hebrews 6:19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; 20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.*
42. Boaz was always concerned about the reputation of Ruth (Ruth 3:14). Christ cleanses His church so that she will be without spot or wrinkle.
- *Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*
43. Before the day's work began Boaz poured out new mercies upon Ruth (Ruth 3:15). The mercies of Christ towards His bride the church are renewed each day.
- *Psalms 89:1 I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.*

44. Ruth spoke well of the mercies of Boaz to Naomi (Ruth 3:16). The Church should be ready to praise the Lord and testify to what He has done on her behalf.
- *Psalms 107:2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy.*
45. Ruth was not allowed to go home empty (Ruth 3:17). The church will never go away empty after being in the presence of Christ. The church shall never hunger or thirst.
- *John 6:56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.*
46. Understanding the character of Boaz, Naomi gave counsel to Ruth to rest that day in the work of another (Ruth 3:18). The church is invited to rest in the finished work of Christ.
- *Matthew 11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*
  - *Hebrews 4:11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.*
47. Having received the grace of God, Boaz was a man of grace, reflected in part by the words he spoke (Ruth 4:1). The church is reminded to be gracious like her Lord to others, especially in conversation.
- *Colossians 4:6 Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.*
48. In working on behalf of Ruth, Boaz proved to be wise and harmless (Ruth 4:1). Christ is wise and harmless, gentle as a lamb. The church is to reflect these virtues of the Savior.
- *Matthew 10:16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*
49. Boaz wanted witness to the dialogue with the nearer kinsmen than he (Ruth 4:2). The Lord has cautioned his church to be careful in certain transactions.
- *Matthew 5:37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.*
50. With plain language and no deceit Boaz shared the situation as well as his intentions (Ruth 4:3-4). Christ would have His church live and speak with no deceit.
- *1 Peter 2:1 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, 2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.*

51. While Boaz spoke plainly, honestly, and openly with his fellow citizen he was able to guide the situation through persuasive speech and a willingness to act (Ruth 4:5-6). Christ would have the church be a moral influence by persuasive words and a willingness to act.
- *Matthew 5:13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. 14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. 15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*
52. Boaz made a legal transaction in order to obtain Naomi's land and win the hand of Ruth (Ruth 4:7-10). In like manner Christ made a legal transaction to redeem His bride, the Church.
- *Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*
  - *Ephesians 1:13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, 14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.*
53. Boaz was determined that neither the seed of his kinsmen or his own seed be cut off from among the land of the living (Ruth 4:10; 4:13). Christ is determined that there be many descendants in glory.
- *Hebrews 2:10 For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*
54. There were many witnesses to the righteous actions of Boaz (Ruth 4:11). A faithful cloud of witnesses surrounds the church when she acts righteously.
- *Hebrews 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*
55. Boaz received a blessing from those who witnessed the legal transaction of grace and mercy (Ruth 4:11-12). The church shall receive a blessing from her Lord when she shows grace and mercy.

- *Matthew 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.*
56. Boaz showed love and kindness to many men and women but he had a special intimate love for Ruth (Ruth 4:13). There is an intimate relationship that exists between Christ and the church.
- *Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*
57. The principle of blessing by association is established again in that Naomi had a much-loved grandson through Boaz and Ruth (Ruth 4:14-16). Christians are blessed by their association with Christ and then by association with others of like mind and faith. The church of Corinth benefited spiritually and financially because of the labors of Paul in their midst.
- *1 Corinthians 4:15 For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.*
58. Ruth became the great grandmother of David (Ruth 4:17). The spiritual legacy of the church has yet to be completely told.
59. The genealogy of Boaz is traced backwards and forwards. The genealogy of Christ is traced in the gospels backwards all the way to Adam but in the Epistles backwards and forwards to eternity. In like manner the church as the Bride of Christ shall enjoy the life of Christ which is eternal.
- *Hebrews 7:3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.*
  - *John 17:1 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: 2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. 3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*
60. The Lord God of the Old Covenant is the Lord God of the New Covenant. As the Lord gave Ruth the ability to conceive to bear a son (Ruth 4:13) so every good and perfect gift comes down to the church from the Father above. We are born of God according to sovereign grace.

- *James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. 18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*

## **The Bible as History**

### **A Survey of the Old Testament**

#### **Chapter 8**

##### **The First Book of Samuel**

###### **The End of Eli**

Though Samson was the last great military leader to bear the title of Judge he was not the exclusive leader of Israel. Contemporary with him and exercising ultimate authority over the tribes of Israel was the high priest Eli. God had intended for Israel to be a theocratic kingdom and not like the other nations of earth. But that was not to be in large part because of the spiritual failures of Eli. Unable to discipline his children God moved to discipline both them and Eli. Because he allowed great corruptions the priestly office would be removed from Eli and his house forever (1 Samuel 2:22-36). Judgment must begin at the house of God *“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? 18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?”* (1 Peter 4:17-18).

###### **Away with the Ark of the Covenant**

The fulfillment of God’s determination to judge the household of Eli came with the removal of the Ark of the Covenant by the Philistines after the Battle of Aphek in the Plain of Esdraelon (Armageddon). But the Ark of God had been missed, and was called for by the people of Shiloh whose citizen-warriors thought, if they carried the Ark into battle, it would bring a military victory. Instead, the people had mishandled the sacred object, aroused the wrath of God and excited Him to opposition. The Ark of the Covenant was captured. Hophni and Phinehas, the immoral sons of Eli, were slain. When Eli heard the Ark had been taken he fell from his seat and was killed at the age of ninety-eight (1 Samuel 4: 1-18).

###### **Tragedy upon Tragedy**

When Eli’s daughter in law heard that he had been killed and the Ark had been taken she went into a premature delivery of her baby *“And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel”* (1 Samuel 4:21). The Philistines carried the Ark to their own country and in a show of triumph placed it at Ashdod, in the temple of their fish god Dagon. Outraged by this show of disrespect the Lord caused plagues to come upon the men of Ashdod, Gath and Ekron as the Ark was removed from place to place (1 Samuel 5:1-12). At last the Ark was placed in a cart and sent by unguided cattle that carried it to Beth-shemesh (1 Samuel 16:1-14). But the plague came there as well. Finally, the men of Kirjath-jearim came and carried the Ark to their city in the tribe of Judah where it remained until the days of David (1 Samuel 7:1-2). The death of Samson occurred about the time when the Philistines took the Ark in battle. Perhaps the thought of the great national humiliation motivated Samson to avenge himself upon the Philistines in a dying act of self-judgment.



## **The Spiritual Strength of Samuel**

While death came to Samson and then to the house of Eli, though the glory of the Lord departed from Hophni and Phinehas, though the Ark of the Covenant was taken captive in battle and a baby was named Ichabod, God was not going to leave His people without hope nor was the Lord going to forsake His own. The life of Samuel reminds the church there is grace in judgment and an elect remnant. The father of Samuel was a member of the tribe of Levi who resided in Mount Ephraim. His mother was Hannah who knew the stinging taunts of Peninnah, Elkanah's other wife. Going to the house of the Lord, Hannah pleaded for a son and in due time Samuel was born. The precious story is told in 1 Samuel 1: 1-28. Reared and educated to be a priest at Shiloh, the time came when Samuel, after the death of Eli, led the people to put away their images of Baal and Astoreth and return to the worship of the true God.

## **A Holy Convocation**

Calling the people to Mizpeh in Benjamin, Samuel held a solemn convocation. Mizpeh is an important place in Hebrew history. It was here the people remembered the help of the Lord (1 Samuel 7:6-12) but then elected their first king being in a state of emotional revolt against divine authority (1 Samuel 10:17-24). In years to come, during the Babylonian captivity, the Chaldean governor Gedaliah would reside at Mizpeh only to be murdered by Ishmael (Jeremiah 41:1-2). When the Philistines heard of the great gathering they saw an opportunity to kill the Israelites in mass. However, due to Samuel's intercessory prayer God sent a thunderstorm which made the Philistines an easy target for the Hebrews (1 Samuel 7:7-12). The weapon of choice Othniel used to deliver Israel was the spear. Ehud chose the dagger, Shamgar the ox-goad, Gideon the sword and Samson the jawbone of an ass. But the weapon of choice for Samuel was prayer. Like so many before him Samuel built an altar to God in Ramah. There in Ramah he performed the civil functions of a judge while serving as high priest.

## **Domestic Life in Hebrew History: The Working People of Palestine**

Under the Mosaic Law a portion of the land for farming was assigned to each family ranging from twenty to fifty acres. While some families employed indentured servants or used the Gibeonites as hewers of wood and drawers of water (Joshua 9:21, 27), each family had to cultivate their own property. The land worked was mainly for three types of produce – grain, fruit and pasture. Grain consisted of wheat, millet and barley. Flax and cotton were also cultivated along with a variety of garden herbs such as anise, cumin, mint and rue. Jesus used the herb to denounce the Pharisees in Matthew 23:23. *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.”* Orchards were planted for greater productivity of olives, sycamores, figs, pomegranates, grapes almond and apples. To work the land there were beasts of burden such as the ox, camel and ass. Sheep and goats provided milk, food and clothing.

## Housing for the Hebrews

For the most part the houses of the Hebrew people were built close together for there was safety in numbers. If the town or city became significant a wall surrounded it. The wealth and resources of the family determined the style and size of the home. Many homes were constructed of brick, stone or made from mud. Some people lived in caves. A limestone cave could be cool in summer and made warm in the winter at low cost. Caves served as stables for livestock. According to tradition the stable in Bethlehem became the place of the birth of Jesus Christ.

**Roof.** The typical roof of houses in Palestine throughout the biblical period was made by laying logs or beams across the top of the walls. Once the beams were in place branches and thatch were laid on top, which were then covered by a layer of clay. It was easy for such a roof to be broken as some friends of a paralyzed man demonstrated in order to get to Jesus for healing (Luke 5:19). Since the roof was flat it became an important part of the house. By means of an outside staircase the roof could be easily reached. A low wall around the roof kept people from falling off. In a crowded city the roof provided a place to rest, dry fruit and grains, wash clothes, enjoy the cool evening breezes on hot nights and lodge strangers or guests for the night (2 Kings 4:8-11).

**Doors and Windows.** Doorways within the house usually were covered with curtains. The doorway on the outside usually had a wooden door that turned on two pivots that fitted into sockets. Glass windows were not known in *Bible* times. Most window openings were left alone with only a lattice or shutter to provide security and keep people from peeking in from the outside.

**Floor.** Packed clay formed the most common floors in houses during *Bible* times. While the homes were of simple construction they were comfortable and adequate.

## Seasons of the Year

- April and May. The grain harvest in Palestine began in April and lasted for about two months.
- June and July. The summer months of June and July was the season for gathering the fruits of the garden.
- August and September, being warm gave way to sheep shearing. During these months there is little or no rainfall. It was not unusual for drought conditions to exist. The country became parched. The brooks and springs dried up. The pools and reservoirs might run dry.
- October and November becomes the seedtime. The “*former rain*” falls then with violence to fill the dry beds. Jesus spoke of this sudden rainfall in Matthew 7:25 “*And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.*”
- December and January are the winter months when frost and snow are common.

- February and March are also cold bringing “*the latter rains*”. Now, “*the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; 12 The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; 13 The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away*” (Song of Solomon 2:11-13).

### **A Variety of Trees**

The following trees grew in Palestine during biblical times.

- Acacia (Shittah) was found in dry areas
- Cedar. Strong and majestic the cedar became a symbol of strength, stability and beauty. *Psalms 92:12 The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.*
- Cypress
- Fir
- Mulberry
- Oak. Both the smooth and the prickly type grew in great abundance in Bashan, the territory that extended from Gilead in the south to Hermon on the N, and from the Jordan to Salecah.
- Pine Myrtle

### **Common Plants and Flowers in *Bible Days***

- Acacia
- Almond
- Aloe
- Apple
- Balm of Gilead
- Barley
- Bean
- Black cummin
- Blight or blasting (Various fungi)
- Bramble
- Broom
- Calamus
- Cane
- Caper

- Carob
- Cassia, cinnamon
- Cattail
- Cedar
- Coriander
- Cotton
- Cumin
- Cypress
  
- Dill
- Dove's dung
- Ebony
  
- Fig
- Flax
- Frankincense
  
- Galbanum
- Gall
- Garlic
- Gourd
- Grape
- Gum resin
- Gum tragacanth
  
- Henna
- Hyssop
  
- Ladanum (See Balm of Gilead)
- Laurel
- Leeks
- Lentil
- Lign aloes or aloe wood
- Lily of the field
  
- Mandrake
- Melon
- Millet
- Mildew
- Mint
- Mustard
- Myrrh
  
- Nettle

- Oak
- Olive
- Onion
  
- Palm
- Papyrus
- Pines
- Pistachio
- Plane tree
- Pomegranate
- Poplars
  
- Reed
- Rose of Sharon
- Rue
- Rush
  
- Saffron
- Sorghum
- Spikenard
- Stone pine
- Styrax
- Sycamore fig
- Tamarix
- Tares
- Terebinth
- Thistle
- Thorn
- Thyine wood or possibly sandalwood
- Tumbleweed
  
- Walnut
- Wheat
- Willow
- Wormwood
  
- Yeast

### **The Festivals of Faith**

By command of the Mosaic Law, three times a year the males went up to Shiloh for the festivals of faith – Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. Every seventh day was a holy sabbath (rest) to the Lord (Numbers 28:9-10). Time was to be devoted to worship and rest. At each new moon

there was also a holy day (Numbers 10:10). Every seventh year was a year of rest to allow the land to replenish itself (Exodus 23:10-11; Leviticus 25:2-7; Deuteronomy 15:1-10; 31:10-13).

- Feast of Passover. The feast of the Passover was designed to remember the last of the plagues that fell upon the Egyptians prior to Israel's departure from the land. Warning that He would slay the firstborn in the houses of the Egyptians, God told the Israelites to kill a lamb and place its blood on the doorposts and lintels of their houses. God said that when He saw the blood he would “*pass over*” the house and spare everyone inside. The blood of the lamb would cover them. When the Egyptians realized that their firstborn had been slain, Pharaoh released the people of Israel from their slavery. The people departed in such haste that they could not allow their bread to rise and so ate unleavened bread. The central element of the Passover celebration in generations to come was to eat a meal that included lamb and unleavened bread. The Passover took place in the spring. During the festival celebration people made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Jesus was crucified at the time of the Passover celebration
- Feast of Pentecost. Biblical references to the Feast of Weeks include Ex 23:16; 34:22; Lev 23:15-21; Num 28:26-31; Deut 16:9-12; and 2 Chron 8:13. The Feast of Pentecost was observed early in the third month on the 50th day after the offering of the barley sheaf at the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It included a holy gathering of the people. There was to be no manual labor. Num 28:26-31 describes the number and nature of offerings. Deut 16:9-12 describes those who were to be invited to this feast. They include servants, sons and daughters, Levites, the fatherless, the widow, and the stranger. Israelites were to be reminded of their bondage in Egypt on that day. This feast was also known as the Feast of Harvest as well as Pentecost.
- Feast of Tabernacle. During the Feast of Tabernacles the people of Israel celebrated their deliverance from bondage, and their dwelling in tabernacles en route to the Promised Land (Leviticus 23:42,43).

### **Education of the Elect**

The education of the children was the responsibility of the parents assisted by the Levites who were paid from the tithes. The children were to be taught they were a chosen people entrusted with the gospel message, which spoke of the Messiah to come. Spiritual education for all came in the form of national events. Wars, acts of ideology, flooding and seasons of prosperity became object lessons for learning spiritual truths.