

—THE FOUNDATION—

THE FOUNDATION

Vincent C. Finnegan

GOD

. . . Reconciling the world unto God . . .

THE FOUNDATION, Kingdom Studies, Volume I

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NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR:

The Foundation is the first in a series of three books written to correspond with the class *His Story: God's Purpose of the Ages*. The volumes and class teach the great theme of the Scriptures and the purpose of life—the Kingdom of God.

The primary purpose of this book is to help the reader understand the Bible and thereby to live to the glory of God. Therefore, many scriptures are written out accompanied with an exposition. ***The Foundation*** should be considered a study guide to be read along with the Bible. The author has no concern to impart his own or someone else's theology or opinion. The only matter of importance is to understand and obey God's will. The Bible records the will of God. The Bereans furnish the example every believer should imitate when reading or hearing things pertaining to God.

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

Acts 17:11

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The Foundation

The Bible is a book with a definite beginning and a corresponding ending. It has a progressive story line with a central theme and climaxes in a dynamic conclusion. If we start in the middle of the book and ignore the beginning, accurate interpretation and understanding are virtually impossible. No book is properly understood when read in this manner, but even more so the holy Scriptures which have been authored by God with a supernatural exactness and comprehensiveness. Everything written has a God-inspired purpose and relates to the overall truth that God wants imparted to those who sincerely desire to know.

Since the Bible unfolds basically in chronological order, the understanding of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy must come first. These books provide the foundation upon which the rest of the Bible is built. The books of Moses, the Pentateuch, and the Law are all common titles used for these books. Moses is the God-inspired writer, hence they are called the books of Moses. The word "Pentateuch" derives from two Greek words meaning five books or five scrolls. The Law given to the children of Israel at Mount Horeb is contained in these books; therefore, it is referred to as the Law. However, much more than the Law is written within these books.

The book of Genesis spans well over 2,000 years beginning with Adam and ending with Joseph's death in Egypt. The Law was given to Moses, who does not appear until the book of Exodus. Exodus and Leviticus begin with the children of Israel's departure from Egypt and cover their first year in the wilderness. The book of Numbers records the wandering of the children of Israel in the wilderness for forty years. Deuteronomy begins in the eleventh month of the fortieth year and concludes with the death of Moses right before entering the promised land. The whole book covers only one month.

The topics selected for ***The Foundation*** are primarily from the books of Genesis and Exodus. The selection was determined because these topics are vital for understanding important themes that run throughout the Scriptures.

- Chapter 1 — ***The Beginning*** shows that Almighty God is the Creator and worthy of all glory and honor. God's original plan for man was that he was an earth dweller with dominion over a perfect earth. Disobedience ushered in the fall and destroyed the original plan. Hence, the overall theme of the Scriptures from then on is God's loving plan to reinstate the world and mankind back to Eden which is realized in the book of Revelation.
- Chapter 2 — ***The Serpent*** explains why the serpent was in Eden and that the devil is God's arch enemy and man's personal adversary.
- Chapter 3 — ***Dead or Alive*** clears up the misunderstanding about that which happened to Enoch when the Scriptures say "he was not." The Scriptures declare that the dead are in the grave and remain there

until the resurrection when Christ returns. Jesus is the only one who has or will ascend into Heaven.

- Chapter 4 — ***God's Judgments*** reveals the sinfulness of man which merits the judgments of God. The effects of His judgment, recorded in the opening pages of the Bible, still greatly impact mankind today. The result of the flood in Noah's day is the reason for earthquakes, volcanoes, and other natural disasters.
- Chapter 5 — ***Our Father Abraham*** unfolds the many ways Abraham is the type for all those who believe throughout the ages. God promised that Abraham and his descendants of faith would inherit the earth. The believers' eternal destiny is upon the regenerated earth. All those who believe in Christ from both the Jews and Gentiles are the seed of Abraham and heirs of the same promises. God's call is by grace; however, man must respond by faith. True faith is always accompanied by obedience to God.
- Chapter 6 — ***The Sacrifice of Giving*** declares the vital importance of the tithe and how it serves as a means for believers to honor and worship God. Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God and the king of Jerusalem, is set forth as a type for Jesus the Christ.
- Chapter 7 — ***Opposite Twins*** makes known the origin of the name "Israel" by viewing the two sons of Isaac: Jacob and Esau.
- Chapter 8 — ***Judah and Ephraim*** proclaims how the sons of Joseph became an intricate part of the blessing of Jacob and the nation of Israel.

- Chapter 9 — ***The Old Covenant*** shows how the covenant with Israel at Mount Horeb has become old, now that Jesus the Christ has ushered in the new covenant. The relationship of the Old and New Testaments is also explained.
- Chapter 10 — ***Tabernacle*** sets forth the shadowy type of the Christ and the tabernacle in heaven.
- Chapter 11 — ***Forty Years*** explains why the children of Israel spent forty years in the wilderness and how their example still speaks to us today.
- Epilogue — A succinct overview of ***The Kingdom of God*** concludes the book.

This presentation is designed to serve as a meager introduction to these very important subjects with the intent of encouraging the reader to engage in a comprehensive study of the Scriptures. The only way to understand the Bible is to read it for oneself, seeking to know the truth with the help of God. ***The Foundation*** is offered as an aid, not a substitute. All the books in the world collectively amount to a very small thing compared to God's unparalleled, wonderful, holy Word.

II Timothy 2:15

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

The Beginning

God is the beginning of all creation.

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

God is the Creator. He is the Almighty. He made heaven and earth and all therein. When we consider His creation, from the luminous band of countless stars that stretch across the sky to the vast and still sustaining food supply in the seas and on the land, we are overwhelmed with awe and astonishment. If the creation is so spectacular and infinitely diversified that man with all his accumulated intellect has still only glimpsed a small part of it, let alone comprehended all of it, how big is the Creator?

The Psalmist gives the proper perspective (as seen in Psalms 8:3 and 4): "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him...?" Man should be inspired to humility and awe when he considers the whole of God's creation, of which he is but a small part. No mind can comprehend, no mouth can utter, but a tiny portion of the greatness of our God. He is the Creator; we are the creation. He is so big, and we are so minuscule in

comparison. He alone should receive glory, honor, and praise from every man continually.

Revelation 4:11

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created

The word "God" is used 26 times in the first chapter of Genesis and draws attention to the great subject of the chapter and the entire Bible. He is the reason for everything in creation. Without Him, there would be nothing.

God sets forth His creation with sublime simplicity in Genesis chapter one. Many "unanswerable" questions about life which rattle around in man's mind can be answered simply by studying this chapter. On the first day, God spoke light into existence (1:3-5). On the second day, the waters were separated, and the firmament was set. The firmament is what we call the universe (1:6-8). On the third day, the sea, the dry land, and plant life were formed (1:9-13). The fourth day, the lights of the heavens were established for day and night (1:14-19). The fifth day, fish and the fowl were created (1:20-23). The sixth day, land animals and finally man were created (1:24-31).

The Original Plan

Man was the final and crowning component of God's magnificent creation. After everything else was finished, the reason for all was brought into existence.

Genesis 1:26

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

The likeness of God that man was given has been the topic of many a theological debate. Far too often, conclusions are drawn based on a predetermined doctrine and human reasoning rather than on sound biblical interpretation. Since no specific information is provided, questions about what is not written may distract the reader from what is written, and thereby he may miss the point. Although we may not know exactly what the image of God is, we do know it equipped man to have dominion over all the earth and everything in it. The emphasis of the verse is – God created man to have dominion on earth!

Some subtle contrasts from the previous acts of creation draw attention to the significance of the creation of man. Reference to God is now switched from the impersonal third person ("Let there be...") to the more personal first person ("Let us make..."). Many good English dictionaries point out that the pronoun "I" can be replaced with "we" or "our" when used by sovereignty. As man is given sovereignty on earth, we are reminded that God is the supreme Sovereign over all of His creation. Once again, we see that dominion is the focus of this verse.

Another contrast is seen in that every other life form was created after its kind, whereas man was created in God's image. We have already noted this point regarding man's ability to have dominion.

Another difference is that gender was never mentioned before. However, with mankind God specifically states "male and female."

Verses 27 and 28

So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish [fill] the earth, and subdue [bring into subjection] it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

The earth was developed in order for man to live abundantly as the sovereign ruler under God's supreme dominion. The psalmist summarized God's relationship to man and man's relationship to the earth. Man was made a little lower than God and placed over all the earth.

Psalms 8:3-9 (NRSV)

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established;

what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?

Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor.

You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet,

all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,
the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the sea.
O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your
name in all the earth!

God's intent even when He formed the earth was that it
be inhabited.

Isaiah 45:18

For thus saith the LORD that created the
heavens; God himself that formed the earth
and made it; he hath established it, he created
it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I
am the LORD; and *there is* none else.

God created a perfect earth for man who was designed to
be an earth dweller, not a celestial being. Man was given
sovereignty under God. In this original environment and in
his original state, man would live a loving, harmonious life
with God forever. God's estimation of everything He created
was that it was very good.

Genesis 1:31

And God saw every thing that he had made,
and, behold, *it was* very good. And the
evening and the morning were the sixth day.

The trees of the garden supplied everything necessary to
sustain life. Three kinds are noted: trees pleasant for sight
and good for food, the tree of life, and the tree of the
knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 2:9

And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

We should acknowledge that the tree of life is that which afforded to man everlasting life. Yet, a common misunderstanding is that something inside of man such as his soul or spirit afforded everlasting life. Fundamental Christian doctrine is based on this wrong premise. However, the Scriptures clearly state that the tree of life, which was outside of man, was the life giver.

Adam and Eve were told that if they disobeyed God's command, they would die. Indeed, they did disobey; hence, they were forbidden access to the tree of life.

Genesis 3:24

So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

Genesis supplies a limited description of Eden. (The word "Eden" means pleasure and is used interchangeably with "Paradise" in the New Testament.) Later in the Scriptures, the prophets refer back to Eden while looking forward to the day that it is reinstated when Christ returns. The apostles in the New Testament also add understanding regarding both the original and that which is to come.

The earth was very different in many ways. It flourished with vegetation which was watered by a mist rather than by rain. The first rain occurs in the time of Noah. The

topography of the earth's overall surface was different without the extreme unproductive and uninhabitable regions such as deserts, jungles, high mountains, low valleys, etc. The animal kingdom was also drastically different in that all the animals were vegetarian rather than carnivorous (flesh eaters). The savage, violent reality now common to animals was then nonexistent. They lived peaceably with each other and with man, who also was vegetarian.

The flood in Noah's time radically altered everything. Before then, harsh weather patterns (volcanoes, earthquakes, etc.) were unknown. After the flood, the earth's surface, the weather patterns, the seasons, the animals, and even man were all completely changed. It is hard for us to imagine the world that God originally designed for Adam and Eve, but we will see a very similar world someday in the future if we have faith.

Adam was given the privilege to enjoy Eden and the responsibility to dress and keep it.

Genesis 2:15

And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

He was given unlimited access to all the trees in the garden with the sole exception of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Verses 16 and 17

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

The forbidden tree sets up the premise upon which man's relationship with God is founded. Genuine love for God is characterized in the Scriptures by man's freewill choice to obey God's Word and will.¹ The tree of knowledge of good and evil gave man the opportunity to choose.

The Fall

Man's fall happened because he did not believe in the integrity of God's Word. That which God said was clear, definitive, and absolute. He did not have to guess about that which was said, nor did he have to question it. He needed simply to obey. The basic responsibility Adam and Eve had to maintain in their relationship with God was OBEDIENCE.

Genesis 3:1

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

The first mention of the devil gives a fundamental description of his behavior and methodology for deceiving people.² That which is seen in Genesis is characteristic of

¹ John 14:15; 15:10; I John 2:5; 5:3

² The serpent is the devil according to Revelation 12:9: "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan..."

the evil one to this day. He is referred to as the serpent, not to describe his appearance, but his subtlety. He is the master of disguise and the master of illusion. The next chapter is dedicated to explaining why the serpent was in Eden. For now, we will limit our attention to the fall of man.

The serpent introduced an evil thought for Eve to consider. Every action begins in the mind; therefore, evil thoughts set the stage for evil behavior. The serpent baited Eve by misquoting God. The question's real aim was to misrepresent God as being mean-spirited with restrictive demands. The question also aroused doubts about God's Word and His motives.

Verses 2 and 3

And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

Eve responded by inaccurately quoting what God had clearly stated. She omitted words, added words, thus changed His word. That which God stated was exactly that which He meant. She should have been attentive and disciplined regarding God's words. Once she had mishandled them, she was set up for the bold-faced contradictions that the serpent presented.

Verses 4 and 5

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: 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.

God said that she would surely die; the devil said she would not die. The serpent implied by his questions and statements that God withheld something of great good from them. He directly challenged the central theme of creation: that everything that God did was good (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). The reason He prohibited the eating of the tree was for their own good. However, the devil presented the matter so that it twisted Eve's thinking to question God's motives and actions.

The basic evil methods used here are constant throughout history. Man is tempted to doubt God's Word and His integrity regarding it. Man is constantly enticed with self-exaltation, making himself to be god while ignoring the one true God.

Eve denied God's goodness and decided that the forbidden fruit was the "good" she desired.

Verse 6

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

The consequences of their disobedience were immediate, drastic, and progressive. Before they ate, their knowledge was limited to only good. After, they gained a knowledge of evil which ill-affected their behavior.

Verse 7

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they

sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

When they had pure minds, nakedness was not an impetus for shame (Genesis 2:25). After they ate, the same nakedness was a problem for them, so they endeavored to cover themselves. Nakedness remains a problem for man to this day.

Verse 8

And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

Their once open, holy, loving relationship with God was reduced to hiding from His presence. Before they disobeyed, they had no reason to hide from God. Hiding from God continues to be an issue for man.

Verses 9 and 10

And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where *art* thou?
And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I *was* naked; and I hid myself.

The love relationship with God was replaced with fear—again, very common today. Everything they experienced after their disobedience is a type for all mankind. We all inherit the same sinful behavior from the father of the human race. Everyone is born dead in trespasses and sin, without God and without Hope in this world.

Verses 11 and 12

And he said, Who told thee that thou *wast* naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

When confronted, Adam manifested an irreverent attitude towards God. Rather than accepting responsibility for his wrongdoing, he shifted the blame to God and to Eve—the woman You gave me.

Verse 13

And the LORD God said unto the woman, What *is* this *that* thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

Eve's response was similar to that of Adam. Instead of accepting the responsibility for her error, she decided to blame the serpent.

Verse 14

And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou *art* cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:

The incident that is declared in Genesis 3 is not only the record of the fall of man but also of the devil. He tried to usurp the authority of God. His rebellious actions indeed destroyed God's original plan but by no means destroyed or

deterred God. Because of his evil actions, he was cursed and remains so until his total annihilation as described in Revelation 20. For the meantime, he has become God's arch enemy and man's personal adversary. However, his destiny was already sealed because God immediately put His redemptive plan into place.

Verse 15

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.

As the Scriptures continue to unfold, we look back and understand that which God stated here was prophecy about the Messiah, the destruction of the devil, the redemption of mankind, and the restoration of the world. Jesus the Messiah stated it succinctly as the coming Kingdom of God. The devil bruised the heel of the seed of the woman when he (Jesus the Messiah) was crucified, but the Messiah will bruise the devil's head and cause total destruction. The heel is the least vital, while the head is the most vital. From this point on, the seed of the woman becomes the focus of the Scriptures. He is the one who would accomplish that which was necessary to usher back God's Kingdom on earth. The fall ruined the original kingdom, but God directly set in motion the plan to reinstate things as they were. God's coming Kingdom, with the Messiah as its central figure, is the theme of the entire Word of God.

Until His Kingdom comes, mankind lives under the consequences of the fall.

Verse 16

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire *shall be* to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

The birth experience is marred by the pain of labor. In Eden, Adam and Eve were helpmates (Genesis 2:18), with equal dominion over the earth and over everything living. Adam did not have dominion of his wife, but after the fall he did. Her desire was then toward him, which was met with varying degrees of satisfaction. This desire has caused many women to do things that are less than the best for their own well-being.

Verses 17-19

And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed *is* the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat *of* it all the days of thy life;

Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return.

Adam was to dress and keep the Garden of Eden. After the fall, his work became much more difficult and troublesome. The fruit of the land was intertwined with

thorns and thistles; therefore it did not yield what it once had. His hard work in the end was rewarded with death.

God could not allow Adam and Eve to have access to the tree of life any longer; for if they ate thereof, they would live forever in an unrighteous state, at enmity with God forever. He had to drive them out of the garden and guard the way to the tree of life.

Verses 22-24

And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

The tree of life will not be available until Paradise is once again established at the end as is communicated in the book of Revelation.

The Serpent

Most people, religious or not, think that Lucifer is the devil. *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines Lucifer as the morning star, a fallen rebel angel, the devil. If Lucifer is who everyone thinks he is, then surely the Word of God will define him so. The word "Lucifer" is used in Isaiah 14.

Isaiah 14:12

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer,
son of the morning! *how* art thou cut down to
the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

The context surrounding this verse gives interesting understanding to it. In this chapter, God inspires Isaiah to write prophetically about the destiny of the king of Babylon.

Verse 4

That thou shalt take up this proverb against the
king of Babylon, and say, How hath the
oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased!

The king of Babylon was a great oppressor as a world conqueror. He exacted or demanded gold from all those he conquered and ruled. "The golden city" is rendered by other translators as the exacter, the gold-gatherer.

Verses 5-8

The LORD hath broken the staff of the wicked,
and the sceptre of the rulers.

He [king of Babylon] who smote the people in
wrath with a continual stroke, he that ruled
the nations in anger, is persecuted, *and* none
hindereth.

The whole earth is at rest, *and* is quiet: they
break forth into singing.

Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee, *and* the cedars
of Lebanon, *saying*, Since thou [king of
Babylon] art laid down, no feller [woodsman]
is come up against us.

The one (referring to the king of Babylon) who ruled the nations with wickedness and anger was broken. As a result, the whole earth was at rest, quiet, and rejoiced with singing. The Babylonian kings were tyrants, but now God had broken them. Nebuchadnezzar is referred to as "king of kings" (Daniel 2:37). He was the most powerful man in the most powerful kingdom. He had conquered all those he went against and had become the king over kings. He became full of himself and thought himself better than all the gods he had conquered and wanted to be worshipped as god. He had the arrogance to ask God's servants, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" He thought himself more powerful than Almighty God!

As the record develops in Daniel, God brings Nebuchadnezzar to the realization that the God of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah was the Most High God, and that he was reckoned as nothing in comparison. The king who followed Nebuchadnezzar was Belshazzar who embraced Nebuchadnezzar's former prideful way of thinking

and ruling. Because of his prideful manner and wicked ways against God, he died. This prophecy, spoken by Isaiah, is most likely addressed to Belshazzar.³

Verses 9-11

Hell [*sheol* - grave] from beneath is moved for thee to meet *thee* at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, *even* all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations.

All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us?

Thy pomp [a show of magnificence, splendor] is brought down to the grave, *and* the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee.

Isaiah speaks metaphorically about the grave and the kings that are in it. The kings were probably killed because of the king of Babylon. Their greeting in essence to him was: You were so high and mighty, but now you are just like the rest of us—dead and rotten. The word "hell" is the Hebrew word *sheol* meaning grave as it is translated in verse 11. A

³ The king of Babylon spoken of in Isaiah is also thought to be either a prototype or prophecy for the last world leader before Christ returns. According to the book of Revelation, Babylon will rise again as a world power. The head of the kingdom will be called the Assyrian (Micah 5:4-7), the man of sin, and the son of perdition (II Thessalonians 2:3). Commerce that will influence the whole world will be centered in the land of Babylon and controlled by this evil king (Zechariah 5:5-11). Like the Babylonian kings of old, he will be a world conqueror and a tyrant, only worse than any before him. Through covetousness he will deceive the whole world, and he will be worshipped as a god-man (Revelation 17:1-18:24). Jesus will destroy him (Isaiah 11:1-4; 14:1-28). Whatever this record is referring to, the Babylonian kings of old or of the future or both, it is clear that it is not speaking about the devil.

human body, not a spirit being, would be covered with worms; therefore, this would not be referring to the devil.

Verses 12-16

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! *how* art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell [*sheol*-grave], to the sides of the pit. [Pit is synonymous with grave.]

They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, *and* consider thee, *saying*, *Is* this the **man** that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms;

Within the scope of the context, we can clearly see that the subject is not the devil but the king of Babylon. In verse 16, he is called a man and not a cherub or angel, because it is talking about the king of Babylon and not the devil.

Isaiah 14:12 is the only place in the Bible the word "Lucifer" appears! The word "Lucifer" is from the Hebrew word *heylel* meaning light-bearer or shining one. The root for *heylel* is *halal*, which is translated in the King James Version "praise" 117 times, "glory" 14 times, and "boast" ten times. The word can also be understood to mean to shine or to be boastful.

The king of Babylon was indeed full of himself, so much so that he wanted others to praise him. He was very

boastful. The name Lucifer refers specifically to the king of Babylon. Although Satan has the same evil characteristics, he is not called Lucifer anywhere in the Bible.

There is a wrong assumption that the devil is referred to as the angel of light in the Scriptures. This conclusion has been arrived at by a misunderstanding of the following verse:

II Corinthians 11:13 and 14

For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

False apostles and deceitful workers give the impression of being true apostles and true workers, but they are false. In like manner, Satan gives the impression of being an angel of light, but he is not. Neither this verse nor any other scripture says that the devil is an angel of light. Since the word "Lucifer" means light-bearer or shining one, many have erroneously concluded that this verse says Satan is an angel of light and therefore would be Lucifer. However, this verse does not say he is an angel of light but that he gives the impression of being so.

The first mention of the devil is in Genesis 3:1.

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

We know the serpent is the devil because Revelation 12:9 and 20:2 say that the serpent is the devil. Many have

wondered why or how the serpent was in Eden. The answer is given in the book of Ezekiel. The prince of Tyrus is described in the beginning of Ezekiel 28 followed by a lamentation. A lamentation is a eulogy—a lyrical poem used to express sorrow. In this lamentation, the devil is shown to be the type that the prince of Tyrus has copied.

Ezekiel 28:11 and 12

Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
 Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.

The New King James Version gives this rendering, "...You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty." This is the description of the serpent in Eden before iniquity was found in him.

Verse 13

Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.

The precious stones give a description of his great beauty. A tabret is a tambourine, and the pipes refer to wind instruments, which may be implying praise.

Verse 14

Thou *art* the anointed cherub that covereth;
and I have set thee *so*: thou wast upon the
holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up
and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

"Cherub" and the plural "cherubim" are spoken of first in the Bible when Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden. The cherubim prevented them from eating of the tree of life; hence their responsibility was to guard or protect. Images of cherubim were placed over the mercy seat and on the veil surrounding the holy of holies in the tabernacle of God. The veil with its cherubim kept Israel from God's presence, just as they did at the east of the Garden of Eden. Cherubim are guards. The cherub we are reading about in Ezekiel was specifically anointed to cover or guard in Eden. The scriptures in Genesis regarding Eden speak of only four beings—God, Adam, Eve, and the serpent. That which follows makes clear that the anointed cherub that covered was the serpent.

Verses 15-19

Thou *wast* perfect in thy ways from the day
that thou wast created, till iniquity was found
in thee.

By the multitude of thy merchandise they have
filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou
hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as
profane out of the mountain of God: and I will
destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the
midst of the stones of fire.

Thine heart was lifted up because of thy
beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by
reason of thy brightness [splendor]: I will cast

thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings,
that they may behold thee.

Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the
multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of
thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire
from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee,
and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in
the sight of all them that behold thee.

All they that know thee among the people
shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a
terror, and never *shalt* thou *be* any more.

Before iniquity was found in the cherub, he was beautiful and wise, anointed to be the guardian in Eden. After he was lifted up with pride, he forsook his responsibility and became the adversary that tempted those he was sent to protect. Genesis 3 details the fall of man and also the fall of the anointed cherub.

Genesis 3:14

And the LORD God said unto the serpent,
Because thou hast done this, thou *art* cursed
above all cattle, and above every beast of the
field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust
shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:

Until this time, there was no reason to conclude that the cherub was cursed or in opposition to God. From this time on, the serpent had become the enemy of God. He is known in the Scriptures as the devil or Satan. He is described as the god of this age, but his end is soon coming, as is written in Revelation 12.

Revelation 12:6-11

And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days.

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

"A thousand two hundred *and* threescore days" refers to the last three and a half years of this current age.⁴ According to these verses, there will be a war in heaven when Michael and his angels will defeat the devil and his angels. They will do so by the blood of the Lamb which is Jesus Christ. The devil and his angels will be locked in chains for 1,000 years

⁴ See Daniel 7:25-27; 8:13 and 14; 12:1ff; Revelation 11:3 and 13:5 for more information regarding the three and a half years.

while Christ rules on earth. For a short period he will be loosed again. At the end of this time, the devil will finally be completely destroyed for all time.

Revelation 20:7-10

And when the thousand years are expired,
Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,
And shall go out to deceive the nations which
are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and
Magog, to gather them together to battle: the
number of whom *is* as the sand of the sea.
And they went up on the breadth of the earth,
and compassed the camp of the saints about,
and the beloved city: and fire came down
from God out of heaven, and devoured them.
And the devil that deceived them was cast into
the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast
and the false prophet *are*, and shall be
tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Today, Satan is referred to as the god of this age. The word "age" is translated from the Greek word *aion* and refers to an age or duration of time. Another word translated "world" is *kosmos* which refers to the people of the world or to the world itself—the earth. Satan is the god of this age, but not of this world. His time will end, as we have seen from the book of Revelation. Today he influences people to blind their minds so they will not believe the glorious Gospel of Christ.

II Corinthians 4:3 and 4

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that
are lost:
In whom the god of this world [age] hath

blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

The first mention of the devil in the Bible (Genesis 3) draws our attention to his subtlety. The reason that he was able to trick Eve was that he "was more subtil than any beast of the field." We are warned that he still functions today with the same cunning craftiness and with the aim of corrupting our minds.

II Corinthians 11:3

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

He is portrayed as a roaring lion seeking opportunity to devour as many people as possible. He is our personal adversary. So often we wrongly perceive other people as our adversaries, when in reality our adversary is the devil.

I Peter 5:8

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

He is the tempter, enticing all he can to sin. He cannot make us sin but can present sin as a beautiful allurements so that we willfully participate. As a fisherman uses bait to attract his game, so the devil baits man with seemingly appealing sin. Lust, covetousness, fornication, drunkenness,

etc. initially look exciting and fun, but eventually lead to darkness and destruction.

Matthew 4:1-3

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.

And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

"Accuser of the brethren" is another descriptive name given to the devil (Revelation 12:10). The filthy, corrupt communication with which people slander each other is motivated by the devil. He is the author of darkness. He knows that the wages of sin is death, so he endeavors to get people to sin. Hebrews 2:14 says "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

As hunters set traps to catch their prey, so does the devil set traps to take captive the children of God.

II Timothy 2:26

And *that* they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

Much has been written about the devil, a lot of which is not biblically based. Some have belittled his influence upon the world, while others have exalted him beyond what is real. Very little was understood about the devil and his cohorts until Jesus exposed them as recorded in the Gospels. Our Lord made a spectacle of them and brought into the open that which had been hidden for centuries.

Colossians 2:15

And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Jesus was the first to discern devil spirits and cast them out of people. The Old Testament has no records of people casting out spirits; at best, they only had limited understanding of them. The Gospels reveal the evil powers but, more importantly, show that Jesus Christ and his followers had authority over them.

He came to turn us from the darkness of the devil to the light of God.

Acts 26:18

To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Jesus came to destroy the power of the devil.

Hebrews 2:14 and 15

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;
And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Since Christ has not yet returned, the devil is still at large and is seeking those he can devour. He may seem

overwhelming to us, but from God's vantage point he is minuscule. Almighty God is the Creator of all there is, and Satan is but one small aspect of His creation. Satan, in comparison to God, is like a mud puddle compared to Niagara Falls. Therefore, we are victorious in our spiritual battle when we humble ourselves to God.

I Peter 5:6-9

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

When we do our part, God will help us. We are instructed to be strong in the Lord, not in ourselves.

Ephesians 6:10

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Although we are assured victory, we must engage in the struggle until Christ returns. Satan is constantly battling against all who are endeavoring to walk with the Lord. We cannot allow ourselves to be tricked into forgetting we are in a spiritual battle. We are not fighting flesh and blood, but the devil and his evil influences.

Verses 11 and 12

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*.

God instructs us to put on His armor, which is primarily God's Word and prayer.

Verses 13-18

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

We must not be weary in the struggle because we know that the devil will be completely destroyed in the end. We stand strong in the Lord day by day, and eventually Christ will return.

Romans 16:20

And the God of peace shall bruise [crush,
break in pieces] Satan under your feet shortly.
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you.
Amen.

Dead or Alive

ENOCH

Genesis 5:22-24

And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters:

And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years:

And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.

A common belief about Enoch was that God took him to heaven so that he did not die. However, this theory does not fit with the rest of the Word of God. Jesus the Christ is the only man who has ascended to heaven.

Many verses indicate that all men die, and not one verse supports Enoch as being the exception.

I Corinthians 15:21 and 22

For since by man came death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead.

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

This clearly states that everyone dies because we are all the descendants of Adam. Romans 5:14 states the same.

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

Psalms 89:48

What man *is he* that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah.

The question is asked with the answer being obvious—all men see death. Even Jesus saw death.

Hebrews 9:27

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

We see that every man is indeed appointed to die. Enoch is not the exception.

Hebrews 11:5

By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

The context of this chapter is the faith that the fathers had in view of their Hope. Enoch is included in this list of believers. The following makes a statement of fact regarding all those in the chapter.

Verse 13

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Again it is clear to see that Enoch, just as every man before and after him, died. So, we need to understand better that which is being stated in Genesis.

Genesis 5:24

And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.

The phrase, "he was not," does not imply that he was caught up to heaven. That would be reading into it. When Joseph's brothers were being questioned by him before they realized who he was, they referred to Joseph (who was believed to be dead) as follows:

Genesis 42:32

We *be* twelve brethren, sons of our father; **one is not**, and the youngest *is* this day with our father in the land of Canaan.

In the same context, Joseph's father (Jacob), believing Joseph and Simeon to be dead, said the following:

Verse 36

And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of *my children*: **Joseph is not, and Simeon is not**, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.

The phrase "is not" can easily be understood as meaning the person is dead. Enoch walked with God, and then he died. The phrase "for God took him" needs more evaluation. In comparing it with Hebrews 11, we see that God apparently transported Enoch so that he would not "see" death. He was not the only one to be transported by God. Elijah was transported on a flaming chariot (II Kings 2:11), and Philip (Acts 8:39 and 40) was also transported. Genesis simply said that God took him without telling where or why. Hebrews offers more information.

Hebrews 11:5

By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

The Greek word *metatithemi* is rendered as the English word "translated." Elsewhere *metatithemi* is translated "carried over" and "removed."

Acts 7:16

And were **carried over** into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor *the father of Sychem*.

Galatians 1:6

I marvel that ye are so soon **removed** from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

Hebrews is declaring that God transported Enoch so that he would not see or perceive death, meaning he never saw

anyone die. The only person who had died of natural causes in the lifetime of Enoch was Adam. Everyone else lived longer than Enoch because he lived only 365 years. See chart. God transported him so that he never saw Adam or anyone else die.

Genealogy from Adam Until the Flood

Name	Year of Birth	Age at Birth of Child	Age at Death	Year of Death
Adam	0	130	930	930
Seth	130	105	912	1042
Enos	235	90	905	1140
Cainan	325	70	910	1235
Mahalalee	395	65	895	1290
Jared	460	162	962	1422
Enoch	622	65	365	987
Methusela	687	187	969	1656
Lamech	874	182	777	1651
Noah	1056	500	Age at Flood 600	Year of flood 1656

Enoch literally never saw a dead person and had no perception of death. God did, however, give him revelation regarding the future.

Jude, verses 14 and 15

And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard *speeches* which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

God showed Enoch what will happen when Jesus the Messiah returns at the end of the age. He will execute judgment upon the ungodly, and the saints will be with him.

Enoch died just like every other man; however, he walked with God in a wonderful way. He was transported by God so that he would not see someone die. Also God showed him what will happen at the end of the age.

Dead Not Alive

The resurrection is the major premise of Christianity. Jesus Christ was dead for three days and three nights, then God raised him.

I Corinthians 15:3 and 4

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;
And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

The very foundation of our faith is his resurrection. If he did not rise, our faith is vain, we are still dead in our sins, and those who have died will stay dead forever.

Verses 17-19

And if Christ be not raised, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins.

Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

However, Christ has been raised. He is the first fruits of them that sleep. The dead are referred to as "them that slept."

Verse 20

But now *is* Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the first fruits of them that slept.

He is called the first fruits for two reasons: he was the first one to get up from the dead and stay up, and he is the prototype of all those who will be raised from the dead at the resurrection of the just.

Verse 23

But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

Again, the resurrection is the major premise of Christianity. Yet, the common belief held in the Church is that the dead have passed to a fully-conscious existence on another plane called heaven, hell, or purgatory. This doctrine

has been embraced by the Church since the second century when Greek philosophy and mythology influenced it. However, the Word of God clearly and emphatically communicates that the dead stay dead until Jesus Christ returns and the resurrections take place. Although most believe that the dead either ascend into heaven or descend into hell upon death, that belief is an error and contradicts the truth of God's Word.

The consistent message of both the Old and the New Testaments is that the dead are asleep. The dead are for the time being unconscious, at rest, unaware of the passage of time (metaphorically "sleeping"). They are awaiting the great moment when the dead are resurrected and changed in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump.

Psalms 13:3

Consider *and* hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the *sleep of death*;

When David died, he joined his ancestors in the state of death which is called sleep.

I Kings 2:10

So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David.

God describes death as rest in total unconsciousness. The mind of the deceased no longer functions, so the ability to remember terminates. The dead cannot give thanks.

Psalms 6:5

For in death *there is* no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?

At the very moment a person takes his last breath, his thoughts perish.

Psalms 146:4

His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.

Ecclesiastes 9:5

For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

The resurrection is when those asleep will awake again.

Daniel 12:2

And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame *and* everlasting contempt.

John 5: 28 and 29

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

The resurrection would have no purpose if the dead immediately were to gain life upon dying. The whole of the Word of God points to the resurrection as man's Hope, and nothing is communicated about immediate life after death. The only one who died, rose, and is still alive is Jesus Christ. An attempt to reconcile the dead being alive now with the resurrection has led to wrong doctrine. The belief is that at

the resurrection, the body will be raised and joined with the already alive soul or spirit. But such thinking is quite unbiblical. The Scriptures do not speak of the resurrection of the body independent of the soul or spirit. They do speak of the resurrection of the dead. Acts 2 specifically states that David himself, the whole person, is not in heaven and that the dead, not their bodies only, are sleeping in the grave and awaiting the resurrection. Notice that the New Testament preaches the resurrection of **dead people** and not the resurrection of **dead bodies**.

Acts 2:25-31

For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:

Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope:

Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [*hades* - grave], neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

Men *and* brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.

Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;

He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell

[*hades* - grave], neither his flesh did see corruption.

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word *sheol* and in the New Testament the Greek equivalent *hades* are rendered as "hell," "the grave," and "the pit." These words should have been consistently translated grave, the place of the dead. The dead remain in the grave until Christ's return.

The reason this erroneous doctrine is so popular is that it provides a comfort, albeit a false one, to the surviving family and friends of the deceased. However, every falsehood or lie ultimately causes more destruction and pain than the immediate relief it provides.

Many have suffered ramifications from this false doctrine. Perhaps the worst impact is that it replaces the true Hope. The Scriptures repeatedly point to Christ's return, the resurrections, his reigning on earth, and the end when God's chosen are with Him in Paradise. At Christ's return a collective gathering and transformation will occur. If each one were to ascend immediately upon death, it would be individual transfer. The false doctrine promulgates both the wrong time (immediately after death) and the wrong place (heaven). The correct time is when Christ returns, and the correct place is Paradise here on earth.

This wrong doctrine makes death seem appealing in that it then would be the porthole to a spiritual existence. The Bible teaches death is an enemy, the last enemy to be destroyed. Suicide is contemplated and committed by many because death is perceived as being desirable. Suicide among Christians is probably the highest. Clichés such as, "He is in a better place" or "God loved him so He called him home" have slandered God and falsely accused Him of killing. Hebrews 2:14 tells us that the devil, not God, has the power of death.

Countless people have become angry, bitter, disillusioned, discouraged, and separated from God because of the inaccurate representation of our loving, merciful God. "If God is love, why did He take my loved one?" is a question asked all too often because of this falsehood.

Spiritualists and mediums (who claim to speak to the dead and have the so-called dead speak to them) thrive because the Church teaches that the dead are alive. Spiritualism is an abomination unto the Lord—it is disgusting to Him.⁵ All of this and more happen because we do not give heed to that which is clearly written about the dead and about when they will be raised again.

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to

⁵ Spiritualism: see Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deuteronomy 18:9-14; II Kings 17:17 and 18; 21:6; I Chronicles 10:13; II Chronicles 33:6

meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

The last enemy to be destroyed will be death, according to I Corinthians 15:26. Death is indeed an enemy, but we are assured that the resurrection is coming with Christ. The dead will rise again! The contrast of the ill-effect of death to the glory of the resurrection is set forth clearly.

I Corinthians 15:42-44

So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

Whereas death is sown in corruption, dishonor, and weakness; in the resurrection, we will be given a spiritual body sown in incorruption, glory, and power. The Word of God will be in our hearts and minds. We will have a spiritual awareness and godliness that today is at best "looking through a glass darkly."

I Corinthians 13:12

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

Our bodies also will be transformed to be similar to his glorious body.

Philippians 3:20 and 21

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

All the prophets and the apostles spoke and wrote about the day when Christ will return. When he comes, some of us may still be alive, while others will be asleep.

I Corinthians 15:51-55

Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory?

Both those alive (referred to as mortal) and those asleep (referred to as corruptible) will be changed. Then, and only then, will death be swallowed up in victory.

Enoch is asleep now, but he will be raised in the resurrection. Whether or not we are raised with him is determined by our faith today.

Verse 58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

God's Judgments

The powerful, decisive judgments of God are very evident within the opening pages of the Bible. Many of these judgments continue to impact the world and will do so until our Lord Jesus Christ's return. Before reviewing these judgments, it is important to state what should be obvious to all—the judgments of God are always right, just, equitable, and loving according to His standard. Almighty God is the sovereign King over all and has infinite wisdom. God inhabits eternity, which is why He knows the end from the beginning. He also knows what is in the heart of every man and woman. According to the book of Proverbs, wisdom has always been with God. He has a purpose for the ages which He ensures will be absolutely fulfilled. These are the things that qualify Him to be the only right Judge. Man should not be so foolish as to question God's judgment; rather we are instructed to praise Him for His judgments. We are privileged to know the little that God reveals about His judgment and should never forget what Romans 11:33 and 34 speak, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the LORD, or who became His counselor?" (NASB).

We have already noted in a previous chapter the sin and judgment of Adam, Eve, and the serpent. The immediate effect of the judgment was expulsion from paradise. The ultimate effect will be realized when the seed of the woman,

which we know to be Jesus the Christ, will destroy the serpent and accomplish eternal salvation for mankind.

Although Adam and Eve were originally created in the image of God, their progeny were born after their likeness in their fallen state. Elsewhere in the Scriptures we learn that Adam, as the head of the human race, passed on his sinful nature to all; and therefore, everyone is born dead in trespasses and sins. By nature, all are sinful; however, those who desire God and strive to live by His commandments can be saved.

Cain, the first man born, became very angry with his brother Abel because his offering was acceptable to God while Cain's was not. God endeavored to help Cain by warning him: "...sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it" (Genesis 4:7, NASB). Sin's evil presence has been a reality for every man since. Cain chose to disregard God's warning and murdered his brother. God's judgment followed.

Genesis 4:11 and 12 NASB

Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.

"When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth."

The next judgment recorded in Genesis was extraordinary with destructive agelong impact. Sweet children's stories have been written, and fun songs with cute lyrics are sung regarding the flood in Noah's time. In contemporary literature, the flood has been reduced to fairytale status. Yet, this cataclysmic result of God's judgment brought about the death of perhaps billions of people, completely altered the

whole of the heavens and the earth,⁶ and caused the natural disasters such as earthquakes, tornadoes, and hurricanes. It is also the prototype for God's final judgment upon the earth. The record of the flood begins in Genesis chapter 6. Noah, who was 500 years old with three sons (Shem, Ham, and Japheth), is an integral part of the record. The chapter begins by informing us that the sons of God married the daughters of men, which resulted in children of wickedness. Some believe that the sons of God represent the line of believers started with Seth and that the daughters of men represent the line of Cain. However, a second possibility also exists regarding this same subject.

The phrase "sons of God" is used elsewhere in the Old Testament referring to angels (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; and Daniel 3:25). We know (from I Peter 3:18-20; II Peter 2:4 and 5; and Jude 6) that during this same time frame, there were disobedient angels. Their sin was so severe that God cast them into everlasting chains of darkness which is called prison. They will remain there until the day of judgment. Because every imaginable sin has been committed since the days of Noah, it is assumed that the angels' sin was to cohabit with the daughters of men producing mutations called "*nephilim*" in Hebrew and "giants" in English.

We may not be sure which scenario is fact, but what is unquestionably clear is that approximately 1650 years after Adam and Eve were expelled from Paradise, mankind had become very wicked.

⁶ We cannot be certain of the earth's population; however, when Jacob's family of 75 went to Egypt, they grew to be well over 2½ million people in 210 years. When we consider this progression and that the average life span before the flood was 780 years, we see indeed billions could have lived in Noah's day.

Genesis 6:5-7

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.

And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

God was grieved or pained in His heart and decided to execute His judgment upon every living thing. However Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord; therefore he was commissioned to build the ark which would hold Noah, his wife, their three sons and wives, plus the animals. The ark was huge with the length 300 cubits (which is about 450 feet), breadth 50 cubits (approximately 75 feet), and the height 30 cubits (approximately 45 feet). The ark could have easily fit every genus of animal. It would have most likely been filled with younger animals that were healthy and ready to reproduce, rather than the oldest and largest animals.

After God gave Noah the instruction to build, one verse of scripture describes Noah's response of faith: "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he" (Genesis 6:22). The Scriptures do not tell how long Noah spent building the ark. Some have concluded from verse 3 that it took 120 years. Others have used the reference to his age of 500 years and then the reference to the year that the flood came in the 600th year of his life to conclude that it took

100 years to build the ark. However, we are not given an exact amount of time.

When the ark was finished, the animals, Noah, and his family went on board. God sealed the door, and it began to get very wet. Before the flood, it had never rained, rather a mist watered the fields.

Genesis 7:11

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

Note that there were two distinct sources for the water. "The fountains of the great deep broken up" is not referring to the rain. The deep usually refers to the deep waters like oceans and seas that are in the earth. The word "fountain" is a spring. Water gushed up from within the earth. "The windows of heaven were opened" can be referring to the water that is outside the expanse or firmament (Genesis 1:6-8). The intensity of the rain must have been fierce. The water that caused the great flood came both from within the earth and from above it.

Although it rained for only 40 days, Noah remained on the ark for one year and three days (Genesis 7:11; 8:14). When Noah and his family finally departed from the ark, they experienced a completely different heaven and earth. II Peter 3:6 and 7 tell us "...the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store..." When we consider the world we live in today and all the glorious beauty contained therein, it is hard to conceive that this is a

mutation of the original. Nevertheless, there are some very sharp differences we can acknowledge.

The amount of water on the earth and in the earth's atmosphere vastly increased. After the flood, 71% of the earth's surface was covered with water. Before the flood, there was no rain or seasons, but rather a constant moderate climate. After the flood, not only is there rain, but also there are all the varying and often extreme weather patterns which include hurricanes, floods, and tornadoes. We now have four seasons which in many parts of the earth are often severe.

Isaiah provides important information regarding God's original creation of the first heaven and earth.

Isaiah 45:18

For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I *am* the LORD; and *there is* none else.

When comparing Isaiah with the many scriptures which tell about the regenerated earth (which comes after Christ returns), we may rightly conclude that the flood radically changed the earth's surface. Today most of the earth's surface is extreme, uninhabitable, uncultivated wasteland. Deserts alone cover about a fifth of the earth's land area. Add in mountain ranges, jungles, marshlands, valleys, etc.; and we realize the devastation of the flood. Earthquakes, volcanoes, and other natural disasters which are so destructive were not a part of paradise, but rather the byproduct of the flood.

Man and all animals were vegetarian according to Genesis 1:29 and 30. Post flood both man and many animals became carnivorous. When Adam named the animals and when the animals were on the ark, they all apparently peacefully

coexisted. After the flood, animals feared man, and the ravaging in the animal kingdom began.

The average age for eleven generations before the flood was 780 years. After the flood the next eleven generations averaged 196 years. Obviously, this has decreased significantly since then.

God made a covenant between Himself and the earth: "...neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth" (Genesis 9:11). He then gave the rainbow as a continual sign of His covenant. However, the Scriptures often prophesy about another cataclysmic judgment upon the whole earth at the time of the return of Jesus Christ. The flood is a prototype for the final judgment which will be with fire.

II Peter 3:10

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Noah and his family had a new beginning freed from the influences of the spirits that were locked in chains and all wicked humanity. However, not all the evil spirits were in prison, nor was the sinful nature inherited from Adam eliminated. You would think after receiving the mercy and grace of God to be saved, along with viewing the water and judgment of God, that Noah's family would all remain faithful. Not so! Ham brought sin back when he saw the nakedness of his father (Genesis 9:18-29). His sinful act brought to pass God's judgment upon his son Canaan. Many years later, beginning when Joshua went into the promised land, the Canaanites received the consequences.

The next major judgment is recorded in Genesis 11. At this time the whole earth had one language. God had commanded man to increase and fill the earth (Genesis 1:28; 9:1). Man's focus should have remained on glorifying God's holy name. In the time of Noah, mankind had forsaken God and become concerned about making a name for himself (Genesis 6:4).

The settlement at Shinar (which was also called Babylon) was not concerned in fulfilling God's command but in defying it. Babylon's goal was again to make men a name for themselves and to resist any further scattering of the people over the earth. It was mankind's city, constructed for their glory. Due to their arrogant, idolatrous, disobedient ways, God confounded the language and caused them to separate and to fill the earth. Hence, began all the many languages of the world.

From just the first 11 chapters of the Bible, we can conclude that SIN HAS CONSEQUENCES! Man's continual concern should always be to obey God. Chapter 12 of Genesis introduces Abraham who is called a friend of God. In the next chapter, we will review this great man who is indeed a breath of fresh air.

As the story line of the Kingdom of God is developed throughout the Scriptures, we learn that man's Hope includes the reversal of all the judgment thus far acknowledged.

Paradise and the eternal life provided from the tree of life forfeited by Adam and Eve will be available again (Revelation 2:7 and 22:14). The serpent, which is the devil, will be thrown into the lake of fire and destroyed forever (Revelation 20:10). A third and final heaven and earth will be created (Isaiah 65:17).

The final judgment of fire will eliminate a lot of the water left from the flood. Balance will be restored to the earth and its atmosphere; and thereby the extreme weather patterns will

be changed. Thus a moderate paradise-like environment will be created. This time of restoration (called restitution in Acts 3:21) will greatly effect the topography of the earth. Valleys will be elevated; mountains lowered (Isaiah 40:4); deserts and wilderness will flourish (Isaiah 35:7; 41:18 and 19; 43:19). Agriculture will thrive, and wars will end (Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3; Ezekiel 39:9).

Even the animal kingdom will have radical change with animals again becoming vegetarian and peacefully coexisting with each other and mankind (Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:25). The multitude of languages will again return to one language (Zephaniah 3:9).

The beginning of understanding the many aspects of man's Hope is found in our father Abraham which is detailed in chapter 5.

Our Father Abraham

FRIEND OF GOD

Of all the men and women mentioned in the Bible, only one is called the friend of God—Abraham. The first eleven chapters of the book of Genesis span approximately 2,000 years. The next fourteen chapters are devoted to the life of this one man, Abraham. The great promises which establish the foundation of mankind's Hope were given to this man. With him we see the commencement of many great spiritual precepts which are a pattern for all believers even to this day. Abraham's footprints can be followed throughout the Scriptures. To begin our study of Abraham, a brief view of his influence will be set forth.

God extended Himself to Abraham in an extraordinary way. He made promises to him and his seed which extend to eternity. To seal the promises, God cut a covenant with him which absolutely ensured that they would be fulfilled. After Abraham demonstrated his faith by obeying God to the degree of offering his son Isaac, God committed Himself in a remarkably unique way. He swore to Himself that He would keep the promises made to Abraham.

At no other time does God give the threefold guarantee of: the promise, covenant, and swearing. God locked Himself in to fulfill that which was committed to Abraham. As the years progressed, He is provoked beyond reason to break His promise because of the vile, unbelieving behavior of

Abraham's descendants. Yet, constantly He remembers His Word to Abraham.

Before Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, God decided to inform Abraham of His plans. Since Abraham's nephew, Lot, and his family lived in Sodom, he besought the Lord to save the city. However, their wickedness was too grievous to withstand God's judgment. Yet, because of Abraham, God did have the angels save Lot and those of his family who would listen.

Genesis 19:29

And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt.

Isaac was the promised son of Abraham and Sarah. God's blessings encompassed Isaac because of his father.

Genesis 26:3, 5, 24

Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father;

Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I *am* the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I *am* with thee, and will

bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake.

The blessing that God promised Abraham passed on to Isaac and then to Jacob. Abraham, his son Isaac, and grandson Jacob are mentioned together over 30 times in the Bible. God often referred to Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The three are referred to as the fathers, the great patriarchs of faith. Jesus said that they will be in the Kingdom of God. This all started with Abraham.

Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, had 12 sons who also were the beneficiaries of Abraham's blessing. Jacob and his sons moved into Egypt, and as time passed they grew into a very large group of people. The Egyptians became threatened by their numbers and began to persecute them. 430 years after God first gave the promise to Abraham, He raised up Moses to lead Israel out of their bondage in Egypt. The reason that God gave for delivering them was His covenant with Abraham.

Exodus 2:24 and 25

And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto *them*.

Apparently the people Moses led out had been evilly influenced while living in Egypt. They were a very hardhearted people who doubted God often. Ten times in the first year after leaving Egypt, they tempted God. At one point when Moses was communicating with God on the mountain, they built a golden calf and worshipped it instead of God. God was so upset with them that He was going to destroy

them and start over with Moses and his seed. However Moses reminded God about Abraham.

Exodus 32:12-14

...Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

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.

And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

For forty years, Israel wanders in the wilderness until God allows them to enter into the promised land. The book of Deuteronomy begins with the eleventh month of the fortieth year. Moses reminds this new generation of the things that took place 40 years earlier with their now deceased fathers. To prepare them to enter the promised land, he gives them God's perspective as to why they are allowed to enter, and again the focus is upon Abraham.

Deuteronomy 9:5 and 6

Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for

thy righteousness; for thou *art* a stiffnecked people.

As the history of Israel continues to unfold throughout the pages of the Old Testament, God's unwavering loyalty to His commitment with Abraham is apparent (even though Israel was unfaithful).

The New Testament opens with the genealogy of Jesus Christ, which begins with Abraham. Pregnant with Jesus, Mary prophesied about her unborn child and acknowledged his connection to Abraham. When John the Baptist was born, his father Zacharias prophesied and cited the oath that God had made to Abraham.

Abraham is set forth in the book of Romans as the standard for receiving God's righteousness. He is also the pattern for faith. He is referred to as "the father of all them that believe." The promise that God made to him is held up as the covenant which preceded and superseded the covenant of the Law.

The book of Galatians informs us that he is the father of many nations including both Israel and the Gentiles. All who have faith in Christ receive the blessing of Abraham. The promised seed of Abraham includes the Messiah. If we are Christ's, then we are also Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.

Hebrews teaches that the promises made to Abraham were not only his Hope but ours also. He is set forth as the original faithful patriarch who embraced the Hope above his own natural life.

Hebrews 11:8-10, 13 and 14

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive

for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

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

For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

When Abraham offered Isaac, he provided a type for the resurrection of Jesus.

Hebrews 11:17-19

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*.

Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

Accounting that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

So much more can be said of this key, influential man of faith. For he indeed was the friend of God and still is the father to Israel and to all that believe in Christ. Abraham is an example in many ways to those of us who want to walk with

God. We will look at some of the truth related to our father Abraham in the following pages.

The Promises

God made promises to Abram that affected the world, shaped history, and remains the believer's Hope for the future.⁷ God first addressed Abram when he lived in Mesopotamia, at which time He said the following:

Genesis 12:1-3

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

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.

As Abram's relationship with God grew, so did the promises and God's commitment to fulfill them. Close examination of this initial promise will provide a standard to compare subsequent promises.

⁷ Abram's name was later changed to Abraham (in Genesis 17:5).

God's First Promise

Abram in Mesopotamia (12:2 and 3)

I Will Make Thee a Great Nation

I Will Bless Thee

I Will Make Thy Name Great

Thou Shalt Be a Blessing

I Will Bless Them That Bless Thee

I Will Curse Them That Curse Thee

In Thee All the Families of the Earth Shall Be Blessed

Abram took Sarai, his wife, and Lot, his nephew, and went into the land of Canaan.⁸ Then God spoke to him again while at Sichem in the plain of Moreh, which is located in the heart of Canaan.

Verse 7

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

With the first promise, nothing was said about land. Now God informed him that his children would inherit the land.

⁸ Sarai later had her name changed to Sarah (in Genesis 17:15).

God's Second Promise

Abram at Sichem in the plain of Moreh (12:7)

Unto Thy Seed Will I Give this Land

As time moved on, Abram became very rich in cattle, silver, and gold. Lot also had many flocks and herds. As a matter of fact, their substance was so great that the same land could no longer provide for both, so they decided to split up. Abram allowed Lot to choose, and he selected what he thought was the most fertile land, the plain of Jordan. After this incident, God again appeared to Abram.

Genesis 13:14-17

And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, *then* shall thy seed also be numbered.

Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.

Initially, God gave a general promise regarding the land. Now the boundaries were established: as far as he could see northward, southward, eastward, and westward. Seed had been mentioned before, but now the promise had expanded to include a great multitude beyond numbering.

God's Third Promise

Abram in the land of Canaan (13:14-17)

All the Land Which Thou Seest, to Thee Will I Give It
 And to Thy Seed for Ever
 I Will Make Thy Seed as the Dust of the Earth

After Abram defeated those who conquered Sodom and Gomorrah, he was blessed by Melchizedek, the King Priest. Abram magnified God and tithed to honor Him. He refused the gifts of the King of Sodom because his dependency was on God. After all of this, God spoke to him again. Abram was getting older, and still he had no son. He asked God whether Eliezer, one born in his house and therefore his adopted son, was to be his heir.

Genesis 15:2-6

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

And, behold, the word of the LORD *came* unto him, saying, This [Eliezer] shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.

And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

In verse 2, the word "steward" should have been translated son as it is 2,978 times. The promise regarding his seed became very specific. The seed would be from his own bowels and innumerable.

Later in this record, God gave him a vision about the next 400 years and what would happen to his seed. God also assured His commitment to fulfill His promises by cutting a covenant with Abram. He also expanded the size of the land.

Verse 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:

The river of Egypt is probably the Nile. In the previous communication, God promised all the territory north, south, east, and west that Abram could see. Now the territory expanded greatly. The Nile and the Euphrates are hundreds of miles apart, far beyond what the eye can see.

God's Fourth Promise

Abram in the land of Canaan (15:4 and 5, 18)

Thine Heir... Come Forth out of Thine Own Bowels

The Seed Shall Be Beyond Numbering

Land from Nile to Euphrates

The first time that God revealed Himself as Almighty God was to Abram when he was ninety-nine years old. In this record, God established His covenant with Abram which became the Hope of every believer of all ages. It was the foundation of what Jesus referred to as the Kingdom of God.

Genesis 17:1 and 2

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

And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.

Clearly we see that God was the One Who initiated the promise. Therefore it was of His grace and not of man's work. Abram did nothing to deserve such abundant promises. However, Abram's responsibility to walk uprightly before God is also evident.

Once more, we see an increase in the promises and God's commitment to fulfill them.

Verses 4-6

As for me, behold, my covenant *is* with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.

Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

When God first called him while he was in Mesopotamia, He promised, "I will make of thee a great nation." Now He expanded "nation" to "nations." As the Scriptures continue to unfold, we learn the nation was Israel, and the nations included all the Gentiles. God changed Abram's name to reflect this great promise. "Abraham" means father of many nations. Out of him also would come kings, the most notable being David, and the Messiah Jesus.

Verses 7 and 8

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

He was told that Canaan would be an everlasting possession. The greatest promise of all was also given, "I will be their God."

God initiated the circumcision at this time as a token of the covenant made with Abraham and his seed.

God's Fifth Promise

Abraham's location not stated (17:1-8)

Multiply Thee Exceedingly

Father of Many Nations

Exceeding Fruitful

Kings Shall Come out of Thee

Everlasting Covenant

Land of Canaan for an Everlasting Possession

I Will Be Their God

The final recorded promise given to Abraham was after he offered his son Isaac. God said that because he had offered his son, He would bless him. Notice how Abraham's obedience influenced God's actions.

Genesis 22:15-18

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

If they possessed the gates of their enemies, then in essence they inherited the lands of their enemies.⁹ This, too, was an extension of the land to be inherited. The influence of Abraham will effect the whole earth.

The most outstanding reality in this record was that God swore to Himself to keep that which He promised. The progression of God's commitment was: first He promised (Genesis 12), then He cut a covenant (Genesis 15 and 17), and finally He swore upon Himself.

The book of Hebrews elaborates on this record.

Hebrews 6:13

For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself,

⁹ The phrase "thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies" was translated in the Lamsa Bible as: "thy seed shall inherit the lands of their enemies."

When men want to guarantee their promises, they do so by swearing to God. For God, there is no greater, so He swears to Himself.

Verses 14-16

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

And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation *is* to them an end of all strife.

When men of integrity make an oath for confirmation or assurance by swearing to God, it ends all strife or opposition. How much more so when God swears!

Verses 17 and 18

Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath:

That by two immutable things, in which *it was* impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

The two immutable (unchangeable) things refer to the promise and the oath. God's promise alone is an absolute guarantee, but He wants us to have complete certainty, so He made an oath. From this record, we begin to see that Abraham's Hope is also ours.

God's Final Promise

Abraham in the land of Moriah (Genesis 22:15-18)

I Will Bless Thee

I Will Multiply Thy Seed

Thy Seed Shall Inherit the Lands of Their Enemies

All the Nations of the Earth Will Be Blessed

Three major aspects of the promises that were reiterated and expanded upon are as follows.

- God's relationship to Abraham and his seed
- Abraham's seed reproducing and enlarging beyond count
- Abraham and his seed inheriting the land

When Abraham was about a hundred years old and Sarah about ninety, their son Isaac was born. The relationship as well as the promises that God had with Abraham were extended to Isaac. "...I will establish my covenant with him [Isaac] for an everlasting covenant..." (Genesis 17:19). "But my covenant will I establish with Isaac..." (Genesis 17:21). "...In Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Genesis 21:12). "...I will be with thee, and will bless thee...I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father; and I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven...and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 26:3 and 4).

Isaac's son Jacob was the next descendant of blessing. "And give thee [Jacob] the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land..." (Genesis 28:4). "...I *am* the LORD God of Abraham thy father,

and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed...in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed...I *am* with thee, and will keep thee..." (Genesis 28:13-15).

Jacob's name was changed to Israel. His sons were known as the 12 sons of Israel. They grew to become the 12 tribes of Israel and eventually into the kingdom of Israel. God's blessing and promises continued to be extended to them, although they did not remain faithful to God.

In the New Testament, once again we see that the promise of God is expanded. The children of Abraham extend far beyond his biological seed to include all those who believe of both Jew and Gentile.

Romans 4:11 and 12

And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had* yet being uncircumcised: that he [Abraham] might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

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

God's original promise regarding the land had no specific boundaries. God simply stated "this land." Later, the promise grew to include all the land Abraham could see northward, southward, eastward, and westward. Afterwards, it grew again to include all the land between the Nile and Euphrates rivers. Finally, after his willingness to sacrifice Isaac, he was

told that his seed would inherit the lands of their enemies. In Romans, a giant increase is guaranteed which includes the whole world.

Verse 13

For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

Those who have the same faith as Abraham are considered to be his children.

Verse 16

Therefore *it is* of faith, that *it might be* by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

Abraham is the father to all those who believe. When God compared his seed to the dust of the earth (Genesis 13:16), the innumerable stars (Genesis 15:5; 22:17), and the sand upon the seashores (Genesis 22:17), He knew it would encompass a lot more than just his biological descendants of Israel. God told him he would be the father of many nations and changed his name to reflect this. Israel is only one nation. The inclusion of the Gentiles made his seed to be many nations.

Galatians 3:6-9

Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.
Know ye therefore that they which are of faith,

the same are the children of Abraham.
And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen [Gentile] through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed.
So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

When God spoke prophetically to Abraham, his seed included all those who would believe because of the accomplished work of Jesus Christ.

Verse 14

That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

The most significant seed of Abraham was both biological and of faith—Jesus Christ "the" promised seed.

Verse 16

Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

If we believe in Christ, then we are the seed of Abraham and heirs together of the same promises.

Verse 29

And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

The truth stated in Galatians is very important and is worth

paraphrasing: the blessing of Abraham, through Christ, is for the believing Gentiles also, since the promises were made to Abraham and his seed (3:14). We are the seed of Abraham; therefore, the promises are for us too (3:16)! If we are Christ's, then we are Abraham's seed also and HEIRS ACCORDING TO THE PROMISE (3:29).

The Gentiles had been shut out of the promises, but now in Christ they too can be included.

Ephesians 2:12 and 13

That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh [near] by the blood of Christ.

Ephesians 3:6

That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

Now would be a good time to pause and consider the promises made to Abraham because we are heirs together with him. Reread the charts that outline the promises.

Israel occupied part of the land promised to them and did so for a relatively short period of time. However, that occupation was by no means the complete fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham. It did not encompass the whole world, nor did it last eternally. When Israel and eventually Judah lost the land, the prophets spoke emphatically and frequently about the coming day when they would again

inherit the Promised Land. This would be in the regeneration when Christ returns.

Isaiah 32:18

And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places;

Isaiah 57:13

...he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain;

Isaiah 60:21

Thy people also *shall be* all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever....

Isaiah 61:7

...in their [Israel's] land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them.

Jeremiah 3:18 and 19

In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers.

...Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me.

Jeremiah 30:3

For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will

cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.

Psalms 37:9, 11, 22, 29, 34

...those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth...

...the meek shall inherit the earth...

For *such as be* blessed of him shall inherit the earth...

The righteous shall inherit the land...

...keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land....

According to the Old Testament prophets, when the Messiah returns, the earth will be changed in a most beautiful way. Eventually it will return to Paradise. This regenerated earth is what was promised to Abraham's seed. Every one of the prophets spoke regarding this subject.

Our Redeemer, Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, preached and taught the Kingdom of God. Its central theme was the believers' inheriting the earth with Christ as King. Christ is not his name, but his title. "Christ" is Messiah, meaning anointed King of earth. He will rule God's Kingdom on earth. He said, "Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." The parables focus on the Kingdom with emphasis on the land. His response to the believing malefactor who was crucified with him was that he would see him in Paradise. Paradise is on earth, not in heaven. On the day of his ascension, his disciples asked if it were time to restore the Kingdom to Israel.

Paul the Apostle, the writer of the seven Church Epistles, also taught the Kingdom of God. He "received all that came in unto him, preaching the Kingdom of God..." (Acts 28:30 and 31). His writings spoke plainly of Abraham's Hope as

being our Hope (as we have already noted in Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews).

The book of Revelation, the conclusion of the written Word, clearly explains this truth.

Revelation 5:10

And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

Revelation 11:15

And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

Abraham has to this day never inherited the land promised him. He must be resurrected to receive that which was promised—inheritance in the Kingdom of God.

The overwhelming evidence of the Scriptures, for those with eyes to see and ears to hear, is that Christ, along with the saints, will inherit the earth and do so eternally. The popular Christian doctrine that the believers go to heaven is a direct contradiction to the truth of God's Word. Nowhere does it say that we will ascend into heaven and live there eternally with our Lord.

The promises made to Abraham are for him and his seed forever. Those who are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. Those who have faith in Christ Jesus will inherit the land with Abraham when our Lord returns.

Called by Grace

God called Abraham because of His own loving-kindness and tender mercies. Abraham did not earn or merit the privilege in any way. God's call to him (as it is with everyone He calls) was by grace—a free expression of God's own bountiful benevolence. According to Joshua, Abraham was an idolater when God's call came.

Joshua 24:2 and 3

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

"Flood" should have been translated river, in that it refers to the Euphrates River. Abraham lived in Ur of the Chaldeans in Mesopotamia, which is on the other side of the Euphrates as viewed from Canaan.

Like Abraham, everyone who is called is dead in trespasses and sins. No one deserves the gracious, merciful call of God. He calls, not because of man's actions, but due to His own, self-motivated purpose.

Ephesians 2:5, 8, and 9

Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and
that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:
Not of works, lest any man should boast.

That which God promises to His chosen is so abundant, it could only be received as a gift. No one could be good enough or work hard enough to earn salvation! The emphasis of the encounter with Abraham was solely on God's grace. Notice the words "I will" in this first call to Abraham.

Genesis 12:1-3

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

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.

Clearly stressed is the focus on God and what **He will do**. Abraham's responsibility was to trust that Almighty God would do what He had promised. As Abraham's relationship developed with God, the promises and God's commitment to fulfill them expanded. Following are some of the records in which God spoke to him. Notice again the prominence given to the words "**I will**" and "**will I**."

Verse 7

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

Genesis 13:14-17

And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot
was separated from him, Lift up now thine
eyes, and look from the place where thou art
northward, and southward, and eastward, and
westward:

For all the land which thou seest, to thee **will I**
give it, and to thy seed for ever.

And **I will** make thy seed as the dust of the
earth: so that if a man can number the dust of
the earth, *then* shall thy seed also be
numbered.

Arise, walk through the land in the length of it
and in the breadth of it; for **I will** give it unto
thee.

Genesis 17:6-8

And **I will** make thee exceeding fruitful, and **I**
will make nations of thee, and kings shall come
out of thee.

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

And **I will** give unto thee, and to thy seed after
thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all
the land of Canaan, for an everlasting
possession; and **I will** be their God.

Genesis 22:17

That in blessing **I will** bless thee, and in multiplying **I will** multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which *is* upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

The emphasis on the promises and God's faithfulness to fulfill them is continued into the New Testament.

Romans 4:13-16, 20

For **the promise**, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

For if they which are of the law *be* heirs, faith is made void, and **the promise** made of none effect:

Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, *there is* no transgression.

Therefore *it is* of faith, that *it might be* by grace; to the end **the promise** might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

He staggered not at **the promise** of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

Galatians 3:16, 18, 22, 29

Now to Abraham and his seed were **the promises** made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

For if the inheritance *be* of the law, *it is* no more of **promise**: but God gave *it* to Abraham by **promise**.

But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that **the promise** by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to **the promise**.

When we consider the magnitude of the promises and God's unaltered commitment to carry them out, we must conclude that we receive them only by grace, not of works. Now that we have acknowledged the obvious about God's grace, we should explain the subtle misunderstanding that seems to be woven into our Christian doctrine.

The common error is having the belief that man has no responsibility to do anything other than accept God's gracious gifts and promises. A fine line of demarcation separates truth from error regarding this very important subject. Since Abraham is held up as a type for receiving righteousness and having faith, once again we will examine his original call.

Genesis 12:1-4

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

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.
So Abram departed....

The communication began with God giving Abram a command. Leave your country, family, father's house, and go to a place I will lead you. The command is followed with the promise stated in verses 2 and 3. Then Abram departed. If Abram had not done what God originally commanded, the record would have ended. He had a responsibility to respond to God's command. First came the **C**ommand, then the **P**romise, followed by the **R**esponse. His response was he departed which means he obeyed. (This was the original C.P.R.!) The work required from Abram did not nullify God's grace, rather it was the proper response that God expected.

A large part of the error regarding works and grace is due to wresting select verses of scripture out of their context. Such is the case with Romans 4.

Romans 4:1-5

What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?
For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God.
For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.
Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.
But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Often these verses are held up as proof that righteousness is obtained by faith alone and that no works are required. These verses must be understood within their context. This section draws a conclusion based upon the previous chapters, as shown by the question, "What shall we say then?" What is the context? The first three chapters of Romans powerfully communicate man's great need and total inability to help himself. Chapter 3 sums up the argument with, "There is none righteous, no, not one:...Destruction and misery are in their [mankind's] ways; and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes" (Romans 3:10, 16-18). Many were holding onto the Law and falsely believing that it provided the means to salvation. God clarifies that justification is made available only through the gracious redemption provided in Jesus Christ. The point of the section is that by the works of the Law, no flesh is justified in His sight, and righteousness comes by way of Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:20, 24, 28

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

The first time righteousness relating to Abraham is spoken of is in Genesis. God's dealing with him set the standard for all that follows. In order to eliminate completely any misunderstanding about the Law as a standard for receiving righteousness, our attention is directed to Abraham. He received God's promise for righteousness over 400 years

before the Law was given to Moses. Therefore, the Law had nothing to do with it.

Righteousness is not by the works of the Law or men's contrived works, but by the grace of God. Abraham's response to grace was faith (which is utter trust and confidence that God will fulfill His promises). Faith is not works, but if we have genuine faith, then there will be corresponding works. We have already seen that Abraham had the responsibility to obey God's command. Because he believed what God said, which is faith, he did what God told him to do. His believing was faith, and his doing was works based on his faith.

This section logically refutes any and all claims that the Law could provide that which became available only through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The context does not say man has absolutely no responsibility. He does have the responsibility to obey God's commands. Romans 4 continues by quoting Psalm 32 which David wrote.

Romans 4:6-8

Even as David also describeth the blessedness
of the man, unto whom God imputeth
righteousness without works,
Saying, Blessed *are* they whose iniquities are
forgiven, and whose sins are covered.
Blessed *is* the man to whom the Lord will not
impute sin.

A reading of Psalm 32 reveals that David was in no way saying that man has no works, rather the opposite is true. The verses in Psalms following those which are quoted in Romans show how he repented of his sins and followed God.

The book of James emphatically clears the air on the relationship of faith and works. In this section, God provides

unmistakable illustrative examples so that we do not miss the point. First, faith and works are compared to someone who has need of food.

James 2:14-17

What *doth it* profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,

And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what *doth it* profit?

Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

If someone who is hungry asks you for food and your response is just kind, encouraging words without giving food, what good is it? When someone is hungry, food is needed, not positive verbiage. Talk is useless in this situation. Faith without works is compared to these empty words. Three times in this section, God says that faith without works is dead. This one illustration shows clearly the wrong thinking that faith has no associated works and is followed with this logical statement.

Verse 18

Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

Faith and works are not identical, but one always accompanies the other. If there is genuine faith, there will always be corresponding works.

The next example addresses the person who thinks he has faith because he has knowledge about God which he considers to be truth.

Verses 19 and 20

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

Knowing there is only one God is so fundamental, even the devils (who obviously do not have faith) know. Real faith has works! Mental assent is not to be perceived as faith. The scope of the Bible shows that the devil knows that the Scriptures are the Word of God. However, that he has no faith is also very evident. So, intellectual assent is not faith! Nevertheless, not all works are the result of faith. Many atheists are involved in noble works which may look identical to a believer's works. Yet the atheists' works are egocentric, while the believer's works are God-centered. Faith is always founded on God's Word and will inspire accompanying works. Therefore our works based on God's Word reveal to us that we have faith. The deception dealt with in this chapter is thinking we have faith when we do not have corresponding works.

Our attention is now drawn to Abraham, who offered his son Isaac, as is recorded previously in Genesis 22.

James 2:21 and 22

Was not Abraham our father justified by works,
when he had offered Isaac his son upon the
altar?

Seest thou how faith wrought with his works,
and by works was faith made perfect?

Abraham absolutely believed that Isaac was the promised offspring. When God told him to offer Isaac, Abraham reasoned (according to Hebrews 11) that God would raise him from the dead; therefore he acted. Because of faith, he obeyed God.

Romans 4 said Abraham was justified by faith. Now James 2 says Abraham was justified by works. How can this be so? Faith and works are not to be separated when the work is based on God's Word and commandments. Again, Romans 4 shows that the Law and/or man's own works are powerless for acquiring righteousness. Faith is based on God's Word. Works are to be founded upon faith. The work spoken of in James 2 is based on Abraham's faith. The way we know if we have faith is by giving heed to our works.

Verses 23 and 24

And the scripture was fulfilled which saith,
Abraham believed God, and it was imputed
unto him for righteousness: and he was called
the Friend of God.

Ye see then how that by works a man is
justified, and not by faith only.

The 14 chapters in Genesis dedicated to Abraham show his life was lived based upon his obedience to God. His obedience showed his faith.

The next example we are given is regarding Rahab from Joshua 6.

James 2:25

Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent *them* out another way?

Rahab risked her life in hiding the two spies who came from Joshua. Her actions, which saved herself and her family, were based on her faith.

The final illustration to help us with the understanding that faith without works is dead is so simple that even a child is able to understand.

Verse 26

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Life is represented as "spirit." As the body without life is dead, so faith without works is dead.

Works always accompany true faith. Faith is absolutely required to receive the promises of God. So how can anyone conclude that man is required to do no works because of God's grace?

Verses such as Romans 10:9 and 10 and John 3:16 are often held up as the formula necessary to receive salvation. The popular premise believed is that a one time acceptance of Jesus as Lord guarantees salvation and that no ongoing works are required.

One simple verse of scripture refutes the illogic that no works are required. Jesus said the following.

Luke 6:46

And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

If he is our Lord, then we do what he says. If we think we do not need to obey because we are saved by grace, then we are deceived and are going to have a horrific experience when we face the Lord.

Matthew 7:21-23

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Yes, Abraham's call was a call of grace. Yet, had he not responded by obeying God, he neither would be considered the father of faith, nor would he be saved.

Like Abraham, we too receive a command to leave our old lives. Abraham could not continue as an idolater and also have a relationship with God, nor can we. The promises offered to him are the same as those offered to us. Similarly, our response must be like his, which was to obey. The New Testament teaches the same realities of **C**ommand, **P**romise, and **R**esponse.

Hagar

Fifteen years after Abraham had received the promise, and ten years after living in the land of Canaan, he and Sarah still had no children. Yet, much of what God promised was contingent upon their having children. Consequently, Sarah contrived a plan in which Abraham willingly participated.

Genesis 16:1 and 2

Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar.

And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

Years earlier, shortly after they first arrived in Canaan, there was a grievous famine in the land. Therefore, they journeyed into Egypt. While there, Pharaoh gave Abraham much livestock, menservants, and maidservants as a token of peace for wrongly taking Sarah to be his own. The Lord plagued Pharaoh because of Sarah, so he told Abraham to take his wife and belongings and to leave the country. This is probably the time when Hagar, the Egyptian, became Sarah's handmaid.

The intent of Sarah's scheme was "that I may obtain children by her." She wanted Hagar to carry Abraham's child and then give him to her. It sounded like a reasonable plan, but it was one that failed miserably because it was self-devised rather than God-inspired.

Verses 3 and 4

And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.

And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.

Hagar despised Sarah. She certainly had reason considering that she was a slave taken from her country, forced to marry someone selected for her, and now pregnant with a child that would be taken from her.

Verses 5 and 6

And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong *be* upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee.

But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid *is* in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.

After Hagar fled, God intervened and told her to return to her mistress, Sarah. The angel of the Lord also spoke about her unborn child.

Verses 11 and 12

And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou *art* with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction.

And he will 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.

"A wild man" literally translated from the Hebrew would read "a wild-ass man." The implication is that he will be like a wild ass—fierce, untamed, and unsettled in his habitation. He will live in deserts and mountains and be warlike and violent; he will exercise himself continually in hunting beasts and oppressing men. This is the exact way Ishmael and his descendants lived and still do today.

Ishmael, as an adult, settled in the land of Paran, a region lying between Canaan and the mountains of Sinai. He became a desert drifter. His twelve sons, the Ishmaelites (who became the founders of many Arab tribes), spread over the wide desert spaces of northern Arabia from the Red Sea to the Euphrates River. Today, Abraham is considered to be the father of the Muslims through his son Ishmael.

Sarah's plan was a disaster and set the stage for human conflict that continues to this very day in the land of Israel.

This all happened when Abraham was 86 years old. Thirteen years passed before God had anything recorded again. When Abraham was 99, God revealed His plan. Their human plan failed. Now Almighty God would bring to pass His will.

Genesis 17:1-4

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

And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.

And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,

As for me, behold, my covenant *is* with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.

When God first spoke, He promised Abraham would be the father of one nation; now it was expanded to many nations. God changed his name to reflect this promise.

Verses 5 and 6

Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

The emphasis was on what God would do, not Abraham and Sarah. As the Bible develops throughout the Old Testament, Israel (the nation that descended from Abraham) becomes the focal point. Not until the New Testament do we clearly see the fullness of the promise regarding many nations. After Christ ascended, the first century Church believers who were Abraham's biological seed (that is Israel) had great difficulty accepting the Gentiles. However, had they studied Genesis and understood the promise given to their father Abraham, they would have had no problem.

The Hebrew word translated "nations" is *gowy* (*goy*), which is most often translated "Gentiles." God's original intent with Abraham was not only regarding Israel but also the Gentiles.

Galatians 3:6-9, 14, 29

Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen [Gentiles] through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

From the beginning, God knew that the true seed of Abraham and the descendants of His promise would be all those who believe, both Jews and Gentiles. The blessed children of Abraham are so, not because of blood lineage, but faith. All those of faith are heirs together with him of the same promise. The greatest of his biological seed was Jesus the Messiah.

Galatians 3:16

Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

As the record develops in Genesis 17, God and Abraham cut a covenant which is how the circumcision was initiated.

Genesis 17:10 and 11

This *is* my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.

And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.

That selfsame day, Abraham, Ishmael, and all the men in his house were circumcised. According to Genesis 14, there were 318 men who went to war from his house. By this time there were probably a lot more. In this record, God clearly communicates that the promised seed would be of Isaac, who was not yet born. Isaac begat Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, and a nation of people developed. The nation of Israel, as the years passed, prided themselves in being God's chosen people because of the circumcision. Unfortunately, they became very arrogant and looked down on all other people. Ironically, the first people who were circumcised with Abraham were all Gentiles since Isaac was not yet born. Abraham himself was a Gentile! God never wanted the children of promise to be limited only to Israel.

Nine months after this record, Isaac was born of Sarah.

Genesis 21:1-3

And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken.

For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.

And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac.

The situation with Hagar and Ishmael once again surfaced as a problem.

Verses 9-11

And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking.

Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, *even* with Isaac.

And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son.

Abraham loved his son, Ishmael, but God told him to follow that which Sarah had said, so he obeyed and sent them away. God promised He would care for them. Not often noted, but certainly significant, is Abraham's obedience in this situation. The father of faith obeyed God, even when it meant sending away his thirteen year old son.

The story about Hagar teaches us the foolishness of dreaming up our own plans rather than patiently awaiting God's promise. Living by human intellect and wisdom can be very painful. All works are not based on true faith. Faith

begins with God's Word. After we receive the Word of God and believe it, then godly works will follow. Works that are based on our own contrived ideas are considered to be works of the flesh.

We can also see from this record that our father Abraham was not perfect. He made mistakes, but he was faithful until the end. God knows we will sin. I John 1 tells us that every man sins, and anyone who thinks differently is deceived. The Lord Jesus told us to pray daily for forgiveness of sins. Sinless perfection is not the example of Abraham, rather a walk of faith. He kept his eyes upon God and His promises all the way to the end of his life. Indeed, great lessons are learned from Hagar; however, God had even more in mind. Galatians reveals to us great truths about our Hope relating back to this record with Hagar.

Galatians 4:21

Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?

Some desired to be under the Law. They believed that adherence to the Law of Moses was necessary in order to be saved. However, the Law was not given to bring about salvation, but rather as a standard for living until the Messiah would come and accomplish the necessary, perfect sacrifice which would make available salvation.

The question put to them was, "Do you not hear the Law?" If they had really studied the Law, they would have understood the lessons provided in Abraham. The promise and covenant given to Abraham preceded the Mosaic Law and superseded it. The Law was only a temporary measure until Christ. Jesus Christ brings us back to the original covenant made to Abraham. Genesis 17:7 refers to the promise made with Abraham as everlasting. The covenant

given to Moses on Mount Sinai is not referred to as everlasting. Jesus Christ was both the fulfillment of the Law covenant and the continuation of the one made to Abraham.

To help us understand these matters, God brings our attention back to Abraham's two wives, Hagar and Sarah.

Verses 22 and 23

For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

But he *who* was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.

The two sons were Ishmael and Isaac. Ishmael was born of the bondmaid, Hagar; and Isaac was born by the freewoman Sarah. The birth of Ishmael was according to the flesh. God did not instruct Abraham to take Hagar. Rather, it was Sarah's plan and therefore according to the flesh. They got anxious while waiting for the promised child and tried to do it on their own. Needless to say it did not work out well. The birth of Isaac was according to the promise and eventually led to Christ.

Verse 24

Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar [Hagar].

The two covenants are the Law with Moses and the everlasting covenant with Abraham. God gave the covenant to Moses while he was on Mount Sinai. In this allegory, Hagar represents Moses' covenant, the Law.

The temple was in Jerusalem and therefore the center of Judaism. Although Christ had come and freed them from the ceremonial aspects of the Law such as the washings, animal sacrifices, temple service, etc., they still desired to continue. This old Jerusalem is compared with Hagar.

Verse 25

For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

In this allegory, Sarah (by implication) represents the covenant given to Abraham and the new Jerusalem which is yet to come.

Verse 26

But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

This new Jerusalem was part of Abraham's Hope. "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God" (Hebrews 11:10). All the faithful fathers looked for this city.

Hebrews 11:13-16

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better *country*, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

The promise of God is that those who are faithful unto the end will inherit the new Jerusalem.

Revelation 3:12

Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, *which is new Jerusalem*, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and *I will write upon him* my new name.

God revealed to the Apostle John a vision about this new Jerusalem which is described in Revelation chapter 21.

Revelation 21:2, 10

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

Israel always identified themselves with Isaac and never considered themselves to be associated with Ishmael. Yet,

because of their resistance to God and to the Gentile believers, God compared them to Ishmael and Hagar, not to Isaac and Sarah.

Galatians 4:28-31

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him *that was born* after the Spirit, even so *it is* now.

Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

God's supernatural foresight is amazing. The words, originally spoken by Sarah and confirmed as truth by God to Abraham in Genesis 21:10-13, had impact for thousands of years into the future as is seen in Galatians.

God revealed His plan for eternity with Abraham in the first book of the Bible, Genesis. So much can be gained by studying the life of this man, Abraham. The understanding about the end of this age and the beginning of the next when Christ returns is very diverse and clouded today. Error and confusion are far more common than truth and clarity regarding this all important subject. Many wander aimlessly because of ignorance of the foundation of the Bible and a failure to read the whole Word of God.

The way in which God communicates His promises about the future is breathtaking. He used this odd event about Hagar and Sarah to teach about the new Jerusalem.

Abraham Offers Isaac

Abraham and Sarah waited almost 25 years (from God's original promise) before receiving their son Isaac. The emotional attachment Abraham had as Isaac's father must have been intense. Also, he understood, because God told him, that Isaac was the son in whom the promise would be carried. Children are often the prized treasure of their parents. How much more so was Isaac to Abraham!

God taught Abraham an extremely important lesson in a very powerful way when He asked him to offer Isaac as a burnt offering.

Genesis 22:1 and 2

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

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

God had taught Abraham many times the importance of being obedient and trusting completely in God and in Him alone. With this trial, He is going to help him to learn by experience, which is the most comprehensive way of learning. He did not tempt him with evil to sin like the devil does. God does not tempt people with evil.

James 1:13

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

Some may read this record of Abraham's offering Isaac and wrongly conclude that it is evil. However, no one is in a position to judge God and to declare that something He does is evil. The devil tempts people to sin, causing hurt; while God tempts people to help them grow or stand strong. The dictionary gives two sides of temptation with its definition: (1) to incite to do wrong by promise of pleasure or gain; allure into evil; seduce or (2) to make trial of; test. Obviously, what God did with Abraham was the latter.

As we have seen over and over again, Abraham's response to God was one of obedience. He did exactly what God told him to do.

Genesis 22:3

And 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 of which God had told him.

A three day journey was necessary to arrive at the right location to offer Isaac, which means Abraham had much time to contemplate his actions. Yet, he still moved forward with faith and obeyed God's Word.

Verses 9-12

And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

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

And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son* from me.

Abraham was obedient to the farthest extreme humanly possible because he revered God. How easy it would have been for him to switch his faith from God to Isaac, from the Promiser to the promise. Since Isaac was in the flesh, Abraham could see and touch him. He was the child God promised, and his descendants would certainly continue to be God's chosen ones. Often people transfer their faith from God to that which God gives them. Abraham did not allow himself to put trust or confidence in what he could see. He truly walked by faith and gave glory to God. This obedience is described by God as reverence or worship.

Verses 13 and 14

And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind *him* a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said *to* this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

Because Abraham did this thing, God swore that He would bless and multiply him.

Verses 16-18

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

God made this oath because of Abraham's obedience. Hebrews reflects on this great occasion.

Hebrews 6:13-20

For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself,
Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.
And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.
For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation *is* to them an end of all strife.
Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath:
That by two immutable things, in which *it* was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

Which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul,
both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into
that within the veil;
Whither the forerunner is for us entered, *even*
Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the
order of Melchisedec.

The ramifications of this incident are far more significant than the obvious things that transpired at that particular time. Once more, God uses the experience of Abraham as an example of something of great importance as it relates to our Hope. Yet again, the additional insight is provided in the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 11:17-19

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*.

Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

Accounting that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

Abraham logically reasoned out that if he killed Isaac as God commanded, then God would have to raise him from the dead. Since Isaac was Abraham's firstborn son of promise, he was the sole link between himself and the fulfillment of the promises. God had clearly stated, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." Neither Ishmael, nor any other child he might have, could be the fulfillment of the promise. His belief enabled him to deliver his only begotten son to death. The Living Bible adds some clarity.

Hebrews 11:17-19 (Living Bible)

While God was testing him, Abraham still trusted in God and his promises, and so he offered up his son Isaac, and was ready to slay him on the altar of sacrifice;

Yes, to slay even Isaac, through whom God had promised to give Abraham a whole nation of descendants!

He believed that if Isaac died God would bring him back to life again; and that is just about what happened, for as far as Abraham was concerned, Isaac was doomed to death, but he came back again alive!

This whole record is a type for God and Jesus Christ. God, like Abraham, offered up His only begotten Son of promise; and Isaac was a type for Jesus who would be resurrected from the dead.

The resurrection is the thing that sets Jesus of Nazareth apart from all others and signifies that he is the Son of God.

Romans 1:4

And declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

Before Abraham, the Bible makes no mention of the resurrection of the dead. The first reference is with Isaac and Abraham. Our father Abraham was the type for God Himself, and Isaac for our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ.

Abraham's Seed

While Jesus was teaching in the temple, the Pharisees (as their manner was) were attacking him. The confrontation which followed reveals very important information about the true seed of Abraham.

John 8:31 and 32

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed;
And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

A disciple of Jesus is one who continues in his word. Jesus' disciples were the ones connected to God. The Pharisees misunderstood and responded by pridefully announcing their association with Abraham.

Verses 33-36

They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?
Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.
And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: *but* the Son abideth ever.
If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Israel had a kinship, a blood relationship, with Abraham. Because of this, they arrogantly assumed themselves to be connected with God also. Abraham's biological family were

indeed blessed by God, but faith, not blood, has always been required to walk with God. The works of Abraham, not the lineage, make one the seed of Abraham. Jesus knew they were the biological seed of Abraham, but he also knew they were not the true children of Abraham.

Verses 37-40

I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.

I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.

They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.

But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham.

The children of Abraham do the works of Abraham. The Pharisees were deceived greatly! They claimed to be connected with Abraham and therefore God; yet the Messiah was the target of their envy, hate, and murder. If Abraham was truly their father, they would have been humble and meek to Christ, the ultimate seed of Abraham. Neither Abraham nor God was their father. The devil was their father!

Verses 41-44

Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, *even* God.

Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.

Why do ye not understand my speech? *even* because ye cannot hear my word.

Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

Yes, they were the blood relation of Abraham, but he was not their father. The children of Abraham have faith like him. He was the friend of God; hence God revealed great truth to him including the coming of the Messiah. He rejoiced to see the day when Jesus the Christ would finally come.

Verse 56

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw *it*, and was glad.

Because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, whosoever believes can be saved and become a child of God. Abraham believed the promises of God; therefore he became the father of many nations. He is the father of all who have faith.

Galatians 3:6-9

Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed.
So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

Although God promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations, the focus throughout the Old Testament is upon one nation—Israel. Since Jesus Christ has come, the doors are wide open to all the Gentiles also, which makes Abraham the father of many nations.

Verse 14

That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Those of faith have been baptized into Christ and are the seed of Abraham also. Being a Jew or Gentile matters not. Faith is the requirement.

Verses 26-29

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.
For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.
There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.
And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

The circumcision was given to Abraham as a token of the covenant made with God. It signified that God would keep His promise. All the descendants of Abraham were to be circumcised. This sign was to help them to have faith in God. But, as time passed, they lost their faith. It was replaced with a prideful, false assurance of being the chosen people because they were circumcised. In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision (representing Israel) nor uncircumcision (representing the Gentiles) avails anything.

Galatians 6:15 and 16

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

And as many as walk according to this rule, peace *be* on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

The Israel of God are not the blood descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Israel of God are those who have faith, as Abraham did, in the Messiah.

In conclusion, we see that Abraham is our father by faith.

The Sacrifice of Giving

Giving is a vital part of Christian living. The mind set of those without Christ is basically self-centered and therefore selfish. Their primary concern is what they can receive and certainly not what they can give. When Christ is reigning in a believer's mind, everything becomes new. Self-centeredness is replaced with godliness, and selfishness with a desire to serve others. The godly attitude of giving influences every aspect of life including finances. Financial giving becomes "the sacrifice of giving" when the Scriptures are understood and obeyed. The foundation for scriptural understanding regarding this subject is found in the Old Testament. As we have noted with many other subjects, the elementary principles of truth are found in Genesis. Abraham's interaction with Melchizedek is a good starting point to study.

Melchizedek

The first war is recorded in Genesis 14. Four kings from the Mesopotamian region attacked five kings from the plains near the Dead Sea. As is true with most wars, they were fighting over land and dominion. The battle took place in the valley of Siddim which is at the south end of the Dead Sea.

King Chedorlaomer and the confederate kings with him overthrew the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar. The victors took their goods, food, and many captives including Lot, Abraham's nephew.

Lot had traveled with Abraham after God told him to leave Mesopotamia. God's blessing on Abraham prospered Lot also. Their substance was so great the land was not able to bear them both, so they separated from each other. Abraham allowed Lot to choose any location he desired, so he selected the plain of Jordan. Eventually, Lot forsook the plain and moved into the city of Sodom which is where he was when taken captive.

Upon hearing of Lot's capture, Abraham armed the 318 servants in his household and went after the army. Aner, Eschol, and Mamre (Amorites) joined him. Chedorlaomer and his confederates had not only won this war but also many before this. They were a mighty force. Yet, Abraham with his meager force pursued and overtook Chedorlaomer in Hobah, which is near Damascus. Abraham lived in Mamre which is in Hebron, approximately 160 miles south of Damascus. He traveled all that distance using animals for transportation and defeated the most powerful army in his day. He brought back the captives including Lot with all the goods. When the kings met him, they were exuberant and thankful.

Genesis 14:17 and 18

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

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

Of all the kings involved in this conflict from both sides, the king of Salem was not mentioned. However, without explanation he shows up on the scene and becomes the predominate focus. Salem is the Hebrew word *Shalem* meaning peace. Many believe Salem is the same place as Jerusalem. The Hebrew word for Jerusalem is *Yaruwshalaim* meaning teaching of peace. Salem is associated with Zion which is in Jerusalem. "In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion" (Psalms 76:2). The valley of Shaveh where Abraham met the kings is on the north side of Jerusalem, later called Kidron.

The psalmist informs us that the Messiah was going to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110). The book of Hebrews provides much clarity about Melchizedek as the type for Jesus the Christ (Hebrews 4:14-5:10; 6:20; 7:1-8:1). There are many kings who follow and many priests who follow, but Melchizedek is the only one who was both. Melchizedek as the king/priest of Jerusalem is a type for Jesus Christ who will serve as the King/Priest in Jerusalem when he returns to rule on earth as King of kings.¹⁰ Melchizedek blessed Abraham. Jesus will bless Abraham and all his descendants of faith.

Verses 19 and 20

And he blessed him, and said, Blessed *be* Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:

And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.

¹⁰ Isaiah 2:1-5; 9:6 and 7; Revelation 11:15

Abraham knew full well that his extraordinary accomplishments were due to the Most High God. All his success was because God promised to bless him. Abraham's response to God's blessings was the tithe. His attitude was one of thankfulness, respect, and a sincere desire to give God due honor. The tithe was a sacrifice of giving as worship to God. Thus began this very important principle that believers throughout the Scriptures practiced to honor their God.

A record in the book of Hebrews provides clear understanding of what exactly this tithe was. The word "tithe" means tenth.

Hebrews 7:4

Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

The word "spoils" is not a good translation from the Greek and, as such, is misleading. "Spoils" is translated from *akrothinion* which means topmost or best part of a heap; the choice part, or first fruits. Abraham gave ten percent of the best, the first fruits of all. He gave the best to God and not the least or the leftovers.

This first record also shows to whom the tithe should be given. Although little is known about Melchizedek, we do know he was God's high priest and he blessed Abraham. He gave the tithe to God's man who blessed him. As we continue to read in Genesis 14, more understanding about the tithe is gained.

Genesis 14:21-24

And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.

And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, That I will not *take* from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that *is* thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich:

Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.

As the book of Genesis unfolds, we learn that the king of Sodom and his fellow kings were very evil. Abraham wanted nothing to do with them. The war he waged was to rescue Lot under the direction of God, not to help the king of Sodom.

"I have lift up mine hand" is an expression signifying full and complete surrender as a servant to God. It means to surrender to God without any doubt. When he tithed, he acknowledged God's absolute sovereignty and ability to provide for him.

The essence of that which Abraham said to the king of Sodom was, "When I tithed, I made a full, complete commitment to God, surrendering my well-being to the most high God Who happens to be the Possessor of heaven and earth. I don't need anything from you. I know you. You will tell everyone you made Abraham rich. Not so! God gets the glory, not you."

When Abraham tithed, he made a commitment to God. He was convinced of God's ability and willingness, so he surrendered his life and well-being to His care. He also knew he needed not to depend on, or be involved with, the unbelieving king. Another wonderful thing Abraham did was

not to allow some man to claim the glory that was properly due God. He ensured that God got the glory.

Although the five kings were blessed by God with Abraham's victory, they did not acknowledge the Most High God. These kings and their kingdoms did not turn from their evil ways. In time, they were all destroyed when the Lord rained brimstone and fire upon them (Genesis 19:24 and 25).

This first occurrence of the concept of tithing provides a standard which is to be followed throughout the Scriptures and by believers today. Since the record is precedent setting, it is worth summarizing:

- The tithe is the sacrifice of giving.
- The reason for the tithe was to give a proper response to God for His blessings.
- The attitude of the giver was one of sincere gratitude, honor, respect, and love. Not one iota of compulsion or any other negative was involved.
- The tithe was ten percent of the first fruits. God received the best.
- The tithe was given to God's man who blessed God's people.
- The tithe was also a commitment to God; it was a surrendering of one's own life and well-being to His care.
- The tithe provided autonomy from worldly dependency.

Tithe Confirmed

Abraham's son was Isaac. Isaac's son was Jacob. In Jacob we will see the tithe was confirmed as the right way for man to believe. The aspects we learned about the tithe in its first occurrence were reaffirmed with Jacob.

Genesis 28:12-15

And he [Jacob] dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I *am* the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

And, behold, I *am* with thee, and will keep thee in all *places* whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done *that* which I have spoken to thee of.

Jacob's response to God's promised blessings establishes the significance of the tithe.

Verses 20-22

And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go,

and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,
 So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God:
 And this stone, which I have set *for* a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

God promised to bless Jacob; therefore Jacob made a solemn promise to adapt his life in three aspects. They were: (1) the Lord would be his God, (2) set Bethel to be God's house, (3) "...of all that Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee." As with Abraham, we see the tithe was given as a proper response to God for His blessings. The tithe was a commitment to God and was given with the attitude of worship. The amount given was ten percent.

The events which follow are interesting and should be read to understand the whole story. Basically, Jacob allowed himself to be deceived and to be taken advantage of by Laban. After twenty years of involvement with Laban, God told Jacob to return to the land of his fathers. Jacob married Laban's daughters Rachel and Leah. Jacob told his wives his plan to leave.

Genesis 31:7-13

And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me.

If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages; then all the cattle bare speckled: and if he said thus, The ringstraked shall be thy hire; then bare all the cattle ringstraked.

Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given *them* to me.

And it came to pass at the time that the cattle conceived, that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream, and, behold, the rams which leaped upon the cattle *were* ringstraked, speckled, and grisled.

And the angel of God spake unto me in a dream, *saying*, Jacob: And I said, Here *am* I.

And he said, Lift up now thine eyes, and see, all the rams which leap upon the cattle *are* ringstraked, speckled, and grisled: for I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee.

I *am* the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, *and* where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred.

Both God and Jacob kept their commitment to each other. The way God prospered him was miraculous. Jacob kept his promise, a part of which was the tithe; and the door was opened for miracles.

God continued to bless Jacob all the days of his life. His name was changed to Israel. He fathered twelve sons, who eventually grew into the twelve tribes of Israel. Israel were God's chosen people. That which is seen in the first occurrence of the tithe is repeated with this second occurrence, confirming it as a proper way for man to respond.

Learn to Fear

Jacob and his family, 75 souls in all, moved into Egypt because of a famine in the land. They were warmly received by Pharaoh and the Egyptians. However, in time as the Israelites grew in numbers, the Egyptians feared them and

began to persecute them. Approximately 210 years after they entered into Egypt, God raised up Moses to lead them out.

Moses received great revelation from God as is recorded in the first five books of the Bible. God gave him specific instructions about the tithe and incorporated it into the Law.

Deuteronomy 14:22 and 23

Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always.

Significant to note is that the tithe taught the people to reverence, respect, and awe God. Having studied Genesis, we can easily understand why. The tither trusts God to provide for him. Tithing is a fundamental way to put God first in life.

Under the Mosaic Law, the Levites received the tithe.

Numbers 18:21

And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, *even* the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.

The Levites were those from the tribe of Levi. God had Moses separate the tribe of Levi from the other tribes and place them in charge of the tabernacle. Later, they were the ones who served in the temple. One of the families of the tribe of Levi, the Aaronites, was the priestly line. The Levites,

as the temple ministers and priests, were to own no land or property. They lived from the tithe provided by the other tribes of Israel (Numbers 18:21-26 Deuteronomy 10:8 and 9; 14:24-29).

Therefore, the tithe was a very integral part of the Mosaic Law. If the people did not tithe, a good part of the rest of the Law could not be fulfilled because the Levites were the ones who were responsible to carry out the sacrifices, the tabernacle and temple service, etc.

When Israel walked with God, they tithed, and God blessed them abundantly. However, Israel often wavered from keeping God's Word and ended up in calamity. After quite a dearth of walking with God, Hezekiah helped God's people get back on track. Eliminating idolatry was the first order of business. Then Hezekiah appointed the priests and Levites after their courses and gave of his own substance for them to carry out the offerings. Then we read:

II Chronicles 31:4-10

Moreover he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might be encouraged in the law of the LORD.

And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought in abundance the firstfruits of corn, wine, and oil, and honey, and of all the increase of the field; and the tithe of all *things* brought they in abundantly.

And *concerning* the children of Israel and Judah, that dwelt in the cities of Judah, they also brought in the tithe of oxen and sheep, and the tithe of holy things which were

consecrated unto the LORD their God, and laid *them* by heaps.

In the third month they began to lay the foundation of the heaps, and finished *them* in the seventh month.

And when Hezekiah and the princes came and saw the heaps, they blessed the LORD, and his people Israel.

Then Hezekiah questioned with the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps.

And Azariah the chief priest of the house of Zadok answered him, and said, Since *the people* began to bring the offerings into the house of the LORD, we have had enough to eat, and have left plenty: for the LORD hath blessed his people; and that which is left *is* this great store.

When they were spiritually minded, they tithed; and God provided an abundance for His people. Proverbs 3 has another record regarding the tithe.

Proverbs 3:5-10

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.

Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:

So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.

This record succinctly communicates much about the tithe. The tithe sits in the context of trusting God, leaning not unto your own understanding, not being wise in your own eyes, and having health and prosperity. Health and prosperity are linked to the tithe. However, the correct reason and attitude for tithing, as seen in the first occurrence and throughout, are important to remember. The tithe is to be a proper acknowledgment due God for His blessings with an attitude of honor, reverence, and thankfulness. The enormous benefits received by the tither could distract him from the correct reason and motivation to tithe. "Giving to get" is not the believing tither's motive. He gives because he loves God and wants to obey His Word.

Malachi 3:7-9

Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept *them*. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?

Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

Ye *are* cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, *even* this whole nation.

The Scriptures show that our loving God always wants to bless His people abundantly. They also declare plainly that God is just and always true to His Word. He cannot break His Word. One of the great rights and privileges God gave man is free will. Man always has the freewill choice to

believe or to reject God. God honors man's freewill choice, even when it is against God's Word. "Return unto me, and I will return unto you..." refers to man's choosing to turn away from God; therefore God had no choice but to refrain from blessing man. They were cursed with a curse because they refused to believe God. The curse spoken of in the Law primarily is concerned with a person's well-being now and in the Kingdom to come.

Malachi 3:10-12

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that *there shall not be room enough to receive it.*

And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.

And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.

The expression "windows of heaven" is used also referring to the flood in Noah's time, when the windows of heaven were opened. So much rain poured out during the forty days and nights that all the earth was covered, including the mountains. For God to have used this expression to explain the blessings He will pour out when we tithe is breathtaking! If that were not enough, He has also promised to rebuke the devourer (the devil). Can you imagine!

The book of Malachi contains reproof and brings focus to

the most important matter of concern to all mankind: life in the age to come.

Verses 3:13-18

Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so *much* against thee?

Ye have said, It *is* vain to serve God: and what profit *is it* that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?

And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, *they that* tempt God are even delivered.

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.

Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

Godly Attitude

Once God communicates a truth, He need not repeat it (although He certainly has the privilege to do so if He wants). Should the truth change, then God clearly communicates the change. In the Gospels, Jesus Christ taught many things. For

instance with the Sermon on the Mount, he spoke many things regarding the Law. He added clarity, more insight, and additional information. Jesus Christ did not change the tithe in his teaching, but rather he added insight into the reason and attitude for tithing. In Matthew 23:23, when confronting the scribes and Pharisees, he said:

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.

Mint, anise (which should be translated as "dill"), and cummin (which is a plant with aromatic seeds used as a condiment) are all very small items—small in size and importance. The Pharisees were religiously adamant and persnickety with these small, insignificant items being tithed. Yet, they had no concern about the Law, judgment, mercy, and faith. The Lord did not tell them to stop tithing. On the contrary, he told them to continue to tithe, but not to be hypocrites. Tithing was never intended to be a religious ritual done without thought and believing, nor was it intended to be a substitute for doing the rest of God's Word.

The churches of Macedonia are a great example of giving with the right godly attitude.

II Corinthians 8:1 and 2

Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;

How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

Acts 16 and 17 record some of the persecution and tribulation that the believers of Macedonia endured. Yet, they had an abundance of joy in giving.

Verses 3-5

For to *their* power, I bear record, yea, and beyond *their* power *they were* willing of themselves;

Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and *take upon us* the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

And *this they did*, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

They were a great example of believers who gave with a heart of love and commitment to God. They were so blessed that to give abundantly was their joy. Chapters 8 and 9 address the collection of the promised gifts to be sent to Jerusalem. (See I Corinthians 16:1-3, and Romans 15:26 and 27). The Corinthians had informed Paul of their intent to share (apparently quite generously) to help the saints in Jerusalem. Paul, in turn, boasted to the other churches in Macedonia and Achaia of their intentions. The believers in Macedonia were very inspired by this seemingly giving commitment of the Corinthians, so they gave abundantly, as we have just read. However, a year had passed, and the Corinthians still had not carried out that which they said they would. These chapters address that situation.

Paul handled this matter discreetly so that the promised sharing would not be given unwillingly out of compulsion because they had been confronted. God did not want their gift to be out of guilt, condemnation, or humiliation. This revelation is piercing and just as alive today as when it was written. God's concern is that the giver has the right reason and attitude for his giving.

Verse 7

Therefore, as ye abound in every *thing*, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and *in* all diligence, and *in* your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.

The word "grace" most often means unmerited, divine favor—a free gift from God. In this section, God chose to use the word "grace" for man's giving to emphasize the attitude behind the giving. All of God's gifts are because of God's love. In like manner, our giving is to be from love with the same pure motives we have seen throughout God's Word.

Verses 8-11

I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

And herein I give *my* advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.

Now therefore perform the doing *of it...*

He did not command them because he wanted their giving to be done as a manifestation of genuine love. The way in which Jesus Christ gave his life sets the sterling example for all giving.

Paul sent Titus and another to help them prepare.

II Corinthians 9:5

Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as *a matter of bounty*, and not as *of covetousness*.

The word "bounty" could have been translated blessing as it is in most other occurrences. The blessing is referring to their promised giving. The word "covetousness" in the context of this verse is contrasted with a blessed, generous gift and implies giving out of compulsion, grudgingly because of the giver's greediness.

Verse 6

But this *I say*, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

To sow bountifully is to give generously with the right, godly attitude. To sow sparingly is the opposite—not only limited in amount, but also limited in correct attitude. Both yield the same respectively.

Verse 7

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

This section is dealing with the gift the Corinthians had already promised (but as of yet had not given) and the right attitude in giving. "Purposeth in his heart" has been misunderstood to mean that each person decides if the tithe is applicable for him. The Word of God clearly states that the tithe is the proper minimum standard for giving. That which is purposed in the heart has absolutely nothing to do with the doctrine of the Word of God. The heart's agreeing or disagreeing does not change the Word of God. Each believer has the responsibility to change his heart to agree with the Word and never to change the Word to agree with his heart. That which is purposed in the heart has an impact on the giver, not on God's Word. The tithe has been established by God. That which is purposed in the heart when a person is giving is determined by him each time he gives.

What we purpose in our hearts about giving should be the mirror of the Macedonians and Jesus. The Macedonians gave generously and joyfully with a heart of love and commitment to God. The generosity of our Lord is unparalleled and defies adequate description.

All giving, whether it be the tithe or sharing abundantly above, is to be the manifestation of a heart of love, thankfulness, respect, and honor to God. We should never give with a heart of reluctance, sorrow, guilt, or out of compulsion. Thus, anyone who endeavors to exact gifts from others by using the unethical means of humiliation by condemnation and guilt is outside of God's will, as is the individual who allows himself to be coerced in this way. God loves a cheerful giver. Would you not agree? How

would you like to receive a gift given begrudgingly out of a feeling of compulsion?

When we consider verse 8, how can we be anything but cheerful in our giving?

Verse 8

And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work:

The New International Version provides a clearer translation of the remainder of II Corinthians 9.

Verses 9-15 NIV

As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; His righteousness endures for ever."

Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.

You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.

Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of

the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

Generous giving with the proper attitude is glorious for all: God, the giver, the recipients, and those who see the giving. When done correctly, God is always glorified.

The church at Philippi was one of the churches in Macedonia which was inspired by the generous intentions of the Corinthians. The Philippians had great concern for the Apostle Paul and supported him with their giving.

Philippians 4:14-20

Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things *which were sent* from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God.

But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Now unto God and our Father *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Paul understood that the believers' financial gifts to him were an offering to God, a sacrifice of worship that was well pleasing to God. Tithing was never intended to be a mechanical, robotic, religious activity given grudgingly because it was demanded. Such giving is repulsive to God. Our giving is to be part of our worship offered to God. Our Father is the Possessor of heaven and earth. All that we have is His. It is our privilege to be able to honor God by returning to Him a portion of that with which He has blessed us.

Summary

- The reason for the tithe is to give a proper response to God for His blessings.
- The attitude of the giver should be one of sincere gratitude, honor, respect, and love. Not one iota of compulsion or any other negative should be involved.
- The tithe is ten percent of the first fruits. God receives the very best.
- The tithe is to be given to God's man who is blessing God's people.
- The tithe is a commitment to God, a surrendering of one's life and well-being to His care.
- The tithe provides autonomy from unbelievers.

- The tithe is given with the attitude of worship.
- The tithe helps to open the door for miracles.
- The tithe teaches people to reverence God.
- The tithe is a fundamental way to put God first in life.
- The tithe is a key to health and prosperity.
- The tithe makes it available for God to open up the windows of heaven and pour out blessings which there is not room enough to receive.
- The tithe makes available the promise for God to rebuke the devourer.
- The tithe is not to be a religious ritual done without thought or believing.
- The tithe is never to be a substitute for doing the rest of God's wonderful Word.
- The tithe should be the minimum today. Since Christ has come, we have been blessed with more than our forefathers; therefore, we should give more.
- The tithe is a sacrifice of worship which is well-pleasing to our God.

Opposite Twins

JACOB AND ESAU

Jacob and Esau, the twin brothers born to Rebekah and Isaac, were the answer to prayer.

Genesis 25:21

And Isaac entreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

As a first-time mother, Rebekah was concerned about her pregnancy, especially when the children struggled within her. She did the right thing with her concern—she prayed to God. The answer she received was quite different from what she would have expected.

Verses 22 and 23

And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If *it be* so, why *am* I thus? And she went to inquire of the LORD.

And the LORD said unto her, Two nations *are* in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and *the one* people shall be stronger than *the other* people; and the elder shall serve the younger.

Before the children are born, God tells her their future. As the story develops, this revelation becomes vitally important because Rebekah would have a very important part in making it become a reality. Nothing indicates that God informed Isaac about the destiny of his sons; rather, it seems apparent that he was ignorant because he took action which was contrary to the revelation.

Verses 24-26

And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, *there were* twins in her womb. And the first came out red, all over like an hairy garment; and they called his name Esau. And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them.

"Esau" means hairy. Later his name is changed to "Edom" which means red. "Jacob" means heel-holder and, according to Genesis 27:36, supplanter. Jacob is often viewed as a deceiver and a conniver, because of his name and a misunderstanding regarding his dealing with his brother. The modern definition of "supplanter" is one who supersedes another, especially by force or treachery. However, the older and now obsolete meaning of "supplanter" is one who takes the place of and serves as a substitute for, especially by reason of superior excellence or power. The meaning of "supplanter," as used in the King James Version, does not have the negative connotation attached with treachery, deceiving, etc. God's Word never says Jacob is a deceiver, treacherous, or a conniver. Later, Jacob's name is changed to Israel.

Verses 27 and 28

And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain [perfect] man, dwelling in tents.

And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of *his* venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Jacob became a shepherd like his father Isaac and his grandfather Abraham. What is said of Esau is that he was going against what had been common to his family. Jacob, on the other hand, was a perfect ("plain" means perfect) man, a shepherd, one who lived in tents like Abraham and Isaac. They did this because of their faith in the promise which was their Hope.

Hebrews 11:9

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

When we keep in mind the revelation Rebekah received, her favoritism toward Jacob is understandable. However, Isaac's favoring of Esau is an indication that he was out of step with the will of God for these boys. God plainly communicated His thoughts regarding Jacob and Esau.

Malachi 1:2 and 3

I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob,
And I hated Esau....

If God hated Esau, why then would Isaac love him more than Jacob?

Genesis 25:29 and 30

And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint:

And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red *pottage*; for I *am* faint: therefore was his name called Edom.

"Faint" means weary, not starving to death. He was a cunning hunter and could have found food for himself. Later, when his father asks him to go out and find venison, he does so in short order.

Verse 31

And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright.

"Birthright" denotes the special privileges and advantages belonging to the firstborn son. He would become the head of the family and be allotted a double portion of the paternal inheritance. In this family, the birthright had greater significance than the norm, for it had everything to do with the promise that God had given to his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac. The birthright was regarding the coming Messiah and God's Kingdom on earth. Jacob really wanted this birthright, and Esau just did not care. The only way for Jacob to acquire that birthright was if Esau, the first born, died or gave it to him. Apparently, Jacob knew Esau would be willing to part with it.

Verses 32-34

And Esau said, Behold, I *am* at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?

And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.

Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised *his* birthright.

Why would Esau be willing to part with such incredible blessing? His birthright was the Christ line! For all he knew, his son could have been the Messiah, and, if not, then definitely a descendant of his would be. How could he have such low regard for something of such high importance? The book of Hebrews provides insight.

Hebrews 12:15-17

Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and thereby many be defiled; Lest there *be* any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

Esau is called a fornicator and profane, which means unholy, ungodly. He deemed his own comfort in life more important than the promise of God. He simply did not believe in the promise of God. Actually, the Word of God speaks more harshly—"he despised [had contempt or disdain for] his birthright." That means he despised God's plan of redemption provided through Christ. He hated God!

On the other hand, Jacob loved God and wanted to be included in the promise. Some have questioned Jacob's actions and believe he was not very kind or loving to his brother. However, God does not say anything against Jacob. The summary of the record is: "Esau despised his birthright."

God's calling, His love for Jacob, and His hatred for Esau are not separate from the freewill choice that the brothers would make.

Romans 9:10-13

And not only *this*; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, *even* by our father Isaac; (For *the children* being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)

It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.

As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

Esau, whose name was changed to Edom, epitomized the God haters; while Jacob, whose name became Israel, epitomized the God lovers. The brothers, as opposites, became a type for all mankind.

When Isaac became blind, he thought his life was near its end. Hence, he went about getting things in order before he would die. One of the important matters of concern was that of imparting the blessing to his firstborn son. He told Esau to go hunt some venison and to cook it, after which he would bless him.

Genesis 27:4

And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring *it* to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die.

Apparently Isaac still did not understand God's will concerning his two sons; nor did he know Esau had forfeited the blessing in that he had sold his birthright to Jacob. Remember that God had told Rebekah before the children were born that the elder would serve the younger. Jacob, not Esau, was God's choice.

Verse 5

And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt *for* venison, *and* to bring *it*.

Rebekah devised a plan to facilitate what she knew to be the will of God. She told Jacob exactly what to do.

Verses 8-13

Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee.

Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth:

And thou shalt bring *it* to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death.

And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother *is* a hairy man, and I *am* a smooth man:

My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall

seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing.

And his mother said unto him, Upon me *be* thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me *them*.

She was absolutely resolved in her conviction to ensure that Jacob would receive the blessing. She prepared the meat, had Jacob put on Esau's clothes, put hairy animal skins on Jacob, and sent him to his father. Isaac was suspicious but deceived, so he blessed Jacob.

Verses 24-29

And he said, *Art* thou my very son Esau? And he said, I *am*.

And he said, Bring *it* near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee. And he brought *it* near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine, and he drank.

And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son.

And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son *is* as the smell of a field which the LORD hath blessed: Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine:

Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed *be* every one that curseth thee, and blessed *be* he that blesseth thee.

When Esau returned and ascertained what had happened, he was very angry with his brother. He decided that he would kill Jacob after his father's death. Rebekah became aware of his evil plan and sent Jacob away to her brother's house in Haran.

Again, some have concluded that Jacob's actions were dishonorable in that he tricked his father and stole the blessing. This position is supported by Esau's comments after he realized what had happened.

Verses 35 and 36

And he [Isaac] said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing.

And he [Esau] said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?

Rebekah could also be viewed with a critical eye in that she was the one who devised the plan and commanded Jacob to follow. Since God speaks negatively about neither Jacob nor Rebekah, we should reconsider.

Before the brothers were born, God knew how they would view Him. God said, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Rebekah believed this revelation and held fast to it throughout their lives. Isaac, on the other hand, seemed to be out of touch with the will of God. He favored Esau and fully intended to bless him, even though doing so would be contrary to God's will. Rebekah developed a plan to circumvent Isaac's intended wrong.

Esau was very upset with his brother because he took away his birthright and blessing. However, this was not true! Esau sold his birthright of his own free will and therefore

forfeited the blessing which corresponded with it. If Esau were honest, he would have told his father about the birthright when Isaac told him he was going to bless him. Instead Esau thought he could get the blessing back and supplant Jacob.

After this incident, Isaac obviously woke up to the reality that Jacob, not Esau, was God's chosen. He agreed with Rebekah to send Jacob to Laban (Rebekah's brother) and again blessed him.

Genesis 28:1-5

And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan.

Arise, go to Padanaram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother.

And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people;

And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham.

And Isaac sent away Jacob: and he went to Padanaram unto Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.

The original intent was for Jacob to depart for a few days until his "brother's fury turn away" and until he found a wife. A few days ended up being 20 years, during which time Jacob married Leah and Rachel. By the time the Lord told him to

return to the land of his fathers, he had eleven sons and a daughter which were mothered by Leah, Rachel, and their handmaids (Bilhah and Zilpah). Later, Rachel had another son, making twelve altogether. These twelve sons of Jacob became the twelve tribes of Israel.

Eventually, God told Jacob to go back to the land of his father. However, Jacob had one major concern—his brother Esau. He sent messengers out before him to Esau. Their report caused Jacob to become greatly afraid.

Genesis 32:6 and 7

And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying,
We came to thy brother Esau, and also he
cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men
with him.

Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed....

As a result of his fear, he did the right thing. He prayed to God for help.

Verses 9-12

And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham,
and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which
saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to
thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee:

I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies,
and of all the truth, which thou hast showed
unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over
this Jordan; and now I am become two bands.
Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my
brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him,
lest he will come and smite me, *and* the mother
with the children.

And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.

The original blessing that Isaac gave Jacob told him that Esau would be subservient to him. Later, while in Bethel before coming to Laban's house, God gave him a vision in which He said:

Genesis 28:15

And, behold, I *am* with thee, and will keep thee in all *places* whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done *that* which I have spoken to thee of.

Twenty years later, when God told him to return to his father, He promised, "I will be with thee." Yet, with all these assurances from God, Jacob still was "greatly afraid and distressed." God responded to Jacob's prayer with an experiential revelation that changed his life forever. The other revelations had been words; this was a unique experience!

Genesis 32:24

And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

Hosea 12:3 and 4 tell us that the man was an angel.

Verses 25 and 26

And when he [the angel] saw that he prevailed not against him [Jacob], he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh.
And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou
bless me.

My sons wrestled in high school. Their matches consisted of three two minute periods, after which they were always exhausted. It would be humanly impossible to wrestle all night. Angels are mighty and easily prevail over man; yet Jacob prevailed over the angel. Again, this is impossible. The thigh is connected to the hip and the knee. If either is out of joint, the excruciating pain would be unbearable. No one could wrestle with his thigh out of joint—impossible! How could Jacob prevail in this impossible struggle?

Verses 27 and 28

And he said unto him, What *is* thy name? And
he said, Jacob.

And he said, Thy name shall be called no more
Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou
power with God and with men, and hast
prevailed.

The only possible way for Jacob to prevail was with the help of God. The situation was constructed by God to show Jacob that he had nothing to fear. If, in his struggle, he depended on God no matter how humanly impossible the situation may have been, he would be successful. God had his name changed to Israel to be a constant reminder of this truth. "Israel" means God prevails.

Immediately after this incident with the angel, Esau and Jacob were reunited.

Genesis 33:1, 3 and 4

And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men....

And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.

Throughout the remainder of Jacob's and Esau's lives, they lived peaceably with each other. However, as the story line continues regarding the descendants of the twin brothers, there is a sharp departure of their ways, and conflicts do develop. From Jacob (Israel), comes the Messiah, who in the end will prevail over all the earth. From Esau (Edom), comes a line of unbelievers who constantly oppose the believers. In the end, Edom will be destroyed, whereas Israel will prevail over them.

Obadiah 1:17 and 18

But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.

And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be *any* remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken *it*.

During their lifetime, Esau never served Jacob. When David was king, Edom did serve Israel for a short time. When

the Messiah returns to reign over the world from Zion, then the prophecy about these twin brothers will be fulfilled.

Genesis 25:23

And the LORD said unto her, Two nations *are* in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and *the one* people shall be stronger than *the other* people; and the elder shall serve the younger.

Judah and Ephraim

written by John Cortright

Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, had twelve sons. Eventually, out of these, came the twelve tribes of the nation of Israel. Two of these tribes, Judah and Ephraim, rose to prominence in ruling the nation. Hundreds of years after the children of Israel came into the land of Canaan, the nation became a kingdom. After the reign of King Solomon, the nation split into two kingdoms. The southern kingdom from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin became the nation of Judah. The northern kingdom, made up of the remaining ten tribes, was the kingdom of Israel. The first king of the northern kingdom came from the tribe of Ephraim. These two kingdoms were at enmity throughout their existence. However, in the end, when the kingdom is reestablished, these two will again be one kingdom that will be ruled by one king forever. To gain a better understanding of this, again we must go to the foundation which was laid in Genesis and look at the blessings of Jacob on his twelve sons and on the sons of Joseph.

The Blessing of the Sons of Joseph

Jacob came into Egypt with all his children and was nourished by his son Joseph who was now lord over all Egypt.

Before Jacob died, Joseph brought his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, before Jacob. Jacob, who was then blind, blessed Joseph's children. This blessing was in obedience to God's will.

Hebrews 11:21

By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, *leaning* upon the top of his staff.

One thing that was revealed was that the two children of Joseph would become heirs as if they were Jacob's very own children. Joseph, through Manasseh and Ephraim, would receive a double portion of the inheritance. Any children that came from Joseph would be given an inheritance within the territory named after Manasseh or Ephraim.

Genesis 48:5 and 6 (NIV)

Now then, your two sons born to you in Egypt before I came to you here will be reckoned as mine; Ephraim and Manasseh will be mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are mine.

Any children born to you after them will be yours; in the territory they inherit they will be reckoned under the names of their brothers.

A further study of the Scriptures reveals that Joseph actually received the birthright of the firstborn of Israel (Jacob). Although Reuben was Jacob's firstborn, this blessing was passed to the sons of Joseph because Reuben had defiled his father's bed by sleeping with his concubine (Genesis 35:22; 49:3-4).

I Chronicles 5:1 and 2

Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel, (for he was the firstborn; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright.

For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him *came* the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joseph's:)

In the Law, if a man had two wives, the firstborn child was given a double portion from his father in order to show the birthright of the firstborn.

Deuteronomy 21:17

But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated *for* the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he *is* the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn *is* his.

Joseph received a double portion of the inheritance. Jacob's son, Levi, did not receive an inheritance of land. The Levites were separated out from the other tribes to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and therefore did not receive an inheritance. Of the remaining eleven children, Joseph received two portions. The two sons of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, each received an inheritance and were counted as part of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Joshua 14:3 and 4

For Moses had given the inheritance of two tribes and an half tribe on the other side Jordan: but unto the Levites he gave none inheritance

among them.

For the children of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim: therefore they gave no part unto the Levites in the land, save cities to dwell *in*, with their suburbs for their cattle and for their substance.

When Joseph brought his children to Jacob, he placed his firstborn, Manasseh, towards the right hand of Jacob; and he placed Ephraim, the younger, towards Jacob's left hand. However, Jacob placed his right hand on Ephraim, rather than on Manasseh.

Genesis 48:13-20

And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought *them* near unto him.

And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn.

And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day,

The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it

displeased him: and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head.

And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this *is* the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head.

And his father refused, and said, I know *it*, my son, I know *it*: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.

And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh.

So Ephraim was placed ahead of Manasseh. As the Scriptures unfold, this prophecy holds true. Ephraim became exceeding great and eventually became head over the northern tribe of Israel.

Judah and Joseph/Ephraim

Genesis chapter 49 records the blessings of Jacob upon all twelve of his sons. It is interesting to note the prophecies to both Judah and Joseph.

Genesis 49:8-10

Judah, thou *art he* whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand *shall be* in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee.

Judah *is* a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be*.

The children of Israel would bow down before Judah. And Shiloh, which most scholars believe refers to the Messiah, would come from the tribe of Judah.

Genesis 49:22, 25 and 26

Joseph *is* a fruitful bough, *even* a fruitful bough by a well; *whose* branches run over the wall:

Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb:

The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.

This blessing of Joseph is also noteworthy. This blessing would pass on to Joseph's two children, of whom Ephraim would become the greater.

Throughout the Scriptures, the tribes of Judah and Ephraim stand out among the children of Israel. Even among the

twelve heads of the tribes that searched out the land during the book of Numbers, Judah and Ephraim stand out.

Numbers 13:2-16

Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them.

And Moses by the commandment of the LORD sent them from the wilderness of Paran: all those men *were* heads of the children of Israel.

And these *were* their names: of the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur.

Of the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori.

Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh.

Of the tribe of Issachar, Igal the son of Joseph.

Of the tribe of Ephraim, Oshea the son of Nun.

Of the tribe of Benjamin, Palti the son of Raphu.

Of the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel the son of Sodi.

Of the tribe of Joseph, *namely*, of the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi the son of Susi.

Of the tribe of Dan, Ammiel the son of Gemalli.

Of the tribe of Asher, Sethur the son of Michael.

Of the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi the son of Vophsi.

Of the tribe of Gad, Geuel the son of Machi.

These *are* the names of the men which Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Oshea the son of Nun Jehoshua.

Of all the children of Israel over 20 years old which came out of Egypt, only Caleb of the tribe Judah and Joshua of the tribe of Ephraim went into the promised land (Canaan).

When the children of Israel finally entered the land of Canaan, the tribes of Benjamin and Judah occupied the central part of land southward, and the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh occupied the central part of the land northward.

The first king of Israel, King Saul, was of the tribe of Benjamin. King David, who followed Saul, was of the tribe of Judah. David's son, Solomon, and then Rehoboam followed in succession. Because of the idolatry of Solomon, God gave ten tribes to Jeroboam, who was from the tribe of Ephraim. Judah and Benjamin became the southern nation of Judah. The ten remaining tribes became the northern kingdom of Israel. Ephraim and Judah both now ruled the children of Israel.

The record of Jeroboam's receiving the news of being selected as king to take ten tribes of Israel is recorded in I Kings. Jeroboam was an Ephrathite, or an Ephraimite, meaning he was of the tribe of Ephraim.

I Kings 11:26-39

And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, **an Ephrathite** of Zereda, Solomon's servant, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow woman, even he lifted up *his* hand against the king.

And this *was* the cause that he lifted up *his* hand against the king: Solomon built Millo, *and* repaired the breaches of the city of David his father.

And the man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valour: and Solomon seeing the young man

that he was industrious, he made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph.

And it came to pass at that time when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the way; and he had clad himself with a new garment; and they two *were* alone in the field: And Ahijah caught the new garment that *was* on him, and rent it *in* twelve pieces:

And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee:

(But he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel:)

Because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in my ways, to do *that which is* right in mine eyes, and to *keep* my statutes and my judgments, as *did* David his father.

Howbeit I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand: but I will make him prince all the days of his life for David my servant's sake, whom I chose, because he kept my commandments and my statutes:

But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee, *even* ten tribes.

And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a light alway before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there.

And I will take thee, and thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel.

And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do *that is* right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee.

And I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not forever.

Although Jeroboam was given this promise from the prophet Ahijah, he did not do that which was right. After Jeroboam began to reign as the king over Israel, one of the first things that he did was to make two golden calves. He put one in the northern border of his kingdom in Dan, and the other he placed in the southern border of this kingdom in Bethel. He then brought the idolatry of Egypt back into the nation of Israel.

I Kings 12:25-30

Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel.

And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David:

If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart

of this people turn again unto their lord, *even* unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah.

Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves *of* gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan.

And this thing became a sin: for the people went to *worship* before the one, *even* unto Dan.

Although other tribes rose up and ruled the northern kingdom of Israel, the sin of Jeroboam followed them until they were defeated by the Assyrians. They never repented of this sin, and it eventually was the cause of their demise.

II Kings 17:20-23

And the LORD rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight.

For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king; and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the LORD, and made them sin a great sin.

For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them;

Until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets.

So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day.

Many times the Scriptures refer to the northern tribe of Israel as Ephraim. In the book of Hosea alone, the name Ephraim is used over 30 times when referring to the northern kingdom of Israel. The southern tribe of Judah and the northern tribe of Ephraim were in contention during these years that the nation was a divided kingdom.

Psalms 78:67 and 68

Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim:
But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved.

Isaiah 9:21

Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh: *and they together shall be against Judah.* For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand *is stretched out still.*

Jeremiah 7:15

And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, *even the whole seed of Ephraim.*

It is interesting to note that in the book of Revelation, when the twelve tribes of Israel are mentioned again, Manasseh is mentioned, but Ephraim is not. Joseph is again mentioned in the listing of the names of Israel. (See Revelation 7:4-8).

The kingdoms of Israel (Ephraim) and Judah never again united into a single nation under one king. But in the future,

when the kingdom will be reestablished, Ephraim and Judah will again be part of one, unified nation having one King over them. This is when the prophecy of Judah and the promise to King David will be fulfilled: when the Messiah, the King from the tribe of Judah, will reign forever.

Ezekiel 37:16-26

Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and *for* all the house of Israel his companions:

And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand.

And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou *meanest* by these?

Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, *even* with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand.

And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes.

And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land:

And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no

more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all:

Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God.

And David my servant *shall be* king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them.

And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, *even* they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David *shall be* their prince for ever.

Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.

The Old Covenant

The Bible is divided into two sections called the Old Testament and the New Testament, respectively. Genesis through Malachi were originally written in the Hebrew language, while Matthew through Revelation were written in Greek. The Hebrew scriptures are referred to as the Old Testament because of the covenant God cut with Israel in the time of Moses. Conversely, the Greek scriptures are called the New Testament because of the covenant ushered in by Jesus Christ. The word "testament" as used in this context means covenant.

The translators, acknowledging the difference between languages and covenants, added the title page indicating "Old Testament" before the book of Genesis and "New Testament" before the book of Matthew. However understandable the reason, these divisions were not inspired by God. This simple human addition has caused major problems for rightly interpreting and understanding God's holy Word.

The contents of the Hebrew scriptures are much more than just the old covenant. Likewise, the Greek scriptures contain far more than the new covenant. Therefore the names Old Testament and New Testament are misleading. Even more importantly, the God-inspired Scriptures must be understood as one complete book, not two separate books. The Bible begins in Genesis with a definite beginning and

ends in Revelation with a corresponding, precise conclusion. The central theme, which Jesus called the "Kingdom of God," spans both the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. The Hebrew scriptures provide the foundation for the Greek. The Greek scriptures give clarity to the Hebrew. If we fail to understand the Hebrew scriptures, we are sure to misunderstand the Greek. The reverse is also true.

To understand any part of the Scriptures, we must always hold in mind the whole. The Bible is not a compilation of segmented, unrelated, or isolated truths. When we study a specific verse or topic, we must acknowledge the scope of both the Hebrew and the Greek Scriptures.

The reason for the difference in languages is simple. The prophets' language was Hebrew; therefore, when God inspired them to write, they did so in the Hebrew language. (Some writings, like Daniel, are written in Chaldean, also called Aramaic). By the time of Christ, 400 years had lapsed since the prophet Malachi. During that time, Alexander the Great conquered most of the world. He influenced the language of the learned to be Greek. Therefore the apostles, whom God inspired to write, did so in Greek. The difference in languages is by no means to be taken as a separation of the whole Word of God. Significant differences do exist between the old and new covenants. However, as we will see, the differences are not intended to segment, but rather to correspond one with another.

The Old Covenant

In the third month after Israel left Egypt, God cut a blood covenant with them. A covenant is a solemn agreement between two parties. The most notable and weighty covenants were ratified with blood. God introduced the

covenant to Israel by setting clearly the responsibilities to both parties.

Exodus 19:4-6

Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and *how* I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine:

And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

Israel's obligation was simply stated—"obey my voice." God's promise was that they would become His peculiar treasure and a kingdom of priests. God had Moses instruct Israel to clean and sanctify themselves to prepare for receiving the covenant. At the appointed time, they were to congregate at the mount (called both Sinai and Horeb), but they were not to touch it.

God presented Himself in an unforgettable way which motivated Israel to have great humility and fear.

Verses 16-19

And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that *was* in the camp trembled.

And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount.

And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.

And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.

Thunder and lightning have a powerful effect on people. The impact was made much more emphatic by adding a huge dark cloud, a long loud blast like a trumpet, smoke billowing into the sky, the mount on fire, and trembling like a violent earthquake! Almighty God presented Himself in a magnificent, authoritative, awe-inspiring fashion. The emotions that the Israelites experienced should have caused an indelible impression that was life-changing. Once God had their attention, He told them the commandments which He expected them to obey. Moses primarily served as a mediator between God and Israel. God spoke to Moses, who in turn spoke to Israel on His behalf. Hitherto, Israel, as a collective group, never heard the voice of God. This day, everyone HEARD THE VOICE OF GOD! No one who was present could justifiably plead ignorance regarding the ten commandments because everyone heard.

Although the covenant consisted of more than the ten commandments, they comprised the heart and foundation of it. The first five commandments have to do with man's relationship with God. The second five regard man's relationship with his fellow man. Much later, Jesus

summarized the ten into two: love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself.

The Israelites had lived in Egypt for over 200 years during which time they were influenced by the false religion of the Egyptians. Egypt was a land of many idols and many gods. Monotheism was unknown to them. However, the God of Israel's fathers (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) was one God, the only true God. The first two commandments set the record straight—there is only one God!

Exodus 20:1-6

And God spake all these words, saying,
I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness *of any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth:

Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me;

And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

Throughout the Hebrew scriptures, we see that Israel constantly violated these primary commands. Idolatry was their consistent desire and the cause of their ultimate destruction. Worshipping the true God remains the most important matter and is still the most commonly neglected.

God revealed Himself to Israel in a manner as He had to none other before or since then. When He told them His name, it was clearly understood to be the most holy. When His name is spoken, it should always be from the lips of men with profound awe and humility. Never was the name to be spoken in a degrading way. Hence, the third commandment guides us as such.

Verse 7

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

"Vain" means emptiness or nothingness. When we consider thoughtfully, we see that this command is often grossly violated today. The holy veneration due His name has been replaced with the trivialization of a sigh, "oh, God." Even more disgusting is that His name is used commonly as a curse word.

The next two commandments have to do with the Sabbath and with children honoring their parents.

Verses 8-12

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.
Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:
But the seventh day *is* the sabbath of the LORD thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates:
For *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them *is*, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

The final five tell us how to deal with others. Thou shalt not kill, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness, or covet (Exodus 20:13-17).

The people were so shaken by the manner in which God spoke to them, they asked Moses again to serve as a mediator. They could not handle the voice of God!

Verses 18-21

And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw *it*, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.

And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.

In subsequent chapters, God proceeds to give Moses a lot more information corresponding with the ten commandments. The revelation was chiefly of a civil nature for the commonwealth of Israel. The various laws and precepts provided the structure for Israel to be governed as a theocracy. God also told Moses about three annual feasts: the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering.

After all this information was given, God said an angel would guide them into the place He had prepared for them. If they would obey and worship God, then He promised to do the following:

Exodus 23:25-30

And ye shall serve the LORD your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee.

There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren, in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil.

I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee.

And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee.

I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee.

By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land.

Moses rehearsed these things to the people who, in turn, unanimously and emphatically agreed to obey.

Exodus 24:3-7

And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and

said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do.

And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.

And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD.

And Moses took half of the blood, and put *it* in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar.

And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient.

They wholeheartedly committed to keeping the covenant. Therefore Moses, as the mediator between God and Israel, ratified the covenant with blood.

Verse 8

And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.

Following this, Moses went into the mountain for 40 days and received instruction regarding the tabernacle, the office of the priest, and the tabernacle service. While he was in the mount, the children of Israel made a golden calf and worshipped it as god. So quickly after cutting the covenant, they broke it by violating the first two commandments. This

situation typifies what continues to unfold throughout the Hebrew scriptures. For the most part, the children of Israel never really kept the blood covenant. For moments in their history (like in David's time), they carried out their responsibilities. Mostly they grew worse and worse until finally God called them "Loammi" meaning "for ye *are* not my people, and I will not be your *God*" (Hosea 1:9). He also told them that someday in the future He would lead them to repentance and once again claim them as His own.

The prophet Malachi concludes the Hebrew scriptures by reminding Israel about their time at Horeb and prophesying about the end times.

Malachi 4:4-6

Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, *with* the statutes and judgments.

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

The New Covenant

During Jesus' last supper, before his death, he speaks about a new covenant ratified by his blood.

Matthew 26:26-29

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament [covenant], which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

The new covenant begins with his shed blood and is not fulfilled until God's Kingdom comes. We must remember that the word "covenant" means solemn promise. The promise was confirmed when he died and is fulfilled after he comes back to reign on earth in his Father's Kingdom.

The book of Hebrews makes plain that much of what was contained in the old covenant was a type or figure for what Jesus the Christ would do. The tabernacle, priesthood, sacrifice, feasts, all prefigured Christ. The old covenant itself was a type for the new covenant that he ushered in. The new is better.

Hebrews 7:22

By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament [covenant].

Jesus himself is the security and guarantee of the new covenant. Moses was the mediator of the old covenant. Jesus is the mediator of the new, which is better established upon better promises.

Hebrews 8:6-12

But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

When the new covenant will have become a reality, the promises God made in the old will finally be fulfilled. He is going to ensure that Israel will keep their part.

Ezekiel 11:19 and 20

And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh:

That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

With the return of Jesus Christ and the resurrection, God will fulfill what is prophesied in Hebrews and Ezekiel. Then the true Israel of God will finally become a kingdom of priests (Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6).¹¹

Because of this new covenant, the covenant made at Mount Horeb is now considered old.

Hebrews 8:13

In that he saith, A new *covenant*, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old *is* ready to vanish away.

The blood of animals was used by Moses as a substitute for Israel with God. The blood ratified the covenant. This, too, was a type because the blood of Jesus was used as a substitute to ratify the new covenant.

Hebrews 9:15-20

And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called

¹¹ The true Israel of God is comprised of all those who believe throughout the ages from among both Israel and the Gentiles.

might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

For where a testament *is*, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

For a testament *is* of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

Whereupon neither the first *testament* was dedicated without blood.

For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people,

Saying, This *is* the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.

His blood has made available remission of sins and eternal redemption which the old covenant could never provide. All that was a type in the old regarding the sacrifice for sins has been fulfilled in Jesus' final perfect sacrifice. The tabernacle, priesthood, sacrifice, etc. are now no longer relevant and should not be observed. Today, we are to believe in the accomplished work of Jesus Christ and the promises of the new covenant.

The acknowledgment of the old and faith in the new should inspire us to serve God with reverence and godly fear.

Hebrews 12:18-29

For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which *voice* they that heard intreated

that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

(For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:

And so terrible was the sight, *that* Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of* Abel.

See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more *shall not* we *escape*, if we turn away from him that *speaketh* from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

And this *word*, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

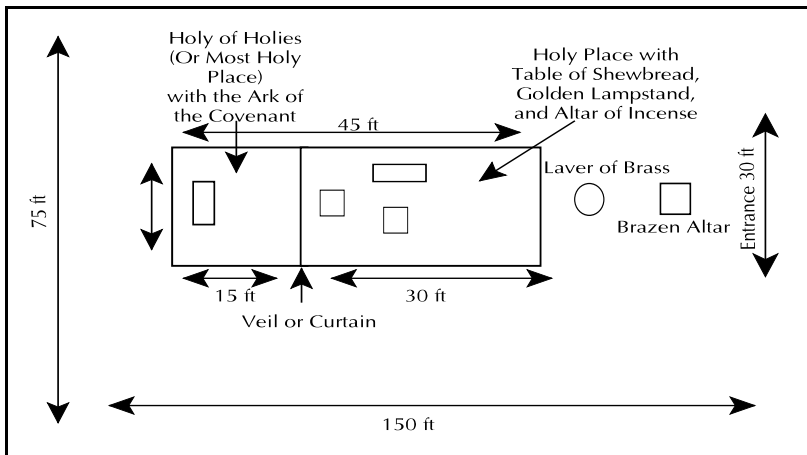
For our God *is* a consuming fire.

Tabernacle

After Moses received the laws and ordinances contained in the old covenant and communicated them to the people, he went up into Mount Sinai. Forty days and forty nights, he communed with God. During this time, God gave him minute details regarding the tabernacle, the priests' functions, and tabernacle service. Page after page in the books of Exodus and Leviticus are dedicated to the information concerning the tabernacle. God obviously places great importance on this subject.

The tabernacle was the focal point of Israel's community and life. It was situated in the center of their camp. Moses, Aaron, the priests, and the Levites were placed on the immediate four sides of the tabernacle. Extended beyond were all the rest of the Israelite community (probably between 2,500,000 and 3,000,000). With this many people, the encampment around the tabernacle extended approximately twelve square miles.

The courtyard walls were 150 feet long by 75 feet wide. Inside the courtyard were the altar of sacrifice, the laver for washing, and the tabernacle proper. The tabernacle was 45 feet long by 15 feet wide. Inside the tabernacle, the holy place was 30 feet by 15 feet; and the holy of holies was a square, 15 feet by 15 feet.



God's initial communication having to do with the tabernacle explains one primary purpose for it: "that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8). Israel apparently needed a visible object representing God. The tabernacle served as a place for God to dwell among His people and a place where His people could commune with Him. Although the tabernacle made God accessible to the people, it also emphatically communicated that He was only approachable in holiness. The structure and service of the tabernacle showed a sinful people how they could come before a holy God in worship and service (Exodus 29:42-46). It also provided a place to offer sacrifice for sin (Leviticus chapters 1-7, 16, and 17). Therefore, it was a graphic portrayal of God's redemptive plan.

Another primary purpose for the tabernacle, its ordinances, and service was to be a figure that looked toward Jesus Christ's sacrificial death as well as man's ultimate redemption and reconciliation to God (Hebrews 9). The entire tabernacle with all of its implements was a shadowy type for the true tabernacle in heaven, where Christ is now serving as the High Priest.

Hebrews 8:5

Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, *that* thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount.

While studying the tabernacle, we must always remember that it is a shadowy type. A shadow is a reflected image which provides a dim outline but not distinct detail. Think of your shadow. Many characteristics can be recognized, but a clear identity is not distinguishable. The tendency is to see more than is obvious and to over-spiritualize what the Scriptures do not make plain. Many similarities are plain enough without exaggerating what is written.

The Brazen Altar

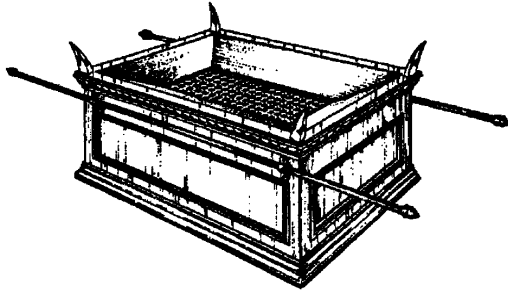
(Exodus 27:1-8)

In the courtyard, the altar of sacrifice was the first thing in view. The altar was a very simple, hollow box made of acacia wood, overlaid with brass. It was seven and one half feet square, stood four and one half feet high, and had four horns pointing outward positioned at each corner. Before anything else, sacrifice was necessary. Starting with Abel, animal sacrifice was God's requirement for the temporary atonement for sin and was the pattern for the ultimate sacrifice: the Lamb of God, Jesus the Christ.

Leviticus 17:11

For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an

atonement for your souls: for it *is* the blood *that* maketh an atonement for the soul.



Animal sacrifice was offered for the sins of the people. The ones who offered laid their hands on the heads of the offerings (the animals). This act identified them with the substitutionary death on their behalf. Their sins were transferred to the sacrifice, and the life of the sacrifice was transferred to them. At the altar, an innocent animal bore the judgment of the guilty. These sacrifices were repeated often because they provided a temporary, partial solution for man's separation from God. The altar and the animal sacrifices offered thereon were a type for Jesus as the sin offering for all mankind. His sacrifice was perfect and provided eternal redemption and reconciliation. His sacrifice was once and for all and replaced the sacrifices of the old covenant.

II Corinthians 5:21

For he hath made him *to be* sin [sin offering] for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

I Peter 1:18 and 19

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers;

But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

Laver of Brass

(Exodus 30:17-28; 40:7-30)

The laver of brass was a large brazen basin on a pedestal which was placed between the altar and the tabernacle. The laver was for the priests to wash their hands and feet.

Exodus 30:17-21

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
Thou shalt also make a laver *of* brass, and his foot *also of* brass, to wash *withal*: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein.

For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat:

When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the

altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD:

So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, *even* to him and to his seed throughout their generations.



Purification before and during service in the tabernacle was mandatory for the priests who ministered before God. The cleansing provided by the laver of brass was a type for the cleansing which would be accomplished for mankind by our Lord Jesus Christ.

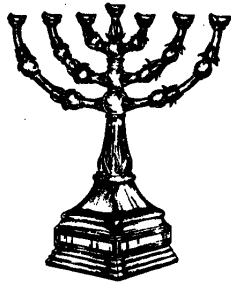
Revelation 1:5

And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

The Golden Lampstand

(Exodus 25:31-40; 37:17-24)

The tabernacle was a rectangular structure divided into two sections. The first compartment was called the holy place. Three implements graced the holy place. The golden lampstand stood on the left side. The table of shewbread stood on the right side. The altar of incense stood in front of the veiled entrance to the holy of holies.



The golden lampstand had seven bowls which were to be filled with pure olive oil. It was to be kept perpetually burning (Exodus 27:20). Since the tabernacle had no windows, the golden lampstand provided the only light, which was quite bright.

Jesus referred to himself as both the "light of life" and the "light of the world."

John 8:12

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

John 9:5

As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

Apart from him there is no light for life or for the world. Those who believe on him shall not abide in darkness. Christ suffered and was raised from the dead in order to show light unto all people.

Acts 26:23

That Christ should suffer, *and* that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

The Table of Shewbread

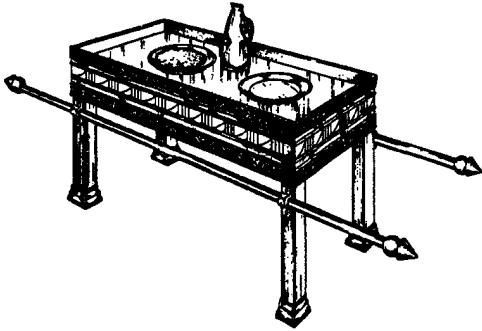
(Exodus 25:23-30; Leviticus 24:5-9)

Every sabbath day twelve new cakes of bread containing about six pounds of flour were arranged in two rows of six loaves on the table. The term "shewbread" comes from a Hebrew word that means bread of the face or bread of presence because the loaves were set before the presence of Yahweh. The bread was a meat offering from the children of Israel.¹² Bread is called the staff of life and is emblematic of sustenance for life itself. Aaron and his sons ate the bread each week before it was replaced.

The shewbread was a foreshadowing for Jesus Christ who is the true bread of life. He provides the necessary substance

¹² The meat offering was also called the meal offering. The word "meat," as used in the Old Testament, and the word "bread," as used in the New Testament, both meant the necessary food to sustain life.

for life to all who partake of him. He was born in the city of Bethlehem, which means house of bread.



John 6:31-35

Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.

For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.

And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

Verses 48-51

I am that bread of life.

Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

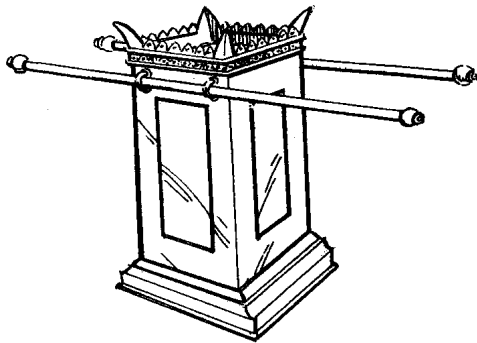
This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

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 Altar of Incense

(Exodus 30:1-10, 34-38)

The golden altar of incense was 36 inches high and 18 inches square and, as such, much smaller than the altar of sacrifice. The incense the priests used was made from three specific perfumes mixed with frankincense. No one else was allowed to mix or burn the incense outside of the holy place because it was designed by the Lord for His service. The incense was to be burned every morning and evening at the same time that the lamps were attended. In like manner to the lamps, the incense was to burn continually. The tabernacle was filled with the unique aroma of the sweet-smelling fragrance.



The offering of Christ is to God a sweet-smelling savor.

Ephesians 5:2

And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us,
and hath given himself for us an offering and a
sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

At the altar of incense, the priests made intercession for Israel. In like manner, Jesus our High Priest makes intercession for us.

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.

Revelation 8:3 and 4

And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer *it* with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

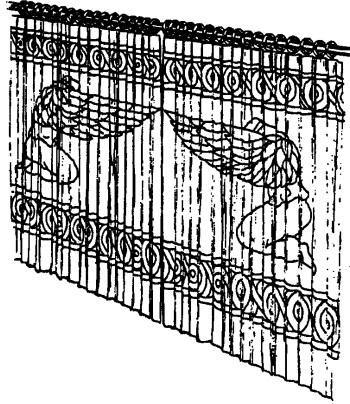
And the smoke of the incense, *which came* with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

The Veil

(Exodus 26:31-33; 36:35-38)

The multicolored veil, embroidered with images of cherubim, hung beautifully between the holy place and the holy of holies. The veil separated the priests from God's

glorious presence. As much as the tabernacle represented the presence of God among His people, it also clearly indicated their separation from Him. The tabernacle was so holy that only the priests were to be allowed to carry it when the camp was moved.



None of the people except the priests were allowed in the holy place. The holy of holies represents the exact place God communed with the high priest. Only the high priest was allowed to pass through the veil and then only once a year on the Day of Atonement.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command, they were driven out of the Garden of Eden. God placed cherubim at the east of the Garden of Eden to keep them from the tree of life (Genesis 3:24). Likewise the cherubim woven on the veil symbolically kept Israel from God's presence. Only one man once a year had access into God's presence.

Simultaneously with the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross, the veil was rent. In a simple yet profoundly significant act, God tore away the barrier that separated sinful humanity from Him.

Matthew 27:51

And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;

With Jesus' death, God proclaimed the end of the Aaronic priesthood. No longer would a high priest be needed to atone for sin annually. When Jesus ascended into heaven, he entered into the presence of God, the true holy of holies.

Hebrews 6:19 and 20

Which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;
Whither the forerunner is for us entered, *even* Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

The Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25:10-16; 37:1-9)

The ark was symbolic of God's throne and presence; thus, it was the most sacred article of furniture in the tabernacle. The tabernacle was built to house the ark of the covenant, so that God could dwell among His people. It was the first item of furniture which was made after God had instructed Moses to build the tabernacle.

The ark was a rectangular chest, three feet nine inches long and two feet three inches wide and high. It was made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold inside and out. The cover, called the mercy seat, was also pure gold. On top of the ark, at each end, stood two cherubim of gold facing each

other but looking down toward the mercy seat. Their wings touched, as they were stretched out over the mercy seat.

Between the cherubim on the mercy seat, God dwelled.

Psalms 80:1

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest *between* the cherubims, shine forth

Psalms 99:1

The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth *between* the cherubims; let the earth be moved.

The ark was called by many names:

- The ark of the testimony (Exodus 25:22), because it was where the two tablets of the Law were kept
- The ark of the covenant (Numbers 10:33), because it symbolized the covenant God made with Israel
- The ark of God (I Samuel 3:3)
- The ark of the Lord God (I Kings 2:26)
- The holy ark (II Chronicles 35:3)
- The ark of Thy strength (Psalms 132:8)

The word "ark" is used three ways in the Scriptures: (1) the ark that Noah built in the times of the flood, (2) the ark that carried the baby Moses when his parents sent him down the river, and (3) the ark of the covenant. The three arks have one main thing in common: they were used to carry and preserve life.

Three objects were contained in the ark of the covenant.

Hebrews 9:4

...and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;

Manna was the food provided by God for the children of Israel during their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. Manna is called "bread from heaven" (Exodus 16:4), "the corn of heaven," and "angels' food" (Psalms 78:24 and 25). Manna provided everything necessary to sustain life and clearly illustrated God's provision for man and man's need for humility. It also taught that man shall not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord (Deuteronomy 8:1-3).

Manna was a type for Christ because he is the true bread from heaven that gives life unto the world. He is the bread of life (John 6:31-35). He is the manna for everlasting life (John 6:48-51).

Aaron's rod that budded was also in the ark. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram had gathered 250 leaders from the twelve tribes to challenge Moses' and Aaron's right to lead the people. Moses did accept the challenge, and then God vindicated his leadership by opening the ground which swallowed up Korah and all those who had decided to stand with him. The 250 who had rebelled were destroyed by fire from God out of heaven.

The next day, the congregation of Israel accused Moses of killing the people. To provide further proof of Aaron's right to be high priest, God instructed Moses to select a representative from each tribe to bring an almond rod with the name of the tribe engraved on it. The rod of the man whom God had chosen to be the high priest would blossom overnight. Aaron's rod budded, blossomed, and yielded

almonds. He indeed was God's selection for high priest and God's chosen mediator between Himself and the people (Numbers 16 and 17).

Jesus Christ is the High Priest (Hebrews 5:1-8:13). He, alone, is God's choice and man's way to the Father. He is "the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

The third item in the ark was the tablets of the Law. God engraved the ten commandments on the stones that Moses had hewn (Exodus 20:1-17; 32:15; Deuteronomy 10:2). According to the Gospel of John chapter 1, Jesus Christ is the living Word of God (John 1:14).

The mercy seat, the place God communed with His people, sat over the manna, Aaron's rod, and the tablets. The manna represented Christ, God's provision for life in the age to come. Aaron's rod represented Christ, the High Priest, the mediator between God and men. The tablets of the covenant represented the Word of life and Jesus Christ who is the living Word. God's mercy for mankind rests upon His Son, Jesus the Christ.

The Mercy Seat

(Exodus 25:17-22; 37:6-9)

Jesus Christ is also called the mercy seat. The Greek word *hilasterion*, translated mercy seat in Hebrews 9:5, is the identical Greek word translated propitiation in Romans 3:25.

Romans 3:25

Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation
[mercy seat] through faith in his blood, to
declare his righteousness for the remission of

sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

The mercy seat on the ark was the place where mercy was manifested and reconciliation appropriated and, as such, is a type for Jesus Christ.

High Priest

(Exodus 28:1-29:46; Leviticus 8:1-9:24)

Aaron and his descendants served as high priests until God's Son became the final High Priest.¹³ Their service was a type for what Jesus would eventually do. The high priesthood was a shadowy type just like everything else relating to the tabernacle. It was shadowy, not only in type, but also in effectiveness. The high priest went into the holy of holies; Jesus Christ ascended into heaven.

Hebrews 8:1

Now of the things which we have spoken *this is* the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;

Jesus the Christ is a minister of the true tabernacle, not the shadowy type that man makes.

Verses 2-5

A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

¹³ For more detail on Jesus Christ our High Priest, see Volume II, *Jesus the Christ*, chapter 10 by this same author.

For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore *it is* of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.

For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:

Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, *that* thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.

The priests went into the holy place to carry out the service to God, but only the high priest could enter the holy of holies.

Hebrews 9:6 and 7

Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle [the holy place], accomplishing the service *of God*.

But into the second [holy of holies] *went* the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and *for* the errors of the people:

The Day of Atonement was the only day the high priest entered into the holy of holies to make a special sacrifice for himself and the people (Leviticus 16). While the tabernacle was still standing, it signified that the way to the holiest of all was not yet manifest.

Verses 8-12

The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:

Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;

Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed *on them* until the time of reformation.

But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*.

Christ as the High Priest and the sacrifice has entered into "the" holy of holies, that is heaven itself.

Verses 13 and 14

For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

The exhortation in view of what Christ accomplished is to "purge your conscience from dead works." The dead works spoken of would be those still observing the old covenant, the old tabernacle, and the old service.

Verses 24-28

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, *which are* the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

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

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Christ has entered into the holy of holies and remains there until he returns. Today is the day of atonement for men, but when he returns, it will be the day of judgment. Jesus Christ is our High Priest; therefore we can come boldly unto the throne of grace.

Hebrews 4:14-16

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.

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

The last place that the word "tabernacle" is used in the Scriptures provides a fitting end to our study of the tabernacle. The tabernacle of old is a type for the tabernacle of God which will be manifest in the new heaven and new earth.

Revelation 21:1-5

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

Forty Years

When Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, the original plan was for them to go directly into the promised land. The books of Exodus and Leviticus record the events which transpired during their first year in the wilderness. These books reveal that the reason for the delay of entering the promised land was Israel's own constant disobedience and rebellion.

God cut a covenant with Israel which consisted of commitments by both parties. Israel was to obey God, and He would be their God caring for them. Regarding entrance into the promised land, God specifically stated the following:

Exodus 23:27-30

I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee.

And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee.

I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee.

By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land.

God's plan was simple, yet powerful and systematic. Israel would not need to lift a hand to fight the inhabitants. Hornets are large wasps that can give a very painful sting. One hornet will make most people run for the hills. A swarm of hornets directed by God would definitely drive out all the Hivites, Canaanites, and Hittites, no matter how powerful a force they were. God promised to do the work. All Israel had to do was trust.

Early in the second year of the wilderness, God led Israel to the border of the promised land to a place called Kadesh-barnea in the wilderness of Paran. The head of each tribe was selected to go into Canaan to spy out the land. After forty days, they came back and reported their findings. They brought samples of the abundant fruit, but they also brought a very negative report.

Numbers 13:27-33

And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this *is* the fruit of it.

Nevertheless the people *be* strong that dwell in the land, and the cities *are* walled, *and* very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there.

The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan.

And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.

But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they *are* stronger than we.

And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, *is* a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it *are* men of a great stature.

And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, *which come* of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

The observations of ten of the spies caused alarm and great fear. They obviously forgot, or did not believe, God's promise of the hornets. Even giants behave rather small and cowardly when attacked by hornets! For Caleb and Joshua the same survey was cause for optimism and determined conviction that God would deliver.

After spending fourteen to fifteen months in the wilderness, the Israelites must have had great expectation about entry into the promised land. The evil report from their respected leaders threw a wet blanket on the sparks of anticipation. The congregation gravitated to the evil report and disregarded Caleb and Joshua, even though their report corresponded with God's promise. The report rocked them so much that they cried all night long and then turned against Moses and Aaron.

Numbers 14:1-5

And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night.

And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!

And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt?

And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.

Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.

The people's reaction to the evil report was insane. They apparently forgot all the supernatural miracles that they had experienced such as the ten plagues inflicted upon Egypt; the Passover; crossing the Red Sea; the angel of the Lord; cloud by day and fire by night; the waters at Marah made sweet; daily manna from heaven; water from the rock at Horeb; and Mount Sinai with the thunder, lightning, thick cloud, the trumpet sounds, the smoke, the quaking, the voice of God, and the covenant.

To arrive at the conclusion that it was better for them to return to Egypt than to enter into the promised land is outrageous. Before their liberation from Egypt, they were in slavery with a taskmaster so cruel that their male children were to be killed at birth. After the ten plagues and the Red Sea, everything in Egypt was destroyed. Yet, they desired to

return to this idolatrous wasteland rather than follow God into the promised land!

Joshua and Caleb pleaded with them to forsake their insanity and turn to God.

Numbers 14:6-9

And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, *which were* of them that searched the land, rent their clothes:

And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, *is* an exceeding good land.

If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.

Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they *are* bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD *is* with us: fear them not.

Their response to these two great men of faith was to stone them; however, God intervened.

Verse 10

But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel.

Before continuing this chapter, we have other scriptures to consider which provide insight. Deuteronomy is the record of events beginning in the eleventh month of the fortieth year in the wilderness and ending with Moses' death right before

Joshua leads Israel into the promised land. Moses recounts many of the things which happened during the first years in the wilderness. He is speaking to the children of those who entered the wilderness and who died before entering the promised land.

Since God had told Israel He was going to give them the land, sending spies into the land to check it out made little sense. Moses explains why the people wanted spies.

Deuteronomy 1:19-36

And when we departed from Horeb, we went through all that great and terrible wilderness, which ye saw by the way of the mountain of the Amorites, as the LORD our God commanded us; and we came to Kadesh-barnea.

And I said unto you, Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the LORD our God doth give unto us.

Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up *and* possess *it*, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged.

And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come.

And the saying pleased me well: and I took twelve men of you, one of a tribe:

And they turned and went up into the mountain, and came unto the valley of Eshcol, and searched it out.

And they took of the fruit of the land in their hands, and brought *it* down unto us, and brought us word again, and said, *It is* a good land which the LORD our God doth give us. Notwithstanding ye would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God:

And ye murmured in your tents, and said, Because the LORD hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us.

Whither shall we go up? our brethren have discouraged our heart, saying, The people *is* greater and taller than we; the cities *are* great and walled up to heaven; and moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakims there.

Then I said unto you, Dread not, neither be afraid of them.

The LORD your God which goeth before you, he shall fight for you, according to all that he did for you in Egypt before your eyes;

And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the LORD thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place.

Yet in this thing ye did not believe the LORD your God,

Who went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents *in*, in fire by night, to shew you by what way ye should go, and in a cloud by day.

And the LORD heard the voice of your words, and was wroth, and sware, saying,

Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I swear to give unto your fathers, Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath wholly followed the LORD.

Hundreds of years later, the prophet Ezekiel is inspired to add more insight to this incident. Israel did not really need spies; God had spied out the land for them.

Ezekiel 20:5 and 6

And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day when I chose Israel, and lifted up mine hand unto the seed of the house of Jacob, and made myself known unto them in the land of Egypt, when I lifted up mine hand unto them, saying, I *am* the LORD your God; In the day *that* I lifted up mine hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt into a land that I had espied for them, flowing with milk and honey, which *is* the glory of all lands:

The first, and indeed most vital, commandment given in the covenant was to worship the one true God and to have no idols. Yet, Israel never forsook the idols of Egypt. They did not worship the Lord, Who is the only true God.

Verses 7 and 8

Then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I *am* the LORD your God.

But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.

The reason Israel was given to such obsessive, grotesque behavior is that they went after idols.

Verses 15 and 16

Yet also I lifted up my hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given *them*, flowing with milk and honey, which *is* the glory of all lands; Because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols.

They despised God's Word and went after false gods. They did not love and trust the true God.

Had God not intervened, Israel would have killed Caleb, Joshua, Moses, and Aaron. Afterwards, they would have marched back to Egypt and their false gods. God was so provoked by them that He determined to destroy them all. However, Moses interceded on their behalf.

Numbers 14:17-22

And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my LORD be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying,

The LORD *is* longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation*.

Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.

And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word:

But *as truly as I live*, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD.

Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice;

The incident we are reviewing is typical of the ten times they tempted God, which were all within fourteen to fifteen months of leaving Egypt.¹⁴ While Moses was on the Mount getting the revelation about the tabernacle, Israel was down below worshipping the golden calf that they had made.

¹⁴ (1) When the Egyptians marched after them (Exodus 14:10-12); (2) bitter waters at Marah (Exodus 15:23 and 24); (3) murmuring because of hunger (Exodus 16:2 and 3); (4) gathering manna (Exodus 16:19 and 20); (5) gathering manna on the Sabbath day (Exodus 16:25-28); (6) chiding over water (Exodus 17:1-7); (7) worshipping molten calf (Exodus 32:1,7-9); (8) complaining (Numbers 11:1-3); (9) lusting for flesh to eat (Numbers 11:4-6); (10) refusing to enter the promised land (Numbers 14:1-4).

Since they adamantly refused to enter the promised land, God accommodated their desire.

Verses 26-35

And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,

How long *shall I bear with* this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me.

Say unto them, *As truly as I live*, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you:

Your carcases shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, *concerning* which I swore to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.

But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised.

But *as for you*, your carcases, they shall fall in this wilderness.

And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcases be wasted in the wilderness.

After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, *even forty days*, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, *even forty years*, and ye shall know my breach of promise.

I the LORD have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.

One year for each day that they spied out the land would be spent in the wilderness. Of the generation that went into the wilderness, only Caleb and Joshua entered the promised land. After they heard God's judgment, they mourned and decided that they would go into the promised land after all. Still they did not take God at His Word. He said they would not enter; they said they would go now.

Verses 40-45

And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we *be here*, and will go up unto the place which the LORD hath promised: for we have sinned.

And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the LORD? but it shall not prosper.

Go not up, for the LORD *is* not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies.

For the Amalekites and the Canaanites *are* there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the LORD, therefore the LORD will not be with you.

But they presumed to go up unto the hill top: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and Moses, departed not out of the camp.

Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote

them, and discomfited them, *even* unto Hormah.

The subsequent chapters in the book of Numbers show how this generation died in the wilderness. Record after record reveals that the hardheartedness manifested at Kadesh-barnea was not a fluke. They did not love or trust God; therefore, they did not enter the promised land. They are held up to us as an example not to follow.

I Corinthians 10:1-12

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

Neither be ye idolaters, as *were* some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

God led Israel out of the bondage of Egypt and wanted to lead them into the promised land. However, they died in the wilderness. We, too, have been called out of our bondage, and God desires to lead us into the Promised Land. We must take heed to the lessons seen in the Hebrew scriptures. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob provide sterling examples of faith; whereas the Israelites as they were in the wilderness provide examples of unbelief.

Hebrews 3:17-19, 4:1 and 2, 11

But with whom was he grieved forty years? was *it* not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?

So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left *us* of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not

profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard *it*.

Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

Whose example will we choose to follow? Abraham's walk of faith provides the type for entering into God's coming Kingdom. Israel's faithlessness shows how to receive damnation in the age to come.

The Kingdom of God

God's original plan was for man to have dominion over a perfect world. He created Adam and Eve in His own image, enabling them to have sovereignty upon earth under God's absolute rule. In this original environment and in his original state, man would live a loving, harmonious life with God and mankind forever. Sin, sickness, sorrow, and death were then nonexistent in the Garden of Eden. Peace, love, joy, and life were flourishing.

However, after being enticed by the serpent, Adam and Eve made the choice to disobey God's direct command. The consequences of their choice were cataclysmic and affected every aspect of creation. Their dominion was greatly diminished, the earth was corrupted, and their harmonious relationships were tarnished with enmity and contention. Sin enveloped mankind as Satan, the god of this age, became a primary influencing agent. Their eternal life was replaced with death.

The fall of man and the covering cherub, who became the devil, indeed destroyed God's original plan but by no means deterred God from His purpose. Immediately after the fall, God set in motion the plan to redeem man and restore the earth to its Paradise state. As the Scriptures continue, this plan becomes its main theme called the Kingdom of God by our Lord Jesus Christ.

The first descriptive information about the Kingdom of God is given to Abraham. God cut a covenant with him promising that Abraham and his descendants of faith would inherit the earth. He also promised that the Messiah would be one of his innumerable descendants.

Evident with Abraham, since he was an idolater when God first called him, is that entrance into the Kingdom of God comes only by God's outright grace and mercy. Notwithstanding, Abraham had the responsibility to respond to God's call with faith. As with Adam and Eve before him, he was required to maintain faith which implied obedience to God's commands. Genuine faith is always accompanied by works, the works of obedience. God commanded Abraham to leave his country, family, father's house and to go to the place God would lead. Abraham believed God, so he obeyed. In like manner we, too, receive the command to forsake our old lives and follow Him. Abraham could not have continued as an idolater and also have had a relationship with God that would end with eternal life, nor can we.

All those who have faith in Jesus the Christ are connected to Abraham. The biological descendants of Abraham are not necessarily referred to as his children. Those from among both Israel and the Gentiles who have faith in Christ are the seed of Abraham. This seed will be blessed with faithful Abraham and will be fellow heirs with him when Christ returns. All the promises made to Abraham are also to his children of faith. Gentile believers have the identical Hope that the Israel believers had, which is the Kingdom of God.

Abraham's encounter with Melchizedek also provides insight into the coming Kingdom. Melchizedek was the priest of the most high God and the king of Salem (later known as Jerusalem). Melchizedek as the priest/king with his throne in Jerusalem is a type for Jesus the Christ.

Abraham's son Isaac and grandson Jacob were the heirs of the "blessings of Abraham." Jacob's name was changed to Israel. Israel, his twelve sons, and their families eventually all moved into Egypt. As time moved on, the Egyptians began to persecute the children of Israel. They cried unto God Who raised up Moses to lead them out. Much of what God did for Israel by the hand of Moses was a shadowy type for the Messiah and the Kingdom of God.

The children of Israel were kept in bondage under the cruel tyranny of the Egyptian taskmasters. God raised up a savior in Moses to lead them out of captivity and into the promised land. Their disobedience to God resulted in forty years of wandering in the wilderness. "Joshua," which is the same name as "Jesus" in the New Testament, finally led them into the promised land. This entire historical event is a type for God's overall plan for man's redemption.

Before people accept Christ as Lord, they are encased in the bondage of sin and ruled by the evil, cruel god of this age. After accepting Christ, we begin our wilderness walk as strangers and pilgrims. In the wilderness journey, we have choices. We can surrender to evil temptations or can remain faithful unto the end. Many of the Israelites died in the wilderness because of their unbelief; consequently they never entered the promised land. The faithful ones did enter with Joshua. If we maintain our faith until we die or till the Lord's return, we will enter into The Promised Land.

The tabernacle, the high priest, the sacrifices, and the other tabernacle service all were types pointing toward the Messiah and the coming Kingdom.

After Moses, the next major illumination about the coming Kingdom is found with King David. David was anointed to be king over God's Kingdom, with his throne located in Jerusalem. With David as king, the children of Israel enjoyed their sweetest time with God. David and his reign are held

up as types for the coming Kingdom when Christ will rule the regenerated earth.

The prophets contribute much insight to the Kingdom of God. The Messiah will return at the end of this age after the wrath of God has been poured out. When he comes, the righteous dead will be resurrected to reign with him. His influence will be over the entire earth with his throne located in Jerusalem. The city will be transformed to be like the Zion it once was under the rule of David. Christ's reign will be righteous, equitable, and absolute. Even the animal kingdom will be transformed to have a peaceful coexistence with each other and with man.

During the first seven years of his reign, all the weapons of war will be molded into tools of agriculture. The earth will begin to restore itself and eventually become completely regenerated like the original Garden of Eden. All the uninhabitable, desolate places like deserts, high mountains, and low valleys will be changed and become fertile, productive, inhabitable terrain. Jesus will reign for 1,000 years until all the kingdoms of the world are brought into subjection and until the destruction of all the enemy, the last of which is death. Then the Kingdom will be given up to God Who will be exalted forevermore. Then what God originally created (as recorded in Genesis chapters 1 and 2) will again be established, but this time for eternity.

The Foundation offers a slight introduction to this comprehensive subject of the Kingdom of God. The only way to gain a full scope of understanding is by studying the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. This book is the first in a three volume set. **Jesus the Christ** (Volume II) covers the information regarding the Kingdom recorded in the Gospels. **Living Sacrifice** (Volume III) sets forth teaching from the Church Epistles related to the same subject. All three books

are designed to aid the reader to understand the most important book of all, the Bible.

II Timothy 2:15

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.