

THE CALL OF ABRAHAM

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About This Work

This volume is a collection of articles, from the pen of E.J. Waggoner, concerning the events of the life of Abraham, and the promises given to him and his seed.

These articles were not written as a series, but rather were written here and there, one in one year, another in another year. In most cases, they are not included in any other book or series, and so I have gathered them and put them in chronological order, according to the chapters in Genesis that cover the life of Abraham.

Abraham stands as a "father of the faithful." The gospel is most clearly spelled out in his life and experiences, and in the promises given to him. It is no surprise therefore, that the books of Romans and Galatians in the New Testament, draw heavily upon lessons from Abraham's life. Even the well-known Christian book, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, draws much inspiration from the example of Abraham: just as Abraham left his country to embark on a journey full of spiritual experiences, so Christian leaves his town, journeying to the heavenly kingdom.

In Revelation 14:6-7, the final presentation of the gospel message to the world, before the scenes of tribulation that precede the coming of Christ, is described as "the everlasting gospel." This means a gospel that has always been the same, unchanged and unchangeable, beginning with the first promise to the seed of the woman, proceeding all through the Old Testament, clearly

demonstrated and proclaimed in the life of Jesus Christ, and afterwards revealed in the teachings and experiences of the church. There is no difference between the faith of Abraham, or any of the Old Testament saints, and that of the New Testament believer.

When the Advent message was first proclaimed, in the early 1800's, it came to a people that were asleep in their sins, attached to the old sinful world, and very much unready for Christ's kingdom. Those who chose to retain their hold on the earth, and who refused to join in and build for the spiritual kingdom, eventually adopted alternative views of the gospel, the law, and carnal interpretations of the prophecies and promises. Their children, who were raised in that apostasy, have further built on that false foundation. Even in Waggoner's day, there were many false theories about the gospel, and some of those are dealt with in these articles, so as to make the true faith stand out, in contrast with the many errors that spring from unbelief and a failure to grasp the true meaning in God's promises.

Even in Abraham's life, there was a failure to grasp the true meaning of God's promise, which led to the production of Ishmael. Ishmael was an attempt to fulfill God's promise, with carnal strength. It fell infinitely short of what God intended. Abraham, however, learned from this experience, and his faith reached higher to grasp God's power. This stands as an encouragement to all of us, who have wasted time and effort trying to produce what only God can do within and through us. If we turn to the Lord, as Abraham did, He will redeem the failures of the past, and bring forth a pattern of life to His glory.

I close with Waggoner's words in the final article of this collection: We are journeying to this land, this new earth, of which the Lord has said to the seed of Abraham, "I will give it unto you" (Genesis 13:17), and we are nearing the end of the journey. We are "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." 2 Peter 3:12.

The reward of the faithful is the inheritance promised to Abraham. Set your face toward Zion, and away from the city of destruction. ... Come with us to this inheritance!

Frank Zimmerman

Chapter 1

The Call of Abraham

"Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto a land that I will show you; And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing; And I will bless them that bless you, and curse him that curses you: and in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed."
(Genesis 12:1-3)

How literally this promise has been fulfilled is scarcely comprehended. Taken in a purely physical sense, it has been fulfilled in a most marvelous manner. There is no other man known to history, to whom such a multitude of people can directly trace their ancestry.

We know that we are all sons of Adam; but here we have something more definitely marked. Here we have a man whose numerous descendants bears his impress, a man who has transmitted a family resemblance to more people than any other man that ever lived. For we must remember that not only the Jews, whose family resemblance is known all over the world, but also the hosts of Arabians, are directly descended from Abraham.

But this, wonderful as it is, does not begin to exhaust the promise made in the call. Indeed, it scarcely touches it; for it is in

Isaac alone that the true seed of Abraham is called, (Genesis 21:12)-
-in Isaac, the child of promise, he who was born of the Spirit.
(Galatians 4:28-29) So we read the words of the prophet: "Hearken
to me, you that follow after righteousness, you that seek the Lord;
look unto the rock whence you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit
whence you were dug. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto
Sarah that bare you; for when he was but one I called him, and I
blessed him, and made him many. For the Lord has comforted Zion;
He has comforted all her waste places, and has made her wilderness
like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and
gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of
melody." (Isaiah 51:1-3)

Thus we see that upon the call of Abraham, and the multiplying
of him into a great nation, yes, a multitude of nations, depends the
comfort of Zion. His seed are only those who follow after
righteousness, and the nations that can truly trace their ancestry to
him will be "the nations of them which are saved," (Revelation
21:24) who bring their glory and their honor to Zion, the heavenly
Jerusalem.

Spiritual Blessings the Only Real Ones

Notice the promise in the call: "In you shall all the families of
the earth be blessed." (Genesis 12:3)

Let no one limit this to temporal prosperity. It is true that food,
and clothing, houses and lands, the power to get wealth, are, if

rightly obtained and used, blessings from the Lord, "who gives us richly all things to enjoy." (1 Timothy 6:17)

Yet the wealth of this world is at the best uncertain, and merely temporal. "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Matthew 16:26)

To limit any promise of blessing from God to the things of this earth only, is to limit His goodness. "The eternal God" (Deuteronomy 33:27) deals always with eternal things; that which we get from Him for the needs of this life are incidental, and only with reference to the life to come.

But there is no possibility for doubt in the matter of the promise to Abraham. Words could not make it any plainer than it is put in the third chapter of Galatians. "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness. Know therefore that they which be of faith, the same are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the Gospel beforehand unto Abraham, saying, In you shall all the nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham." (Galatians 3:6-9,RV)

And again: "Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He said not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to your seed, which is Christ." " (Galatians 3:16,RV)

If we read the story of Abraham, and do not read the Gospel of our salvation in it, we read it to no purpose. More of this, however, will appear in a subsequent lesson. The blessing promised to the nations of the earth, even to all the families, is the blessing that comes by the cross of Christ; for: "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." (Galatians 3:13-14)

Calling the Gentiles

It is strange that people read into the Old Testament history promises only to the Jews, and imagine that for some hundreds of years God cared for the salvation of only one people. Such things are read into the Bible, not in it.

Look at the facts. God called Abraham, or Abram, as he was then named. Who was he? He was a Gentile, the son of heathen parents, (Joshua 24:2) so that the very calling of him, without the specific promise, is a pledge of salvation to any other Gentile who will believe as Abraham did. And then the promise was, "In you shall all the families of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 12:3)

His call, as we have read from Galatians 3:3, had direct reference to the Gentiles, to all nations. To say or to think that for centuries the energies of God, so far as this earth is concerned, were almost wholly absorbed in caring for one people, "the fewest of all

people," (Deuteronomy 7:7) or that, even if they did not absorb His energy, He was indifferent to all others, is most dishonoring both to His power and His goodness. How anybody who holds such a view can trust God for salvation, it is difficult to see. How can they believe that He now cares for all? How can they think that after hundreds of years of exclusiveness He has suddenly become broad-minded? He says that He does not change; (Malachi 3:6) how then can those who think that for ages He loved only the Jews, believe that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

How plain it is, that to hold such views of God's dealing in the past is to undermine faith in the Gospel.

Missionary Effort in Ancient Times

All the Old Testament history and prophecy shows that God was working through the chosen seed of Abraham to save the world. He was trying to induce them to fulfil their mission, namely, to carry the Gospel of the kingdom to the whole world.

When they would not do it, but instead of converting the heathen, became perverted by them, God made the truth known through the kings of the Gentiles. Read especially the second, third, fourth, and sixth chapters of Daniel. See how Jonah was sent against his will to the city of Nineveh. Read the direct appeals, warnings, and threatenings to the different nations by name, in the writings of

the prophets. And, finally, read the words of God to Jeremiah: "Before I formed you in the belly, I knew you; and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you, and I ordained you a prophet unto the nations." (Jeremiah 1:5)

The word "nations" is the same as Gentiles, or heathen. So hundreds years before the advent of Christ, the Gentiles had a prophet specially ordained for them, just as afterwards they had an apostle. He dealt as well by them before the crucifixion as afterwards; but the most of the people whom He called would not go.

Why did God choose Abraham? Because when God called, Abraham obeyed. He calls all, but those who will not hear the call cannot be used. Why did He work through Israel for so long? Because, headstrong as they were, they were the only people near enough to Him for Him to work through.

No Continuing City

Abraham's call was first to get out of his country. In that we see that the purpose of God for those whom He calls is not to give them a dwelling place on this earth in its present state. "By faith Abraham ... 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 has foundations,

whose builder and maker is God." (Hebrews 11:8-10) "Here have we no continuing city." (Hebrews 13:14)

Everything reared by human hands is bound to perish. The proudest structure built by man crumbles into ruin. But, "whatsoever God does, it shall be for ever;" (Ecclesiastes 3:14) and the city which He builds shall stand throughout the ages of eternity. All who will be blessed with faithful Abraham must be content to sojourn as he did,-not rooted to any spot on this earth, but looking for "a better county, that is, a heavenly." (Hebrews 11:16)

Protection

"And the Canaanite was then in the land." (Genesis 12:6)

That was when Abraham dwelt in it, moving about from place to place as a stranger. What is the meaning of that item thrown in seemingly without any connection? Read the subsequent history of the Canaanites, and you will see. There were many kingdoms of them, and they were strong and cruelly fierce, all fighters. They had no love for the strangers that came among them. They had, as a class, no virtues, least of all hospitality. Read how the very sight of them by the spies whom Moses sent out, and the story of their warlike power frightened the whole nation of Israel. Yet Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob dwelt safely in the land, because they believed in the Lord. "He is the Lord our God: His judgments are in all the earth. He has remembered His covenant for ever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations. Which covenant He made

with Abraham, and His oath unto Isaac; And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant; Saying, Unto you will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance: When they were but few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it. When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people; He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, He reprov'd kings for their sakes; Saying, Touch not my anointed, and do my prophets no harm." (Psalm 105:7-15)

Abraham a Prophet

Yes; Abraham was a prophet,--a speaker for God,--one by whom God made His will known to the people. God said to one of the kings whom He reprov'd for Abraham's sake, "He is a prophet; and he shall pray for you, and you shall live." (Genesis 20:7)

Ah, it was not merely for Abraham's sake that God preserved him and multiplied him. God sent Abraham to Canaan as a missionary to the heathen, and He protected him that he might bear his testimony to them. And this is how he did it: "And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto your seed will I give this land; and there he built an altar unto the Lord who appeared unto him. And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he built an altar unto the Lord, and called on the name of the Lord." (Genesis 12:7-8)

Everywhere he went he created a place of worship. But that was not all; he "proclaimed the name of the Lord," or, as Young renders it, "He preached in the name of Jehovah." By a comparison of the Hebrew of this passage with that of Exodus 34:5, we find that the two passages are identical.

So we find that Abraham did not merely call on the name of the Lord for his own sake, but he made that name known to the heathen. It was by their rejection of the message which he took to them, that their iniquity became so full that God was obliged to cut them off.

Preaching the Resurrection

By the revelation of God to Abraham, we may know what he preached to the heathen in Canaan. God said to him, "To you and to your seed will I give this land;" (Genesis 12:7) yet Abraham himself never had any permanent dwelling place there, neither did Isaac or Jacob, nor, in fact, any of their descendants, not excepting King David. (1 Chronicles 29:15; Psalm 39:12) The whole nation was subsequently carried away, and they have no possession whatever in it to this day. God called Abraham to the land, but: "He gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on; yet He promised that He would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child." (Acts 7:5)

What is the trouble? Did God break His word? Not by any means. Knowing that God cannot lie, (Titus 1:2; Numbers 23:19) and reading this inspired statement as to the facts of the promise, we

are shut up to the conclusion that the promise to Abraham was to be fulfilled through the resurrection. The land was to be his for an everlasting possession after the resurrection of the just.

Even so Abraham understood it, because God plainly told him that he was to die and be buried before the possession of the land was given. (Genesis 15:13-16) So Abraham died in faith, fully assured that the land was his, although he possessed not a foot of it.

It was by faith that Abraham sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country; and the faith that sustained him was the faith in the resurrection through Jesus Christ. (See Hebrews 11:17-19) It was this faith, therefore, which he made known to the heathen in the land, and that same faith and hope is ours to proclaim today to the people among whom we sojourn.--Present Truth, July 18, 1901--Genesis 12:1-9.

Chapter 2

The Blessing of Abraham

"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of law, been made a curse for us, ... 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 you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:13-14,29)

Therefore every word that God spoke to Abraham applies to us who believe, just as much as it did to him. Now note the very first statement of the promise to Abraham: "I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing; And I will bless them that bless you; and curse him that curses you; and in you shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 12:2-3)

Abraham was blessed, that he might be a blessing; and, in like manner, God makes every believer in Him a blessing to somebody wherever he may be.

Every particle of matter in the universe has some influence over every other particle; even so it is with people; and everyone who receives and appreciates the blessing from God must, although almost always unconsciously to himself, be a blessing to others.

What a comforting thought this is, and what an incentive to be always in touch with the Lord, from whom all blessings flow.-- Present Truth, February 27, 1902--Genesis 12:2-3.

Chapter 3

Hearing Abraham's Gospel

The Gospel was preached in the days of Abraham. Not only so, but we who live in this nineteenth century are admonished to take heed to that Gospel and that preaching. It is the same Gospel that has been preached in all ages,--the Gospel which is "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes." (Romans 1:16)

Of this preaching we are told that: "The Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In you shall all nations be blessed." (Galatians 3:8)

It was preached also to Abraham's descendants, those "whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, ... [who] because of unbelief," (Hebrews 3:17,19) could not enter into the promised rest. The promise of rest and inheritance is the Gospel, since it comes through the righteousness of faith. "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." (Romans 4:13)

And now the exhortation comes, "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." (Hebrews 4:1-2)

In preaching the Gospel to Abraham and to them, God also preached it to us, who are the children of Abraham by faith. Very profitable is it, therefore, to consider Abraham and the promises made to him. Unless we do, we shall be ignorant of what the Gospel means, and of what it has for us.--Present Truth, May 24, 1894--
Genesis 12:3.

Chapter 4

God Our Defender

The promise to Abraham and to us is, "I will bless them that bless you, and curse him that curses you." (Genesis 12:3)

If we believe this promise, we shall never attempt to defend ourselves, nor waste time in replying to those who bring false charges against us. God takes all the responsibility of that upon himself, leaving us free to do the work He has given us.

If we are provoked to reply to attacks upon us, it shows that we do not believe, or else have forgotten, the promise of God. So long as we are trusting in God, whoever curses--speaks lightly of us,--thereby brings a curse upon his own head. How useless, then, for us to do anything to him! "His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate." (Psalm 7:16)

God says to us, "I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward." (Genesis 15:1)

Let us therefore learn from our Elder Brother in the family of Abraham, Jesus Christ, "Who when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judges righteously." (1 Peter 2:23)--Present Truth, March 6, 1902--Genesis 12:3; 15:1.

Chapter 5

Lot's Choice

Though the place of Sodom and Gomorrah was as beautiful "as the garden of the Lord," the people were so corrupt that neither earth nor Heaven could endure them but a little while longer. "The men of Sodom were wicked and sinners exceedingly before the Lord." (Genesis 13:13)

And, "Behold, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination." (Ezekiel 16:49-50)

This was the iniquity of Sodom. And though Lot found the place beautiful, he found the people abominable; and his righteous soul was "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds." (2 Peter 2:7-8)

But, "Evil communications corrupt good manners." (1 Corinthians 15:33)

And although Lot is given by the word of God the title of "just" and "righteous," yet his family was so far influenced by the "evil

communications" of those wicked people, that his wife did not escape destruction, and his daughters, though they escaped, showed themselves more thoroughly familiar with the wicked ways of Sodom than with the righteous ways of their father.

"Lot's choice" was a miserable choice. Worldly prosperity is no evidence of the fear of God, but rather tends to make the naturally corrupt heart still more corrupt. Let it be the aim of all to "walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham," (Romans 4:12) that we may all be partakers with him of the same promise in view of which he ever lived and walked.--Signs of the Times, January 20, 1887--Notes on the International Lesson, February 6--Genesis 13:1-13.

Chapter 6

A Lesson in Unselfishness / Abram and Lot

When Abraham left his native country at the call of God, and came into the land of Canaan, he took his nephew Lot with him. For some time they remained together, Lot accompanying Abraham in all his journeyings. From the 12th chapter of Genesis we learn that they passed through Canaan, and went down into Egypt; our present lesson tells of their return to Canaan. "And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai; Unto the place of the altar, which he had made here at the first; and there Abram called on the name of Jehovah." (Genesis 13:2-4)

Abraham a Preacher

We see that Abraham did not forget his mission in the land, which was to preach the Gospel. Bear in mind what was said concerning the expression, "called on the name of the Lord." In the Hebrew the words are exactly the same as those in Exodus 34:5, where we read that the Lord descended in the cloud to Moses upon the mount, and "proclaimed the name of the Lord." (Exodus 34:5)

Now it is evident that this is correctly rendered; because it is exactly what the Lord did on that occasion, as we learn from the succeeding verses; and it is equally evident that it would be most

improper--absolutely impossible--to render the expression, "called on the name of the Lord," as in Genesis 12:8; 13:4. Therefore we are justified in giving to the term in these instances the same rendering that it has in Exodus, where we know it is correctly rendered. So we render the last part of Genesis 22:4 literally, thus: "And there Abram proclaimed the name of the Lord," or, which is the same thing, "preached in the name of the Lord."

Division in the Church

"And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle, and the herdmen of Lot's cattle; and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt then in the land. And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray you, between me and you, and between my herdmen and your herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before you? separate yourself, I pray you, from me; if you will take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if you will depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." (Genesis 13:5-9)

We have termed this a division in the church, for Abraham's large family was emphatically a church--a congregation of believers. Abraham was "called out," which is the literal meaning of the Greek word commonly rendered church; and we have seen that his sole business in the land of Canaan was to proclaim the name of the Lord, and to establish the worship of the true God.

The immense wealth that God gave him contributed to this end; it was simply a means of supporting the workers. Rightly used, as it was, it gave Abraham prestige among the people of the land, and assured him a hearing wherever he went.

But while possessions bestowed by the Lord, "For it is He that gives the power to get wealth, (Deuteronomy 8:18) are designed as a great blessing, "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, says 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, says the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for you shall be a delightful land, says the Lord of hosts." (Malachi 3:10-12) they may, and often do, prove a source of trouble and backsliding from God. A blessing misused and its source unrecognized, always becomes a curse; for a curse is simply the wrong side of a blessing.

So the first trouble in the church in the land of Canaan, even as it was in the church in the days of the apostles, (See Acts 5:1-10; 6:1) was over the matter of the division and distribution of funds. In the case before us it was Lot that made the mistake, and Abraham who acted strictly according to Christian principle.

The Secret of Abraham's Generous Conduct

This is found in the last five verses of chapter 13, together with Genesis 15:5-6. "And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now your eyes, and look from the place where you are northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which you see, to you will I give it, and to your seed for ever. And I will make your seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall your 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 you. Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord." (Genesis 13:14-18) "And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if you be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall your seed be. And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness." (Genesis 15:5-6)

Abraham remembered the promise of God, that the whole earth was to be given to him and to his seed; therefore he could afford to be generous. The man who has everything can always be generous; in fact, we should expect him to be. Now the same promise applied equally to Lot, for: "They which be of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham." (Galatians 3:9)

We are also included in the promise; for: "Christ has redeemed us from the curse, ... That the blessing of Abraham might come on [us] through Jesus Christ." (Galatians 3:13-14) "He that spared not

His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32)

The early Christians not only gave liberally, but "took joyfully [even] the spoiling of their goods, knowing that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance." (Hebrews 10:34)

It was this knowledge that made Abraham so generously courteous. He looked for a better country, that is, a heavenly, and whatever of temporal possessions he might have were only an incident. He knew that he was but a sojourner in the land; then why should he strive for the possession of any portion of it?

All men are but sojourners, equally with Abraham, and if they recognized that truth there would be no wars. Who would not think it most foolish, even in small children, to fight for the possession of soap bubbles? Yet the greater part of mankind is engaged in equally foolish and profitless work. "The world passes away, and the lust thereof; but he that does the will of God abides for ever." (1 Timothy 6:17)

It is useless to contend over that which we cannot hold, even if we succeed in seizing it. As to the everlasting possession that God gives, the fact that God himself gives it to us shows that it is not to be gained by strife and contention; and nobody can take it from us, even though they kill us. Moreover the inheritance is inexhaustible, therefore we may be very "ready to distribute." (1 Timothy 6:18)

All Things Common

If Lot had been as mindful as Abraham was, of the purpose for which God had sent them into the land, he would not have separated from Abraham in the way he did. It might indeed have been necessary for them to separate for the more extensive proclamation of the name of the Lord; but it would not have been over a division of property.

Lot was a righteous man, and he did not allow his wealth to corrupt him, for his character remained pure even in Sodom; but he allowed the cares of this world to prevent him from being a missionary, and so he eventually lost all that he had.

Earthly possessions are for no other purpose than to be used in the propagation of the Gospel; whoever uses them to this end will always have "all sufficiency in all things, ... Being enriched in everything to all bountifulness." (2 Corinthians 9:8,11)

But those who attempt to hold them for their own personal use, will finally lose everything. They may be saved, as Lot was, yet it will be "so as by fire." (1 Corinthians 3:15)

On this basis, and on this only, can men have all things common, as was the case in the early church. "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." (Acts 4:32)

And as a matter of course, "Neither was there any among them that lacked." (Acts 4:34)

Modern Socialism aims at an equal distribution of property, but it is radically defective, and can never succeed. Its principles, while they seem to many to be Christian, are directly opposed to Christianity, as everything must be that leaves Christ out.

- The Christian way is for each one to say that what he has does not belong to him, but is given him in trust, to be used for the benefit of the world;

- The human way is for each one to say that he has a right to what belongs to somebody else, and that the world owes him a living.

The former method will provide everybody with all he needs all the time; the latter loads some down temporarily with that which they cannot use, while others are destitute, and at last leaves all empty-handed, for their riches take wings of fire, and in smoke fly away towards heaven.

So we say that if Lot had not allowed his wealth to tie him up, so that he could not continue in the missionary work, but had remembered that it was not his, his life would not have been the total failure that it was.

Opulence and Sin

"Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, ... even as the garden of the Lord; ... Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan, ... and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." (Genesis 13:10-13)

Now read what God afterwards said to Israel--the church--when they had lost the missionary spirit, and had become like the heathen round them: "Behold this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy." (Ezekiel 16:49)

While it is true that wealth is a blessing from God, if received as from Him, the majority of mankind, who are poor, have no reason to complain; because poverty is a still greater blessing than wealth. "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Has not God chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to them that love Him?" (James 1:5)

Jesus said unto His disciples: "Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 19:23)

Better, infinitely better, poverty in this world, with the heirship of heaven and earth, than to have the whole world and lose our souls.

Look abroad over the world in history or at the present time, and see where the simple virtues are most prevalent, and where vice most abounds. The inhabitants of tropical and semi-tropical lands, where abundance of food grows almost spontaneously, and people can live with scarcely any exertion, are invariably of looser morale than their brethren of lands where severe toil must be put forth in order to enjoy the products of the earth. This does not apply to the natives of those regions, whose desires are moderate, so much as to those who go there because of the ease with which wealth may be gained.

It is in the North, where the climate is severe, and the earth in many places yields but a scanty supply, that the Word of God finds freest course. Compare the Scandinavian countries with Italy and Spain.

In the early history of the United States, and especially in the Colonial period, when the population was mostly confined to the North-east, where the land is rocky and responds only to the most patient industry, the simple, sturdy virtues were predominant. But when wealth began to multiply from the rich farming lands and the mines of the far West, and when money literally flowed from the ground, in the oil regions, dissolution and crime increased in proportion.

There is no other country on earth where wealth is so abundant, and no other country has degenerated as the United States has in the last few years. When wealth accumulates, men always decay. "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. ... But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." (1 Timothy 6:9,6-8)--Present Truth, July 25, 1901--International Sunday-school Lesson for Aug. 4--Genesis 13:1-18.

Chapter 7

Pitched toward Sodom

We read that Lot journeyed eastward over the fertile plain of Jordan, and: "pitched his tent toward Sodom." (Genesis 13:12)

Lot was not a wicked man, but he was attracted by the sight of worldly riches. He did not by this confess, as did Abraham, that he was a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth, looking for a better country, that is, a heavenly.

And there are many today who are taking the same course. Is your time and strength being spent to gain the wealth of earth? Is that the object of your best endeavors?

Beware; your tent is pitched toward Sodom, and do not flatter yourself that the history of that bad choice will not be repeated if you persist. For the world, with all that is of it, is reserved by the word of God unto a fate precisely such as that which overtook Sodom and Gomorrah.

The only wise choice now, as then, is to "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," (Matthew 6:33) trusting Him to add unto you all such temporal things as your best good requires.-- Present Truth, December 27, 1894--Genesis 13:12.

Chapter 8

The Rest That Remains

"There remains therefore a rest to the people of God." (Hebrews 4:9)

This text and its context require frequent explanation. We accordingly give the following, which, although brief, will, we think, be found a sufficient key to the entire chapter.

That God made to Abraham a promise of an inheritance, is well known. We will quote only two texts. The first is: "And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now your eyes, and look from the place where you are northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward; For all the land which you see, to you will I give it, and to your seed for ever. And I will make your seed as the dust of the earth; so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall your 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 you." (Genesis 13:14-17)

Again the Lord said to Abraham, after he had offered Isaac: "I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies." (Genesis 22:17)

Putting these two texts together, we learn that the inheritance promised to Abraham contemplated peaceable and quiet possession of the land; not simply of a few square miles, but of the whole world. "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." (Romans 4:13)

Now it was in pursuance of this promise, that the Lord delivered the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. "Then the Lord said unto Moses, Now shall you see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land. And God spoke unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord: And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them. And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant. Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, which brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for a heritage: I am the Lord." (Exodus 6:1-8)

Passing by the wanderings in the wilderness, we come to the address which Moses made to the children of Israel just before his death. Speaking to the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh, who were allowed to settle on the east side of Jordan, he said: "The Lord your God has given you this land to possess it; you shall pass over armed before your brethren the children of Israel. ... Until the Lord have given rest unto your brethren, as well as unto you, and until they also possess the land which the Lord your God has given them beyond Jordan; and then shall you return every man unto his possession, which I have given you." (Deuteronomy 3:18,20)

From this we learn that the giving of them rest was nothing more nor less than the establishing of them in their possession. The same thing is also shown by the following words: "For you are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the Lord your God gives you. But when you go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the Lord your God gives you to inherit, and when He gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety; Then there shall be a place." (Deuteronomy 12:9-11)

In further confirmation of the idea that the promised rest comprehended quiet possession of the land, we read 2 Samuel 7:1, which says that: "when the king sat in his house, and the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies," (2 Samuel 7:1) then he thought to build a house for the Lord. In refusing to allow him to do this work, the Lord made great promises to David, and

said, "Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime." (2 Samuel 7:10)

It is evident, then, that the "rest" promised to the Israelites was the inheritance. Into this rest Joshua led them, as it is written: "And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which He swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that he swore unto their fathers; and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand." (Joshua 21:43-44)

Yet in the face of this declaration, the apostle declares that Joshua did not give them rest, and that the Lord afterward spoke of "another day," in which they might secure rest: "For if Joshua had given them rest, then would He not afterward have spoken of another day." (Hebrews 4:8,margin)

We have just read from 2 Samuel 7:10 the promise of that rest. If Joshua had given them that rest, then another day could not have been spoken of.

Although God did give to the Israelites the land of Canaan, Abraham had no part in it, "And He gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet He promised that He would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet

he had no child." (Acts 7:5) neither did Isaac and Jacob, to whom the promise was made as well as to Abraham; and the apostle, after mentioning these patriarchs, and many other worthies, says, "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." (Hebrews 11:39-40)

This shows that the possession of the land of Canaan by the Israelites did not fill all the specifications of the promise. This is still more evident from the fact that they were at peace when the Lord renewed the promise in 2 Samuel 7:10.

But how shall we explain the statement in Joshua 21:43-45, that God gave to the Israelites that which He promised? Simply on the ground that the partial inheritance which they had, might have been made complete, if they had obeyed and trusted God. That they did not have the complete rest and inheritance that was promised to Abraham, is evident from the fact that the promise to him included nothing less than the possession of the whole world. "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." (Romans 4:13)

Now from Jeremiah 17:19-27, we know that God designed that the Israelites should be forever established in the land of Canaan, whose capital, Jerusalem, was to be the capital of the whole world, even as the New Jerusalem will be the capital of the earth made new. "Thus said the Lord unto me; Go and stand in the gate of the

children of the people, whereby the kings of Judah come in, and by the which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem; And say unto them, Hear the word of the Lord, you kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that enter in by these gates: Thus says the Lord; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the sabbath day, neither do any work, but hallow the sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers. But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction. And it shall come to pass, if you diligently hearken unto me, says the Lord, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the sabbath day, but hallow the sabbath day, to do no work therein; Then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain for ever. And they shall come from the cities of Judah, and from the places about Jerusalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from the plain, and from the mountains, and from the south, bringing burnt offerings, and sacrifices, and meat offerings, and incense, and bringing sacrifices of praise, unto the house of the Lord. But if you will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched." (Jeremiah 17:19-27)

But although they were given possession of the capital of their inheritance, they entered not into the full possession thereof, because of unbelief; so that it was the same as though they had never had any of it. But, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise," (2 Peter 3:9) and so, "There remains therefore a rest to the people of God." (Hebrews 4:9)

This rest is the same as that promised to Abraham, namely, the whole earth; for, after evil-doers have all been cut off, "The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." (Psalm 37:11)

The fact that some could not enter into rest because of unbelief, does not invalidate the promise that those who will now believe shall enter into it, for the rest was prepared and completed from the foundation of the world; and God will not allow his original plan to be frustrated.

With the knowledge that the earth is the rest that was promised to Abraham and to his seed, and which remains for us who believe, it is very easy to understand Hebrews 4:3-4, and the relation which the facts there stated bear to that rest. Thus, the apostle says, "and God did rest on the seventh day from all His works." (Hebrews 4:4)

This is positive proof of the statement made just before, namely, that: "the works were finished from the foundation of the world." (Hebrews 4:3)

Genesis 2 says that: "[God] rested on the seventh day from all His works which He had made." (Genesis 2:3)

And that His blessing pronounced upon the seventh day was "because that in it He had rested from all His works which God created and made." (Genesis 2:3)

He made the earth "to be inhabited," (Isaiah 45:18) and gave it to men for a peaceful abode; and the fact that He rested on the seventh day was a proof that the works were finished and the rest prepared.

The Sabbath, therefore--the memorial of God's rest--a day in which to be glad through the work of God, and to triumph in the works of His hands, as we meditate upon their greatness, "For You, Lord, have made me glad through your work: I will triumph in the works of your hands. O Lord, how great are your works! and your thoughts are very deep." (Psalm 92:4-5 is an assurance that God has prepared a rest for His people, and that they will share it just as surely as He is the great Creator who changes not. The rest that remains is, therefore, the coming inheritance and kingdom of the saints. The "another day" of Joshua is the day of final reward.

When Christ shall descend in glory, sitting upon the throne of His glory, having received the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession, that He may rid it of all that corrupt it, He will say to the righteous who have kept the faith, "Come, you blessed of my Father,

inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matthew 25:34)

And when they with Him shall have executed upon the wicked the judgment that is written, And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes 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. (Jude 14-15) "Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two edged sword in their hand; To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; To execute upon them the judgment written: this honor have all His saints. Praise the Lord." (Psalm 149:5-9) then will be fulfilled the promise given through the holy prophet: "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." (Isaiah 32:17-18)

Then shall the people of God enjoy the rest which was prepared for them from the foundation of the world.--Bible Students Library, No. 101, November 1894--Genesis 13:14-17.

Chapter 9

Our Reward

If we are the children of Abraham, our reward will be his reward. What his reward was we learn from: "Fear not, Abram; I am your Shield, and your exceeding great reward." (Genesis 15:1)

These were the words of God; and in harmony with them are the words of Christ to His followers: "Blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." (Matthew 5:11-12)

The universe can afford no higher reward than that promised to Abraham, which was God himself. And we, if we are his children, are heirs with him of the promise. "He that overcomes shall inherit all things." (Revelation 21:7)--Present Truth, June 21, 1894--Genesis 15:1.

Chapter 10

God's Promise to Abraham

Our last lesson left us with Lot separated from Abraham, and on his way to Sodom. Although the nephew of Abraham improved his worldly condition by his new move, he was very soon in a position where he owed all that he had, and possibly his own life, to his generous uncle.

The king of Sodom rebelled against the powerful King Chedorlaomer, to whom he had become subject, and the latter, with his confederate kings, came against the king of Sodom and the other kings of the plain, and reconquered them. "And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way. And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed." (Genesis 14:11-12)

News of this was brought to Abraham, who took three hundred and eighteen of his own servants, with some chiefs who were friendly to him, and pursued the victorious army. Coming upon it at night, he scattered it, and recaptured all the prisoners and the property.

This encounter might well give Abraham some uneasiness, for he could scarcely expect anything else than that the hosts of the East would return in stronger force, and give him trouble. But God did not forsake Abraham, but appeared to him in a vision, saying, "Fear

not, Abram: I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward."
(Genesis 15:1)

God Our Defense and Reward

We have all things in having the Lord himself, He is our righteousness, our strength, our light, our reward, and our salvation. He does not merely impart strength, righteousness and salvation to us, but He himself is all that to us. So He is our reward. Having Him, we need nothing more. The psalmist says: "Whom have I in heaven but You? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside You." (Psalm 73:25)

Or, as the Norwegian has it: "When I have You, I have no desire for anything on earth."

There is nothing also that one can desire; for since "in Him all things consist," (Colossians 1:17,RV) that which is not in Him cannot continue. Note here that God never promises or gives anything to His people separate from himself. The land that He promised to Abraham could be inherited by him and his seed only as they were in Christ; and the countless seed of Abraham are only those who are Christ's. "And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:29)

Those who have not God as their strength, their life, their salvation,--who are not satisfied with Him as their portion, can never have any part in the inheritance promised to Abraham.

Abraham's Descendants Not to Be Servants

Abraham evidently understood what God meant, but he could see no other way for the inheritance to come than through his servant Eliezer. He said, "What will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me, You have given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is my heir." (Genesis 15:2-3)

Verse 2 is thus given in the Revision: "he that shall be possessor of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus." (Genesis 15:2)

But it was not God's purpose that the seed of Abraham should be a race of servants. So the Lord said to him: "This shall not be your heir; but he that shall come forth out of your own bowels shall be your heir. And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now, toward heaven, and tell the stars if you be able to number them; and He said unto him, So shall your seed be. And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness." (Genesis 15:4-6)

The Faith That is Righteousness

Why should Abraham's simple belief in the promise that he should have a posterity as numerous as the stars of heaven and the

sand of the sea be counted to him for righteousness? Only because it was righteousness; for we may be sure that God does not play at a thing, calling it so when it is not so. "With the heart man believes unto righteousness." (Romans 10:10)

Read the context, and see that the thing which the heart believes unto righteousness is that Christ, the Word, is very nigh, even in the mouth and in the heart. Now remember that Abraham "believed in the Lord." He believed in Christ revealed in his flesh, and that from the life at Christ all this would be wrought. "For how many soever be the promises of God, in Him is the yes; wherefore also through Him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us." (2 Corinthians 1:20,RV)

So we see that the promise to Abraham was in Christ, and Abraham saw Christ in it. It was the Gospel to Abraham. It was no half-way Gospel, dimly get forth, but the complete Gospel of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We read that Abraham "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief," (Romans 4:20) although the vastness of the promise to a man in his circumstances was enough to stagger one; but he was "fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for offenses, and was raised again for justification." (Romans 4:21-25)

What Abraham Believed

That which Abraham believed in, was the offering of Christ for sin, and His resurrection for our justification. That is, he believed that Christ was already crucified, "from the foundation of the world," (Revelation 13:8) and that He had come in his flesh with His resurrection life. He believed in and experienced the power of the resurrection; and he knew that God, who could make a new man of him, could make millions more.

More than this, he saw Christ revealed to all the world in his flesh, recognized as descended from him according to the flesh, and he knew that the power that could perform this is the Divine power that gives to us "all things that pertain unto life and godliness." (2 Peter 1:3)

So God indicated to Abraham, and through Abraham to us, that his seed is to be composed only of those who, through Christ, are free from sin.

A Covenant Confirmed by Death

Then God made a covenant with Abraham. The Hebrew idiom expressing, to make a covenant, is, "cut a covenant." It always implies the shedding of blood. The covenant was based on the life of God, the shed blood of Christ. In the deep sleep that fell on Abraham, in which "a horror of great darkness fell on him," (Genesis 15:12) God said to him: "Know of a surety that your seed

shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterwards shall they come out with great substance. And you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." (Genesis 15:13-16)

What does this tell us? In the first place it confirms the statement that the faith which was counted to Abraham for righteousness was faith in the resurrection; for he was plainly told that he should die without inheriting the land. Not only so, but none of his posterity could have any inheritance in the land of Canaan until after four hundred years. "He gave him no inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on; yet He promised that He would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child." (Acts 7:5)

Abraham died in faith, not having received the promised inheritance. It is evident that he never looked for a possession in the land except by means of and after the resurrection of the just. The covenant taught Abraham not only that death could not break it, but also that death--the death of Christ, and his death with Christ--was the very means by which it would be established.

When the Land Was to Be Possessed

Another thing that we learn from the verses quoted is that Abraham's seed were to return to the land "in the fourth generation," after four hundred years of sojourning and oppression. That is, they were to inherit the land at that time. There would then be nothing in the way of their possessing the country, for the iniquity of the Amorites would be full.

But the children inherit from the father, not the father from the children. The seed cannot enter into the inheritance of the father before the father himself possesses it. Therefore since there was a definite promise that Abraham's seed should inherit the land of Canaan after four hundred years, it follows that this was the time appointed for the resurrection. If the children of Israel had not failed, because of unbelief, to possess the land, the resurrection of all the righteous dead would have taken place at the time of the Exode.

Giving the Heathen a Chance

Again, we learn that God will not cut off the heathen, as long as there is any hope that they will accept the Gospel. He would not allow the Israelites to dispossess the Canaanites of their land until the Canaanites had sinned so grievously that the land could not hold them. And in the meantime there was salvation for any of them who would accept a place among the people of God, as demonstrated by the case of Rahab.

This truth shows the fallacy and the blasphemy of the doctrine of a future probation--a probation after death. It is not necessary, because God has given all men "a chance" ever since the creation, "so that they are without excuse" if they have not repented. (Romans 1:18-21) And to claim that a future probation is necessary, is blasphemous because it charges God with trifling with men, and not dealing in the same way with all.

Canaan to be Possessed Only by the Righteous

Still further: from the passage in Genesis we learn that the land of Canaan could be possessed according to God's promise only by righteous people. The Canaanites were cast out because their cup of iniquity became filled up. The Israelites who came out of Egypt could not enter because of unbelief. Therefore those who did enter did not hold the possession, because they did not keep the faith; and they were at last carried far away into captivity because of their sins.

The promise was of land for an everlasting possession; not that it should pass from one generation to another, but both Abraham and all his seed were to possess the land for ever. But an everlasting possession means an everlasting life in which to possess it; and everlasting life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore it follows that all talk about the fulfillment of the promise by the emigration of the Jews to Palestine is not only absurd, but is a denial of the Gospel.

The promise is to us, if we have the faith of Abraham. Christ is now in the heavens until the time of restoration of all things; and in the meantime He comes to us by the Spirit, in the power of His resurrection, to bless us, in turning us away from our iniquities, so that we may share the inheritance with Abraham when He appears in glory. "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." (Hebrews 4:1) "The upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it." (Proverbs 2:21)--Present Truth, August 1, 1901--International Sunday-school Lesson for Aug. 11--Genesis 15:1-18.

Chapter 11

The Promise and the Darkness

It was immediately after receiving the most blessed and comprehensive promise that God ever made, that "a horror of great darkness" (Genesis 15:12) fell upon Abraham. Such an experience is not uncommon, and we should not be disheartened by it. Instead of regarding the enshrouding darkness as evidence that we have forfeited the favor of God, we should consider that the promise and the communion which preceded it were for the purpose of strengthening us for the trial.

Remember also that God was in the darkness with Abraham, and in the midst of it the promise was repeated. "Yea, the darkness hides not from You; but the night shines as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to You." (Psalm 139:12)--Present Truth, January 2, 1902--Original title: Back Page--Genesis 15:12

Chapter 12

The True Israel

"For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children; but, In Isaac shall your seed be called." (Romans 9:6-7)

These words of the Apostle Paul should be sufficient to clear up all mystery in the minds of Bible believers concerning who are the "Israel" of today. It is plain that all theories and all claims based upon literal descent from Abraham are of no value. It is of no consequence to us to know who are the natural seed of Abraham today, or what is to become of them in the future. No promise of God made to Israel was fulfilled through the simple process of natural descent.

The line of descent from Abraham which God recognises is not a natural line, but a spiritual one. He has never recognised any line but the spiritual one, even from the days of Abraham himself. Of this fact there are many proofs.

When Ishmael was born, and Abraham desired that he might live before God as the heir of the promise, (Genesis 17:18) the Lord said to him, "Sarah your wife shall bear you a son indeed, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him." (Genesis 17:19)

And when after the birth of Isaac, Sarah desired the son of Abraham by the bondwoman to be cast out because of his mocking, the Lord said to Abraham, "In all that Sarah has said unto you hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall your seed be called." (Genesis 21:12)

Ishmael was the father of a great nation; and we read that Abraham had other sons beside Ishmael and Isaac; but to these he gave gifts and sent them away, and Isaac alone was his heir. So there were several sons of Abraham, but only one heir; multitudes of natural descendants, but only a certain line of them whom God recognised as His children.

Isaac was chosen as the heir because he was the child of promise. The scripture commentary upon this is, "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." (Romans 9:8)

So then the line of descent was reckoned from God himself. Between God and the carnal nature there could be no possible union, and therefore no child of the flesh could be a son of God. Isaac was the child; that is, he was born through faith in the promise of God made to Abraham, and thus he became a son. No person was ever a son of God who did not become so by faith. It has been possible for all the fallen sons of Adam to become the sons of God by believing, as Abraham did, on "Him that justifies the ungodly." (Romans 4:5)

By so doing they are "born again," into the line of the true descendants of Abraham,--into the family of God. And the same privilege is open to every man today. The distinguishing mark of this line of descent from Abraham, is righteousness; and his descendants compose together a "righteous nation,"--the only righteous nation this earth has ever known. Of them it will be said in the final day of reckoning, "Open the gates, that the righteous nation which keeps the truth may enter in." (Isaiah 26:2)

This righteousness is by faith; for we read that: "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness;" (Romans 4:3) and also, "To him that works not, but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." (Romans 4:5)

And thus, as the apostle states in another place, "They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." (Galatians 3:7)

And the same are also the sons of God; for: "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of men, but of God." (John 1:12-13)

Faith, and faith alone, stands out through all the history of Israel as the means by which the heirship of the promises of God was received. Abraham had faith in God, and God gave him the covenant of circumcision, "a seal of the righteousness of the faith

which he had yet being uncircumcised; that he might be the father of all them that believe." (Romans 4:11)

But when the Israelites signally failed in faith, at Kadesh-Barnea, and were turned back from the land of promise to wander in the wilderness, circumcision ceased among them, and was not renewed until, under the command of Joshua, they again stood on the borders of Canaan. Though they were the literal descendants of Abraham, and of Isaac, the child a promise, the Lord refused to recognise them as the children of Abraham, because of their unbelief.

John the Baptist, also, and the Saviour, plainly told the Pharisees that they were not the children of Abraham. Said John, "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our Father: for I say unto you, that God is able of the stones to raise the children unto Abraham." (Matthew 3:9)

Thus he declared that natural descent from Abraham counted for nothing. And the Saviour said of them, "If you were Abraham's children you would do the works of Abraham;" (John 8:39) and also, "You are of your father the devil." (John 8:44)

They had not been born of God and therefore were neither the children of God nor the children of Abraham.

As the natural seed of Abraham were not counted as children without faith, so on the other hand those who were not the natural

seed could become united to Israel by faith. Any stranger could come and join himself to them and be counted as one of them. The promises of God were specifically made to the stranger who came and united with Israel, as to the natural descendants themselves.

God did not separate the Israelites from the other nations for the purpose of going off by himself with a certain people to favour them, and shutting the others out. He separated them from the wickedness of the nations around them, that they might not be contaminated thereby; but He excluded no one from joining them and sharing with them in all their blessings. He designed to magnify His name in them before all the world, that men might be drawn to them with a desire to obtain a knowledge of Him.

There is an Israel of God today, as there ever has been; and now, as then, it is open to all persons of whatever race or ancestry to unite themselves to it. There is nothing exclusive about it; it is as free as the offer of salvation. The condition of union with Israel now is the same that it ever was,--belief in God. "They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." (Galatians 3:7)

The same promises of God to ancient Israel hold good today; the advantages of union with Israel are the same. But there is no promise to the merely natural descendants, and no advantage in being connected with Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob through the flesh. The Israel of God is today the remnant of the "righteous nation," that have been gathered out in all ages from every race and kindred and tongue, by the power of God's grace, through faith.

"Israel" stands for those who by faith have power, as Jacob did, with God, and prevailed. (Genesis 32:38) All these are children of God; and only these has God recognised in past times as Abraham's children, or does recognise as such today. They are those whom Christ has redeemed. "If you are Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:29)--Present Truth, July 19, 1894--Genesis 17:19; 21:12.

Chapter 13

The Revealer of Secret Things

Whoever reads the Old Testament thoughtfully cannot fail to be impressed with the fact that the people who knew the Lord in the days of which it tells, lived on very intimate terms with Him. It could really be said of them that they knew Him. They did not merely know of Him, but they were personally acquainted with Him.

Simple Living Gives Clear Vision

If you ask for the reason for this familiarity with God, you will find it in this, that the lives of the people in those days were more simple than the lives of people now. They did not live in so great a rush. They did not have so many artificial wants to be supplied. There were not so many inventions as there are now, to make living complex. For it should not be overlooked, that what are called "modern conveniences" have greatly increased the trouble of living.

People often wonder how our forefathers managed to live without the "improvements" that we have. The truth is that they lived much better and more happily than the most of their descendants. Many inventions have now made wants that then were unknown, and people were then, as a general thing, more satisfied and contented. They lived peaceful lives, and had time to think. They did not have so many books, but they studied the vast book in

which God is revealed, and He was to them a personal Being, and not an article in the creed.

Abraham's Intimacy with God

Nowhere is the intimacy that existed between God and men more strikingly apparent than in the history recorded in the 18th chapter of Genesis. The Lord himself, accompanied by two angels, visited Abraham in visible form, enjoyed his hospitality, and talked familiarly with him.

When Abraham first saw them he could not recognize in them anything more than ordinary travelers, and such he received them. Yet when he learned, as he soon did by their conversation, that his guests were heavenly beings, it does not seem to have made any difference with him. He did not become embarrassed, and begin to apologize. There was the same free yet dignified hospitality.

One would think that he had been accustomed to meet and talk with heavenly messengers every day, and so he had. He was acquainted with the Lord, and to see Him face to face did not throw him out of balance.

How to Treat Our Fellow-Men

There is one thing that we must not forget in reading this narrative, and that is the instruction it gives us as to how to treat our fellow-men.

Abraham treated the Lord and His angels just as if they were really ordinary men, because he was accustomed to treat mere men as courteously as if they had been the Lord. He did not have two sets of manners; his best were for everyday use; and when the Lord came to visit him, he could not do any better than he was in the habit of doing.

This is true courtesy, true hospitality. It is the courtesy that comes from daily association with the inhabitants of the court of the King of kings.

God Cannot Keep Aloof from Men

When Abraham's guests started away, he accompanied them a little distance. Then the Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; Seeing that Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?" (Genesis 18:17-18)

That is to say, "How can I keep a secret from Abraham?"

That is the language of one with regard to another, whose friendship he values; and this was the case. The Lord loves the society of men, and has chosen them for His intimate companions. He cannot hold himself aloof from them.

It is wonderfully helpful and encouraging to know that it is not mere pity, that prompts God to seek to save us. It is not merely because He has compassion on us in our fallen condition, but because He loves us. His love for us, and His desire for our companionship, leads Him to search us out. How greatly He longs for us may be learned from the sacrifices He makes to obtain us.

The Lord thought so much of Abraham, that He could not keep anything secret from him; but Abraham is not the only one so favored. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant." (Psalm 25:14)

Jesus says: "You are my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you;" (John 15:14) and friends share one another's secrets. Again Jesus said: "The Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He does." (John 5:30)

But Jesus also prayed that His disciples might know that the Father loved them even as He loved Him. "I in them, and You in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent me, and have loved them, as You have loved me." (John 17:23)

Therefore we may be sure that God will show us all things that He does. "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He reveals His secret unto His servants the prophets," (Amos 3:7) and He reveals His secret to them in order that they may in turn pass it on to whomsoever will hear.

The Joy of the Revelation

Many fail to get the comfort that they should from the statement that there is nothing secret that shall not be revealed, because they do not sufficiently consider the connection. Jesus was sending the disciples out to preach, and in forewarning them of persecutions that they must endure at the hands of wicked men, He added: "Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak in light: and what you hear in the ear, that preach upon the housetops." (Matthew 10:26-27)

We see that the hidden things that are to be revealed are the deep things of God, which we in turn are to proclaim to the world. "He reveals the deep and secret things; He knows what is in darkness, and the light dwells with Him." (Daniel 2:23)

God Knows Whom He Can Trust

The best reading of Genesis 18:17-18 is, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; and Abraham shall surely become a great nation," etc.

The connecting word is "and," and not "seeing." That Abraham should become a great nation comes in incidentally, and not as the reason why the Lord would favor him with His confidence. The

reason for that is found in the next verse: "For I know him."
(Genesis 18:19)

That was why the Lord could not keep His plans hidden from Abraham: He knew him; He could trust him. How easy of comprehension the character of God is! We do not trust our secrets with those whom we do not know, but only to those whom we know, and whose loyalty is approved. God knows whom He can trust, and He trusts those whom He knows. "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He has spoken of him."
(Genesis 18:19)

What God's Foreknowledge Does for Us

The expression, "I know him," implies more than mere acquaintance. Gesenius renders it: "I have chosen him, that he may command," etc.

The French of Segond, and the Swedish also have, "I have chosen him."

That is, the Lord had known, or recognized, Abraham in the multitude as a kindred spirit, and had singled him out. He knew what Abraham would do, and He had chosen him to do that very thing. The Lord knew Abraham so well that He allowed Abraham to know Him.

In this we have a sidelight on the unnecessarily difficult question of foreknowledge; for it is evident that the saying that God had known, or chosen, Abraham, indicates that He foreknew him. He knew him beforehand. He knew Abraham before Abraham knew Him. He knows us before we can possibly know Him, He knew Cyrus more than a hundred years before he was born, and appointed him to the great work of his life. He knew Jeremiah, and ordained him to be a prophet, before his birth. So also with Samson, John the Baptist, and, in fact, everybody; only most people will not accept God's foreknowledge, with the position of labor and blessing to which it calls them.

Then let us be glad and rejoice in God's foreknowledge and foreordination, for: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:28-31)

Commandments of Righteousness

God said of Abraham: "He will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." (Genesis 18:19)

He knew that there would be force to Abraham's commands- the force of his own righteous life. He would command, and it would be done. Here we see a likeness to God's commands: "He spoke, and it was; He commanded, and it stood fast." (Psalm 33:9)

Why? Because His own life was in the word spoken. When men "say, and do not," (Matthew 23:3) there is no life in their teaching, and it cannot be expected that there will be any results. The scribes and Pharisees, as the successors of Moses, taught good precepts; but they did not cause the people to do righteousness, because there was not the power of righteousness in their utterances.

When a man has learned to rule himself in righteousness, that is, to submit himself completely to the rule of the Spirit, he can rule others; but there will be nothing of the despotic in his commands.

Parents Saved in the Salvation of Their Children

"They shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He has spoken of him." (Genesis 18:19)

Abraham's salvation depended upon his children. This is strikingly suggested in the fact that the promise could be fulfilled to him only through his Seed-Jesus Christ. In that the Lord indicates that the salvation of the fathers depends largely upon their sons. "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the Government shall be upon His shoulder." (Isaiah 9:6)

God could not bring upon Abraham that which He had spoken of him, unless he so commanded his children that they kept the way of the Lord. If the father allows his children to go to destruction, there is fear that he will also be destroyed. The Christian must be able to say with Christ: "Here am I, and the children whom You have given me." (Isaiah 8:18)

The last part of the 18th chapter of Genesis is taken up with the account of Abraham's intercession for the city of Sodom. It reveals in a striking manner the humble boldness of Abraham. There was no self-assertion, he was most humble and respectful, and yet he pressed his petitions with increasing boldness. Each point gained gave him confidence to press another.

This speaks volumes for the longsuffering kindness of the Lord. He can be pleaded with in behalf of weakness and transgression. "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16)--Present Truth, August 8, 1901--Genesis 18:16-33.

Chapter 14

A Friend of God

Abraham was the friend of God, therefore God told him when He was about to destroy Sodom. Note the words: "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" (Genesis 18:17)

Abraham and the Lord were so intimate that the Lord could not think of doing anything without telling His friend Abraham. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant." (Psalm 25:14) "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He reveals His secret unto His servants the prophets." (Amos 3:7)

What a blessed privilege to be admitted into the confidence of the Lord, to share His secrets! "The meek will He guide in judgment; and the meek will He teach His way." (Psalm 25:9)

What wonderful possibilities for improvement this opens up to us! For, "As for God, His way is perfect." (Psalm 18:30)

But friendship is a mutual affair. "A man that has friends must show himself friendly." (Proverbs 18:24)

If God reveals His secret affairs to us, and tells us all about himself, because we are His friends, then we must unbosom ourselves to Him because He is our Friend. We must keep nothing

back from Him, even as He keeps nothing of His back from us. It is easy for us thus to confide in Him, when we come to know the value of His friendship.

We naturally shrink from telling even the Lord some things about ourselves, because we are too much ashamed of them to speak of them. This would not be if we knew Him as we ought. He is a true and faithful Friend, and will never reveal what is told to Him in confidence.

If we do not tell our sins to the Lord, then they will at the last be published to the whole world; but if we tell them to Him, He will cover them up, so that no other soul can ever see them or learn about them. But, better than this, He will forget them himself. He says of His people, that: "[He] will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." (Micah 7:19) "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." (Hebrews 8:12)

But God never forgets anything that exists; therefore when He forgets our sins they are for ever blotted out of existence. "The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none." (Jeremiah 50:20)

Who would not have such a friend? Why should we seek to conceal anything from the Lord? or why should we show ourselves so unfriendly, and so unworthy of His friendship, as to substitute in any particular our will for His? "O taste and see that the Lord is

good; blessed is the man that trusts in Him." (Psalm 34:8)--Present Truth, April 30, 1903--Original title: Back Page--Genesis 18:17.

Chapter 15

The Test of Faith

Doubtless everybody who has read the history of Abraham and Isaac has thought that the test that Abraham was called upon to undergo was the severest that could possibly come to any man. Yet, few readers grasp all the details, and comprehend all that was involved in it. Let us briefly rehearse the facts.

Abraham was an old man, as men reckon, when he received the promise from God that he should have a son. He was seventy-five years old, and his wife was sixty-five. They had no child, and, humanly speaking, it was impossible for them to have one. Nevertheless God assured them that it should be as He said--that they should have a son of their own.

But not at once did God fulfill the promise. The promised son was to be His gift, received by faith, and it must be very apparent that it was wholly His gift; and also the faith of Abraham and Sarah must be so strengthened and purified that the deadness of their bodies would not in the least degree diminish their assurance that it would be even as God said.

Accordingly, they had to wait twenty-five years before the birth of Isaac. It was thus that their faith became strong, purged from everything earthly and fleshly, and centered only in Christ.

How different from men's ideas! People talk about faith getting weak through long waiting; and most of the joyous professions of "faith"--statements to the effect that: "Now I fully believe the Lord" that one hears come as the result of a gift already received. In their joy over finding their desires fulfilled, people fancy that they have perfect faith in God. But that is not true faith. It is not the faith that comes by hearing the Word of God, but a manufactured faith. It is of the same nature as that expressed in the remark, "I'll believe you when I see you do the thing."

It is not that kind of faith that justifies and gives peace with God. Abraham believed God when the promise was first made known to him; and, with the exception of one misstep, which resulted from uninstructed faith rather than absence of it, his faith grew stronger as the years of waiting passed. And, "By faith even Sarah herself received power to conceive seed when she was past age, since she counted Him faithful who had promised," (Hebrews 11:11) although she had once laughed at the mention of such a thing. There is a great lesson for us in this; for only those who walk in the steps of our father Abraham can share the promise with him. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." (John 20:29)

At last Isaac, the child of promise and of long expectation was born. The joy of Abraham and Sarah was more than ordinary joy when "a man is born into the world;" (John 16:21) for the promise ran, "In your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed,"

(Genesis 28:14) and, "In Isaac shall your seed be called." (Genesis 21:12)

They well know that this meant the Messiah, Jesus, and that on the Seed that was to be born in Isaac's line depended their eternal salvation, and that of the whole world. No other person, save Mary of Nazareth, ever had such wondrous reason to rejoice over the birth of a son.

In this joy Abraham and Sarah lived for twenty-five years, until Abraham was one hundred and twenty-five years old, and Sarah one hundred and fifteen. Isaac was twenty-five, in the full vigor of young manhood. Then came the supreme test: "Take now your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and get into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you of." (Genesis 22:2)

Cutting Off the Messiah

From what we have already learned, we know that this meant literally the cutting off of the Messiah. The call tested not merely Abraham's fatherly love, but his faith in God's love, who "so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

He had believed that God would give him a son, through whom the Messiah should be born, and now he was called on to sacrifice

that son, and, seemingly his hope of salvation, since another son was not in the question.

Faith in the Resurrection

But, "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 your 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." (Hebrews 11:17-19)

Abraham could offer up his only begotten son, because of his confidence that God had-not would, but had--already offered up His only begotten Son, and that by virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ, Isaac would be raised from the dead. That is, the Messiah yet to be born of Isaac's line would raise Isaac from the dead in order that He might be born! (Yet in the face of this, men talk about the pre-existence of Christ as though it were a debatable question.)

This was but a test of the faith by which Abraham first received Isaac; for the birth of Isaac was life from the dead. Abraham did not lose sight of the promise that in Isaac his seed should be called, and he knew that the same power that brought Isaac into the world would raise him from the dead.

A Fiery Trial

However, if anybody thinks that Abraham set about the execution of this order with a light heart, let him read the story of Gethsemane. Although Christ knew that He came into the world for the express purpose of giving His life for it, and had repeatedly told His disciples that He should be crucified and should rise again the third day, the night of His betrayal was the trial of His life.

Be sure that Satan whispered all sorts of doubts into Abraham's mind before he set out on his journey to the land of Moriah. It is no sin to be tempted; the sin comes only in yielding to the temptation; and Abraham let all the doubts that Satan could suggest be swallowed up in the promise of God.

A Type of Christ

Isaac was a type of Christ. In him we see all the particulars of Christ's birth, life, and death pictured out.

- He was born of the Spirit, contrary to nature, as men understand it.
- On him rested the salvation of the world, because of the promise of God; and
- In his cutting off it looked to human understanding as though all hope was lost, even as to the disciples it seemed that everything

perished when Christ was laid in the tomb. Yet that very cutting off was what was to beget a living hope in thousands; and so the offering of Isaac assured salvation, since it was the crowning act of faith, by which we are saved.

- Christ carried the cross on which He was to be offered, and Isaac carried the wood for the altar on which he was to be offered.

- Christ offered himself voluntarily, although sent by the Father; and Isaac likewise meekly yielded himself to death; for he was young and strong, and his aged father could not have bound him to the altar without his consent.

The Climax of Faith

"And on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." (Genesis 22:4-5)

Here we have the climax of faith. In those two verses we read Hebrews 11:17-19, which have already been quoted. Abraham knew that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead, and he expected that it would be done at once, so that they would come back together. For notice that his words to the young men were that they would both go to worship, and that both would return to them. There was no trace of doubt in this faith.

We do not need to follow the history farther, for we well know the result. Now that Abraham had showed that his faith was perfect, (See James 2:22) and that he believed the simple word of God, that word was confirmed by an oath. Thus we see that the strongest assurances come as the result of faith, instead of faith depending on the fulfillment of something. Faith itself is "the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:2)

It was for our sakes that God confirmed the promise by an oath. Abraham did not need it; but in order that we who flee to Christ for refuge might have strong consolation, (See Hebrews 6:18) God gives us even stronger assurances than He did Abraham.

The Friend of God

"And he was called the friend of God." (James 2:28)

That test brought Abraham and God very near together. They were bound together by mutual suffering and mutual sacrifice. In offering up his only begotten son, Abraham entered fully into the experience of God in offering up His only begotten Son. Abraham became the special friend of God, not because of any partiality on the part of God, but because no one who had not passed through that experience could possibly be so closely bound to Him.

True friendship is not a matter of fancy, but the communion of souls that are bound together by a peculiar experience common to both, and by mutual understanding. The honor of being friends of

God may be ours as well as Abraham's, and we may each be received into as close fellowship, if we are willing to share His sacrifice and suffering. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 13 But rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy." (1 Peter 4:12-13)--Present Truth, August 15, 1901--Genesis 22:1-14.

Chapter 16

Thought and Deed

"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son."
(Hebrews 11:17)

Yet Abraham did not slay his son, who lived to a good old age. The offering was made in the heart of Abraham.

He had received his son from the Lord, and he gave him up at the Lord's call; but the Lord gave him back. God looks upon the heart.

The gift which a heart makes, and which would be offered if there were the ability or opportunity, is counted by the Lord as already given.

On the other hand, the evil which men meditate, but which circumstances, where lack of ability prevent, is counted to them as actually accomplished.--Present Truth, August 9, 1894--Genesis 22.

Chapter 17

Hope of the Promise

The Old Testament and the Future Life

A sample of the common idea as to the teaching of the Old Testament with regard to the resurrection and the life to come is found in the following statements from an editorial in a leading religious paper:

The Old Testament, we say, is almost silent on the subject of the future life. We have to gather its hope of the world to come from hints and developments of its language. ... The Old Testament nowhere indulges in the triumph of the hope of the world to come which illuminates the whole New Testament with the thought that to go and be with Christ is far better.

It is not a small matter to have such an opinion of the Old Testament, for according to the Saviour's words he who does not find the resurrection and the life in the Old Testament will not understand or appreciate it in the New. Jesus says of the Scriptures, meaning the Old Testament, for that is all that was in existence when He spoke, "They are they which testify of me." (John 5:39)

But He is "the resurrection and the life." (John 11:25)

Therefore since the Old Testament testifies of Christ, it must testify of the resurrection and the life. Further, Jesus says, "Had you believed Moses, you would have believed me; for he wrote of me. But if you believe not his writings, how shall you believe my words?" (John 5:46-47)

That is to say, that if we do not find Christ in the writings of Moses we shall not find Him at all; if we do not perceive Him, the resurrection and the life, in the Old Testament, we shall not be able to grasp the real significance of the words which Christ spoke in person.

Let us now study a few passages, to see how accurately the Gospel of life is set forth in the Scriptures from the very beginning. Take first the statement that: The Old Testament nowhere indulges in the triumph of the hope of the world to come which illuminates the whole of the New Testament with the thought that to go and be with Christ is far better, and compare it with three passages of Scripture. The first is: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: ... Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another." (Job 19:25,27)

The other two are from: "My heart is glad, and my glory rejoices: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in hell; neither will You suffer your Holy One to see corruption. You will show me the path of life: in your presence is fulness of joy; at your right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (Psalm 16:9-11) "As for me, I shall behold your face in

righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with your likeness." (Psalm 17:15)

Where in the New Testament can you find any more triumphant expressions of hope in the resurrection and the future life? See in what clear and confident words the resurrection is set forth in the book of Job. The question is asked, "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14)

And immediately the answer comes, "all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. You shall call, and I will answer You: You will have a desire to the work of your hands." (Job 14:14-15)

This is as clear as the words of Jesus, "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the grave shall hear His voice, And shall come forth." (John 5:28-29)

The "change" of which the patriarch Job spoke is described in: "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." (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)

Preaching of the Apostles

The apostles and early disciples "went everywhere preaching the Word," (Acts 8:4) the Old Testament being all they had, and: "They

taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead." (Acts 4:2)

When Paul went to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews, "[He] went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead." (Acts 17:2-3)

People forget that the Christians of the first century were not converted by the writings of the apostles, but by their preaching. The epistles were written to those who were already Christians, and who had become Christians by means of the teaching of the Old Testament.

And when the apostles did write, they drew very largely from the Old Testament Scriptures. Take for instance that wonderful chapter on the resurrection, and the triumphant close of the argument is a quotation from the prophets. "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 your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:54-55)

These expressions are taken from Isaiah 25:8 and Hosea 13:14. In the former passage we find those beautiful words used by John: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." (Revelation 21:4)

So we should find throughout the Bible that the Old Testament not only proclaims the resurrection and the future life as clearly as does the New, but that some of the brightest passages of the New are drawn from the Old. The prophets ministered the very same things that the apostle afterwards did, and by the same Spirit. "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." (1 Peter 1:11-12)

The Promises to the Fathers

While there are many other direct statements in the Old Testament relative to the resurrection and the future life, some of the strongest evidence is found in the promises to the fathers, which formed the basis of the hope of God's people of old.

The Apostle Peter tells us that in the last days there should come "scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (2 Peter 3:3-4)

This suggests a connection between "the fathers" and the promise of the coming of the Lord.

The apostle then proceeds to show that those who disbelieve in the coming of the Lord, and who say that there has been no change since the creation, are wilfully ignorant of the facts. He reminds us that the earth of creation was once destroyed by the flood, and that the same word which created it, and which caused its destruction by the flood, still keeps it "reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." (2 Peter 3:7)

Then He reminds us that: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise." (2 Peter 3:9)

Not promises, but promise, having special reference to "the promise of His coming," (2 Peter 3:4)

The fact that God delays the fulfilment of His promise for what seems a long time to men, is no evidence that He is slack in performing it, for time is nothing to Him. But the day of the Lord will come, "wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." (2 Peter 3:12-13)

Here we find a positive statement that our hope of the future life is based on the promise of God to the fathers. Let us turn, then, and note that promise very briefly. Take the brief summary given by

Stephen: "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, And said unto him, Get out of your country, and from your kindred, and come into the land which I shall show you. Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed into this land, wherein you now dwell. And He gave him no inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet He promised that He would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child." (Acts 7:2-5)

Here we have a promise unfulfilled. Can it be that God was slack in this instance? Impossible; for the promise was confirmed by the oath of God, who swore by himself, "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 on the hope set before us." (Hebrews 6:18)

So we see that instead of God's promise to Abraham having failed, it is all our hope and consolation. Note the facts: God promised to give Abraham an inheritance in the land of Canaan, yet Abraham died without receiving it. Now since it is impossible for God to lie, the only possible explanation is that God meant that Abraham should receive it at the resurrection. And this is just what Abraham expected, for not only he, but his children also, "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." (Hebrews 11:13)

The fact that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob "died in faith," without having received the promised inheritance, but "were persuaded" that they should, shows that they had not expected it in this present life. If they had, they would have died disappointed, instead of in faith.

If we turn to Genesis 15:15-16, we shall find that God plainly told Abraham that he should die before the inheritance was bestowed, thus leaving him no other ground of hope but the resurrection. This hope was his consolation through life and in death.

The Hope of the Promise

This hope of the resurrection was the only hope of the patriarchs and prophets of old. We say "the only hope," not because it was a meagre one, but meaning that it filled their whole lives. Read the Apostle Paul's witness to this effect when he stood before Agrippa in chains because of his loyalty to Christ and the Gospel: "And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers; Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" (Acts 26:6-8)

Thus we see that the hope of the resurrection of the dead was the hope of the promise of God to the fathers, and that this was the hope that engrossed the thoughts of the true Israelites day and night. We

know that Paul was persecuted only for preaching the resurrection of the dead through Christ, yet he himself declared, "For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain." (Acts 28:20)

A Test and a Promise

When God told Abraham that his posterity should be as the stars of heaven in number, although Abraham was then old and had no child, "He believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness." (Genesis 15:6)

Righteousness comes only through faith in Christ; therefore Abraham's faith was in Christ, since it was counted to him for righteousness. Therefore also the promise of a vast posterity was a promise in Christ. "For how many soever be the promises of God, in Him is the yea; wherefore also through Him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us." (2 Corinthians 1:20,RV)

This is further shown by the fact that faith brings the blessing.

It brought the blessing of forgiveness to Abraham, (Romans 4:6-9) and: "They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." (Galatians 3:9)

Further, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ." (Galatians 3:13-14)

The blessing of Abraham comes upon us through the cross of Christ. This shows in whom Abraham and all the other faithful ones trusted. But Abraham had wavered once, and so the Lord tested him, saying, "Take now your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and get into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you of." (Genesis 22:2)

We need not stop now to dwell upon the temptations that must have assailed Abraham when this command came to him. It was a test not only to his parental love, but it was a test of his faith in the promise of God, for everything depended on Isaac. To cut him off was to all human calculation to cut off all hope of the promise.

But Abraham knew how the promise was to be fulfilled, and that the birth of Isaac had been a manifestation of God's power to bring life from the dead. So we read that Abraham started the next morning with Isaac and two of his servants. "Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship and come again to you." (Genesis 22:4-5)

Note that statement carefully. Abraham said that both he and Isaac would go and worship, and would come again. Both were going, and both were coming back. How could that be, when he was going to offer Isaac as a burnt offering? Read: "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 your 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." (Hebrews 11:17-19)

It was Abraham's clear grasp of the resurrection that made him stand this test. Note the statement made that he "offered up his only begotten son." (Hebrews 11:17)

That which enabled him to do this, was his knowledge of the fact that: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

If all professed Christians in these days had as clear a knowledge of Jesus and the resurrection as Abraham had, the world would soon see that Christianity is something more than a name.

The Promise

But we must not forget the promise in connection with this test. "And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, says the Lord, for because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son: That in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand

which is upon the sea shore; and your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies." (Genesis 22:15-17)

That last promise is a most sweeping one. Who are the seed, to whom it was made? The answer is in: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He said not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to your seed, which is Christ. ... And if you be Christ's then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:16,29)

The seed, therefore, means Christ and all His people. What are their enemies? The greatest of all enemies, and the leader of all, in fact, the source of all enemies, is the devil. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8)

His power is death. "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." (Hebrews 2:14)

Now in the chapter which is entirely devoted to the coming of Christ, when "they that are Christ's at His coming," (1 Corinthians 15:23) shall be raised from the dead, we read that: "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." (1 Corinthians 15:23)

Christ has conquered, and has the keys of death and the grave, (Revelation 1:18) where many of His people are now entombed. But

the promise to Abraham includes all the seed,--all who are Christ's,--and so it includes nothing less than the final resurrection of all the saints at Christ's coming, when death shall be swallowed up in victory. It was the hope of this promise that sustained God's people of old in all their tribulations.

Till He Come

After describing the Lord's Supper the Apostle Paul declares, "As often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till He come." (1 Corinthians 11:26)

How many are there who realize all that the Lord's Supper means? It means more than a mere belief in the fact that Christ died. It means an appropriation of His death, so that we know that we are crucified with Him, and thus "freed from sin." (Romans 6:7)

But it means more than simple belief in Christ's death. It means His resurrection also; for He is not dead, but alive. To preach Christ crucified, it is necessary to preach Christ risen. So when we show His death, by the same act we show His resurrection. But just as surely as Christ died and rose again, so surely will He come again. His own word says, "I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14:3)

Christ's coming is just as necessary to the completion of the plan of salvation as was His death and resurrection. He is to come to take

us to himself, in order that we may be with Him. This shows that without His coming we cannot be with Him, for He does not come unnecessarily. He will come, "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 meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

The Christian's hope, therefore, centers in the coming of Christ and the resurrection. It is "that blessed hope." So our faith in His death necessarily includes His coming.

But the bread and the wine of the Lord's Supper stand for the very same thing that the flesh and the blood did, of the lamb slain in ancient sacrifice. Christ is the Lamb as well as the true Vine; so the blood of the lamb and the blood of the vine both represent His own precious blood.

The ancients, therefore, by their offerings of lambs, showed the very same thing that we do in the Lord's Supper. Their offerings meant nothing except when they were offered in faith in His death. But His death means His resurrection, and His resurrection means His coming again. So when we read that all the ancient sacrifices pointed to Christ, we must know that they pointed to Christ crucified, raised, ascended, and returned.

Someone will ask, "Do you suppose that all who offered sacrifices saw all this?"

By no means. They were undoubtedly about the same as people in these days; and who will dare say that all who partake of the Lord's Supper realize all that it means? But we know that many of them saw Christ, and rejoiced in Him, even as Abraham did; and there is no reason to doubt that the proportion of intelligent worshippers was as great then as now.

It is as clear therefore as the Word of God, that from the days of Abel to the time of Paul, the one hope before the true children of God was the coming of Christ and the resurrection. All the prophets wrote of "the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." (1 Peter 1:11)

The Grand Summing Up

"And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again; and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection." (Hebrews 11:32-35)

What more could any Christian minister desire of his flock than that which Paul says to us, concerning those ancient worthies: "And we desire that everyone of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That you be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." (Hebrews 6:11-12)--Present Truth, November 28, 1895--Genesis 22:2-17.

Chapter 18

Did Abraham Think God Would Provide a Lamb?

Did Abraham think that God would provide a lamb instead of Isaac?

This is a question that comes to us for answer. We read in Hebrews 11:17-19 that Abraham offered Isaac, through faith in God, "Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead." (Hebrews 11:19)

If Abraham had expected that God was going to provide a substitute, there would have been no occasion for faith in the resurrection, and the matter would have been no trial at all.--Signs of the Times, July 7, 1890--Genesis 22:8.

Chapter 19

The Fear of God

What the fear of God is, was shown in the life of Abraham, when he endured the great test on Mount Moriah. When the angel had arrested the patriarch's hand as it was about to give the fatal blow, the Divine messenger said, "Now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." (Genesis 22:12)

The obedience of Abraham did not come from that fear which is inspired by tyrants. How he regarded the Lord is shown in his wonderful conversation with Him on the day before the destruction of Sodom, when he appealed to God's righteousness and mercy.

Abraham had placed God first in his affections when he took Isaac to Mount Moriah, and when He is first in our affections, and only then, can we be truly said to possess the fear of God.--Present Truth, October 11, 1894--Genesis 22:12.

Chapter 20

We Have Abraham to Our Father

"And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." (Matthew 3:9)

These are the words which John the Baptist spoke to the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to his baptism. These men were corrupt at heart. Their character is described by our Saviour himself in Matthew 23:13-33, where they are said to have outwardly appeared righteous, while within they were full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Both John the Baptist and our Saviour called them vipers. "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." (Matthew 3:7-8)

These men were lineal descendants of Abraham, and were of the stock of Israel, but they had lost the spirit of Israel. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob confessed that they were pilgrims and strangers on the earth. "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." (Hebrews 11:13)

They did not expect their portion in this life, nor an earthly inheritance; but they looked for a city from Heaven, and an inheritance in the new earth, wherein righteousness alone should dwell. "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." (2 Peter 3:13)

And they knew that the possession of righteousness would be the only passport to that heavenly inheritance.

The Pharisees, on the other hand, had ceased to look for a Messiah who should finally reign over a righteous nation, and who should prepare subjects for that kingdom by cleansing them from sin. They did not look at their hearts, which were corrupt, but only on the outward appearance, which was fair. Consequently, seeing no sin in themselves, they felt no need of a Saviour.

And so they came to John's baptism, not because they felt any need of flying from the wrath to come, but because they thought that by enrolling themselves in the ranks of the new leader, whose coming John announced, they would be sure of places of honor in the coming kingdom.

They expected that this kingdom would bring simply emancipation from the Roman yoke, and would place the Jewish nation in the seat of dominion over the whole world; and they had not the slightest doubt but that they would have a place in the

kingdom, because they were children of Abraham. Their sole anxiety was to have as high a place as possible.

John saw through their mask of hypocrisy, and told them that they need not flatter themselves that they were children of Abraham. The promise to Abraham and to his seed would be fulfilled, but sooner than count them as the seed of Abraham, God would raise up children unto Abraham, out of the stones of the ground.

The inheritance was promised to Abraham, not because God regarded his person or his descent as superior to that of other men, but because he had the righteousness of faith. Consequently those who are counted as heirs with him, must be men of like character. It certainly would not be just to accept Abraham solely because of his faith in God, and to accept others solely on account of their parentage.

Afterward, when Christ was talking to the wicked Jews, He said, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham." (John 8:39)

The apostle Paul also says, "And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:29)

The Pharisees who came to John to be baptized thought that the fact that they could prove their descent from Abraham, would insure them a place in the kingdom of Christ; but Paul shows that they had

turned the matter around. They could only prove themselves children by bringing forth such works of repentance as would show them to be Christ's.

There are many today who have as erroneous ideas of the kingdom of Christ as the Pharisees and the Sadducees had. There is a large party called the National Reform Association, whose members think that Christ's kingdom is going to be established at the polls, by the voices of men. And they imagine that they are sure of a place in that kingdom, because they can trace their ancestry back to the Covenanters, or some of the Reformers.

They forget that the Reformers did not follow the multitude, but took the Bible for their guide, as far as its truths were revealed to them, and that in following its teachings they suffered untold hardships. The Reformers became such, solely because their love for God and His truth was so great as to lead them to endure privation and to be considered as outcasts.

And yet these men imagine that they can ride into the kingdom of God on the top wave of popularity. How terribly mistaken they will some day be. The kingdom of Christ is promised only to the true Israel, but the true Israel are only those "whose praise is not of men, but of God." (Romans 2:29)

Those who will be great in that kingdom, must be content to be small here; and whosoever will be chief, must be a servant: "Even as the Son of man [the King himself] came not to be ministered unto,

but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:28)

He was in the form of God, and had all glory and honor, yet when He saw the lost world, He did not think His glory was a thing to be desired, so he laid it all aside, and "Made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." (Philippians 2:7-10) "The servant is not great than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him." (John 13:16)

Let none therefore imagine that he is going to get into the kingdom on the strength of a profession, nor because he is a descendant of the Reformers, nor because he is a member of a large and influential church organization. Let none think that he can be more favored than the King, and can obtain the kingdom by any other means than humble self-denial and a godly life.

Neither let any think that Christ's reception of the kingdom depends on them. He receives His kingdom from the Father, (Psalm 2:7-9; Daniel 7:13-14) and will admit into it only those who upon the foundation of faith have built a superstructure of virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and

charity. "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacks these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, you shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:5-11)--Signs of the Times, July 7, 1887.

Chapter 21

The Gospel to the Gentiles

It is quite commonly supposed that until several years after the ascension of Christ nothing had ever been done for the Gentiles, and that the carrying of the Gospel to them was something in the nature of an afterthought, even with the Lord.

Without realizing how dishonoring to the Lord such a thought is, men have rather taken it for granted that the Lord loved the Jewish people more than He did any other people, and that all of His plans for centuries were with reference to them alone. Yet the whole teaching of the Bible is contrary to such an idea, as the following points will in part show.

The Patriarchal Period

We may note, in passing, that more than two thousand years of the world's history passed before there were any such people as the Israelites. In this period we may note Enoch, the faithful prophet and teacher, and Noah, the "preacher of righteousness," (2 Peter 2:5) whose message was to the whole world.

Coming to Abraham, the head of the Jewish race, we find that God called him when he was a Gentile, in the midst of heathen people. His faith was reckoned to him for righteousness. "How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in

uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also." (Romans 4:10-11)

So we see that in the very call of Abraham the Lord showed that He is no respecter of persons, but that: "In every nation he that fears Him, and works righteousness, is accepted with Him." (Acts 10:35)

Abraham was to be the father not simply of a certain race, but of all them that believe, no matter of what nationality. In the very days of Abraham there was Melchizedek, a king in the land of Canaan, and a priest of the Most High God, who was a greater man than Abraham, and whose greatness Abraham recognized in receiving his blessing, and paying tithes to him. (Hebrews 7:1-10)

That God did not cast off the Gentiles in choosing Abraham, is shown not only by the fact that Abraham was himself a Gentile, but also by the fact He would not give Abraham and his seed an inheritance in the promised land until the present occupants of it had been proved to the full.

As in later times He bore with the Jews until they should fill up the measure of their iniquity, and as He gave the people before the flood a probation of one hundred and twenty years after the flood was threatened, so to the inhabitants of Canaan He gave a probation of four hundred years. This is an illustration of the truth that God

"will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 3:4)

It is an instance of the longsuffering of God, "[Who is] not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

An Appeal to Egypt

We come to the time when God sent Moses to Egypt to deliver the children of Israel from bondage. In doing this God did not doom to destruction all the rest of the inhabitants of the world. His wonderful works for Israel were that His name might be declared throughout all the earth. "And in very deed for this cause have I raised you up, for to show in you my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." (Exodus 9:16)

Therefore in delivering the Israelites, it was for the purpose of making them missionaries to the whole world. The only reason for making His name known throughout the whole earth was that people out of every nation might believe on Him. Evidence of this is seen in the fact that when the plagues came on Egypt, warning was given, so that any among the servants of Pharaoh who feared the Lord might save themselves and their cattle. "Behold, to morrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as has not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof even until now. Send therefore now, and gather your cattle, and all that you have in the field; for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the

field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die. He that feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses: And he that regarded not the word of the Lord left his servants and his cattle in the field." (Exodus 9:18-21)

The blood upon the door-post would have saved the lives of Egyptians as well as the lives of Israelites, if they had believed. The only advantage of the Jew was that to them were committed the oracles of God.

Missionary Purpose of Israel

"What advantage then has the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." (Romans 3:1-2)

To them was given the high honor of carrying the Gospel to the nations. We find that the purpose of God in bringing the plagues upon the obstinate Egyptians was fulfilled, because His name was declared throughout all the earth. When the spies entered the house of Rahab, forty years after, she said to them: "I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that your terror has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when you came out of Egypt; and what you did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our

hearts did melt,neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you; for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath." (Joshua 2:9-11)

All the inhabitants of Canaan had heard of the Lord and His power. Rahab believed, and: "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace." (Hebrews 11:31)

All the other inhabitants of Canaan might have been saved, as well as Rahab, if they had only believed, as she did. The opportunity was given them.

It is true that the Israelites were forbidden to make any league with the inhabitants of the land. And why? Because the Israelites were the congregation, or church, of the Lord, and He would not have His church in alliance with the world.

The union of Church and State is a thing that is utterly abhorrent to the Lord, since it destroys the life of the church, and makes the world no better. But all who had faith might in those days, as well as in these become identified with the church, and thus come out and be separate from the world. See in the case of Rahab.

It is a sad fact that the Jews did not accept the high commission given them, and did not proceed to evangelize the world. Once in the land of Canaan, they settled down to their ease. They assumed that what the Lord had done for them was because He thought more

of them than of any other people in the world, and so they began to trust in themselves that they were righteous, and despise others.

This spirit was shown in the case of Jonah, which also shows God's care for other people besides the Israelites. How strange it is that with the case of Jonah before them, men will think that God had no care for any people but the Jews! It is far more strange then that the Jews themselves should have thought so.

Throughout the prophecies of Isaiah we find many references to the Gentiles, and there are prophecies addressed especially to them. The same is true of other prophets.

At length, because the Jews would not make known the truth of God to other people, they were carried into captivity, God himself delivering them into the hands of their enemies, in order that in captivity they might do that which they refused to do in freedom. And so God's name was made known throughout the world.

Nebuchadnezzar himself was given a wonderful dream, and its interpretation. Through the three friends of Daniel the truth of God was made known to all the rulers of the kingdom. In all the history of the captivity we find that six hundred years before Christ, as well as in the days of Paul, God was desirous of having His name borne before kings.

Christ Shows the Way

We come to the birth of Christ. When the angel appeared to the shepherds on the plain, he said, "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." (Luke 2:10)

When Jesus was presented in the temple, six weeks after His birth, the aged Simeon took Him up in his arms, and said, "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word; For my eyes have seen your salvation, That You have prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel." (Luke 2:29-32)

So there was no reason in the world for the exclusiveness which the disciples of Christ manifested. What Simeon knew they might all have known. For through the prophet Isaiah the Lord had said of Christ, "I have put my Spirit upon Him; and He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles," (Isaiah 43:1) and had said that He was to be given "For a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." (Isaiah 43:6-7)

In the presence of His disciples Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." (John 8:12)

To them, together with the assembled multitudes, He said, "You are the light of the world." (Matthew 5:14)

This shows the position that He wishes His people to occupy. And this is what He designed them to be from the beginning. The disciples might have known and ought to have known, that the mission of the Gospel was to the whole world. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

And when was Christ given? "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." (1 Peter 1:18-20)

God changes not; therefore from the beginning, and all the time, He has been working for the salvation of the whole world. Ever since the fall it has been as true as it is now, that: "[Christ] is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:2)

Take the instance in which to the superficial reader Jesus seemed to be the most indifferent to suffering, and regardless of any but the Jews. "Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, You Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away; for she cries after us. But He

answered, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matthew 15:21-24)

Yet He granted the woman's request, and healed her daughter, thus showing that when He said, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," (Matthew 15:24) He did not mean that He was not sent to everyone that would believe on Him. By her faith the woman showed that she was one of the house of Israel. The fact that Jesus granted her request should have taught the disciples that He was not exclusive in His work.

Carried On by the Church

All this is only a beginning of the evidence that from the first God's plan has been the same. When Peter went to Cornelius, and, after hearing the whole story of how God had brought him there, he said, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; But to every nation he that fears Him, and works righteousness, is accepted with Him." (Acts 10:34-35)

This was the first time that Peter had perceived that truth, but it was not a new thing. God did not at that hour cease to be a respecter of persons. He had never been one. God was at that time just what He had always been. And thus it will be that before the throne of God will stand at last a multitude "of all nations and kindreds, and people, and tongues." (Revelation 7:9)

The closing message of the Gospel, which is "to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people," (Revelation 14:6) is but the last note of the song which was begun in Eden, after the fall, and which the angels echoed to the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem. As Christ was sent that the world through Him might be saved, so are His disciples sent to all the world; not aside from the Master, but together with Him for the assurance is, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20)--Present Truth, June 29, 1893.

Chapter 22

Pilgrims and Strangers

The people of God are, and have been in all ages, pilgrims and strangers in the earth. (Hebrews 11:13) They have been such because it has always been a necessity to them. As servants of God, owing and maintaining their allegiance to Him, there was never any other course for them to take.

Satan's Dominion

When man fell, the earth which had been given to him for his possession and his abode as a "son of God" (Luke 3:38) passed into the possession of the one by whom the man was overcome. Man was overcome by Satan, and became his servant; for the Scripture says, "Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." (2 Peter 2:19)

Consequently all that man possessed passed under the dominion of Satan. Satan thus became the "god of this world." (2 Corinthians 4:4)

And he spoke not untruly when he said to Christ on the mount of temptation that all the glory of the kingdoms of the world was his, and he gave it to whomsoever he would. "And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give you, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it." (Luke 4:6)

The world became his dominion, and all the descendants of Adam became his subjects. The vast majority of these have chosen to remain under his rule, but a few in every age have renounced the dominion and service of Satan, through the provision made therefore by the sacrifice of Christ, who died to redeem man and that which man had lost. By thus renouncing allegiance to Satan they necessarily renounced all desire for home or position in the kingdoms of this world. They looked by faith to a future country, and to a city whose builder should be the Lord.

Heirs of the New Earth

The promise was made to Abraham that he should be the heir of the world. "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." (Romans 4:13)

Isaac and Jacob were heirs of the same promise. "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:" (Hebrews 11:9)

The Seed of Abraham was Christ: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He said not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to your seed, which is Christ." (Galatians 3:16)

He was also Heir with Abraham, and all who are Christ's are heirs likewise: "And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:29)

But Abraham received not the dominion of the earth, nor has it yet come to any of his descendants. "The whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now," (Romans 8:22) being still under the dominion of the author of pain and death. Abraham sojourned by faith in the land of promise, and: "looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Hebrews 11:10)

And his descendants, the spiritual seed, also died, "not having received the promises," (Hebrews 11:13) but having confessed by their lives that they were "strangers and pilgrims on the earth." (Hebrews 11:13)

The heavens and the earth that are now, are by the word of God reserved under fire: "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." (2 Peter 3:7)

When they shall have passed through the burning day, and from their ashes creative power shall have called forth a "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness," (2 Peter 3:13) then the promise will have its fulfillment; the meek shall inherit the earth, and "The saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom and shall possess the kingdom for ever." (Daniel 7:18)

Relinquishing All Worldliness

The children of faith have never reckoned this world to be their home, or counted its riches and honor and power as the objects for which their efforts here should be put forth. They have never been imbued with the idea of subduing a part or all of the dominions of the god of this world, so as to make it the dominion of Christ. They have never looked for a country here wherein should dwell righteousness, or in which they should be anything else than strangers and pilgrims. For earthly power and dominion they have never sought nor cared.

But with the subjects of Satan it has been just the reverse. They have never counted themselves pilgrims and strangers here. Their lives have never declared that they seek a country other than this for the realization of their ambitions and their hopes. They have sought ever for power, wealth, and honor among men. They have sought for possession and dominion on the earth.

And not merely those who made no pretense of allegiance to God--though openly worldly and irreligious--are to be reckoned in this class; it includes nearly the whole Christian church as well. But it is a mark of worldliness, wherever it may be found.

Temporal power, temporal dominion, belong to him who is the "god" and "prince" of this world, the one by whom Adam was overcome, and to whom, consequently, he lost his possession, the earth; the one to whom every person not born again yields a natural

allegiance; the spirit that has ever ruled in the "children of disobedience." (Ephesians 2:2, 5:6; Colossians 3:6)

This is his, to be given to whomsoever he will, and must remain his until the day when: "The elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up; ... [For] the heavens and the earth that are now, by the same word [the word of God] are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men." (2 Peter 3:7,10)

The church therefore is entirely out of her sphere when she seeks for temporal power; and that person is greatly deceived both in his own heart and in respect to the nature of Christianity, who imagines that it is the church's place to be established in wealth and power and dominion here, to rule earthly governments and countries and kingdoms.

The Church of Christ cannot legitimately fill any position or occupy any station here that is not consistent with that of a stranger and pilgrim in the earth. The mission of the Church, and her only mission, is to "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15)

Therefore the Church or individual that is looking to any country, or any place in this earth for the attainment of dominion and honor among men, is moved by another spirit and following another leadership than that of the Author of Christianity.--Present Truth, September 14, 1893.

Chapter 23

Jews and Israelites

A strange misapprehension has arisen in the minds of many concerning the promises of God to Israel. An idea has gained currency that the Jews and Israelites are two distinct peoples, and that when we read in the Bible about a Jew, it is a gross error to speak of him as an Israelite. There is no need of any controversy or speculation over the matter, when we read the truth so plainly in the Scriptures.

Names Used Interchangeably

Let us note a few texts. In Romans 3:1-2 we read, "What advantage then has the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly that unto them were committed the oracles of God." (Romans 3:1-2)

Here we learn that the law was given to the Jews. But we read in Exodus 19:1-2, that it was the children of Israel that camped before the mount in the third month after their departure from Egypt; and in Malachi 4:4 we read, "Remember the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel." (Malachi 4:4)

And again in 2 Corinthians 3:13-14, that Moses put a veil upon his face when he came down from the mount, on account of the blindness of the minds of "the children of Israel," which blindness

remains unto this day. In the case of the giving of the law, therefore, we see that the terms "Jews" and "children of Israel" are used interchangeably.

Again, when the Apostle Paul had been seized by the Roman soldiers, and was about to be scourged, he said in reply to the centurion's question as to who he was, "I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus." (Acts 21:39)

He also said that he and Peter were "Jews by nature," as distinguished from Gentiles. (Galatians 2:15) And yet he said, "I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin." (Romans 11:1)

The Jew and the Israelite are one and the same man. When the angel foretold the birth of Jesus, he said, "The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke 1:32-33)

But David reigned over all Israel, and Jacob is Israel, so that reigning over the house of Jacob means reigning over the house of Israel. Thus we read, "And you, Bethlehem Ephratah, though you be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall He come forth unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." (Micah 5:2)

"The twelve tribes of Israel" are often mentioned in the Scriptures, referring to the twelve sons of Jacob, who is also called Israel. The city of the saints of God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down from God out of heaven, will have on its twelve gates twelve names, "which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel." (Revelation 21:12)

Israel = Overcomer

This shows that all who have right to the tree of life, and enter in through the gates into the city will be Israelites. That this is so may be further seen from the meaning of the name Israel, and the reason why it was given. When the Lord changed Jacob's name to Israel, He gave as the reason for the change, "For as a prince you have power with God and with men, and have prevailed." (Genesis 33:28)

Israel, therefore, means one who prevails, an overcomer. Now read the words of the Lord, "To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne." (Revelation 3:21)

None but overcomers will enter the kingdom of God. They will all be princes, sons of God. That is, they will all be Israelites. None but Israelites will be in the kingdom of Christ, for He is the King of Israel; yet men will be there "of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," (Revelation 7:9) because, "God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that fears Him, and works righteousness, is accepted with Him." (Acts 10:34-35)

This definition of Israel corresponds exactly to the description of true Jews. The Israelite is the one who prevails, and the power by which he prevails is the power of the Spirit. He is one in whom is no guile. "Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" (John 1:47)

So likewise, "He is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." (Romans 2:29)

It is true that after the death of Solomon the kingdom was divided, and the two divisions were known as the kingdom of Judah and the kingdom of Israel; nevertheless they were all Israel, and the two kingdoms were embraced in "the twelve tribes of Israel." (Matthew 19:28; See also Ezekiel 47:13, Luke 22:30)

The facts are, therefore, that the people who are now generally known as Jews, are the same as those who in Scripture are called both Jews and Israelites.

No Confidence in the Flesh

Those terms are used, however, much the same as the words "church" and "Christian" are used. That is, they are used to designate the people who profess to serve the Lord, although their profession may be a false one. As the real christians are those who love and serve the Lord, no matter by what name they are known, so

the real Jews or Israelites are and always were those who "worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh;" (Philippians 3:3) and it matters not in what country they may live, nor what their birth may be. The tabernacle of David, that is fallen down, is to be built up again by the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles. When men cease to be "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise," (Ephesians 2:12) they become "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." (Ephesians 2:19)

The branches from the wild olive tree are grafted into the tame olive tree, and partake of its fatness, but only by faith. In like manner the natural branches which were broken off because of unbelief, are grafted in again, "if they abide not in unbelief. ... And so all Israel shall be saved." (Romans 11:23,26)

How? By the uniting of both Jews and Gentiles to the body of Christ by faith. This thing is certain, that whether we use the term Jews or Israelites, they are the descendants of Abraham: "And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:29)--Present Truth, September 6, 1894.

Chapter 24

The Jews and Palestine

The studies on the promise to Abraham now in progress in this paper [PP Editor's note: Waggoner is referring to a series of studies published in the Present Truth, that began with one titled "The Everlasting Gospel. The Gospel Message," on May 7, 1896, and continued on in a series titled "The Call of Abraham," and then into another series titled "The Promises to Israel," and on to a final article titled "The Gathering of Israel. The Everlasting Covenant Complete," published on May 27, 1897. This whole series of articles were later incorporated into the book, The Everlasting Covenant. It is recommended to read that book, as I have not reproduced those studies in this collection.] have from the first shown how far astray those are who look for the fulfillment of promises to the fathers and the return of the fleshly Jews to Palestine.

Not until Abraham is raised to life, with all the children of Abraham by the faith of Jesus, will he and his seed inherit the land. Whether a few thousand or even millions of unbelieving Jews join a mixed population of Palestine or not is a matter of no interest, so far as prophecy is concerned.

The frequent statements by those who insist that there is a significant movement of Jews for Palestine are very indefinite. Not so, however, some of the statements in the following article, written by Rev. C. L. Goodell, a Methodist minister, who has lately traveled

in that land. He writes to the Zion's Herald, of Boston, as follows: Your excellent paper had a short note last week in which some figures are given concerning the return of the Jews, which are said to be "highly significant." It is said that dozens of Jewish agricultural colonies are being established, and that, taking all things together, "students of prophecy will not fail to recognize herein one of the most important 'signs of the times.'" I am sure that none of us would want to base even a desirable conclusion on an unwarranted premise. Whether or not we believe in the literal return of the Jews to Palestine, we are all interested in knowing what the present facts are.

I have had an honest desire and exceptional opportunities to find out those facts. I went from one end of Palestine to the other, inquiring of consuls, missionaries, physicians, teachers, dragomens, Turks and Jews, and using my own eyes to the best of my ability, to determine if anything in the present condition of things could be taken as evidence of any general and surprising return of the Jews. I found only two parties who made such a claim, and these were both Americans who came to Palestine a generation ago with the same conviction and who hold it as one of the strongest articles of their faith.

It is true that a great effort is being made to get poor Jews to go back to Palestine. On arriving at Jerusalem they register at one of the synagogues, and collections are taken for them throughout the world. But notwithstanding this, and the generosity of Sir Moses Montefiore and the Rothschilds in building tenement houses,

hospitals, and reclaiming land, the concurrent testimony of the men best qualified to judge is that nothing has as yet transpired which is at all significant from a prophetic standpoint.

Let me give some of the facts and the names which are behind this conclusion. Dr. Selah Merrill is quoted as saying that there are 27,000 Jews in Jerusalem. That is a very conservative estimate, and unless Dr. Merrill has greatly changed his mind since we ran over the figures of the various consulates in Jerusalem, he will be greatly surprised to find his figures quoted as giving any color to the idea of the rapid return of the Jews. Dr. Merrill stoutly opposes the idea. Much more than half the Jewish population of Palestine is in Jerusalem. Safed and Tiberius are the only other cities where there is a considerable number of Jews; while in Nazareth and Bethlehem there is not a Jew.

Dr. W. H. Thompson saw nothing in his time that seemed to him to indicate a speedy return, although he witnessed a much larger proportionate increase than has taken place in the last few years. Dr. Jessup, of the American College at Beirut, has been there since 1856. Dr. Vartan, a Scotch physician at Nazareth, has been there almost as long, and both these men share the opinion of Dr. Merrill, our consul at Jerusalem. Dr. Buckley, of the Christian Advocate, sums up a very careful inquiry with the words: "In view of the character of the Jews migrating hither, nothing of significance is indicated." There are four times as many Jews in New York city as in all Palestine.

It cannot be truthfully said that there are "dozens of Jewish agricultural colonies" in Palestine. I saw only three in a journey from Damascus to Jerusalem. It is impossible to get any accurate census from the Turkish authorities, but they may be relied upon to make the Jewish population as large as it is, so that they may get as large a per capita tax from them as possible.

If the home-coming of the Jews is a necessary preliminary to the coming of our Lord, we will do all we can to hasten that event; but no good will come of our claiming a consummation which has not taken place.--Present Truth, June 25, 1896.

Chapter 25

The Twelve Tribes of Israel

When the Apostle James, about thirty years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, wrote the epistle which remains till this day, and which is part of the Scriptures written by inspiration of God, and profitable, "That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," (2 Timothy 3:17) he addressed it "to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad." (James 1:1)

That greeting is just as pertinent and timely today as when it was penned, because the Word of God "lives and abides for ever." (1 Peter 1:23)

It is as though the Spirit of God were still breathing those words into our ears. Let us see what they teach us.

1. We may learn from these words that the twelve tribes were all in existence when James wrote his epistle. There were no "ten lost tribes," but all were equally well-known, or else all were equally lost.

2. The twelve tribes were all scattered abroad. This is as plain as language can make it.

3. Glancing onward in the epistle, and comparing the first verse of the 2nd chapter with the first verse of the 1st, we find that these twelve tribes, to whom the epistle is address, had "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ." (James 2:1) That is, they were all Christians. This is so important a matter, yet one so almost universally misunderstood, that we must emphasise it.

Read the words of the Apostle Paul, in Acts 23:6; 26:6-8, and it will be seen that the twelve tribes are those who are "earnestly serving God night and day," (Acts 26:7,RV) and hoping in the promise of the resurrection. It was so then, and it is so now, as surely as God's Word is living.

These three items, are self-evident from the text. This one verse is of itself sufficient to overthrow all the theories and speculations about Israel, which come in swarms like the flies in Egypt. The reading of the Word with attention and faith will disperse these plagues. But let us note further.

The Twelve Tribes and the New Jerusalem

We see from these plain, simple statements of Scripture that the twelve tribes of the children of Israel are all Christians. The New Jerusalem, the capital city of their redeemed kingdom of God, "lies foursquare," (Revelation 21:16) and has twelve gates, three opening to each of the four cardinal points of the compass, so that the saints from every quarter of the new earth may march up and enter in without turning to the right or to the left; but these gates have

written on them "the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel." (Revelation 21:12)

That is to say, that none will "have the right to come to the tree of life, [and] enter in through the gates into the city," (Revelation 22:14,RV) except the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. Not only are the twelve tribes of Israel all Christians, but all Christians are enrolled in and compose those twelve tribes. In short, the twelve tribes of Israel are identical with the church of Christ, the saints of God.

"Scattered Abroad" According to God's Plan

"To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad." (James 1:1)

Note the expression "scattered abroad," or, "of the Dispersion," as in the Revision. The Greek word in this place has the signification, "to sow seed." This tallies exactly with the words of Christ in: "The field is the world, the good seed are the children of the kingdom." (Matthew 13:30)

The good seed is sown broadcast over the land. Each individual is not sent everywhere, but everywhere one may be, there is where he has been sown, that he may bear fruit to swell the harvest. God's people, the tribes of Israel, are scattered over the face of the whole earth, and are to be found among every nation, kindred, tribe and people, and are not recognisable from the peoples and tribes of the

earth except as the truth of God marks them as "a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus 2:14)

This is exactly in harmony with God's original design for Israel. No one should imagine that God's plan has been frustrated, because the twelve tribes of Israel are now scattered abroad. Quite the contrary. God chose Israel at the first that they might be a missionary people. Only as they are a missionary people, and scattered abroad, widely dispersed, is there any use for their existence, or, in fact, can they have any existence.

Why Abraham Was Chosen

Take Abraham, the father of the tribes of the faithful. He was chosen because he answered and came when He was called. To all God says, "Come," those who heed the call are His chosen ones, and to them He says, "Go."

Abraham was a wandering preacher to the heathen, and Isaac and Jacob followed his example. Wherever they went, they built an altar, and "proclaimed the name of Jehovah." (Exodus 34:5)

When they were few men in number, and strangers and the land, "When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people; He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, He reproved kings for their sakes; Saying, Touch not my anointed, and do my prophets no harm." (Psalm 105:13-15)

The Spirit of Colonization

Those men were Christians, trusting in Christ to save them from sin by the power of His victory over the grave. It was not so, however, with the most of their descendants, except for certain short periods. "They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in His law. ... They believed not in God, and trusted not in His salvation." (Psalm 78:10,22)

They desired a king from their own number to deliver them, that they might be like the heathen around them. They chose to colonise, rather than to be scattered abroad as seed, and consequently they had to be carried away by force. They could not learn the lesson, that Israel's country, the real Canaan, is an heavenly country, and even the earth made new, but persisted in making this earth as it now is their home. Being therefore utterly useless for the purpose for which God chose them, their house was left to them desolate, and others were raised up in their stead, from among the Gentiles, as they themselves had been, to build up the tabernacle of David that had fallen down.

That same desire to colonise, to gather in groups to be preached to by men who will preach just what they like to hear, still characterises the professed church of God. Nevertheless His people are scattered abroad, and fulfilling their mission to an extent never before known except in the few years immediately following the notable Pentecost. Day and night the twelve tribes of Israel,

scattered abroad in every part of the earth, serve God in Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus.

All Israel God's Children

All of the twelve tribes of Israel are children of God. When God sent Moses to deliver His people from Egyptian bondage, He said, "Israel is my son, even my firstborn." (Exodus 4:22) "When Israel was a child, and I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." (Hosea 11:2)

This prophecy was said to be fulfilled when the Infant Jesus was taken to Egypt to escape the fury of Herod, and was called out, (Matthew 2:14-15) thus showing the identity of Christ with Israel. Indeed, Christ himself declares that God has directly addressed Him as Israel, in whom He will be glorified. (Isaiah 49:1-6) In harmony with this, is the statement that: "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel; ... That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are accounted for the seed." (Romans 9:6,8) "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." (Galatians 4:28)

Being children of promise, as Isaac was, we are children of God, true Israelites; for it is by the "exceeding great and precious promises [of God], that [we become] partakers of the Divine nature," (2 Peter 1:4) and so birthright members of God's own family. Receive, then, into your hearts and lives these promises of God, which are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus, (2 Corinthians

1:20) and you will be "no more strangers and foreigners," ... aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, ... but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, And [be] built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; In whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto a holy temple in the Lord." (Ephesians 2:19,12,19-21)-- Present Truth, November 14, 1901.

Chapter 26

Are the British People the Heirs of the World?

I find in looking over the promises given to Abraham that they [his seed] were to spread abroad west, east, north, and south, and they were to become a company of nations. I see no nation at present occupying this position except the British Empire, which has very recently become so. At the last census I find from statistics that the area covers 11,778,256 square miles: the population is 391,844,878; English speaking people estimated at over 116,000,000. These figures are enough to show that the British people, or Anglo-Saxon, occupy the role of Israel. These figures show that this empire is the greatest that has ever been, and it bids fair to become the heir of the world. (Romans 4:13)

That which convinces you that the British people, or the Anglo-Saxon race, are the heirs of the world, is sufficient of itself, if there were nothing else, to convince me that they are not, and that no nation on earth does occupy that "role." Let us note a few points.

The people who are to inherit the earth must be the seed of Abraham; for it was to Abraham that the promise was made that he and his seed should be the heir of the world. (Romans 4:13) Therefore if your idea were correct, the inhabitants of the British Empire must be the seed of Abraham.

Passing by the fact that the people embraced in the British Empire are not by any means the same as the Anglo-Saxon race, since the Anglo-Saxon people are largely in the minority, and there are millions of the Anglo-Saxon race not subject to Great Britain, I note the one point of the census. The census shows that there are 391,844,878 people in the British Empire. This is indeed a vast population; but the mere fact that a census of the British Empire can be taken, shows that it is not the heir of the promise to Abraham. Read the following: "And the Lord said Abraham, ... I will make your seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall your seed also be numbered." (Genesis 13:14,16)

Do you see that Britain's four hundred millions of people fall far short of Abraham's posterity? Suppose we take all the nations on this earth; a fairly accurate census has been taken, and they are found to number about fifteen hundred millions. A vast number, truly, but nevertheless they can be numbered, and fall far short of equaling in number the dust of the earth or "the sand of the sea shore." (Genesis 22:17)

Home of the Faithful

Now let us read the text referred to, "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." (Romans 4:13)

Abraham is "the father of all them that believe." (Romans 4:11)

Therefore the promised inheritance "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, (As it is written, I have made you a father of many nations,) before Him whom he believed, even God, who quickens the dead, and calls those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall your seed be." (Romans 4:16-18)

Could anything be plainer? Is it not evident that no race or nation, as such, on this earth is to possess it, but that it is to be possessed by a people who have the righteousness of faith-the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Through the Resurrection

Further: The promise was to Abraham and to his seed; to both together, not to either Abraham or his seed separately. Every time God spoke the promise to Abraham he was very explicit that to him the land should be given. Nevertheless Abraham lived as a stranger, a pilgrim and a sojourner, all his life, (Hebrews 11:13; Genesis 23:4) and died without any inheritance, "no, not so much as to set his foot on." (Acts 7:5)

Yet although he "died in faith, not having received the promise;" (Hebrews 11:13) he was not disappointed, because God had told him that he should die before he received the inheritance. (Genesis 15:15) But God cannot lie, (Titus 1:2) and Abraham knew it, and therefore he knew also that the inheritance of the world was to be his through the resurrection. He believed in the God "who quickens the dead." (Romans 4:17)

It was his faith in the resurrection by Jesus Christ that made him sure of the promise. But the promise is to Abraham and to his seed at the same time. The heir cannot inherit property before the father does, through whom he receives it. This is self-evident. Therefore it is only by the general resurrection of the just, which will take place at the end of this world, when Christ comes, that the seed of Abraham will come into their inheritance.

Those who are raised to life at the coming of Christ are raised incorruptible, immortal. (1 Corinthians 15:51-53) Therefore when they come into their inheritance it will be to hold it for ever. That was indicated in the promise, for the land was to be theirs for "an everlasting possession." (Genesis 17:8)

But only that which is perfect is everlasting; therefore as the sin which has cursed this earth is removed, the curse itself will be removed. Therefore, "We, according to His promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." (2 Peter 3:13) Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5)

Time of the Inheritance

When will they inherit it? "Evil-doers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, you shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." (Psalm 37:9-11)

This brings us to the same point of time as before: the end of "this present evil world," (Galatians 1:4) and the destruction of the wicked, when "The Lord will make wars to cease unto the ends of the earth." (Psalm 46:9)

Now nobody will have the hardihood to assert that the British Empire has been enlarged to its present proportions by peaceful means, or that meekness helps to enlarge one's earthly possessions. The British Empire, like every other government on earth, has won its possessions by the sword, and holds them by the sword.

A Perfect Gift

But the inheritance to Abraham's seed is the gift of God by grace to "the poor of this world, rich in faith." (James 2:5)

As is the Giver, so is the gift. A mean man may give mean gifts; but a king would deem it a disgrace to give in any other way than

royally. And how much more must the King of kings give only "Every good gift and every perfect gift." (James 1:17)

If a king with unlimited wealth at his disposal, should promise something as a mark of special favor to one whom he called his personal friend, and should repeat the promise many times, confirming it with the most solemn oath, and cause it to be proclaimed throughout his dominions, would you not expect the gift to be something in proportion to his wealth and power?

And if after all the promises and proclamations he should give this bosom friend an old house with second-hand furniture, would you not think it a disgrace? It would be mockery to his friend, and would show the king to be lacking in a sense of the dignity due his own position.

Well, that is just how many people expect God to fulfill His promises to His friend. They think that after making a special promise, confirming it by an oath, and calling the attention of the universe to the graciousness of the gift, that He will at last bestow upon them an earth that has grown old like a garment, and is almost worn out!

No, no; when God gives, He gives the best. When the meek, the faithful, righteous ones receive the reward of the inheritance, "the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose, [and] they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God." (Isaiah 35:1-2)

Once more God will see everything that He has made, and behold, it will be "very good," as good as the eternal Creator can make it.

Numbering Israel

One word more about the census of the heirs of God's promise.

When "Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel," (1 Chronicles 21:1) the act was iniquity on the part of David, who thus "sinned greatly [and did] very foolishly," (1 Chronicles 21:8) and became "a cause of trespass to Israel." (1 Chronicles 21:3)

David's pride over the number of Israel caused him to forget God's word concerning them, that they should be innumerable. God alone can write up the number of His faithful ones, and when that is done there will be "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues." (Revelation 7:9)--Present Truth, February 20, 1902--Genesis 13:14-16.

Chapter 27

The Heavenly Canaan

It is not at all surprising that the casual reader of the Bible should conclude that all that God ever promised to Abraham and his seed, was the possession of what was and is known as the land of Canaan.

But it is surprising that men should insist that an earthly inheritance was all that was promised them, after they read that the promise was that they should be "heirs of the world," (Hebrews 4:13) and that it was such an inheritance as could be obtained only by faith in Christ.

First, let it be remembered that if it were true that the promise was that Abraham should have a temporal inheritance in the land of Canaan, then the promise failed, because he did not have it. "[God] gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on; yet He promised that He would give it to him, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child." (Acts 7:5)

But God's word cannot fail. Nothing can frustrate His promises, but everyone of them will be fulfilled to the minutest detail. Sometimes we hear it said that God tried one plan, and that when that failed, He tried another. But that cannot be.

"[God] works all things after the counsel of His own will."
(Ephesians 1:11)

He is true, although every man fails. Neither did Abraham's descendants possess the inheritance that God promised them. Isaac and Jacob, as well as Abraham, "sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles. ... [They] confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." (Hebrews 11:9,13)

It is true that when God led the children of Israel out of Egypt, He did give to them the inheritance, and they began to possess it by faith; but they did not keep the faith, and so they put from them the inheritance. They did not realize how great a thing God had given them, and so they let it slip from their grasp. As it could be gained only by faith, so it could be held only by faith; but we are told that the word preached to them did not profit them, because faith was lacking. (Hebrews 4:2) "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." (Hebrews 3:19)

This refers not only to those who died in the wilderness, but to those whom Joshua led into the land of Canaan, because we read that Joshua did not give them rest. "For if Joshua had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day." (Hebrews 4:8)

Canaan's Importance

The land of Canaan, and especially the locality of Jerusalem, has from the earliest times been prominent in God's plan. It was there, on Mount Moriah, that Abraham offered Isaac, and found a ram to offer in his stead. (Genesis 22:2,14) On that same spot the plague was stayed in the days of David, and there the temple of Solomon was built. (2 Chronicles 3:1) It was of this place that Moses in his song after the passage of the Red Sea, said, "You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which You have made for yourself to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established." (Exodus 15:17)

In this last text we have reference to the Sanctuary of which Christ is Minister, "the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." (Hebrews 8:2)

Take this with the verses immediately following the one quoted from Exodus, "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever;" (Exodus 15:18) and also with the statement that Abraham "looked for a city which have foundations, whose builder and maker is God," (Hebrews 11:10) and we shall see that none of the faithful had the idea that they were to possess a temporal inheritance in this present world, but that they desired "a better country, that is, a heavenly." (Hebrews 11:16)

If we are children of Abraham, then, "our citizenship is in heaven." (Philippians 3:20,RV)

We have "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." (Hebrews 12:22-23)

A City with Foundations

"[Abraham] looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Hebrews 11:10)

Read in Revelation 21:14-20 the description of the foundations of the city of God. The heavenly Jerusalem, therefore, is the city for which Abraham looked. "Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." (Galatians 4:26)

But this Jerusalem is coming down from God out of heaven, to be the capital of the new earth. "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." (Revelation 21:1-3)

And where will the heavenly Jerusalem come down? The prophet tells us that in the time of the great battle of the day of the Lord, "His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. ... and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with You. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear nor dark." (Zechariah 14:4)

That is, as stated in the margin, it shall not be clear in some places and dark in other places. "But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night; but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light. And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea; in summer and in winter shall it be. And the Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one." (Zechariah 14:7-9)

Even if the Jerusalem that is now on the earth were a fit place for the tabernacle of God, it is altogether too small for all Israel. "The children which you shall have, after you have lost the other, shall say again in your ears, The place is too strait for me; give place to me that I may dwell." (Isaiah 49:20)

The text from Zechariah tells us how the place will be made large enough. We have read that in that day living waters shall go forth from Jerusalem. That is because the tabernacle of God is with men, and from His throne proceeds a "clear river of water of life." (Revelation 22:1)

Then will Abraham and his seed inherit the land of Canaan.

Both Spiritual and Literal

But someone will say that we are spiritualizing the text, when it ought to be taken literally. No; we are taking it literally, for the city will be a very real city. "Spiritual" is not opposed to "literal." The law of God, even the whole Bible, is spiritual, yet it is very real. God himself is spiritual, yet He is a very real, living God.

The trouble with so many who read the promises to Israel is that they forget that the word is spiritual, and so leave Christ out of them. The promise is the promise of the Spirit, and the inheritance will be shared only by those who are spiritual, but it is so real that it will endure when everything else passes away. The promise that Abraham and his seed shall inherit the land of Canaan will be fulfilled to the very letter.

Now it is easy to see that the possession of the land of Canaan is in reality the possession of the whole earth. For when the New Jerusalem comes down and all the saints with it, the earth will be made new, and the Lord will be King over all the earth. "But why

did not the Lord say 'the heavenly Canaan,' instead of simply Canaan, when He made the promise to Abraham, so that we need not make so great a mistake?"

Well, in the first place, it is no more strange that He should say simply Canaan, than that He should say simply the earth, instead of "new earth," in the promise, "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5)

And secondly, the Lord made it so clear that He meant a heavenly and not an earthly inheritance, that Abraham understood Him, and looked only for a heavenly country. If Abraham could understand the promise, there is no reason why we should make a mistake in regard to it.

And now that we know what the promise is, let us remember that they who do His commandments, through faith in Christ, "may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." (Revelation 22:14)

Those gates have on them the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel, (Revelation 21:12) so that the gathering of the saints of God into the New Jerusalem is the fulfillment of the promise through the prophets, that Israel shall return to Jerusalem.--
Present Truth, September 20, 1894.

Chapter 28

The City of the Living God

"Abraham looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Hebrews 11:10)

That is the only "holy city." It is "reserved in heaven for you," (1 Peter 1:4) and in it is prepared a special "place for you" (John 14:2) if you will but allow Him to prepare you for it. Not to the Jerusalem "trodden down of the nations," (Luke 21:24) does faith look, but to the "Jerusalem which is above, ... which is the mother of us all." (Galatians 4:26)--Present Truth, February 3, 1898.

Chapter 29

The Real Land of Promise

The record of the taking of Jericho teaches a lesson that ought to be studied by everyone who is in danger of being led to accept the theories of "Anglo-Israelites," and to expect the return of all Jews to Palestine before the coming of the Lord.

Character of the Inheritance

That victory at the very door of the land of Canaan, showed how alone the land which God has promised could really be possessed, and consequently the character of the inheritance. "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down," (Hebrews 11:30) even as the children of Israel had crossed the Red Sea, and the Jordan by faith. The land which they were to inherit, in fulfillment of the promise of God, was one that could be inherited only by faith-by a people full of faith, and living and moving only by faith. But faith means righteousness. "The just shall live by his faith." (Habakkuk 2:4)

We are made righteous by faith. Therefore the inheritance was to be one in which only righteous people can dwell; and for that we, according to God's promise, still look, "for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." (2 Peter 3:13)

This was in the promise from the beginning. When God appeared to Abraham in Mesopotamia, and said, "Get you out of

your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto a land that I will show you, ... I will bless you, and make your name great, and you shall be a blessing, ... and in you shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 12:1-3)

Blessing means the removal of the curse; so the blessing upon all the families of the earth means the removal of the curse from all the earth. The blessing promised to Abraham is forgiveness of sins, the turning away from iniquities; (Acts 3:25-26; Romans 4:6-9) it is also "life for evermore." (Psalm 133:3)

Now the curse came upon the earth because of man's sin, and therefore it follows that when all families of the earth are delivered from sin, the curse will be removed from it. Thus we have it that Abraham and his faithful descendants gladly confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, (Hebrews 11:13) even as King David at the height of his power did, (1 Chronicles 29:15) desiring "a better country, that is, a heavenly." (Hebrews 11:16)

And for this reason, "God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared for them a city." (Hebrews 11:16)

Heirs of God

The promise of God to the seed of Abraham, extending even to us, was, "I will be their God. ... I will establish my covenant between me and you and your seed after you in their generations for

an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto you, and to your seed after you." (Genesis 17:8,7)

Compare with: "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says 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." (Hebrews 8:10)

The possession of God himself--"heirs of God" (Romans 8:17)--is the essential part of the promise, the sum and substance of it. "I am ... your exceeding great reward." (Genesis 15:1)

Having God, we have all things; "having no hope and without God in the world, [we are] aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise." (Ephesians 2:12)

The Israelites crossed the Jordan, and captured Jericho, by faith--the faith of Jesus--the faith that means the receiving of God, the Divine Word. Their abiding in God was their surety of the possession of the land; without Him, their being in the land, even as rulers, was as though they were in Egypt.

In Him we also obtain the same inheritance, and the Holy Spirit is the pledge of it. His abiding presence causes us to look with confidence and hope for the coming of Christ from heaven, at the time of the "restoration of all things, whereof God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets which have been since the world began." (Acts 3:21,RV)--Present Truth, October 9, 1902.

Chapter 30

Come With Us

"We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it to you: come with us, and we will do you good: for the Lord has spoken good concerning Israel." (Numbers 10:29)

We are journeying unto the land of which the Lord has said to His people in this age, "I will give it unto you." (Genesis 13:17)

Children of Promise

The Israel of today are not the literal seed of Abraham, but they are the spiritual seed, the children of promise. "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel; Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children; but, In Isaac shall your seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." (Romans 9:6-8) "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." (Romans 4:13) "Know you therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." (Galatians 3:7)

The promise to Abraham was that he should be the heir of the world; and the same promise reaches down to us today; for, "If you

be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:29)

Abraham did not receive the promise, for, said the martyr Stephen, "He gave him no inheritance in it [the land of promise], no, not so much as to set his foot on;" (Acts 7:5) nor did his descendants receive it, nor any of the faithful who lived after him. "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." (Hebrews 11:13)

This has been the lot of God's people in all ages. They have been but strangers and pilgrims, knowing that "Here we have no continuing city," (Hebrews 13:14) but looking, as did Abraham, for "a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Hebrews 11:10)

Not This Old Earth

It is true that the literal descendants of Abraham did enter and possess the land of Canaan, but that was not the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham "that he should be the heir of the world." (Romans 4:13)

The Israelites possessed but a very small portion of the world, and their tenure of that was only maintained by almost continual war with the surrounding nations. They did not obtain that for which

Abraham and the patriarchs looked. They did not enjoy the promised rest. "For if Joshua had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest to the people of God." (Hebrews 4:8-9)

The promise to Abraham and to his seed is yet to be fulfilled. The promise is, as we have seen, that they shall inherit the earth. It is not an inheritance in heaven, or on some distant star or planet, but here, where they have sojourned as strangers, and amid trials and temptations and persecutions have fought the good fight of faith.

But they will not inherit the earth in its present state, for now it is given over to the dominion of sin and evil. It is under the rule of "the god of this world [Satan, who] has blinded the minds of them which believe not." (2 Corinthians 4:4)

Also Peter tells us that: "The heavens and earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto the fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." (2 Peter 3:7) "For behold, [says the prophet Malachi,] the day comes, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." (Malachi 4:1) "And we, [says Peter,] according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (2 Peter 3:13)

The Time Is at Hand

We are journeying to this land, this new earth, of which the Lord has said to the seed of Abraham, "I will give it unto you;" (Genesis 13:17) and we are nearing the end of the journey. We are "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." (2 Peter 3:12) "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." (2 Peter 1:19)

The day dawn is near at hand. If we inquire, in the language of the prophet, "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" (Isaiah 21:11)

The answer is, "The morning comes, and also the night," (Isaiah 21:12) the morning of eternal day to those who are the seed of Abraham, and the night of eternal death to such as are not the children of faith. "The night is far spent; the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." (Romans 13:12) "This Gospel of the kingdom, [said Jesus,] shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." (Matthew 24:14)

We are living in the day of the fulfillment of these words. Already the proclamation of the hour of God's judgment (Revelation 14:7) has encircled the earth. Every nation and kingdom has been

entered, and dwellers in the uttermost parts of the earth have heard the voice of them "that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things. ... Their sound has gone into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." (Romans 10:15,18)

A little work yet remains to be accomplished, and "then shall the end come." (Matthew 24:14)

Then, The saints of the most the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever." (Daniel 7:18)

That is the kingdom of the Son of David, the Seed of Abraham, to whom the promise of inheritance was made. The prophet beheld the time when "There was given Him dominion, and glory, and the kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him." (Daniel 7:14)

This kingdom and dominion His saints will share with Him. "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." (Daniel 7:27)

Then the heirs of the world will enter upon their inheritance- the new earth purified from sin and every trace of the curse-and enjoy with faithful Abraham the rest which has so long been promise. To this land of promise we are journeying, and we would that every

man might share in this inheritance. Come with us! "Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth," (Colossians 3:2) for, "The world passes away, and the lust thereof." (1 John 2:17)

It is hastening on to the burning day, when "the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." (2 Peter 3:12)

Already, "wars and commotions," (Luke 21:9) "pestilences, and earthquakes," (Matthew 24:7) "distress of nations with perplexity," (Luke 21:25) "signs in the heavens and in the earth, (Acts 2:19) "the sea and the waves roaring, [And] men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after the things that are coming," (Luke 21:25-26) betoken the approach of the day of God. It is the rumbling of the chariot wheels of the coming King. "The Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father, with His angels; and then shall He reward every man according to his work." (Matthew 16:27)

The reward of the faithful is the inheritance promised to Abraham. Set your face toward Zion, and away from the city of destruction. "For evil doers shall be cut off; but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be; yea, you shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." (Psalm 37:9-11)

Come with us to this inheritance. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that hears say, Come; and let him that is athirst, Come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Revelation 22:17) "Come with us, and we will do you good; for the Lord has spoken good concerning Israel." (Numbers 10:29)--Present Truth, September 14, 1893.