

The Two Sons of God

By

Rev. Dale R. Andre, D.D.

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Note: All Scriptural quotations are from the King James Version of the Bible (1611).

I respectfully dedicate this book to the truth of the Gospel of the Saving Grace of Jesus Christ and the faithful ministry of the Word of God. Dedication to such a ministry has not been without costs nor has it been without rewards. The Lord has provided great spiritual blessings to my wife, son, two daughters, grandchildren, and their children, as well as to our church: for such and for whom I am sincerely thankful.

INTRODUCTION TO THE TWO SONS OF GOD

The Bible is a wonderful Book. It was wonderfully written and it has been wonderfully preserved by God through the ages despite overt attempts to destroy it and the subtle attempts of certain scholars to corrupt it. The Bible declares, *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God* (II Timothy 3:16). The words translated *inspiration of God* literally means *God breathed*. This means *holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost* (II Peter 1:21), or they were borne along in a manner that can be compared to the wind moving different sorts of sailing vessels. As each vessel exhibits its own characteristics in response to the wind, each writer of the Scriptures exhibited his own personality, personal experiences and writing style in response to the Holy Spirit: producing a verbally inspired Bible in which each word, in its respective original document, was a word chosen of God. This evidence supplies for me and for all of similar persuasion -- the Bible is the very Word of God.

The Bible was produced by some forty human writers of various vocations. They were statesmen, shepherds, herdsmen, fishermen, kings, tax collectors, a sail maker and a physician,

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and they wrote their individual books of the Bible from many different countries of the Mediterranean world. There was a span of some fifteen to sixteen hundred years from the writing of the first book to the writing of the last book of the Bible. The number of writers, the diversity of vocations, the vast physical separation of the writers, and the span of time between the writing of the first book and the writing of the last book of the Bible deems collaboration by the writers impossible. Despite these conditions, which would make the writing of any other book without congruity, the Bible has a unity of thought and purpose from beginning to end that would seem to demand a single author: and indeed there is but one Author of the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit of God. This is what the Bible claims, it is what we believe, and it is what the Bible proves to be so. Further considering the superstitions that were rampant in the ages in which the Bible was written, none of these superstitions and irrational beliefs have found their way into the pages of holy writ, except as they are revealed to be false beliefs held by idolatrous peoples.

The theme of the Bible is the redemption of man. Redemption has been in the mind of God from all eternity. The record of its revelation to man begins in Genesis, where we have the fall of Adam and Eve. It continues with subsequent revelations throughout the remainder of the Old and New Testaments. This theme is reflected in many prophetic statements and promises related to the people of God and the Person and work of the Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. Finally redemption finds its completion in the book of the Revelation with the *creation of a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*

Even though the redemption of man is the primary purpose of the Bible, the Bible also supplies us with information about creation, history, geography, science, human relationships,

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biographies, human nature and the nature of God, etc. This information is supplied because of its relationship to the theme of redemption, and none of these other subjects is necessarily treated in full. This can be seen in the account of creation. All of the details of creation are not supplied, but only that information which is relevant to the Bible's central theme.

A thorough examination of the Bible reveals that the Old Testament Scriptures contain many New Testament truths veiled in shadows and types. The apostle Paul declared this to be so in his letter to the Corinthian church, when he prophetically spoke of the giving of the New Testament Scriptures: *For now we see through a glass, darkly [enigmatically]; but then face to face: now I know in [out of] part; but then shall I know even as also I am known* (I Corinthians 13:12).

One of the purposes for the writing of the New Testament Scriptures, besides the presentation of the Christ and the church age, was to unveil the Old Testament Scriptures and to make them plain to a redeemed people. The unique content and structure of the Scriptures declares unquestionably that they are inspired of God. All of the doctrinal truths revealed plainly in the New Testament Scriptures have their origin in the Old Testament Scriptures, where they are veiled in their mystery form of shadows and types. No human genius could conceive such a book as our Bible, or prophesy with the one hundred percent accuracy which is the Bible's record with respect to the first advent of Christ: let alone forty men writing independently of one another over a period of a millennium and a half.

Now with respect to our book, *The Two Sons of God*, it was written to unveil some of the New Testament doctrinal truths which are veiled in the biographical sketches found in the Old

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Testament Scriptures, particularly the truth of the new birth and the relationship of the flesh to the Spirit of God. This is to clearly show the inspiration of the Spirit of God in the writing of the Scriptures. The Old Testament was written, as we have already stated, as an unfolding drama of the redemption of man. The doctrinal truths are eternal and constant, yet there is a progressive revelation of the theme of redemption in the lives of the individuals we meet as we progress through the Scriptures, with each subsequent character revealing more about redemption.

We will attempt to show that the historical personalities found in the Scriptures reveal certain events from their lives which were used of the Spirit of God to reveal spiritual realities in their relationships with one another and with God. For example, the natural and the spiritual man are conveyed to us in the lives of men like Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, and Esau and Jacob. In these relationships, the unredeemed are portrayed by the firstborn, which speaks of the natural birth: i. e., those who were born into this world naturally, but have never accepted the gospel of the grace of God that they might be a part of the family of God. On the other hand the redeemed are portrayed by the second-born, which speaks of the new birth: i. e., those born from above by faith in Jesus Christ.

The Two Sons of God is a study of Adam's race which is natural, and Christ's redeemed race which is reckoned spiritual. Adam was God's son by right of creation, and Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God: hence the title, *The Two Sons of God*. In terms of their respective ministries on this earth, Adam was first and Jesus was second (I Corinthians 15:47). These two men, Adam and Christ, are federal heads over two races of men which are represented by the firstborn and the second-born in some of the biographical sketches in the Bible.

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The term *federal headship* may not be understood by all. Simply stated: *federal headship* means that one stands for all. The term is familiar to most of us as it relates to the federal government. The President and the Congress of the United States can and do make decisions which affect our lives as citizens of the United States. As heads of government, they represent us. We are legally responsible for their governmental actions and decisions. Similarly redemption is based upon federal headship. The Bible says:

Therefore as by the offence of one [Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [Jesus Christ] the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. (Romans 5:18)

The unfolding plan of redemption deals with the relationship between these two races. In Adam all die. In Christ all who believe in Him are quickened and given eternal life (I Corinthians 15:22). Thus the study of the redemption of man is the study of these two federal heads.

In *The Two Sons of God* we shall begin with *Lessons from the Fall of Adam and Eve* and we shall progress to *The Flesh and the Spirit in the Church Age*. This will give us a view of the fall of man and the rise of the gospel as God presented it to man. It will also give us a view of the rise of all that is false in the spiritual world. From Adam we shall proceed through the Old Testament Scriptures until we finally arrive in the church age where we shall view the gospel and the rise of *another gospel*. Throughout this book we shall be confronted with the Spirit of the Truth and the spirit of the error in our view of the redemption of man. *The Two Sons of God* will carry us all the way from Eden to Eden; from the paradise of God to the paradise of God; from sin and failure to grace, faith, and life. The enigmatical portrayal of the grace of God throughout the Old Testament Scriptures establishes the inspiration of the Scriptures and brings all that we

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know under the authority of *Thus saith the Lord*.

Come with us, then, on this allegory of faith through *The Two Sons of God*. If you are a believer, it will strengthen you. If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, this book could establish the basis for the gospel in your mind, so that you could have a basis to believe what God has promised. The primary difference between believers and unbelievers is that the believer has merely accepted God's provision of salvation by grace through faith and has been accepted of God; whereas the unbeliever has not entered into the provisions and blessings of God's grace and is unaccepted of God. Even so God's grace is available to those who will believe in God's gracious provision in His Son Jesus Christ.

Dale Andre

Chapter I

LESSONS FROM THE FALL OF ADAM AND EVE

In the Introduction to this book we mentioned that Adam is revealed to have been the federal head of the human race (being its progenitor). Federal headship is essential to the redemption of man, which is the central theme of the Bible. This principle establishes that one man (Adam) plunged the entire human family into sin by his disobedience, so that One Man (Jesus Christ) could make provision for its redemption through His obedience *unto death, even the death of the cross* (Philippians 2:8). The Bible also discloses many other truths in the presentation of the redemption of man that may whet our appetites for these subjects, but Biblical information on these subjects is limited to their relationships to the theme of redemption.

One such bit of information, or non-information, is the number and gender of the children of Adam and Eve, besides Cain, Abel and Seth. This lack of information has caused some to mockingly question, "Where did Cain get his wife?" This is easily answered by the rather obvious fact that Adam and Eve had many children (Genesis 5:4), who in turn had many children, and they

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populated the earth. The Scriptures do not give us this information directly, but it is revealed in the federal headship of Adam and in the later testimony of the apostle Paul before the Athenians, when he said:

God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us. (Acts 17:24-27, emphasis mine)

The three sons named in the Genesis account of the lineage of Adam are important to the Bible's theme of the redemption of man. The other sons and daughters of Adam and Eve, mentioned in the Scriptures but not directly named, are not. In Cain, the firstborn, and in Abel, the second-born, we have significant information provided relevant to redemption. In Seth, the third named son, we have the lineage through which the fulfillment of the promise of redemption would come at the appointed time. We will consider Cain and Abel in their relationships to redemption in our next chapter, but now it is important to consider the circumstances which brought about the fall of the human family, necessitating its redemption.

The Scriptures tell us Adam was created in the image and likeness of God. By analysis we know this image was both physical and spiritual. It was physical because Adam bore the physical image Jesus Christ bore when, in the omniscience of God, He was crucified before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). It was spiritual because *God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth* (John 4:24). Thus in keeping with the Biblical theme of redemption, Adam and Eve were created as free agents with the power of choice.

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This power of choice was an essential aspect of Adam's ability to love and to fellowship with God. Without it Adam would have been no more than a robot, incapable of love or fellowship, but he was no robot. He was an intelligent, physical, spiritual and sinless being with great powers of discernment and intellect. This was demonstrated in the naming of all of the animals God had created (Genesis 2:19-20) -- a feat modern man would have difficulty duplicating.

Adam was not produced by an evolutionary process. Such a process would have negated the possibility of his federal headship, which, as stated, is absolutely necessary to the theme of redemption. (Creation versus evolution is too vast a subject to be properly treated here, but suffice it to say, evolution directly denies the Scriptural fact of Adam's creation in the image of God. It also denies the fact that in the world created by God, all things reproduce after their own kind. Sometimes there can be seeming exceptions to this when there is outside interference such as cross pollination, grafting, and cross breeding between similar species -- conditions which do not generally occur in nature without the interference of man.)

When Adam had finished naming all of the animals God had created, God declared, *It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him* (Genesis 2:18). God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and He removed a rib from Adam's side and with it made him a wife. This information is rejected by some as myth. However it is an essential piece of information and must not be passed over lightly. The apostle Paul spoke to the Corinthian church of the fact that all people come from women through the process of birth, but Eve was formed from Adam (I Corinthians 11:12). This information is not spurious, or fanciful, but is essential to the federal headship of Adam and to the Bible's theme of redemption. It provides for Eve's

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salvation through her link to Adam and Adam's link to Christ, Who died for Adam's race.

Adam and Eve lived in the garden of Eden after their creation. It was an earthly paradise which provided for their sustenance and was entrusted into their care, but with one prohibition: *[T]he LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die* (Genesis 2:16-17).

This command reveals that Adam and Eve were to live their lives in dependence upon the provisions and promises of God. They were not to live their lives on the basis of self-determination, but on the basis of God's determination through the spoken Word of God. God gave them permission to eat of every tree of the garden which produced food, but one: *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*. When God warned Adam concerning this tree, He said (in the Hebrew text), *dying, thou shalt die*. This meant they would immediately die spiritually and they would begin to die physically the moment, through disobedience to God's warning, they would eat of this tree.

We can presume Adam and Eve selected fruits for their meals from the trees of the garden and had fellowship with God on a regular basis. This continued for an undisclosed period of time, until Satan entered into the serpent to deceive Eve -- to perpetuate his plan to overthrow the purpose of God. It is important for us to understand that the deception of Eve and the sin of Adam did not occur because of any flaw in their character, or their essential being. It occurred because Satan, the avowed enemy of God, had attempted to usurp his authority over the authority of God. This began when as Lucifer, *son of the morning*, he was lifted up in pride because of his great

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beauty (Ezekiel 28) and rebelled against God by trying to make himself God (Isaiah 14). He convinced one-third of the angels to follow him and set about the task of making himself *the god of this world -- the prince of the power of the air*. From the time of Lucifer's sin, Satan's plan and program have been in continuous opposition to God. This has been evident throughout the history of the world, and it will continue until the day Satan is brought to his final judgment and is cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10).

The serpent is described in Genesis 3:1 as being *more subtle than any of the beast of the field, which the Lord God had made*. Thus he was used by the devil to tempt Eve when he said, *Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?* This question was designed to throw Eve off her guard. She replied: *We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die* (Genesis 3:2-3, emphasis mine).

This response is evidence of the serpent's cunning. Eve acted independently of God and His Word. She increased God's prohibition and lessened God's punishment. Nowhere in Scripture does it say they were not to touch this tree. So if we take this fact, along with the fact that she lessened the punishment for eating of this tree, this tends to prove she was wrong on both counts. Eve's argument of not being able to eat of the tree, nor to touch the tree, *lest we die*, was born of independent thinking, without reference to what God had actually said.

The language in the Hebrew text (to which we previously alluded), *dying thou shalt die*, is exact. It tells us death was a certainty, not just a possibility, and that it was both physical and spiritual. Despite this, the serpent said: *Ye shall not surely die: for God [Elohim] doth know that*

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in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods [Elohim], knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:4-5).

With this statement, the serpent did what every false religion (associated with the Bible) from that day to this has done. He took bits and pieces of what God had said and corrupted it so that Eve reasoned apart from the exact Word of God. Then he promised her she would live and not die. Remarkably she never reasoned how it would be possible for her disobedience to God to make her like God. She simply looked at the tree and saw that it was good for food, which produced the lust of the flesh; she saw that the tree was pleasant to the eyes, which produce the lust of the eyes; and she saw that the tree was a tree to be desired to make one wise, which produced the pride of life. With this, being deceived, she ate of the tree and then she gave the fruit of the tree to Adam, who also ate of it.

This had an immediate and damaging effect upon Adam and his race: he died spiritually and the whole human family (yet in his loins) was plunged into sin with him. Adam's sin became their sin by reason of Adam's federal headship over his race. Thus Adam and his race were changed from *the image of God* into a fallen image. The Bible says, *Adam ... begat a son in his own likeness, after his image* (Genesis 5:3). This suggests that Adam and his race were no longer in the precise image of God.

Adam still had a physical body like the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, but it had become subject to sin, sickness and death. He still possessed intelligence, imagination and a will, but they were subject to his sin nature. The image in which Adam had been created had been altered by the fall so that *man's ways are not God's way*. Despite the devastating changes to Adam and his

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race, one day the redeemed will be restored to the image of God -- when by their resurrection, glorification and adoption -- when they *see Him, they shall be like Him* (I John 3:2).

Sin came into the world full grown. It did not take time to develop. Cain, the firstborn son of Adam and Eve, murdered his brother Abel. Then, a few pages later, the Bible tells us: *The LORD God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually* (Genesis 6:5).

This depravity was produced by the three components of the forbidden tree: *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life* (I John 2:16). The first two have provided man with his knowledge of evil. All of the overt sins of man are found in the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, while the pride of life has provided man with his knowledge of good. In the area of what man calls *good*, he has pride of performance; so that in all of the aspects of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, man has a corrupted sense of right and wrong.

It is interesting to note: all of Adam's and Eve's knowledge of good or evil, prior to eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, had come from God by direct revelation. This Source provided for their well-being, but the tree of the knowledge of good and evil provided them knowledge in these areas, independent of God and of their well-being. It is this independent knowledge, commonly called reason, that has man in rebellion against God.

It is also interesting to note: Webster defines morality as being the quality of knowing the difference between good and evil. He also tells us morality is subject to the influence of society. When a manner of thinking or a conduct becomes socially acceptable, it is then considered moral. This makes human morality to be subject to ever-changing social conventions. This makes it

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without absolute values. Consequently human morality is not the absolute determination of good and evil; it is society's determination, and it is as varied as the societies of this world are varied.

Let me illustrate: if a man were to measure himself by God's absolute standards, as proclaimed by the law of Moses, he would be found guilty before God, because the Scriptures say: *we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his [God's] sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin* (Romans 3:19-20).

The same man who is made guilty by the law of Moses (properly interpreted and applied) can measure himself by his own standards, or by the standards of the society in which he lives, and proclaim himself a *good man*: one who is moral. So by use of his own standards, or those of society, man can justify himself, but not before God. The Bible says: *we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise* (II Corinthians 10:12, emphasis mine).

In the garden of Eden, not far from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, was the tree of life. It was one of the trees of which Adam and Eve could freely eat. Yet it was a tree in which they showed no apparent interest: probably because they did not have a sense of needing it. Even so the tree of life promised eternal life to whoever ate of it. The promise was God's, so it was absolute. Adam and Eve simply had to act on the basis of God's Word, and taste of the fruit of the tree of life and live forever. It took no meritorious action to taste of the fruit of the

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tree of life: just a simple act of faith, but they did not make that choice. Rather Eve was deceived into eating of the forbidden fruit; and Adam, though not deceived, also ate of it.

The choice which mankind has today is very much akin to the choice which Adam and Eve had then. The human family can believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as the One who bore their judgment on a cruel cross (*the tree of life*), or they can depend upon their moral choices (*the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*) to try to make themselves fit for heaven. The choice of self-effort shall fail in condemnation and death, while the choice of faith in Jesus Christ shall result in eternal life.

Ironically man's moral nature is evidence of his disobedience to God and his fall from the image of God rather than being a manifestation of having been created in the image of God, as so many suppose. Subsequent to the fall, the human family has not functioned in the image of God; it has functioned in the image of Adam, who gave it a sin nature. The Scriptures declare the natural man to be ignorant of the Word of God. This ignorance is not due to a lack of intelligence, but is the direct result of the federal headship of Adam.

After Adam and Eve ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they were confronted with their first *moral* judgment because *the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked*. Their self-appraisal resulted in an attempt at self-justification through their efforts to make themselves acceptable to God: when *they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons*. Adam must have known their efforts of self-justification, through the works of their own hands, were futile -- for though he and Eve had clothed themselves with fig leaves, they knew they were still naked before God:

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And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? (Genesis 3:8-11)

Their response was an odd response for those who had newly become *like God*, if, indeed, this were so. They had acquired a knowledge of good and evil, but it did not draw them closer to God, it drove them apart -- because it was a corrupt knowledge, born in disobedience to God.

We have previously seen that Eve saw three things in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which attracted her: it was good for food; it was pleasant to the eyes; and it was a tree to be desired to make one wise. The account in Genesis does not tell us when or how this tree came to be in the midst of the garden of Eden. It simply says: *And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil* (Genesis 2:9). It is assumed because of this verse that God put the tree in the Garden of Eden, when all the verse says is that God allowed it to grow. Rarely, if ever, does one book of the Scriptures supply all of the information on a subject. This tree certainly had a place in the overall plan and purpose of God; but, like the tares, in the parable of the tares and wheat, it was not sown by the Lord, but by the enemy. The tares were out of place in the midst of the wheat, just as an independent knowledge of good and evil was out of place in man's relationship with God.

The Scriptures provide more information about this tree, but not in the account in Genesis. This additional information is found in the first epistle of John, where it is described by what it

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produced, rather than by its name:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. (I John 2:15-16, emphasis mine)

This should change our perspective of the fall. This should forever silence those who would find God culpable for Eve's deception and Adam's willful sin. These things were *not of the Father*. The apostle James supplied additional information on this subject, when he wrote:

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. (James 1:13-17)

God certainly had foreknowledge of Adam's sin, but the choice was Adam's. In keeping with the theme of redemption: when they sinned, it was God who sought them, not they who sought God. In keeping with the theme of redemption: the confession of their sin was evoked when God asked, *Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee thou shouldest not eat?* Then the Lord said unto the serpent:

Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

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

And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it

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wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. (Genesis 3:14-19)

With God's pronouncement of judgment there was also the manifestation of His grace. God promised that the serpent's seed would be judged by the *Seed of the woman*. This meant God promised to provide a Redeemer, One near of kin (i.e., of the seed of the woman) to stand in their stead in life and in death. The Redeemer was to deliver a crushing blow to the head of the serpent, which would provide for the judgment of the serpent and at the same time provide for the redemption of the human family. In delivering this crushing blow, *the Seed of the woman* would have His heel bruised, which in the imagery of Scripture speaks of our Lord's triumph over death by His resurrection -- a bruised heel is not fatal.

Without the remainder of Scripture, it would be difficult to see the promise of *the Seed of the woman* being the promise of salvation in Jesus Christ, but the Bible is God's unfolding plan of redemption and the terms of redemption are revealed in a progressive manner as we travel in time from Genesis to Revelation. This can be seen in the book of Hebrews, where *we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man* (Hebrews 2:9, emphasis mine). *And: Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage* (Hebrews 2:14-15, emphasis mine). It is, then, by the revelation of all of the Word of God that we know Christ to be *the Seed of the woman: slain before the foundation of the world and revealed in the fullness of time*.

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To this point, we have used the name Eve to address Adam's wife, but she did not receive this name until after God had spoken the prophecy of *the Seed of the woman*. It seems because of the limited information God had given about the seed of the woman, Adam believed his wife to be the woman and called her Eve. Then, *Unto Adam and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them*. This was the next step in the progressive revelation of the redemption of man. Redemption was to be through the *Seed of the woman*, but not without *the shedding of blood*. Since the judgment for Adam's sin was death, both spiritual and physical, the judgment of sin could be satisfied by the sacrifice of a vicarious atonement. This atonement was prefigured with the skins of the sacrificial animals. The sacrifice and covering of animal skins agrees with a future step in the progressive revelation of the Scriptures: *Without the shedding of blood there is no remission*, and this agrees with God's revelation to Moses: *the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul* (Leviticus 17:11).

Adam could not redeem himself by dying because death was the judgment for his sin. For Adam and his race to be redeemed, it required a vicarious sacrifice of a near Kinsman, Who was without sin and was willing and able to stand in the stead of Adam and his race. The sacrificial lambs which God provided to clothe Adam and Eve represented this Redeemer; while the covering of fig leaves, which Adam and Eve had provided for themselves, represented the totally inadequate efforts of man to make himself fit for the presence of God. The fig leaves were inadequate because they would dry and crumble and fall away in a short time, leaving Adam and Eve naked once again. Not only were the fig leaves a tenuous covering, there was nothing about them that

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provided for the judgment of their sin. This required the forfeiture of the life of a substitute, by the shedding of blood, to make Adam and Eve judicially fit for the presence of God. God's covering (Hebrew: *kaphar*, which is translated: *atonement*) speaks of the blood of Christ which would be shed to pay for the sins of the transgressors, and the skins of the sacrificial animals speak of Christ's perfect righteousness, which would be provided to make them fit for God's presence: *For he hath made him [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him* (II Corinthians 5:21).

God's grace prevailed and Adam and Eve secured their eternal salvation by faith in the promise of God, which would be effected at the first advent of Christ. So, at their deaths, as with all Old Testament saints, they were ushered into paradise, to await the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of the Lord and the day He would lead *captivity captive*.

Then, after providing the *covering* for Adam and Eve, God showed still more grace toward the offenders when He said: *Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life* (Genesis 3:22-24, emphasis mine).

What a tragedy it would have been if Adam or his posterity had been able to eat of the tree of life in their fallen condition. God would not allow that. In His grace He put them out of the garden of Eden, *lest ... he take also of the tree of life, and eat and live for ever* -- in bodies subject

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to sin, sickness and all of the other maladies associated with the fall. As we have seen in the judgment of the serpent, God promised Adam and Eve eternal life through another tree of life: one which would make provision for sin. Thus this tree of life would be a cruel cross upon which the Kinsman Redeemer would die a ransom for sin, bearing their judgment. This tree of life would be the cross of Calvary.

From the day Adam and Eve were created until the day they will be raised in resurrection, Adam and Eve will have made a journey from Eden to Eden, from the paradise of God to the paradise of God, because the Scriptures tell us: *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is* (I John 3:2).

Between birth and death (or as in the case of Adam and Eve, between creation and death) mankind is given life. During this life he has the opportunity, for the most part, to live his life in accordance with his own will. Even so God did not create mankind to be selfish and concerned only with their own wants and cares. God created mankind so that God and man might have fellowship together. So God portrayed the gospel to Adam and Eve so that the fellowship which had been broken by sin might be restored by faith in the promise of the *Seed of the woman*. In doing this, God gave Adam and Eve the purpose of life.

During man's short sojourn on this earth, he has the opportunity to believe the gospel and then to aid in its proclamation, so that others might also believe it. Adam and Eve believed the gospel as it was proclaimed by God. We know, because of Abel and Seth, Adam conveyed the gospel to his children so that they might also believe it and be saved. We also know, because of

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Cain, it is not possible by human endeavor to effectively force the gospel upon anyone; but as God gives us opportunity we proclaim the truth of the gospel, and God in His infinite grace gives the gift of faith to as many as are *ordained to eternal life*: that they may believe to the salvation of their eternal souls.

Chapter II

LESSONS FROM THE FIRST TWO SONS

The Bible does not tell us when Eve conceived her first son, but it was probably within the first year after they were expelled from the garden. The Bible simply says, *Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD* (Genesis 4:1). According to the Hebrew lexicons, this means she had received her firstborn son with *God's help*. This probably means she recognized the power of God in her distinctive creation from the side of Adam and was not claiming Cain to be *the seed of the woman*, as might be supposed.

At this juncture the Biblical narrative moves along rapidly. The purpose of the narrative, as we have seen, is God's unfolding plan of redemption and not a detailed history of the origin of man. To this end it is important to the theme of redemption that the second-born son of Adam and Eve be introduced immediately, and he was: *And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground* (Genesis 4:2).

In my study of the Scriptures over the years, I had noted a contrast between the first and

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second-born sons in the book of Genesis. As I viewed these individuals, it seemed as if the firstborn was likened to all of us in this world, who by right of birth, are simply *of the earth, earthy*; and the second-born seemed to occupy the position of gaining the inheritance, which the firstborn believed was his by right of birth. Further the second-born seemed to be likened to those of us who have been regenerated and are reckoned spiritual, with a heavenly inheritance which is undeserved.

When I first discovered this contrast, the principle seemed to stand in every case but in the case of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. In His case the typology seemed to break down because, at that time, I considered Him to be the firstborn Son of God. Then I remembered: in the genealogy of our Lord in the book of Luke, Adam is called *the son of God*. With this, the typology (of the natural first and the spiritual second) proved to be true in every case. Adam was the first son of God by right of creation, and the Lord Jesus Christ (with respect to His earthly ministry) was the second Son of God by right of His incarnation. Further I was reminded of Paul's instructions to the Corinthians, where he wrote:

Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. (I Corinthians 15:46-49)

In the progressive revelation of the redemption of man, the relationship between these first two sons portrays two ways of thinking: one from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the other in the promise of the *seed of the woman*. The first way had its origin in *the spirit of the error* and is the lie of the Devil. It is represented in and expressed by Cain. The other way is of

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the Spirit of the Truth and is a manifestation of the gospel of the saving grace of Jesus Christ. It is represented in and expressed by Abel. Returning to the narrative, we find: ... *in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell* (Genesis 4:3-5).

The common view of the offerings of Cain and Abel is that they both brought of that which they had produced. While this is true, it was not the reason for their offerings. The reason was hidden in their respective responses to the truth preached by their father, which is implied, but not recorded in Scripture. Their respective offerings reflected the basis of their respective views: one was according to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, *a way which seemeth right unto a man*, and the other was according to the revelation of God in the promise of the *Seed of the woman*. One rejected the concept of federal headship, and the other recognized this truth. Cain sought the approbation of God by the works of his own hands, and Abel placed his faith in the promise of the *Seed of the woman* (Jesus Christ), who would come in the fullness of time and offer Himself a ransom for sin. Consequently Cain's offering was bloodless, rejecting the idea that *without the shedding of blood is no remission*, and Abel's offering was a declaration of this truth.

When Abel offered of the *firstlings of his flock*, he did so because he acknowledged himself a sinner. He did this because he acknowledged he was related to a federal head who had plunged himself and his posterity into sin. Abel's offering was in keeping with this and with God's promise of a Redeemer.

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We know this because the Bible tells us, *for where no law is, there is no transgression* (Romans 4:15). So for the first twenty-five hundred years of human history, the only sin anyone was charged with was the sin of Adam. This does not mean they were otherwise sinless. It means they were not charged with anything that had not been expressly prohibited by God and, at that time, eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was the only prohibition God had made.

Cain refused to acknowledge Adam's sin to be his sin. Instead he rationalized he could have a viable relationship with God on the basis of the works of his own hands. He produced what must have been a beautiful display of all of the things which he had grown. These he presented to God instead of a sacrificial lamb, which had been revealed in the promise of *the Seed of the woman* to be a type of the Kinsman Redeemer. He blatantly rejected the truth of the promised Redeemer for that which was right in his own eyes. Despite his denial of the truth, God was gracious and said: *Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him* (Genesis 4:6-7).

Make no mistake, *doing well* was not something Cain, or anyone else in Adam's race, could do. The whole human family has been born *dead in trespasses and in sin*. God was not suggesting to Cain that he could have a viable relationship with Him based upon doing well: He was using Cain's inability to do well as *a schoolmaster* to bring him unto Christ that he might be justified by faith (Galatians 3:24). Even so Cain refused to see any fault in himself, or to acknowledge his condemnation as a member of the human race. He believed he could stand before God on the basis of his own merit. This is *the way of Cain*, who is described as a false prophet

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in the book of Jude. *Cain's way* was the way of the Pharisees, so our Lord said to them: *They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance* (Luke 5:31-32).

The problem with Cain, and with all of those who follow *the way of Cain*, is that Cain failed to recognize that his human nature was in rebellion against God. Cain's nature, as well as the nature of the entire human family, is not fit for the presence of God. Cain ignored his fallen nature because he believed he could have a viable relationship with God on the basis of his personal goodness.

Cain's way is the way of the world. It is universal because it is intrinsic to human nature. It is subtle and persistent. On the surface *Cain's way* may not appear to be too harmful, but a close examination of Cain's offering, which was an expression of his way, reveals *Cain's way* was of extreme harm. It was born in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It had its roots in the lie of the Devil. Thus it was in opposition to the truth of the Word of God and was in no way an expression of faith in the promises of God. Cain was a false prophet who espoused *another gospel* which was based upon *a way which seemeth right unto a man*, as all false religions are.

The Scriptures tell us, *Cain was wroth and his countenance was fallen*. Apparently this condition continued despite God's gracious handling of Cain. Cain carried his anger with him, from the rejection of his offering forward, awaiting the opportunity to vent his displeasure with Abel. In Cain's mind, Abel was responsible for God's refusal of his offering; otherwise, according to his way of thinking, God would have accepted it. Shortly thereafter: *Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel*

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his brother, and slew him (Genesis 4:8).

The New Testament account of these events helps us to understand Cain's motive for killing Abel and the circumstances and manner by which Cain slew him. Jealousy, anger and self-righteousness were at the root of it. This is revealed by the apostle John in the third chapter of his first epistle, where, writing under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, he said: *Cain, who was of that wicked one ... slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous* (I John 3:12).

John used the Greek word *spahdzo* (in this text) to describe the murder of Abel. *Sphadzo* means to slaughter victims for sacrifice. In the usual meaning of the word, this is done by slitting the throat of the victim. Thus through the verbal inspiration of Scripture we learn Cain slit Abel's throat, as in a sacrifice. This gives us a mental picture of their meeting in the field: Cain, most likely, accused Abel of spoiling his offering; and Abel, most likely, explained the truth of the promise of the *seed of the woman* to Cain: to provide the reason for the acceptance of his offering and the rejection of Cain's. This explanation would have been the last thing Cain wanted to hear. In a self-righteous rage, he grabbed Abel and with one quick move slit his throat. It is very possible Cain may have thought, *If God wants a bloody sacrifice, here is one!* as he allowed his brother's body to slump to the ground.

Make no mistake, Cain was not the product of his environment. Cain was the product of his fallen nature, and his nature was intrinsically self-righteous; so much so, that he felt justified in murdering his brother because his religious ideas were rejected of God and his brother's were accepted. Even so Cain could have been accepted of God. God certainly gave him the

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opportunity to express his faith in the promise of the seed of the woman by offering a lamb as a type of Christ, but he would not. These events agree with the meaning of the word *sphadzo*; these events agree with the character of Cain as described in Scripture; and these events agree with Cain's characterization as a representative of the flesh, which is at enmity with the Spirit of God. Cain was a murderer in the same capacity that the Devil is a murderer. Our Lord told the religious leaders of the Jews, who, like Cain, rejected him:

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer [Greek: *anthropoktonos*, a slayer of men, contextually: a slayer of souls] from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh [the] lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. (John 8:44)

After the death of Abel, Cain was made a vagabond. He wandered east of Eden, where he took a wife and *builded a city* and named it for his son Enoch (Genesis 4:17). Cain was the spiritual leader of his posterity, but he could not lead them in the truth. He had rejected the truth for his own *way*. Consequently he slew the souls of those who followed him as certainly as he had physically slain his brother. In this respect, Cain was very much like the nation of Israel. They both turned their backs on the truth of the Word of God and provided a religious tradition for their posterities which revealed they were *ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, [so they would not submit] themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth* (Romans 10:3-4).

Cain and Israel both tried to establish their own righteousness before God. They both had a zeal for God but it was not based on a full knowledge of the Word of God. They both failed before God in the matter of *doing well*. In addition to failing before the law, Cain and Israel both failed in the object of their faith. They both placed their trust in their own self efforts, rather than

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in the promises of God. Therefore Cain and Israel both had a vain faith.

Their faith was vain because they interpreted their relationship with God on the basis of their knowledge of good and evil, rather than on the basis of the Word of God. Therefore God would not and could not accept them on the basis of their vain faith. Finally, in jealousy, Cain and Israel both slew their *brothers*. Cain slew Abel and Israel slew the Lord Jesus Christ; therefore, Cain and Israel both offered their brothers in sacrifice unto God in rebellion against the truth. They both did this not realizing that while they meant it for evil, God meant it for good: to set forth the truth in Abel and to provide redemption in Christ.

Despite Cain's and Israel's rebellion against the truth, God set a mark on both of them. God dealt with both Cain and Israel in grace. All either Cain or Israel had to do was to trust in the promises of God rather than in their own good works, and God would have accepted them. However they both chose to stand upon the basis of their own self-righteousness rather than on the basis of God's grace. Returning to the narrative, God said unto Cain:

Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? And he said, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; when thou tillest the ground it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

. And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me. And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him. And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod [wandering], on the east of Eden. (Genesis 4:9-16, emphasis mine)

A faith which is based upon the self-determination of good and evil sets a man wandering

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outside of the Paradise of God with no certain dwelling place in the things of God. This kind of faith has a faulty foundation. Man's knowledge of good and evil came about because of his disobedience to the Word of God. Therefore anything born of that knowledge sets a man at variance with God. In the Bible this relationship is called *the flesh*, or the *old man*. The *old man* always functions in *a way which seemeth right unto a man* (Proverbs 14:12), which came from *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*.

There is another relationship in the Bible which was portrayed in Abel. This relationship sets a man at rest with God. It is a spiritual relationship, which the Bible refers to as *the new man*, or *walking in the Spirit*. It is a relationship in which the believer functions on the basis of faith in the Word of God by the leading of the Spirit of God. Walking in the flesh is walking according to *a way which seemeth right unto a man*, and walking in the Spirit is walking according to the truth of the Word of God. These two ways are diametrically opposed to one another. One is of God, the other is of the Devil.

On the one hand, Cain could have enjoyed fellowship with God if he would have submitted to the grace of God and offered the lamb lying outside the door, but he would not. On the other hand, Abel was accepted of God because his offering was based upon the truth of the Word of God. This causes us to ask, what was the basic difference between Cain and Abel? They had the same parents and they had the same brothers, sisters, nephews, and nieces. The human family had grown to a considerable size in the nearly one hundred and thirty years that elapsed before Cain slew Abel. They lived in the same environment and undoubtedly they were taught the same things. The influences that were brought to bear upon one were brought to bear upon the other.

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Yet they were diametrically opposed to one another. This opposition came about because Abel believed God and Cain did not. This was the primary difference between them. This is also the difference between the flesh and the Spirit. Faith, or unbelief, in the promises of God is the difference between whether a man is accepted or rejected of God. And finally, faith, or unbelief, in the Word of God is the primary difference we shall view in the first and second-born sons portrayed in the Bible and reviewed in this book.

Chapter III

LESSONS FROM ADAM TO ABRAHAM

One of the things we have learned thus far is that Adam and Eve and their progeny produced a substantial population on this earth during the one hundred and thirty years between their creation and the birth of Seth. We have also learned that Cain slew Abel in rebellion against the truth, and he was set wandering east of Eden where he took a wife and reared a family. These events give us an insight into the development of Adam's progeny into families, classes and city-states, which would ultimately become the nations of this world.

Now, given the fact of the fall of Adam and Eve, all of their progeny have been born dead in trespasses and in sin. Nevertheless God's grace has been manifested, and some of them, like us, have been saved. This was accomplished then, as now, through the preaching of the Word of God by Adam, or others like him, who believed the promise of the *Seed of the woman*, which would be fulfilled by Jesus Christ and proclaimed as the gospel *in the fullness of the time*.

Consequently the world's populations of that day were not too different from our day --

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most were steeped in the lie of the Devil. They used their intellects and their imaginations and they produced various cultures and religious systems. Some of these cultures were more advanced than others, sometimes showing great ingenuity; but all were steeped in the lie of the Devil except for the small remnant who were elected to salvation and trusted in the truth of the saving grace of God through the preaching of the Word of God. It is not surprising then that after a little more than the first fifteen hundred years of human history: *God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually* (Genesis 6:5).

It was at that time, *when men began to multiply on the face of the earth*, that Satan influenced a number of angels, who had rebelled with him against God, to behold *the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown* (Genesis 6:2-4).

Since the term *sons of God* has been used to denote angels in the book of Job (1:6), and since the Devil's purpose has been to overthrow the purpose of God -- particularly His plan of redemption -- this cohabitation seems to have been an attempt by the Devil and his angels to thwart God's plan of redemption. Nevertheless there have been noted theologians, like Dr. C. I. Scofield and Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, who rejected the idea espoused by Clarence Larkin, that *the sons of God* in this text were fallen angels. (*Systematic Theology, Volume II*, Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, Dallas Seminary Press,

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Dallas, Texas, 1947, pg. 114-117; *Scofield Reference Bible*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1909, 1917, 1937, 1945, Dr. C.I. Scofield, pg. 13, Genesis 6:4, Note 1.) They believed these *sons of God* were redeemed men of the sons of Seth, who took wives of the unredeemed daughters of Cain.

This theory does not explain why the saved men of one lineage would only marry unsaved women of another lineage; nor does it explain why such a union would produce giants; nor why it would warrant the judgment of the flood. Even so Scofield and Chafer defended this theory and staunchly rejected the theory of Clarence Larkin (which had been held by many believers for the better part of the Christian era), because they believed angels to be sexless. They based their assumption on our Lord's argument with the Sadducees about the resurrection, in which our Lord said, *For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven* (Matthew 22:30).

This does not prove angels to be sexless. It proves they, as well as those resurrected (who were in life sexual beings), are not given in marriage in heaven. Now given the fact that angels are always spoken of in the Scriptures in the masculine gender, with masculine names, it is understandable why they are not given in marriage. They simply do not have mates. Further we know that angels are spirit beings (which would tend to support Scofield and Chafer's argument), but certain angels have manifested themselves in human bodies without detection that they were angels. Hence the admonition to *entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares* (Hebrews 13:2).

The sexual issue, raised by Scofield and Chafer, appears then to have been a non-issue and is directly refuted by Jude, who wrote of certain angels who left their first estate through

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fornication: *And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire* (Jude 1:6-7, emphasis mine).

This brings us to our position, that *the sons of God* who cohabited with *the daughters of men* were angels. We believe their cohabitation was an attempt by the Devil to overthrow God's plan of redemption. This, of course, was and is and always will be an impossibility, but this has never dissuaded the Devil in any of the things he has attempted to do.

There were two possible results to this cohabitation if God had not intervened. First, hybrids are produced by a mixed parentage. For example, it takes a horse and an ass to produce a mule, but mules are sterile. If this were true of the offsprings of angels and women it would not have been long before the human family would have ceased to exist because of its inability to reproduce. This would have destroyed the human family before the *Seed of the woman* could have come. Second, assuming the offsprings could have reproduced, this would have destroyed the federal headship of Adam -- preventing Christ from also acting as a Federal Head because angels were individually created, with no common head. Nevertheless federal headship was preserved because *Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord* (Genesis 6:8). He and his family were then preserved, as a redeemable race, in the ark during the judgment of the flood; and the rest of the human family (those corrupted by the cohabitation) perished in the flood; and the angels involved were *reserved in chains...unto judgment*, which eliminated a future repetition of this scheme.

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Thus God defeated this insidious plan by the intervention of the flood.

Of the two theories, the theory that *the sons of God* were angels answers questions left unanswered by the other theory. For example, applying the second theory, it is reasonable that a union of angels with women could produce giants; it is reasonable that the judgment of the flood was to preserve God's redemptive purpose; and it is reasonable that the demons originated with this cohabitation, being the spirits of the hybrids who perished in the waters of the flood. This, incidentally, is the only feasible explanation for the origin of the demons in the Scriptures, because it is inconsistent with God's nature to have created evil spirits. Thus the demons, like the human family, came from a creation of God that had been created perfect, but had fallen.

Even so let us suppose the theory embraced by Dr. Scofield and Dr. Chafer was correct. Then, according to the theory, the judgment of the flood came upon the earth because of the unholy union of the sons of Seth with the daughters of Cain. According to the theory God preserved Noah and his family to preserve the godly lineage of Seth, from which, ultimately, the Christ would come. This raises the question, what is a godly lineage? Since the Scriptures declare, *There is none righteous, no, not one* (Romans 3:10); since they declare, *For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23); since they declare, *The heart [of man] is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?* (Jeremiah 17:9); and since they declare, *For there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not* (Ecclesiastes 7:20), the whole concept of preserving a godly lineage is on the shifting sands of human reason and not on the solid rock of the Word of God.

The proposition of preserving a godly lineage simply will not stand in the face of these and

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other Scriptures. The proposition of preserving a godly lineage seems to forget the fact that the Scriptures promised the virgin birth of Christ (Isaiah 7:14). This was God's answer to the transmission of sin from one generation to another, from father to son. Thus the virgin birth of Christ provided that Jesus could be born into this world without a sin nature, a condition which was impossible by natural generation through the lineage of Seth or any other members of the human family. Thus the *godly lineage* theory collapses like a house of cards and produces more questions than answers.

As we progress in our journey through the Bible it may not always be evident, but each personality we meet will have some connection with the theme of the redemption of man. Some of the characters we meet will provide a very positive connection with this theme; others will be enemies of the truth of redemption; and still others will have a connection with redemption that may not be immediately evident. Thus the Biblical treatment of the theme of redemption will be like a great stage performance with some personalities playing leading roles, and others will provide the supporting cast and historical circumstances for the portrayal of this great drama. This should have been evident in each of the characters we have met thus far, and it is evident in Abraham the next major personality in the progressive revelation of the redemption of man.

Abraham was born two years after the death of Noah, which was 2,008 years after the creation of Adam. He is revealed in Scripture to be the father of the faithful (Romans 4:16). As such, the Scriptures portray him both as a believer and as a type of the believer. There was a point in his relationship with the Lord when Abraham was called *the friend of God* (James 2:23). Since our Lord told his disciple, *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you* (John

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15:14), the believer who walks according to the truth of the Word of God is also the friend of God. Thus it should be carefully noted, Abraham was the friend of God because he believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness. He did not own this title because of personal merit. His relationship with God, like all believers, was a relationship based upon the unmerited favor of God. Therefore the only righteousness he possessed, which was acceptable with God, was the imputed righteousness of Christ.

Thus for a proper understanding of Abraham and of ourselves, we must observe that he was the *friend of God* by grace through faith and: *Not by works of righteousness which [he had] done, but according to his mercy he saved [him], by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on [him] abundantly through Jesus Christ [his] Saviour; that being justified by his grace, [he] should be made [an heir] according to the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:5-7).* (Note: I have taken the liberty to change the plural pronouns in this text to singular pronouns, to apply this text directly to Abraham, even though, contextually, it applies to all believers.)

Chapter IV

LESSONS FROM ABRAHAM, THE FRIEND OF GOD

The first mention of Abraham in Scripture is in the genealogy of Shem recorded in the eleventh chapter of Genesis. He appears prominently in the next fourteen chapters of this book, except for one chapter which is devoted to Lot and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. This emphasis reveals Abraham has an important part in the revelation of God's plan of redemption. The story of creation also has a part in declaring this truth, but by contrast, in terms of allotted space in Scripture, a lesser part than that of Abraham.

Even with all of the information about Abraham in these chapters, virtually nothing is known of him prior to his departure from Haran at age seventy-five. At that time he is presented to us with this statement, *Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee* (Genesis 12:1). The first part of this verse provides us with conditions that had existed prior to the latter part of the verse. We know that God had told Abraham to separate himself from his father's house and

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kindred and follow His directions into a land that He would show him, but Abraham did not do precisely that. Instead: *Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there* (Genesis 11:31).

This was a definite breach of the explicit command of God, and it was accomplished by Terah when he took command of Abraham's life and changed his appointed destination from Canaan to Haran. Terah's exercise of control over Abraham is important to our understanding of the redeemed. He can be viewed as a character actor in this drama of redemption with the role of *the flesh*, which is called the *old man* in several of Paul's epistles. In this role he was instrumental in preventing Abraham from being obedient to God's specific command. He took the whole family on a side trip to Haran: when God had commanded Abraham, *Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee*.

There certainly were practical and emotional reasons for the family traveling together. This is one of the roles of the flesh, to put human reason before the explicit will of God. This incident reflects the constant warfare between the flesh and the Spirit in the lives of believers. All believers at times are subject to the flesh. Abraham was no exception, and his relationship with Terah reflects this until *the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran* (Genesis 11:32).

Terah's death speaks of the *mortification* of the flesh, which is the subject of Paul's remarks when he wrote about *the old man*. It takes the mortification of the flesh on a day by day,

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case by case basis in order for the believer to effectively function in the will of God. This is the reason the apostle Paul instructed believers to *Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would* (Galatians 5:16-17).

This walk in the Spirit is not as mysterious as some would have us to believe. It is expressed very simply in the statement, *The just shall live by faith. Since faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*, the basis for the walk in the Spirit is faith in the body of revealed truth surrounding Jesus Christ in His Person and work, as found in the Word of God. This makes spiritual sense because *All scripture is given by inspiration of God*. Thus the walk in the Spirit is the believer functioning in accordance with the truth of the Word of God, so that it shapes his thinking and his actions. This is seen in James's argument about faith and works in the second chapter of his epistle. The works produced by a viable faith are based upon the fact that what God has promised, He is able also to perform (Romans 4:21). Thus this is the basis of Abraham's offering of Isaac and Rahab's hiding of the spies.

Since Abraham is called the *father of the faithful* and the flesh was clearly seen in him, it must be concluded that no believer is entirely free from the influence of the flesh in his life. However recognizing the flesh is sometimes difficult. Overt sins are easily recognized as the flesh, but the more subtle aspects of the flesh are not as easily recognized because they can appear, to a mind lacking in spiritual growth, to be the right course of action. Men with good intentions sometimes endeavor to use fleshly expedients in the service of the Lord. They attempt to offer to God the best that the flesh can supply. They do not necessarily do this with evil intentions, but

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are like king Saul saying to Samuel, when he was commanded to utterly destroy the Amalekites and all that they possessed, *The people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice them unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.* This was a rather lame explanation in the light of God's command, so Samuel said, *Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams* (I Samuel 15:22).

After the death of *the old man*, Abraham left Haran and journeyed towards Canaan. This was in obedience to God's command. Sarai (who would later be named Sarah) and Lot went with him. They went to the land of Canaan, the place to which Abraham had been called. However they did not remain in Canaan because of a famine in the land. They kept journeying towards the south, towards Egypt. This appears to be another action governed by the flesh rather than by the expressed will of God.

It is not our purpose to malign Abraham by suggesting this was not the will of the Lord, but to consider the ramifications of his decision to go to Egypt, which in the typology of Scripture represents the world. This does not automatically make Abraham's decision a fleshly decision, but it appears that it was. Later events in the lives of Abraham and Sarah will bear this out. Even so most people, not to say many believers, would consider Abraham to have been wise in avoiding the famine in Canaan. They would consider his move to Egypt to have been the practical solution to a difficult situation. This illustrates the difficulty we sometimes have in identifying the flesh. When it is overt and salacious it is easily identified, but when it is subtle and practical it can be very deceptive, even to the point of suggesting to the uninstructed that it is the will of the Lord.

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Sarah must have been an incredibly beautiful woman, even at age sixty-five. Her beauty became a source of worry to Abraham even before they left Ur of the Chaldees, which led to a pact between them. They agreed, wherever they went, they would tell everyone she was Abraham's sister (which was true) and not his wife. This pact was born of Abraham's fear, and it may have seemed very necessary in the culture of that day. Yet the ramifications of such a pact could have pressed to the limit Sarah's ability to avoid adultery. Even so they were apparently willing to take such a risk, because *the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair. The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house* (Genesis 12:14-15).

Job said, *For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me* (Job 3:25); and, as with Job, the thing Abraham feared came upon him. He was not killed for the sake of Sarah, but her great beauty brought her to the attention of Pharaoh. So their fleshly scheme seemed to be working for Abraham's sake, but Sarah was in jeopardy because Pharaoh *entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants and maidservants, and she asses, and camels* (Genesis 12:16).

Pharaoh's treatment of Abraham was cunningly deceptive. It was probably a Satanic attempt to thwart God's purpose to provide, through them, *the Seed* through whom *all of the families of the earth would be blessed*. Consequently God intervened with a plague:

And Pharaoh ... said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? Why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? Why saidst thou, She is my sister? So I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way. And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had. (Genesis 12:18-20)

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With this Abraham departed Egypt appreciably wealthier *in cattle, in silver and in gold* than he had been when he came there. Some could foolishly think the things Abraham did in Egypt had the approval of God because of Abraham's increased wealth, but we must not misjudge the circumstances. This increase was the result of a fleshly plan, which, from the human point of view, put the purpose of God at risk. Abraham would not have wittingly put the promise of God in jeopardy, but his fleshly scheme did just that. Even so God's grace prevailed for them and for all that would be blessed through Abraham's Seed.

This revelation of Abraham's fallibility is not meant to single him out more than any other member of the human family. It is to establish the fact that we cannot, yea, we dare not look for merit in man's relationship with God. Too often the lives of the patriarchs have been used as role models in lessons and sermons. Their virtues have been extolled beyond reality; yet, at the same time, certain aspects of their lives have been carefully ignored, or explained away. The only role model any of them could have actually been was they *believed God and it was counted unto them for righteousness*. Now if we should look to them as role models beyond their faith in the promises of God, we shall find ourselves in a moral dilemma.

Abraham is declared to be the father of the faithful, and yet there is little about his sojourn in Egypt which speaks of faith. He went into Egypt in the strength of the flesh, and he continued to live in the flesh while he was there. Even so God's grace prevailed, and Abraham and Sarah were saved from the results of their fleshly scheme. The truth is there never was a compelling reason for them to leave Canaan and go into Egypt. God was more than able to provide for them, as He later did for Israel: providing food, clothing and water for probably more than two million

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Jews as they wandered for forty years in the desert of Sinai, and as He did for Elijah during the drought of three and one-half years.

Abraham, Sarah and Lot had spent about a year in Egypt before they were expelled. Now, traveling at the pace of their flocks and herds, Abraham had time to ponder God's promise, *that of his seed all of the families of the earth would be blessed*. This, most likely, would have increased his desire to be back in Bethel, the place where he had pitched his tent on his journey south; the place where he had remembered the Lord; and the place where he built an altar unto the Lord. While these things were spiritual and positive, Bethel was also the place where he formulated his scheme to survive the famine by traveling into Egypt. In the typology of Scripture, Bethel is indicative of the choices a believer has in his life whether to *Trust in the Lord with all of his heart*, or whether to *lean to his own understanding*. Since the return to Bethel from Egypt was in the right direction, it signifies a mortification of the flesh and a desire to walk according to the truth of the Word of God.

Even so there was nothing special about Canaan more than any other place in the world of that day. It was simply the place to which God had called him. It was no more of a permanent dwelling place for him than any other place on this earth. The Scriptures tell us Abraham *looked for a city whose builder and maker was God* and, according to the book of Hebrews, the city he looked for was the heavenly Jerusalem. It was not to be found on this earth. Canaan was simply the place where he was to sojourn: just as this world, with its various peoples and nations, is the place where we, as believers in Jesus Christ, are to sojourn. Each of us, like Abraham, has a specific place where God would have us be: where we each can give testimony to the truth of the

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Word of God and function in a local assembly of believers for the propagation of the gospel to a lost world.

With the return to Canaan, Abraham was where God called him to be. Even so Lot was still with him. Lot, like Abraham, was a believer; but in the typology of Scripture, he represents the flesh because he lived his life for himself. As long as Lot was with Abraham, this was analogous to a believer living his life in the flesh. God had told Abraham, *Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house*, but Abraham had not done that. God's desire that they be separated from one another was accomplished another way.

This sometimes happens in the lives of believers because of the influence of the flesh. It is possible for us to be self-willed and not do God's will, but God has a way of taking even the stupid things we do and using them to teach us, or even to accomplish His purpose indirectly because of them: so that it is possible to find ourselves where God would have us be, but not necessarily as a product of our faith. Thus the separation from his kindred, enjoined upon Abraham at the time of his call, came about because Pharaoh had *entreated Abram well for Sarah's sake*. When they returned to Canaan, the land was not able to support the combined herds of Abraham and Lot and resulted in a quarrel between their servants over pasture land:

And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. (Genesis 13:8-9)

It was then that Lot looked to the well-watered plains of Jordan, *before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah*, when it was like the *garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou*

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comest unto Zoar, and pitched his tent toward Sodom: no doubt motivated by the lure of prosperity. He must not have considered that *the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly* because he *pitched his tent toward Sodom*. There, according to the Greek text of Peter's second epistle, Lot gave in to the manner of life of the people of Sodom after a hard struggle; and then he was tormented from day to day by their unlawful deeds.

We will consider Lot in Sodom later, but for now let us consider the differences between the Old and New Testament's accounts of Abraham's life. The Old Testament reveals Abraham exactly as he was a fleshly man who was saved and called of God; but the New Testament reveals him in the light of the new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah. This is by right of the vicarious atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ which was applied to Abraham, as well as to all Old Testament believers, after the sacrifice of Christ. The book of Hebrews declares:

This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. (Hebrews 10:16-17)

Many regard this covenant to be effective only to those of the New Testament era, but this cannot be. Our Lord said, *I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*. This statement required that the new covenant had to be put into effect when Christ paid the ransom for sin. This is confirmed by comparing the new covenant in the tenth chapter of Hebrews with the lives of the saints recorded in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, and it is also confirmed by the fact that not one sin of an Old Testament saint is recorded in the New Testament. Further it is confirmed by Paul's account of Abraham in the fourth chapter Romans:

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

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of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.

And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. (Romans 4:13-22, emphasis mine)

This portion of Scripture provides a new covenant view of Abraham. Consequently his faults are not seen. All that can be seen is what he did by faith, because *whatsoever is not of faith is sin* (Romans 14:23); and, according to the new covenant, *there sins and iniquities will I remember no more* (Hebrews 10:17). Since God is not a respecter of persons, and since He is immutable; the new covenant view of Abraham is the view God has of all believers because their trust is in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ for justification before God. Therefore Paul wrote: *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory* (Colossians 3:1-4, emphasis mine).

The Lord's judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah has made those names synonymous with moral decadence. However the overt moral decadence of those cities was the result of their self-righteous rejection of the truth of the saving grace of God, which had been promised through *the seed of the woman*. Their rejection of the truth is not found in Genesis, but in the first chapter of

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Paul's epistle to the Romans, where Paul wrote of them without naming them:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into [the] lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. (Romans 1:18-32, emphasis mine)

The conditions described by Paul multiplied in the cities of the plain, yet the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah still would not submit to the grace of God, leaving themselves subject to God's judgment. Abraham asked the two angels, *Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked?* and God promised to preserve the cities for the sake of ten righteous souls; but there were not ten, only Lot, his wife and their daughters:

And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place: for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law. (Genesis 19:14, emphasis mine)

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It is lamentable that one's life-style can influence his testimony before the lost so that they give no credence to the message of God. However anyone who rejects the message of God because of fault in the messenger is a self-righteous fool. Would such a person apply the same standards to one warning him his house is on fire? I think not! As deplorable as the expressions of the flesh can be in the lives of believers, these expressions cannot cause anyone to be lost. The lost may attempt to use them for an excuse, but it will not avail, because:

He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:18)

Some preachers, with good intentions, have placed a great deal of emphasis upon the personal lives of believers. Despite their motives, this can be dangerous because it can subvert the work of the Spirit of God and promote self-righteousness as it did in Sodom and Gomorrah. The insidious ego of man corrupted the truth of the gospel at Sodom, again at Jerusalem, and it will have a part in promoting the apostasy of the last days. The Scriptures tell us, ... *because [the] iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.*

While technically the iniquity is lawlessness: the lawlessness had its roots in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The iniquity in this text is *a way which seemeth right unto a man*. It is man trying to be God by his self-determination of good and evil. Consequently it magnifies man and not God. Therefore the love of the truth of the grace of God waxes cold when it is emphasized. It has been an integral part of the self-improvement methods of man from the time of the fall until now, and even in the realm of the truth it has had distressing success. Thus Paul wrote of the Cretans: *They profess that they know God; but in works [insisting upon them for*

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salvation] they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate (Titus 1:16).

The Cretans' thoughts were affected by this abounding iniquity and so they supplanted the clear, unadulterated, truth of the Word of God with the *doctrines and commandments of men*. This is always the result of magnifying the works of man. Doctrine and truth are replaced with emotion and personal experiences: so with the Cretans and with many of the churches of our day, *What do you think?* and *What do you feel?* replaced and are replacing, *Thus saith the Lord*.

Returning to Lot, we find that the deliverance of Lot and his family from Sodom prefigures events in Jerusalem and Judaea prior to the return of our Lord. The false prophet will place an idol of the antichrist in the temple in Jerusalem and will demand, like Nebuchadnezzar of old, that it be worshiped. Many will be deceived when the false prophet causes the idol to speak. Even so certain Jews will flee Jerusalem. They will recognize this to be *the abomination of desolation*, *spoken of by Daniel the prophet* and referred to by our Lord, when He said:

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whosoever readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.... For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. (Matthew 24:15-18, 21)

The Jews who flee Jerusalem and Judaea will be preserved of God in the wilderness, where they will be hidden from the presence of the antichrist for three and one half years; but the remainder of the Jews, who fail to flee the city, *which is spiritually called Sodom*, and the region of Judaea will be ensnared by an attempt to save their lives. Many, therefore, will worship the antichrist and will receive his mark in their foreheads or their hands in order to be able to buy and

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sell, but our Lord warned: *Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it* (Luke 17:32-33).

Lot's wife was so consumed with all that they had left in Sodom and the status which they had held there, that she disregarded God's warning of not looking back when they fled the city. She could not resist one last, long, loving, look towards Sodom. Similarly, much of what Israel has desired and prayed for during the last two thousand years (i.e., peace, the temple, and one they perceive to be the Messiah) will be in Jerusalem when the abomination of desolation stands in the holy place. Israel must recognize that the antichrist could not possibly be the Messiah, despite his *signs and lying wonders*, because the true and living God has always forbidden idolatry and judged it severely. They must not be like Lot's wife. Even so, according to the thirteenth chapter of Zechariah, two-thirds of the nation of Israel will in fact be like Lot's wife and will perish during *the time of Jacob's trouble*, the great tribulation.

As we return to Abraham, we are reminded of an incident which occurred nine years after his return to Canaan from Egypt. Abraham was eighty-five years old and Sarah was seventy-five and they were still without children. Despite Sarah's beauty and youthful appearance, she was barren and had been all of their married life. They began to worry about the possibility of Sarah ever being able to have a child. Then God spoke to Abraham: *Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out*

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of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness (Genesis 15:1-6).

Not long after God had spoken to Abraham and reconfirmed His covenant with him, Sarah apparently began to think about God's promise and about her own barren womb. She must have reasoned that since she had been barren all of her normal child bearing years; and since she was seventy-five years old and no longer had a monthly cycle, it was hopeless to think that she could ever have a child. If God was going to give Abraham a son, it could not be through her. Thus she devised a scheme to fulfill God's promise man's way:

Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her.

And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai. And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband to be his wife. And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes. (Genesis 16:1-4, emphasis mine)

Hagar's spite must have been fostered by what she considered Sarah's permissiveness. Beyond the human reasons for her animosity, the Scriptural allegory in the fourth chapter of Galatians reveals that Hagar represents the earthly Jerusalem, the law and human effort for an inheritance in the things of God; whereas Sarah represents the heavenly Jerusalem and an inheritance in the things of God by God's grace through faith, apart from the deeds of the law.

Consequently Hagar felt herself morally superior to Sarah; and, in her disrespect, she was

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not about to hide her feelings from her. Thus she boasted her ability to produce and mocked Sarah's inability. With each subsequent expression of her derision she became bolder, to the point of trying to supplant Sarah altogether. It was then that Sarah had enough of her chiding and drove her off, but the angel of the Lord found her in the wilderness and called: *Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai. And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands* (Genesis 16:8-9).

It is significant that Hagar was to remain a servant, because Paul tells us that she represents the law; and he also tells us, *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith* (Galatians 3:24). These truths enable us to understand why Paul wrote:

[W]e know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind [homosexuals], for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. (I Timothy 1:8-11)

Thus, according to the command of the angel, Hagar returned to Abraham and Sarah and submitted unto them. She then gave birth to Ishmael. After that the narrative jumps ahead in time to when Abraham was ninety-nine years old and Sarah was eighty-nine, and God said:

I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect [honest and true]. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and

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kings shall come out of thee.

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. (Genesis 17:1-8)

Thus God reconfirmed His covenant with Abraham and changed his name from Abram, *a father*, to Abraham, *a father of many nations*. God also added the rite of circumcision as a sign of their covenant. Circumcision was to be performed initially upon Abraham and every male under his authority and subsequently to every male born into his household.

Then God said: *As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her* (Genesis 17:15-16). This statement overwhelmed Abraham. At that moment it seemed beyond belief. Sarah had been unable to produce children in all of their years together, and then, by virtue of her age, she had passed through menopause. So Abraham *fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?* (Genesis 17:17)

The believer must understand, as Abraham came to understand, that God *is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think* (Ephesians 3:20). God cannot be limited to human reason. Otherwise salvation would not be available by grace to God's *enemies*, the *ungodly* and *sinner*s (Romans 5:6-10). Even so for a time Abraham struggled with the concept of Sarah bearing a son. To his mind he had already produced the son through whom all the families of the earth would be blessed. So he cried, *O that Ishmael might live before thee!*

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This cry was not much different than the choice of Lot to go into Sodom, or Abraham's decision to call Sarah his sister instead of his wife. Abraham's cry in behalf of Ishmael was the flesh manifesting itself in a believer in one of its most arrogant and ugly ways. At that moment Abraham did not want the son of God's promise, he wanted to be able to boast in the son of his flesh. The cry for the preeminence of the flesh has resounded down the corridors of time and is still resounding.

Even so God understands us better than we understand ourselves. He patiently allowed the flesh to give way to the Spirit. Then *God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year* (Genesis 17:19-21).

Abraham's unbelief was short lived because the Scriptures tell us, *He believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness.* This was manifested by the fact that *Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him. And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son. And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the*

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stranger, were circumcised with him (Genesis 17:23-27).

Circumcision, like baptism, does not save, but both circumcision and baptism are outward manifestations of an inward faith. Abraham believed that what God had promised, God was able also to perform. Therefore Abraham believed that God had power over his impotence and over Sarah's barren womb and manifested his faith by circumcising all of the males in his household.

As we proceed with our consideration of first and second-born sons in the lineage of Abraham, we will find his daughter-in-law and his granddaughter-in-law, like Sarah, were both barren until the Lord interceded in their behalf. These three women, Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel represent the church in its reproductive role. The church cannot produce the children of God's promise unless the Holy Spirit quickens the Word we preach to those who were foreordained to salvation. Paul wrote the Corinthians, *I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase*. In the fifteenth chapter of the gospel of John, our Lord said, *Apart from me ye can do nothing*. Consequently any attempts at fruit bearing apart from Him and His methods count for nothing.

The church, of course, does not know who was foreordained to salvation, so it has been commissioned of the Lord to go into all of the world and preach the gospel to everyone. We know from Scripture, *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*. Therefore, like Abraham and Sarah, we are to rest in God's promise and realize He will bless us with children of His promise in His time. We are to recognize Abraham's and Sarah's folly and not attempt to produce the children of God's promise by fleshly schemes. All that can be produced by these schemes are sons of the flesh, like Ishmael a man whose *hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him* (Genesis 16:12).

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Just prior to the destruction of Sodom and the cities of the plain, the preincarnate Christ appeared with two angels, all in the form of men, to Abraham as he dwelt in the plains of Mamre. When Abraham greeted them, according to the custom of the East, Abraham invited them to dine with him. He killed a fatted calf and gave it to Sarah, and she prepared the calf and bread, and the angels and Abraham ate together under a tree. Then the Lord said: *Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent. And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life, and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him* (Genesis 18:9-10).

Sarah had not been included at the meal with the strangers, apparently because of the customs of the East, but this did not stop her from eavesdropping on their conversation. When she heard that she was supposed to have a child, she reasoned that she and Abraham *were old and well stricken in age; and it [had] ceased to be with [her] after the manner of women. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?* (Genesis 18:11-12)

Even though Sarah was a believer, her first reaction to the promise of the Lord was the many fleshly reasons why it was impossible for her to have a child, but Sarah had neglected to consider that it was the Lord who had promised this child. Therefore *the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son* (Genesis 18:13-14).

The Lord's statement to Abraham is a statement to us, and we must not forget it. We are

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to believe that what God has promised, He is able also to perform. We are to operate according to the truth of the Word of God. When we operate this way, there is nothing consistent with God's will that He will withhold from us. Sarah should have known this, but she had already laughed within herself, so she tried to cover it up by saying, *I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh* (Genesis 18:15).

Abraham and Sarah both came to manifest their faith in the promise of the Lord, but this did not make them free from future fleshly manifestations. Their experience with the flesh, like ours, was something that had to be dealt with daily. Within a very short time of God's re-confirmation of His covenant, Abraham and Sarah made a trip from Canaan to the border town of Gerar. Gerar was on the way to Egypt, but was it not in Egypt. Thus Abraham picked a place to dwell where it was easy to go from one place to the other. Unfortunately this is the common experience of many believers. John wrote, *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is* (I John 3:2, emphasis mine)

Abraham told the men of Gerar, as he had done in every place he and Sarah had gone from the time they left Ur of the Chaldees, *Sarah is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah* (Genesis 20:2). Even though Abraham had learned some spiritual lesson, this did not keep him from resorting to the flesh from time to time; and what was true of Abraham is also true of every believer. Despite our salvation, we will from time to time seek fleshly solutions to spiritual problems.

This will continue until our resurrection and glorification. Then, and only then, will the

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believer no longer be susceptible to the flesh. Thus God came to Abraham's rescue and spoke to Abimelech, the king of Gerar *in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife. But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation? Said he not unto me, She is my sister? and she, even she herself said, He is my brother: in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this. And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her. Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine* (Genesis 20:3-7).

In light of the above incident, it is inconceivable to me that anyone could ever conceive of our relationship with God being based upon merit and not upon the grace of God. But given our innate knowledge of good and evil as a result of the fall, we know that some men will conceive such things in spite of the evidence. Even Abraham offered self-conceived moral judgments as an excuse for jeopardizing Sarah's chastity, when he answered Abimelech's question (*What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing?*):

And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake. And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou shalt show unto me; at every place we shall come, say of me, He is my brother. (Genesis 20:10-13)

Despite Abraham's fleshly excuses, God's grace prevailed and they were delivered safely back to Canaan, where God fulfilled His promise to Abraham. It was God's promise and not

Abraham's flesh which produced Isaac at the appointed time. Isaac was truly a child of promise, the second-born, by the power of God.

And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him.

And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him. And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me. And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born him a son in his old age. (Genesis 21:1-7)

Thus Abraham had two sons: one born after the flesh and the other born after the Spirit.

Ishmael, the firstborn, was born by the craft and cunning of man. Isaac, the second-born, was by the power and promise of God.

Chapter V

LESSONS FROM THE TWO SONS OF ABRAHAM

We have observed that the order of the births of certain sons in the Bible, like Cain and Abel and Ishmael and Isaac, has set forth in allegorical terms that which is natural and that which is spiritual. According to this premise Cain and Ishmael represent the flesh, with its view to thinking according to *a way which seemeth right unto a man*; while Abel and Isaac represent the spiritual man, who is deemed such through the judicial reckoning of God because of his faith in the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As the lives of these sons unfolded there came to be a natural enmity in the firstborn towards the second-born. This enmity arose between Cain and Abel because God accepted the offering of Abel and rejected Cain's offering. Abel's offering reflected his faith in God's promise of salvation through the seed of the woman but Cain's offering did not. Cain's offering was bloodless. Thus it denied the promise of the seed of the woman and revealed his trust in the lie of the devil. Nevertheless God extended His grace to Cain (Genesis 4:7), but he refused it. He

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then showed his disdain for God's grace by slaying his brother (Genesis 4:8).

With Ishmael and Isaac, Ishmael did not receive the inheritance according to the natural scheme of things. Rather God promised it to Isaac. This is another expression of the typology that second-born sons in Scripture often represent those who are born again. The enmity expressed by Cain and Ishmael towards Abel and Isaac, respectively, reflects the enmity the world has towards the redeemed. This enmity is almost always exhibited when the redeemed express the truth of the gospel: that salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, apart from human effort. Thus our Lord said:

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. (John 15:18-19)

We have also observed that the birth of Ishmael was the result of Sarah's scheme, using Abraham and Hagar in a natural liaison, to try to produce the son of God's promise by fleshly efforts. We then observed the birth of Isaac by the power of God. This was an initial step in the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham: that of his Seed all of the families of the earth would be blessed. The birth of Isaac was accomplished when Abraham was impotent because of his age, and Sarah, after being barren all of her normal child-bearing years, had passed through menopause.

These events and circumstances provide us with a Scriptural principle: God uses men to proclaim the message of salvation, but those who give forth this message are powerless to produce a single birth into the family of God except as God gives the increase. He does this by the Spirit of God quickening the Word of God to the hearts of those whom He has chosen in Christ before

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the foundation of the world. In this regard, our Lord said, *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.* This principle is inexorable and was reinforced by our Lord when He said to His disciples, *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing* (John 15:5). The Lord also said, *It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life* (John 6:63).

In keeping with this principle, the church of Jesus Christ is not idle, but has been given certain works to perform. We are to be obedient to the command of our Lord to see that the gospel is preached in all of the world (because God has chosen to save the lost by the foolishness of preaching). We are to baptize in water those who were baptized by the Spirit at the moment of their salvation, and we are to teach them the Word of God. We are, by the enabling power of the Spirit of God, to function within the church, the body of Christ, in the spiritual gifts which God has given us. In this capacity we are to *Trust in the Lord with all of [our] hearts and lean not unto [our] own understanding*, knowing that the Lord will keep His Word, in His time and by His methods. Thus our lives are lived in expectancy and thanksgiving.

Under no circumstances are we to become impatient with God's increase and resort to fleshly means, like Abraham and Hagar, to try to produce what only God can produce. All that can be produced by the flesh is the flesh: and the flesh is at war with the Spirit, so that *we cannot do the things that we would.* This lesson must be learned from the relationships which we have been considering in the lives of the patriarchs we have viewed thus far. Through these, as well as our own personal relationships, it is clear that God is faithful. He cannot lie. Let us then be

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faithful to what He has committed to our trust.

From the outset the patriarchs, Israel and the church, have been at war against *the world, the flesh and the devil*. Our Lord and the apostles warned of *grievous wolves* who would enter in, *not sparing the flock*. They also warned of perverse individuals who would arise and draw away disciples after themselves. It is incumbent, then, upon those of us who know and preach the truth, to fight against the errors that would subvert the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Paul did this in all of his epistles and specifically in the book of Galatians, where he wrote:

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you. Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar. For this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free. Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. (Galatians 4:19-5:1)

Given the allegorical interpretation of the historical events in the life of Abraham, Abraham, like all of us at times, desired to exalt the flesh. He did this when God came to him to reconfirm His promise to him *that of his seed all of the families of the earth would be blessed*. This was to be through Isaac *at this set time in the next year*, but Abraham cried, *O that Ishmael might live before thee*. In other words, Abraham desired the works of his flesh to have precedent

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over the promise and power of God, but God said, *Behold, I have blessed [Ishmael], and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac*, which Sarah shalt bear unto thee at this set time in the next year (Genesis 17:20-21, emphasis mine).

God, indeed, blessed Ishmael simply because he was related to Abraham, but he was not the son of God's promise. He could not be. He had been produced by a fleshly scheme, a scheme that did not wait for God to give the increase. Consequently Ishmael and his posterity have been at war with the people of Isaac, through whom the Christ was to come, and have ever twisted and perverted the Word of God to give credence to Ishmael's claim.

In contrast, the birth of Isaac was a miraculous birth. Abraham and Sarah had come to a place in their lives where they were incapable of producing a child. They were simply too old. Even so God *called those things that are not as though they are* and Isaac was born. This compares to the virgin birth of our Lord Jesus Christ that in *the fulness of the time*, He would become a man; and through His Person and work in our behalf would have the spiritual right to change us completely unto Himself as objects of His grace.

The birth of Isaac not only relates to the birth of Christ, but also to the new birth of believers. Paul quoted Isaiah, *Rejoice thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband*. This, too, relates to an increase. The flesh always produces more children (spiritual *bastards and not sons*) than the Spirit produces children of God. Consequently there are many more people who think they have an inheritance in the things of God than there are those who actually have an

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inheritance. This has been the result of those who were not content with faithfully preaching the Word and allowing the Spirit of God to do His work. Consequently they have devised fleshly methods to obtain *confessions* and have called it *revival*.

The spiritual lesson is constant: it is God who gives the increase of the salvation of souls and the spiritual growth of believers. Despite this, churches and pastors are always looking for some scheme whereby they may obtain an increase, not realizing or caring that the children of the bondwoman are greater in number than the children of promise. Thus we should recognize that just because a work is large and enjoys great wealth and prominence, this is not necessarily evidence that it is of God. Paul made this clear in his letter to Timothy. He warned him of those who claimed, *Gain is godliness*. This was an error in the thinking of the Jews, which did not take long to manifest itself in the church. Paul instructed Timothy to separate himself from those who made such claims, because in order to get the wealth they desired, they willingly corrupted the truth of the gospel and preached messages which appealed to the masses. Obviously anyone who could do this was merely giving lip service to the truth. Thus our Lord said:

Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. Woe unto you, when all men speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets. (Luke 6:22-26, emphasis mine)

Given this information, whence cometh the persecution of believers? Most often it comes from those who are called *brothers*, just as the persecution of Isaac came from Ishmael. Persecution does not necessarily take the form of pogroms and inquisitions, though historically

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there was much of that throughout the church age (with *brother* persecuting *brother* and particularly during the middle ages). Even so it comes daily from those who call themselves *brothers*, who want to lay *the commandments and doctrines of men* upon believers and verbally abuse those who do not live up to their standards, as the Judaizers did with the Galatians.

The key is found in the meaning of Paul's statement to Timothy, *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution* (II Timothy 3:12). Some perceive that *godliness* is a manner of life subject to *the commandments and doctrines of men*: a life of *touch not; taste not; handle not* regimens; a life that requires strict adherence to ritual and the law of Moses; but in his letter to the Galatians Paul called that *another gospel, which is not another* and those who preached such a message, *accursed*. These claim to be our brothers, but they are not. Thus the true brother knows that *Salvation is of the Lord* by God's grace through faith.

Grace deals with our sin nature and should beget a life of thanksgiving, because *what God has promised, He is able also to perform*. This faith, which is *the faith* (the body of revealed truth), has enabled God to change us completely unto Himself. It is not something we have done for God, but what God has done for us. Thus the believer should live his life in the full realization that his life is *hid with Christ in God*. *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory* (Colossians 3:3-4).

Paul taught the Corinthians that *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned* (I Corinthians 2:14). Thus we preach a message that the world cannot understand. It is the Spirit of God, then, Who enables those whom He has elected to salvation to understand what

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we have preached. Therefore we know that we cannot argue anyone into the Kingdom of God. We can merely give forth the truth of the gospel and allow the Spirit of God to do His work.

When Ishmael mocked Isaac, Sarah said, *Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac* (Genesis 21:9). Abraham was grieved at the saying of Sarah. Nevertheless God said, ... *in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called*. Paul clarified the significance of those events in his allegory. He showed that all of the fleshly responsibilities the Judaizers were laying on the believers of Galatia were of the flesh and have no place in the life of one who has been saved by grace. However when the one who has been saved by grace refuses to submit to the regimen of the flesh, those of the flesh respond by persecuting him: not knowing that they are of the flesh and flesh has no inheritance in the things of God. Even so for those who are born of the promise of God, the reception of a spiritual inheritance is sure:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten [regenerated] us again unto a lively [living] hope by the resurrection from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (I Peter 1:3-5)

There is, then, a spiritual inheritance for those who have been born from above by faith in the promise of God. The believer's inheritance is held secure by the promise and power of God. However for those who are steeped in human effort and legalism there is no inheritance. They are the product of the flesh and the only *blessings* which they have are those pleasures which are their's during their lives on this earth.

Those who are steeped in law works could have a spiritual inheritance. Saul of Tarsus

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certainly changed from being a self-righteous Pharisee to a believer in the grace of God. However they would have to have a dramatic change of mind towards God. That kind of a change of mind is called repentance. Repentance is effected by the preaching of the Word of God and the convicting power of the Spirit of God. It is not self-deprecation and a promise to do better. That is simply another expression of a legalistic approach to God. Those who are of such a legalistic disposition must see the error of a self-improvement approach to God. They must, by the quickening power of the Spirit of God, embrace, by grace, the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ in their behalf. If they would embrace God's grace, they would become children of promise, but as long as they remain children of the bondwoman, they have no inheritance in the things of God.

Paul confirmed the position of the Galatians in their relationship before God by saying, *So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.* That is, they were not born into the family of God by circumcision and law keeping. Those who were born into the family of God were born by the power of the Word of God and the Spirit of God, by God's grace. Therefore Paul exhorted the Galatians, *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage* (Galatians 5:1).

The observance of legalistic codes to gain favor with and access to God is born in the natural mind. It is a product of man's self-determination of good and evil, *a way which seemeth right unto a man.* The self-determination of good and evil is of the flesh. Our Lord said, *That which is born of the flesh is flesh.* Sarah said, *Cast out the flesh,* for she said, *Cast out the bondwoman and her son.* The casting out of the bondwoman and her son represents the casting

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away of all human effort to gain an inheritance with God. It is standing on the promises of God, rather than leaning on the arm of the flesh. It is abiding unentangled in the yoke of the law. It is standing totally in and for the grace of God.

Ishmael and Hagar have served their purpose in helping us to understand the flesh and law works. Periodically, as we move in our chronological and progressive view of the Bible, we will see the posterity of Ishmael. When we meet Ishmael, or his posterity, we must be reminded that they always represent the flesh, wherever we find them in Scripture. We must be alert to recognize the great spiritual lessons, which God has portrayed in the firstborn and in the second-born, as we study the Scriptures.

Ishmael was cast out after the incident at the weaning feast. He went into Egypt to Paran, where ... *his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.* Abraham continued to live in the south country at Beersheba. The Scripture says of him, *And Abraham sojourned in the Philistines' land many days.* The many days were in fact many years. Perhaps as many as twenty-five or thirty years; so that the next time we see Abraham and Isaac, Isaac was an adult of thirty or more years of age.

Chapter VI

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF ISAAC

The typology of Scripture is both mysterious and marvelous. It is mysterious because, until we have the keys to unlock the types in Scripture, they are closed to us. It is marvelous because, once we have the keys, wonderful truths concerning God's plan of redemption are opened to us. This has already been observed in the firstborn and the second-born. It has also been seen in the birth of Isaac to parents who were past age, as representing the virgin birth of Christ.

Isaac was certainly not virgin born; but his birth, nevertheless, required a similar expression of God's miraculous power, for Sarah was past age, having passed through menopause, and Abraham was old and impotent. It was while they were in this condition that *God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed: and thou shalt call his name Isaac ...* (Genesis 17:19). *And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him* (Genesis 21:1-2).

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The mysterious aspect of the life of Isaac does not stop with his birth. It continues in Genesis chapter twenty-two where he and the ram portray Christ's vicarious sacrifice for sin. Then in chapter twenty-four the selection of his bride portrays the calling out of a redeemed people to be the bride of Christ. In keeping with these types, God told Abraham: *Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of* (Genesis 22:2). This command, considering the third chapter of the gospel of John, brings forth a clear representation of the Lord Jesus Christ:

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:14-16)

This link between Isaac and our Lord was clearly by God's design. Abraham was to offer Isaac as a burnt offering, which was a sin offering. In this offering the victim was laid upon the wood of the offering and slain, which speaks of crucifixion. Then its body was burned, which would cause it to rise in the gases of combustion. This speaks of the resurrection from the dead.

There was no question in Abraham's mind what God had asked him to do. Neither was there any hesitation in his response of faith to do it. There is a good chance Abraham understood the significance of his actions. In Romans 4:19 we learn, he was *not weak in [the] faith*. The untranslated definite article before *faith* indicates that it was not his personal faith, but the body of revealed truth that was the source of his strength. Thus he knew if he sacrificed Isaac, God would raise him from the dead because of His promise, *In Isaac shall thy seed be called*.

This historical incident, by God's design, was a prophetic portrayal of the crucifixion and

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resurrection of Christ. This was accomplished when, according to God's command, Abraham rose early and saddled his ass with the burden of the wood and all of the items necessary for the sacrifice. Then Abraham, Isaac and two of his servants traveled for three days towards what is present-day Jerusalem. There, *in the land of Moriah*, they arrived at the mount God had told him of, and Abraham said to his servants, *Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you* (Genesis 22:5).

Just as God would sacrifice His Son for sin on mount Calvary at a future day, Abraham intended to sacrifice Isaac on the same mount on that day. Even so he told his servants, *I and the lad will come again to you*. His faith was based, as we have just noted, upon the fact that God had promised him a son, which he had received in his old age. God had also promised that all of the families of the earth would be blessed in this son. Therefore he believed that if he sacrificed Isaac, then God would raise him from the dead. This is confirmed in the book of Hebrews: *[W]hen he was tried, [Abraham] offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure* (Hebrews 11:17-19).

When they arrived at the base of the mount, Abraham transferred the wood and the other items necessary for the sacrifice from the ass to his son. Then they ascended the mount together. The Scriptures declare that both asses and men need to be redeemed (Exodus 13:13). Thus, in the typology of Scripture, the ass represents man in his fallen state. Both asses and men can be stubborn and self-willed, and both asses and men are under a curse unless redeemed. The

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Scripture says, *Cursed is every one who hangeth on a tree* (Galatians 3:13). Therefore the wood that was removed from the ass and placed upon Isaac, to bear it to the mount, speaks of the curse of sin.

This makes the transferral of the burden from the ass to the son a picture of the doctrine of imputation. *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him* (II Corinthians 5:21). The One who knew no sin took our sins upon Himself and bore them to the cross of Calvary, where He made *one sacrifice for sins forever* (Hebrews 10:12). Thus, in his letter to the Galatians, the apostle Paul wrote:

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. (Galatians 3:10)

And:

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth 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)

When they arrived at the top of the mount, Abraham laid Isaac on the wood of the offering. This was in obedience to God's command to offer Isaac as a burnt offering. It was then that *the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of the place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this*

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day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen (Genesis 22:11-14). Clearly then, to this point in time, Isaac was a type of Christ; but when he was lifted from the wood and the ram was offered in his stead, then Isaac became a type of a sinner saved by grace. After that Isaac again became a type of Christ again as he descended the mount alive, portraying the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Everything that happened that day was significant. Prior to their arrival at the top of the mount, Isaac had questioned, *Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?* Abraham had answered, *My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering.* In their immediate circumstances God provided Abraham with a ram to offer in Isaac's stead. Then, with the absolute sureness of God's promise, in the fullness of time, the second Person of the Godhead, Jesus Christ, came to be *the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world,* when *God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons* (Galatians 4:4-5).

The prophetic aspect of the events of those days was confirmed by the name Abraham ascribed to the mount. He called it *Jehovah-jireh*, which means, *in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen*. Thus on that mount on that day, many of the details of what God would do through Jesus Christ were *seen* in the sacrifice of Isaac; and in the ram which was offered in his stead; and in their coming again from the mount.

Some time after the offering of Isaac Sarah died at age one hundred twenty-seven, when Isaac was thirty-seven. Assuming that Isaac was offered at age thirty-three, the same as our Lord, this gives us a span of four years between his sacrifice and the death of Sarah. If we allow each

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year to represent a decade, this takes us from the death of our Lord to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and the death of Israel as a nation. It would seem then, in this respect, Sarah was also a type of the nation of Israel. Sarah, like Israel, tried to fulfill God's promise to Abraham by the works of the flesh; and Sarah, like Israel, died a short time after the offering of Isaac on the mount.

After Sarah's death Abraham sought a wife for Isaac. This compares to the preaching of the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles throughout this church age. Abraham sent his faithful and trusted servant into a far country to Abraham's kindred to seek a bride for Isaac. The selection of a bride for Isaac compares to the calling out of the world a body of believers, which will one day be the bride of Christ. Thus Abraham (as a representative of God) sent his servant (who can be compared to the Holy Spirit) into a far country (which can be compared to the world) to seek a bride (who can be compared to the redeemed) for his son (who can be compared to the Lord Jesus Christ).

The bride was found by the word of the father and the ministry of the servant. This is comparable to the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God. Thus the servant told Rebekah of Abraham's proposal and, in accordance with the foreknowledge and elective purpose of God, Rebekah responded favorably to the word of the father through the ministry of the servant. Then Rebekah (as a type of a believer) agreed to leave her father's house (a type of the world) and return with the servant to the land of the father (a type of heaven) and to become the bride of Isaac (a type of the Lord Jesus Christ).

No one, after the post resurrection appearances of our Lord to His apostles, has ever seen

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our Lord face to face. Even so, like Rebekah, we have been called to leave our former lives for a new life with Christ. One day the trumpet shall sound and all of the redeemed shall see Him, Who redeemed them and espoused them to be His bride. Consequently:

Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a veil and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death. (Genesis 24:63-67)

If the death of Sarah represents the death of Israel as a nation, then the sorrow that followed can be compared to the seventieth week of Daniel, *the time of Jacob's trouble*. This week (the seven years of the great tribulation) will end with the second coming of Christ: when Israel will look on Him Whom they pierced and be saved. Then Christ will reign with His bride (the new Jerusalem: made up of redeemed Jews and Gentiles from all ages) in Christ's eternal Kingdom. There, like Isaac and Rebekah in his mother Sarah's tent, they will be comforted.

As far as I can discern, after his marriage to Rebekah, subsequent events in the life of Isaac no longer portray him as a type of Christ. Rather he is seen as a believer who may be subject to the Spirit of God and the Word of God, or as a believer who may be subject to the flesh. Thus, in the role of the spiritual man, when Isaac and Rebekah attempted to have children, they found that Rebekah was barren; and so Isaac did not resort to the flesh, as Abraham did with Hagar in similar circumstances, but *Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived* (Genesis 25:21).

Barrenness in the wives of these two patriarchs is significant. It emphasizes the fact, that

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though we can *plant* and we can *water*, it is God alone Who gives the increase. There is no question that it is the will of the Lord for the church to bring forth fruit in abundance, but always in accordance with the will of the Lord; the methods of the Lord; in the Lord's time and by His power: because it is not possible that one chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world should fail to come to faith in Christ at God's foreordained time.

Christians, individually or collectively as a church, may fail to avail themselves of opportunities to proclaim the truth, but as Mordecai advised Esther: *[I]f thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place...* (Esther 4:14a). Therefore the church is to be faithful to its assigned tasks of preaching the gospel in all of the world and teaching its members the truth of the Word of God, grounding them in the faith. If the church is faithful in this, the Lord will give His increase in His time. This He cannot fail to do. When it comes to an increase, we must not forget, ... *the desolate [Hagar] hath many more children than she which hath an husband [Sarah]*.

It goes without saying, fleshly schemes have no place in the service of our Lord. Even so the desire for the greater increase is constantly addressed by the churches and is in evidence in my weekly mail. Very often it includes a letter or an advertisement with a new scheme, or an invitation to a seminar to learn how to finance the church, triple church attendance, reach the unreached, etc., etc. These sound like high and holy goals, but the problem is with the methods suggested for their accomplishment. They are akin to Sarah's scheme, they appeal to the flesh and are accomplished by the flesh. The instigators of these schemes cry out with Abraham, *O that Ishmael [the flesh] might live before Thee*. They do this unabashedly, apparently thinking they

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are fulfilling the promises of God by their wanton desire for more.

Continuing with the narrative, we find that Rebekah conceived because of the entreaty of Isaac and God's intervention in her behalf. In a similar manner the church conceives by the faithful preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God. Yet those who are redeemed retain their Adamic nature. Because of this, it will be readily observed that the redeemed have this treasure of eternal life in *earthen vessels*. Therefore we must not be deceived into thinking that by our own determination and will we can live unaffected and undaunted by our Adamic nature, which has a propensity for sin and fleshly manipulations. Only by the Word of God and the Spirit of God can these propensities be held in check.

This is emphasized by Rebekah's pregnancy, during which there was movement of an unusual nature within her womb, because *the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD. And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger. And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. And the first came out red, all over like an hairy garment; and they called his name Esau. And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them* (Genesis 25:22-26).

Rebekah, like Isaac, portrays a believer in Jesus Christ. She also portrays the church. In the typology of Scripture, the *two manner of people* within her womb reveals the *old man* and the *new man* that are at work within the believer individually, or in the church collectively. The

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believer in Jesus Christ has the potential to walk in the Spirit, by means of the Word of God operating upon and through his regenerated spirit, or he has the capacity to depend upon himself, endeavoring to fulfill the work of God in the energy of the flesh. This last mode of operation produces more visible results than the former, as equivalent values of *wood, hay and stubble* are much greater in size than *gold, silver and precious stones*: all of which are representative of the works of believers, which will be tried by fire at the judgment seat of Christ (see I Corinthians 3:9-23). In this regard, the apostle Paul wrote:

If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former [manner of life] the old man, which is corrupt according to [the lusts of the deceit]; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created [according to the truth of righteousness and holiness]. (Ephesians 4:21-25)

As time progressed there came to be a famine in the land, which was comparable to the famine that was in the days of Abraham. Like his father, Isaac determined to go into Egypt to escape the effects of the famine. He took his family and started his journey south. As they approached Gerar, near the Egyptian border, the Lord appeared unto Isaac and said: *Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father; and I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws* (Genesis 26:2-5).

Isaac responded to this appearance of the Lord by obeying the Lord's command and so he

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and his family settled in Gerar. He was blessed to hear that the covenant God had confirmed with Abraham was now confirmed to him. All should have been well: he was dwelling where God told him to dwell; he was redeemed; he was in a covenant relationship with God; he had a redeemed wife and two sons; he had the promise that his seed would one day possess all of the land from the Nile river to the Euphrates river; his posterity was to be multiplied like the stars of heaven; and through his lineage the Christ was to come to provide a blessing for all of the families of the earth.

Nevertheless Isaac would learn that the flesh is ever with us. Just when we think we might have it under control, it can raise its ugly head and trip us up. While *Isaac dwelt in Gerar: ... the men of the place asked him of his wife; and he said, She is my sister: for he feared to say, She is my wife; lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she was fair to look upon* (Genesis 26:6-7).

It is so easy to fall prey to the flesh, which is ever with us. This emphasizes why our relationship with the Lord is not based upon works of righteousness which we have done: not before our salvation, nor after it. It emphasizes, *There is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not*. It emphasizes that salvation is of the Lord; and it emphasizes the infinite wisdom of God in establishing our relationship with Him on the basis of a judicial standing, secured by our Lord Jesus Christ, so that each believer is reckoned *dead, and [his] life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is [his] life, shall appear, then shall [he] also appear with him in glory* (Colossians 3:3-4).

This judicial relationship is possible because the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world

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by means of the virgin birth, so that He could be both God and Man. In His humanity, as a member of the nation of Israel and the tribe of Judah, He was heir to the throne of David. He was responsible to the law because of the covenant relationship between God and the nation of Israel. He was related to the entire human family, so that He could be its Federal Head. Consequently He did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it: so that *one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled*. Not only did He fulfill the law, He fulfilled all righteousness. Then, with no sin of His own, He willingly took our sins upon Himself, dying *the Just for the unjust*. This, then, satisfied the Holiness, Righteousness and Justice of God, as well as His Love, Mercy and Grace: enabling God to be Just and the Justifier of him who does no more than to believe in Jesus: so that, ... *as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all [in Christ] be made alive*.

Like Isaac, we can *trust in the Lord with all of our heart*, or we can *lean to our own understanding*. When we trust in the Lord, we can be assured that He will direct our steps. When we trust in the flesh, we can be assured that the product, whether we call it good, or whether we call it evil, is unacceptable to God. The believer, then, is to live his life by the faith. The faith life that we are to live is based upon the body of revealed truth concerning Jesus Christ in His Person and in His Work.

When the believer lives by the faith, he pleases God. When he does not, it is impossible, no matter what he does and no matter the motive, to please God. The apostle Paul wrote, *Whatsoever is not of faith is sin*. But, praise God, even though there are lapses in the lives of believers, the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin. Consequently there is

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never a time when we, as believers, are void of the grace of God and the cleansing power of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. *Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!*

Chapter VII

LESSONS FROM THE LIVES OF JACOB AND ESAU

In the introduction to this book we recognized the truth that the Bible is God's revelation to man of His unfolding drama of redemption. It is permissible then, as we have seen, to liken each character we meet in Scripture to actors in a play. Some have leading roles in this drama, and others provide the supporting cast; but all, in some measure, support the theme of the redemption of man either positively or negatively.

We have seen Isaac presented, in four chapters in Genesis, in a fourfold manner as a type of Christ: in his birth; in his sacrifice on mount Moriah; in his coming alive again from the mount; and in the selection of his bride. In sharp contrast, after his marriage to Rebekah, only three verses of Scripture are used to describe the nearly twenty years from his marriage to the time of Rebekah's pregnancy. In this period of time Isaac is no longer seen as a type of Christ, but simply as a believer who has been saved by God's grace and who abides in this world.

And these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham begat Isaac: and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian

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of Padan-aram, the sister to Laban the Syrian. And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. (Genesis 25:19-21)

We then find Rebekah pregnant in answer to Isaac's prayer, but everything is not normal in her pregnancy: *the children struggled together within her*. She was perplexed about this and inquired of the Lord: *And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger* (Genesis 25:23).

This disclosure fits perfectly into God's unfolding drama of redemption. The two *manner of people* within her womb would continue to portray the struggle between the world and the believer in God's revelation of the redemption of man. Thus we are born into this world as children of Adam, who are *of the earth, earthy*. Then, through the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God, those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ become children of God and are justified freely by God's grace; but this manifestation of God's grace upon sinners does not set well with the self-righteous of this world. They believe they should have an inheritance with God by right of their births and by right of their conduct.

Rebekah undoubtedly shared the answer to her inquiry of the Lord with Isaac. Together they must have pondered just what these words, *two manner of people* and *the elder shall serve the younger*, could mean. *And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. And the first came out red, all over like an hairy garment; and they called his name Esau. And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them* (Genesis 25:24-26).

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Thus the struggle that had caused Rebekah's inquiry of the Lord was openly manifested at their births, when Jacob's *hand took hold on Esau's heel*.

This struggle, which began in the womb, has continued long after the deaths of Esau and Jacob. To anyone who has *ears to hear and eyes to see*, the struggle between Esau and Jacob is evident in the affairs of the Middle East. It plays out daily on television, in our newspapers and other media sources: which report constant wars and acts of terrorism. These are a constant reminder to those with spiritual perception that *the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would* (Galatians 5:17).

When man tries to evaluate the Middle East situation, he has a tendency to say, the Jews are the source of the problem. He sees them as interlopers, who, by a 1947 United Nations mandate, took the land from the Arabs. It is imperative for man, with his natural mind, to think this way. Otherwise he would have to recognize the existence of the God of the Bible; the covenant relationship between God and Abraham; the same covenant confirmed to Isaac; and again confirmed to Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. If he allows that the Jews have a legitimate claim to the land of Israel (which name was changed to Palestine by the Romans, after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.), then he must allow for the authority of the Scriptures. This is something mankind, as a whole, is not willing to do.

After the births of Esau and Jacob the next event recorded in the Bible is the sale of Esau's birthright, which occurred when Jacob and Esau were adults, not boys as is supposed by many Sunday School publishing houses:

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And the boys grew [to make large, i.e.: to grow to adulthood]: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob. And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint: and Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright. (Genesis 25:27-34)

This description of Esau and Jacob and the details of the sale of the birthright tells us a great deal about the spiritual character of each of them. The Scriptures tell us Esau was a *cunning hunter*, which means he was skillful in catching his prey by stealth and he was *a man of the field*. This suggests he was a man of the world. Thus Esau is a representative of the flesh. Conversely the Scriptures describe *Jacob as a plain man, dwelling in tents*. The term *plain man* connotes the wrong image to most of us. The literal meaning of the Hebrew conveys the idea that a *plain man* was one who was pious. This means Jacob had some interests in spiritual things, which is not necessarily evident in the Scripture's account of his life. Even so Jacob is representative of the spiritual man and this agrees with his position of being second-born. If we contrast the descriptions of Esau and Jacob with that of Adam and the Lord Jesus Christ, we find an interesting comparison:

And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. (I Corinthians 15:45-49)

Esau was called Edom because of the incident in which he sold his birthright, and Adam

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was called Adam because God formed him of the red earth. Thus the first man and Esau, the firstborn, are both called *Red* because the Bible speaks of them as being of the *earth, earthy*. Jacob's position of being the second-born, as previously stated, speaks of that which has been born again. Therefore the apostle Paul wrote: *Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual* (I Corinthians 15:46).

Esau and Jacob clearly fit the Biblical description of that which is first and that which is second. As we learn more of Jacob, we may have a tendency to want to reject him as a type of the spiritual man because Jacob leaned so heavily upon the flesh, but we must not succumb to this tendency. To *rightly divide the Word of Truth*, we must take what God says as opposed to what we think, because *man looks on the outward, but God looks on the heart*. The view of Jacob as a spiritual man is by God's grace, through the imputed righteousness of Christ.

As we continue with our view of Jacob, we find he was *a plain man dwelling in tents*. The Bible places a good deal of importance upon Abraham, Isaac and Jacob dwelling in tents:

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. (Hebrews 11:8-10, emphasis mine)

Tent-dwelling is seen to be a declaration of faith on the part of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It is a declaration of their faith in the promise of eternal life. They believed they would live in the presence of God forever. Thus the tent is representative of the fact that they saw this earth as a temporary dwelling place and, indeed, it is.

In the life of Jacob, as in the lives of Abraham and Isaac, we shall see, once again, that the

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spiritual man does not always behave spiritually. Jacob was plagued by a fleshly nature, but he also had a spiritual nature. Consequently there was a constant battle between the flesh and the Spirit in his life, just as there is in the life of every believer in Jesus Christ.

When Jacob *stole* the birthright from Esau, it is reasonable to assume, Jacob had some knowledge of his mother's inquiry of the Lord and of the promise, *the elder shall serve the younger*. God promised Jacob's grandfather, Abraham, and his father, Isaac, that all of the families of the earth would be blessed through their Seed. From Rebekah's inquiry it was evident that God's promise would be kept through Jacob, but Jacob did not rest in God's promise. Rather he found a fleshly means of extorting the birthright from Esau.

It is this terrible dependence upon the flesh, which is revealed in all of the characters we have viewed, that plagues all believers. The identification of the flesh in them is for our benefit. Not so we can feel superior, but that we might learn from them. The many examples of their dependence upon the flesh shows us how easy it is to succumb to the flesh, rather than to depend upon the Spirit of God through the promises in the Word of God.

One of the marvelous things about the revelation of the flesh within believers like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is that it shows us we are not lost or rejected of God because it is there. It is simply a part of our human nature, which remains active in the believer until he is resurrected and glorified. Since the benefits of believing God and living by faith are so much better than those problems that arise because of unbelief, it seems silly that we should be so dependent upon the flesh. Yet this dependence is overwhelming evidence of the strength and subtleness of the flesh and of the fact that we are still subject to it.

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Many times the believer operates in the energy of the flesh, while thinking he is operating spiritually. He does this because he has been taught to do so from the pulpit. The ministry from the pulpit has not taught the believer to operate in the overt or knowledge of the evil side of the flesh, but in the knowledge of the good side. The ministry from the pulpit has taught the believer to seek to gain favor with God by self-effort. Thus the believer has often been taught that his moral life is the basis for blessings from God. The truth is, every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies is the believer's because of the grace of God.

There is nothing wrong with a pure lifestyle, if it is born out of the love of Christ, but if it is born out of the observance of fleshly codes of *touch not, taste not, and handle not*, it is of the flesh and shows itself as self-righteousness. Self-righteousness is one of the most insidious manifestations of the flesh within the believer, because it thrives on finding fault with others and it is unable to perceive its own faults. Sadly, self-righteousness is often perceived by the uninstructed as being a manifestation of holiness, but it is not. Thus our Lord asked, *Or how wilt thou say to thy brother? Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye* (Matthew 7:4).

The Jews, like all of us, had to understand their human nature in order to come into a right relationship with the Lord. Even so they were ignorant of God's righteousness; and they sought various methods to establish their own righteousness, apparently not realizing self-righteousness is a stench in God's nostrils. This prompted Isaiah to write: *But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy [menstrual] rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away* (Isaiah 64:6).

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The narrative tell us when Esau came from the field he was hungry. This is quite understandable to all of us, for our appetite for food is, over time, very necessary to sustain our lives. There was nothing intrinsically wrong with Esau's expression of hunger. It was the degree of importance he placed upon satisfying his hunger that is key to understanding him. At that moment, he placed the satisfaction of his appetite above everything else. Our Lord said, *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God* (Matthew 4:4).

As we continue with the account of Esau and Jacob in Scripture, we will find Esau had many characteristics which were naturally attractive, but none of them were pleasing to God. Esau was a man's man, a hunter, who provided venison for his father and thereby comforted him. Yet in the area in which he could have pleased God, Esau was bankrupt. He lived his life void of faith, apparently not realizing, *without faith it is impossible to please [God]*.

With our natural minds we perceive no evil in Esau's actions, but Esau's actions were born entirely of his fleshly appetite, which was void of any spiritual perception. On the other hand Jacob seized the opportunity to gain the birthright for himself, but he did it by fleshly means. He may have known the birthright was to be his according to God's promise; but instead of waiting on the Lord to deliver it in due time, Jacob exerted fleshly pressure on Esau, when he said, *Sell me this day thy birthright*.

Esau submitted to this pressure for a few beans and bread. This is evidence that he despised his birthright. The birthright represented fellowship with God, because God created Adam in His image for fellowship. So, by right of creation, man had a birthright to fellowship

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with God, but that right was lost through Adam's sin. Despite the loss of the birthright by Adam, it is restored by faith in the Person and work of Jesus Christ, giving those who are born-again the right to fellowship with God through Jesus Christ.

It was after the sale of the birthright that Isaac took his family towards Egypt to escape the famine in the land. He heeded the warning of God not to go into Egypt and so they dwelt in Gerar. By this time Esau and Jacob were old enough not to be recognized as the children of Rebekah, because she was presented to Abimelech, the king of Gerar, as the sister of Isaac. Even so it did not take long for Abimelech to recognize Rebekah to be Isaac's wife and demand that they leave Gerar. It was then that they moved to Beersheba: *And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite: which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah* (Genesis 26:34-35).

The Hittites were an idolatrous people. This was undoubtedly the reason Esau's interest in Judith and Bashemath were *a grief of mind* to his parents. His interest in these women provide us with a greater profile of the character of Esau: he was not concerned with his birthright, which typified fellowship with God, nor with the false beliefs of his wives. He was *of the earth, earthy* and put no stock in anything of a genuine spiritual nature. This evoked God to say, *Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated* (Romans 9:13).

Isaac was one hundred years old when Esau married Judith and Bashemath. Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Esau and Esau's wives lived together in Beersheeba for thirty-seven years after Esau's marriages to the Hittites. Then, when Isaac was one hundred and thirty-seven years old, he called Esau to his side: *And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my*

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death: now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; and make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die (Genesis 27:2-4).

Previously we suggested Rebekah must have told Isaac what the Lord had revealed to her, when she inquired of the Lord. It would be strange if she had not. Despite the probability of this, it appears this made little difference to Isaac. He loved Esau and he intended to bless him, instead of Jacob. The source of his intentions was certainly not the prophecy of God but his love for Esau and the venison he provided. It was this insignificant fleshly pleasure which motivated him to rebel against the prophecy of God in the interests of Esau.

Isaac told Esau to hunt for venison and prepare it the way he liked it. Then he promised to bless Esau before his death. These instructions and promised blessing are akin to Abraham's cry, *O that Ishmael might live before thee!* This is the cry of the flesh, which desires its will above God's will. Isaac repeated Abraham's sin, rather than learning from it. Even so Rebekah overheard Isaac's conversation with Esau. She ran and told Jacob of his father's plan, rather than resting in the fact that God had promised, *the elder shall serve the younger*. She should have realized that God always keeps His promises. He cannot lie.

The thought of the promise did not cross Rebekah's mind: she had a plan of her own. She told Jacob to fetch two kids of the goats and dress them and bring them to her. Rebekah cooked the kids in a manner which simulated the venison which Isaac so dearly loved. Rebekah told Jacob to put on Esau's clothing because, at Isaac's advanced age, he was nearly blind. Even so Jacob was afraid of being caught, but Rebekah met Jacob's fears with cunning detail. She told Jacob to

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put skins upon the nape of his neck and upon his hands and arms to simulate the hairiness of his brother.

Finally everything was ready. The meal was prepared. It was time for Jacob's presentation:

And he came unto his father: and he said, My father: and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son? And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy first born; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me. And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the LORD thy God brought it to me. And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not. And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him.

And he said, Art thou my very son Esau? And he said, I am. And he said, Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, and my soul may bless thee. And he brought it near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine, and he drank. And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son. And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the LORD hath blessed: therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be everyone that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee. And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. (Genesis 27:18-30, emphasis mine)

Any thoughts Jacob had of effecting his mother's scheme without having to blatantly lie were soon dispelled. First, he answered his father, *I am Esau thy firstborn*. Second, in response to how he had found it so quickly, Jacob had to involve God in his duplicity and said, *Because the Lord thy God brought it to me*.

Many people gravely misunderstand what it means to use the name of the Lord in vain. Church members are appalled at the use of the Lord's name as a swear word, and rightly so. But

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these same people think nothing of attaching the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to acts as notorious as that of Jacob's, or worse. In this category there are vast numbers of professing Christians who claim they can do all of the miracles our Lord did. Even so the hospitals and cemeteries remain full, and I have yet to see one of them walking on water. It seems as though the most preposterous lies are told for *the glory of God*, and no one in these groups seems to be the least bit upset with all of the lies.

There is no such thing as a little compromise respecting the truth of the Word of God. Have you ever thought about the fact that it is an impossibility to tell one lie? I don't think it can be done. One lie leads to another lie in order to give the first lie some kind of credibility. The worst kind of lies are those which affect man's relationship with God. These are the lies of the false prophets, who speak with feigned words.

Of course all people have lied, or will lie in one capacity or another at sometime in their lives. Jacob lied by claiming to be Esau. Then, to be convincing, Jacob wore Esau's clothes and put skins on his hands and the nape of his neck. He presented his father with a kid of the goats, instead of venison. Then he said he had found the venison quickly because the Lord God had brought it to him. When Jacob was confronted with whether he really was Esau (because Isaac recognized his voice), Jacob reaffirmed his first lie and said, *I am*, to the query, *Art thou my very son, Esau?*

In the deception of Isaac a great spiritual truth is revealed. Isaac recognized Jacob's voice, but what he heard did not convince him he was Jacob. Rather he sought to confirm what he heard by what he felt and smelled. If Isaac had trusted what he heard, rather than what he felt, he would

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not have been deceived. In the Bible we are told, *Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God*. Consequently in our relationship with the Lord, the Word of God is the final authority and must not fall to our natural feelings.

Further the deception of Isaac was aided by his rebellion against the Word of God. God had told Rebekah, *The elder shall serve the younger*. Yet Isaac pronounced the blessing upon the elder, over the younger, not knowing that he was actually blessing the younger, but his intent was to bless Esau. By Isaac's intent, the *blessing of Esau* placed him in direct violation to the revealed will of God. At that point in time, Isaac's love for Esau took precedence over his relationship with God. Perhaps this is the reason our Lord said, *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple* (Luke 14:26).

In light of the commandment to honor your father and mother, obviously, our Lord was not advocating a genuine hatred of father, mother, sisters, and brothers. Rather the Lord was drawing a comparison between heavenly and earthly relationships. It is a matter of loyalty. Our relationship to the Lord and to His Word must take precedence over all earthly, or fleshly relationships. By comparison our love for God ought to make all other relationships appear to be hatred.

Isaac failed the test of the disciple on that occasion, on that day. Yet this is the same Isaac who went to the mount with his father Abraham and willingly allowed himself to be bound to the wood upon the altar. Isaac's desire to bless Esau in opposition to the Word of God portrays the believer who is dependent upon the flesh. Yet Isaac's submission to Abraham, as a willing

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sacrifice, portrayed the Lord Jesus Christ. How perplexing the life of a believer can be. At one moment the believer can show marvelous faith in God, and the next moment he can be disgraced in the degradation of the flesh.

When Esau came in from the field, he prepared the venison he had taken in the hunt and went unto his father and said to him, *Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me.* Isaac asked who it was that stood before him and he answered, *I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau.* Then *Isaac trembled very exceedingly and said, Who?* because the realization of what he had attempted to do must have overflowed him with waves of guilt and shame. He had sought to bless Esau, because he was his favorite son, but had inadvertently blessed Jacob, which was the will of the Lord according to the prophecy spoken to Rebekah. After those initial moments of guilt and shame, Isaac quickly responded to the will of the Lord and said to Esau, *I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him, and he shall be blessed.* Then Esau lamented with a bitter cry when he realized that his blessing was lost.

There are many Esaus in this world who shall lament one day for their rejection of the truth of the Word of God. They have lived their lives for themselves and have given little, if any thought to the truth of the Word of God. They have the attitude that if there is a heaven to gain, it shall be their's because they are good people; and if there is an inheritance, it shall be their's because of their natural births. The Esaus of this world are more concerned for their appetites, which are displayed in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, than they are for their souls. Thus the birthright and the blessing remain lost to the Esaus of this world because they will not receive them by faith.

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This perplexes those who view mankind according to *a way which seemeth right unto a man*. Esau appears to have been more righteous than Jacob. He looked after his father in his old age, endeavoring to please him with the venison he so dearly loved, but we must not be deceived: *... for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart*. Esau must be viewed through the eyes of God, and this view is not at all like man's view:

Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it [the blessing] carefully with tears. (Hebrews 12:15-17)

Contrary to common belief Biblical repentance is not sorrow, though Godly sorrow can produce repentance. Biblical repentance is a change of mind, usually towards God. Esau was sorry he lost his inheritance and this produced many tears, but he never changed his mind. His tears reflected self-pity, not repentance; so he remained adamant in his belief that the blessing should have been his because of his birth and because of his life. Esau was not willing to recognize the total insufficiency of his birth, nor of his efforts to gain the blessing by providing venison for his father: to sway him from the pre-known will of God. Thus he can be compared to those Jews who said to John the Baptist and to the Lord, *We be Abraham's seed*. Indeed they were Abraham's seed after the flesh, but not after the Spirit.

Throughout the history of Israel, there have been those Jews who expected all of the spiritual blessings promised to Abraham to be their's simply because they were of the natural lineage of Abraham. They failed to recognize God made promises to Abraham which were to be fulfilled in his natural lineage and others in his spiritual lineage.

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The words of Esau's threat to kill Jacob were told to Rebekah (Genesis 27:42). Once again, she devised a plan. She spoke to Isaac and proposed the idea of sending Jacob to the city of Haran to obtain a wife of her kindred. Her plan would serve two purposes: it would protect Jacob, and it would provide him with a suitable wife of their kin, not like the wives of Esau, who had been a grief of mind to both Rebekah and Isaac. Isaac agreed with the plan, apparently, not knowing of the death threat to Jacob; and as Abraham had done so many years before, he desired to obtain a wife for his son of their kin in Haran. Rebekah's second plan reveals she had completely lost sight of the fact that *God is not a man, that he should lie; neither a son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?* (Numbers 23:19)

When a believer is in the flesh, for the most part, he does not consider the things of the Spirit. She did not consider the promise given her in her pregnancy. Rather she trusted in her own ability to protect her beloved son. This tendency to trust the flesh rather than the Spirit is the principle which we have seen repeated throughout the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is the principle of the believer trying to protect God's interest by fleshly means. The believer's responsibility is to trust the Lord, rather than to react in the flesh. Thus Rebekah's scheme to send Jacob to Haran was born of the flesh:

Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran; and tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away; until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget that which thou hast done to him: then I will send, and fetch thee from thence: why should I be deprived also of you both in one day? And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me? (Genesis 27:42b-46)

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Rebekah urged Jacob to go to Haran to preserve his life, and she convinced Isaac that her interest in having Jacob go to Haran was for the purpose of obtaining a wife. Unaware of the duplicity, and with proper motivation *Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother* (Genesis 28:1-2).

In these events Rebekah and Isaac present an interesting contrast. They were in agreement with the concept of finding a proper wife for their son. The selection of a proper wife, who was not an idolater, was a spiritually sound idea. Isaac's motivation for sending Jacob to Padan-aram was born out of a spiritual consideration to select a proper bride for his son. Rebekah's motivation was born out of her interest to protect her son from the threat of death. The threat of death was the result of Rebekah's fleshly scheme to deceive Isaac. Even though Isaac and Rebekah were in agreement about a spiritually sound plan, Isaac was operating in the Spirit and Rebekah was operating in the flesh.

This incident teaches us it is possible for two believers to be in agreement with, and actively engaged in, an activity which of itself is spiritual. One believer is governed by faith and the other is governed by the flesh. What makes the one believer's activity of faith and the other believer's activity of the flesh? It is their motivation. The apostle Paul wrote:

And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: the one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. (Philippians

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1:14-18)

It is possible to be engaged in a spiritual activity, such as the preaching of the gospel and the salvation of souls, for the wrong reason. Paul has shown us that there were those who preached the gospel, hoping to add affliction to him in his imprisonment. They certainly were not motivated by the Spirit of God to do this. They had to be motivated by the flesh. Even so Paul rejoiced in the preaching of the gospel, because the gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

Motivation, then, is a key factor in whether an activity is of the flesh, or whether it is of the Spirit. Despite this, there is a tendency, especially by church people, to judge a man by the company he keeps. One who associates with whores and drunks is often accused of being a whoremonger and a drunkard. Such associations are not judged to be spiritual associations, no matter the activity, or the motivation, because man has a tendency to look on the outward and not on the heart.

This is the reason the religious Jews accused the Lord Jesus of being a whoremonger and a drunkard. All of our Lord's activities were of the Spirit of God, because Jesus said, *I do always those things which the Father showeth me*. It should be apparent, then, that motivation cannot, necessarily, be judged by outward appearance. Our Lord said, *... as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you*. The methods of our Lord should be our methods, despite man, who *looketh on the outward appearance*.

Believers in Jesus Christ should be discerning. They should be engaged in those activities which the Lord called them to do, without concern for what man thinks of them when they do them. The believer also needs to look carefully at the many so-called spiritual activities, which

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they are called upon by man to do, because these activities may be of the flesh and not of the Spirit.

At the urging of his mother and with the blessing of his father, Jacob departed for Haran to seek a wife. Rebekah perceived the separation to be but a short time, until the anger of Esau could abate; but as we noted earlier, the anger of Esau has not abated unto this present day. The return of Jacob to the land is still not tolerated by the descendants of Esau.

Despite her hopes, Jacob never returned to Beersheba in Rebekah's lifetime. In fact, Jacob never saw his mother again. Fleshly schemes have a way of causing us to suffer in the flesh. The Bible says, *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.* Rebekah sowed to the flesh, and her fleshly sowing caused her to be separated from her beloved son for the rest of her natural life. Even though the child of God has all of his sins forgiven because of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, this does not necessarily alter the law of sowing and reaping. The consequences of sowing to the flesh can and often do remain throughout the lifetime of the believer.

The law of sowing and reaping is especially evident in the relationship between Jacob and Esau and the nations which they founded (Israel and Edom). Jacob fled from the presence of Esau for fear of his life. He went to Haran, where he married Leah and Rachel and their maids Bilhah and Zilpah. Jacob fathered eleven sons and one daughter during the twenty years that he lived in Haran.

Then Jacob left Haran and began his trek back to Beersheba. As he neared Esau's land, Jacob feared that Esau might still try to kill him. Even though Esau never carried out his death

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threat against Jacob, the nation which Esau fathered was and still is the continual enemy of the Jews, the children of Jacob (Israel). Jacob's flight from Canaan to Haran, to avoid the death threat, did not change Jacob's character. He was a man of faith, and he was a man of the flesh. There were times when Jacob believed God, and there were times when he trusted his own natural abilities. In the light of this he still represents the redeemed man; so that Jacob's life is a spiritual object lesson to all who are believers in Jesus Christ.

Chapter VIII

LESSONS FROM HAMAN AND MORDECAI

Every book of the Bible is related in some way to the theme of the redemption of man. In some books this is more obvious than in others, but the relationship is there nevertheless. In ancient times there were those who felt the book of Esther should not be considered a part of the canon of Scripture because the name of God is not mentioned in it. Despite this seemingly apparent shortcoming, Esther still fulfills its role in the unfolding drama of the redemption of man, and the evidence of its inspiration by the Holy Spirit of God is irrefutable.

The book of Esther is primarily concerned with five people -- three Persians and two Jews. They are Ahasuerus, Vashti, Haman, Esther and Mordecai. The spiritual value of the book of Esther derives from the historical relationships among these five, which form an allegory portraying the salvation of king Ahasuerus. Ahasuerus and his realm portrays his whole person, body and soul; Vashti portrays his sense of human goodness; Haman portrays the flesh; Esther portrays his regenerated spirit; and Mordecai portrays the Holy Spirit. All of these were, or

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would become, a part of his realm and so portray events and conditions in the life of one who comes to faith in Jesus Christ.

To say that Ahasuerus was king is like saying, *The king was king*, because Ahasuerus was a title, not his name. He was the Persian king Darius Hystaspes, who, in Scripture, is called Darius, or by his titles: Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes, which mean the same thing. For example: ... *And they builded, and finished it [the temple], according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia* (Ezra 6:14).

This quotation from Ezra is not a description of three men, as has been supposed from its translation, but of two. Martin Anstey provides us with a literal translation of the above verse in his *Chronology of the Old Testament: And they builded and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel and according to the commandment of Cyrus and Darius, even the great shah, king of Persia*. Rev. Anstey points out that much confusion has arisen because the Hebrew word *vav* was translated *and*, when it should have been translated *even*, and Artaxerxes means *the great shah*. (Old Testament Chronology, Martin Anstey, Kregel Publications, 1973, pg. 244)

Thus Cyrus and Darius were the two monarchs who were responsible for the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem and of the temple in the fifth century before Christ. Cyrus gave the decree for the Jews to return to Jerusalem after seventy years of captivity in Babylon. Nearly fifty thousand Jews returned to the land under this decree and began rebuilding the city and the temple. The Samaritans resisted this work and had it stopped by an appeal to Artaxerxes (Pseudo Smerdis), who was co-ruler of Persia after the death of Cyrus. Then about seventeen years after the decree

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of Cyrus, the Jews made an appeal to Darius Hystaspes to allow them to resume the work of rebuilding the city and the temple. Darius searched the archives and found the decree of Cyrus and honored it, so that the work was completed under Esther's *great shah*.

As we open the book of Esther *the great shah* of Persia was married to Vashti. Since Vashti represents his sense of human goodness, our first view of Ahasuerus is as an unsaved man. Consequently it was quite natural for him to be concerned only with the affairs and pleasures of this world, for he had power, wealth, great possessions, and a beautiful wife. From the world's point of view, he had everything.

Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this is Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces:) that in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace, in the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him: when he shewed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, even an hundred and four score days. (Esther 1:1-4).

Men who have the kind of wealth and power possessed by Ahasuerus often love to display their greatness for the adulation of their subjects. More than once this has been done, as was the case with Ahasuerus, under the pretense of calling the lesser rulers of a political party, or kingdom together to receive honor from the leader of the realm:

And they gave them drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from another,) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king. And the drinking was according to the law; none did compel: for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man's pleasure. Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to king Ahasuerus.

On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king, to bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty:

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for she was fair to look on. But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him. (Esther 1:7-12)

This feast was for the adulation of the great shah. It was to show his greatness before his subjects, and an important part of that display was the incomparable beauty of Vashti, his queen; but rather than being able to glory in her beauty, he was embarrassed by her refusal to come before his subjects. In that one fateful moment, all she had been was as though it had never been: nothing but the wrath of the king remained. Ahasuerus thought of her as the unsaved before God: *There is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good and sinneth not. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?*

In her allegorical portrayal of Ahasuerus' human goodness, Vashti had acted as many an unsaved person acts in boasting their purity. She had drawn upon the best of her moral refinements and had refused to be put upon display before a drunken crowd. It had been morally repugnant to her to be displayed in such a fashion. Her pride had not let her be subjected to such indignities. We could mistakenly think her refusal to be put on display as the acts of a *godly* woman, a portrayal of goodness; but Vashti's actions are not to be confused with godliness. They are a revelation of the works of the flesh: feigning its goodness and trying to establish its righteousness before God in His Holiness, in His Righteousness and in His Justice, where the works of the flesh cannot possibly stand uncondemned.

When the flesh operates in the realm of its knowledge of good, it is much more difficult to recognize it as being intrinsically evil, than when the flesh operates in its knowledge of evil. It is this sense of right action which causes the unsaved man to trust in his own human goodness

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as adequate grounds for acceptance with God. It is the unsaved man's knowledge of good which deludes him into believing that he does not need a Savior. Vashti might have felt justified by her actions, but by her actions she violated the law of the land and she embarrassed her husband:

Then the king said to the wise men, which knew the times, (for so was the king's manner toward all that knew law and judgment: and the next unto him was Carshena, Shethar, Admantha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw the king's face, and which sat the first in the kingdom;) what shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains?

And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that are in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus. For this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not. Likewise shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the king's princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus shall there arise too much contempt and wrath. If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she. And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small.

And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan: for he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and that it should be published according to the language of every people. (Esther 1:13-22)

Thus Vashti was condemned for her actions. She could not reign as queen: she had violated the law of her husband, and she had violated the law of the land. There are many unsaved people who think as Vashti thought: they mock the authority of the Word of God as Vashti mocked the authority of Ahasuerus. They have the misconceived idea that their moral ideals make them fit for the presence of God, regardless of the many times they have failed to live up to their own standards, let alone the law of God. Vashti and all like her are described by James, *[W]hosoever*

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shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law (James 2:10-11). With the deposing of Vashti, it became incumbent upon those who served the king to find him a new wife:

Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king: and let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hege the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given them: and let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so.

Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite; who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away. And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter.

So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women. And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, which were meet to be given her, out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women. (Esther 2:2-9)

Esther portrays the regenerated spirit of Ahasuerus. The events which brought her into his kingdom represent the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God. Even so, before she was brought before the king, many virgins were also brought before him. They can be likened to the philosophies of this world, which can never bring satisfaction to the soul of one who is to be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, to one who has been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. One by one they were all rejected. In the meanwhile

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Esther came into favor with Hegai, the keeper of the women.

Several years earlier, in this same general locale, the prophet Daniel found favor with the keeper of the eunuchs in the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar. The favor which Daniel enjoyed was not accidental, it was the work of God. So, too, was it the work of God to bring Esther into favor with the keeper of the women. She obtained kindnesses of him, and she received from him the things necessary for her purification. She did not shirk her training, but was completely committed to the task of preparing herself for her presentation before the king, having been instructed of Mordecai, Who represents the Spirit of God.

Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew it. And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her.

Now when every maid's turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, to wit, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with other things for the purifying of the women;) then thus came every maiden unto the king; whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king's house. In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name. (Esther 2:10-14)

Finally, as with the preparation of the heart of man by the Spirit of God and the Word of God, Esther's preparation was completed:

Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her. So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.

Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther's

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feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king. And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in the king's gate. Esther had not yet showed her kindred nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him. (Esther 2:15-20)

The marriage of Ahasuerus and Esther is typical of Ahasuerus' salvation, because Esther represents his regenerated spirit:

In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told it unto Esther the queen; and Esther certified the king thereof in Mordecai's name. And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out; therefore they were both hanged on a tree: and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king. (Esther 2:21-23)

This is one more detail in the salvation of a soul, because Mordecai (who represents the Spirit of God) told Esther (the king's regenerated spirit) of the threat of death imposed by the chamberlains. The word which Esther received from Mordecai represents the Word of God, while the chamberlains represent sin (*the soul that sinneth, it shall die*). Ahasuerus believed the word of Mordecai (which represents the preaching of the Word of God). Therefore an investigation was made and the thing determined true. As a consequence Ahasuerus' life was saved and the chamberlains were hanged. The hanging represents the believer's sins, which were judged in Jesus Christ upon the cross of Calvary, because *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree* (Galatians 3:13).

These historical events have portrayed, allegorically, the salvation of Ahasuerus. From this time on, many of the historical events which transpired in his kingdom were instigated by Haman (who represents the flesh), or by Mordecai (who represents the Spirit of God). Haman

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acted directly upon Ahasuerus, by his counsel and by his deeds, but Mordecai acted upon Ahasuerus through Esther (who represents his regenerated spirit). Even though in this allegory Ahasuerus has been saved, true to the new believer's experiences, we find the flesh (Haman) still very much in control:

After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him. And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence. Then the king's servants, which were in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment?

Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand: for he had told them that he was a Jew. And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath. And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai. (Esther 3:1-6)

Some might be tempted to believe the order of events and conditions in Shushan does not agree with their experiences as a believer, but lest they idealize their experiences, Paul wrote, *I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ* and he also wrote, *...that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.* Thus, in order to change the fleshly condition of the new believer into a dependence upon the Word of God and the Spirit of God, the apostle Peter wrote, *But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...* (II Peter 3:18). If the new believer is nurtured in the things of the Lord, conditions can rapidly change from carnality to spirituality, but only by the Word and Spirit of God.

The Bible says that Haman was the son of Hammedatha the Agagite. The Agagites were

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the sons of Agag, king of the Amalekites. Amalek was the great grandson of Esau, who, in Scripture, is also presented as a representative of the flesh. Esau swore that he would kill Jacob, and this threat against Jacob was attempted through Amalek and Edom, Esau's posterity. Because Haman was an Amalekite, the Scripture says of him, ... *the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation* (Exodus 17:16).

Our studies have indicated that there are two primary influences in the life of a believer, the flesh and the Spirit. The flesh is an expression of man's human nature and was introduced into this world by the serpent's deception of Eve and Adam's willful sin. The flesh is the product of a knowledge of good and evil, obtained independently of and in rebellion against God. In contrast to the flesh, when the believer walks in the Spirit, he walks according to the Word of God. Since *faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God*, the walk in the Spirit is a walk of faith. Thus the apostle Paul admonished, *Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh*. Conversely if the believer fails to walk in the Spirit, according to the truth of the Word of God, he will fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

Haman, who represents the flesh, acted much as the Persian princes had acted in their jealousy against the prophet Daniel. They desired to be rid of him, so they deceived Darius the Mede into signing a decree which would prohibit prayer to any God but the Persians' gods for one month. They knew enough about Daniel to know he would not neglect his prayers to the true and living God. Thus they used his faithfulness to bring him into disfavor with the king. And as with the Persian princes and the prophet Daniel, Haman sought to destroy Mordecai and his people:

In the first month, that is, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month,

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to the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar. And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them. If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king's treasuries. And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jew's enemy. And the king said unto Haman, The silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee.

Then were the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors that were over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language; in the name of king Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring. And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey. The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, that they should be ready against that day. The posts went out, being hastened by the king's commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed. (Esther 3:7-15, emphasis mine)

The cunning of the flesh is revealed in Haman. He wished to be rid of Mordecai, but he thought it not wise to attack him directly, because it had not been long since Mordecai had saved the king's life. Rather than attacking Mordecai directly, Haman sought a cause to bring a charge against the people of Mordecai, whom he would label *an unprofitable people*, and he found this cause in their worship of the true and living God.

History reveals that Darius Hystaspes could be swayed by money. Haman offered him ten thousand talents of silver for his treasury to destroy the *unprofitable people* in his kingdom. Ten thousand talents is one million pounds of silver! The silver was to be delivered to the treasury in the last month of the Jewish year, on the thirteenth day of Adar, after the *unprofitable people* were destroyed. In order for his plan to go smoothly, Haman did not identify the people to the king,

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and it is evident he did not know Esther was one of the *unprofitable people*.

The Scriptures teach the believer not to quench, or grieve the Holy Spirit. Thus the spiritual man is dependent upon the Word of God and the Spirit of God to perform the will of God. If the believer is not dependent upon these sources of spiritual strength, then he will revert to his natural abilities and views. It is in this mode that the flesh, portrayed allegorically by Haman, is in control. When the flesh is in control, the Spirit of God and the Word of God are quenched. Thus in the city of Shushan, with the ring of power upon the finger of Haman, the Jews (who represent that which is spiritual) were under the sentence of death, and the inhabitants of the city were perplexed.

Ahasuerus' kingdom covered the entire Mediterranean world, so it would take time to bring word of Haman's decree to the outlying areas. Haman wanted to accomplish his plan against the Jews on a grand scale. He wanted all of them to die in one day. The decree of Haman was made on the thirteenth day of the first month of the year, with the execution of the decree to take place on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month. Thus adequate time was given for all of the machinations of the scheme to come into place. Further Haman was pleased with the power that had come into his hands, which to his mind would enable him to destroy his enemy Mordecai.

As believers we make choices to operate in the flesh or in the Spirit. We can either operate in faith, or we can operate in unbelief. When the flesh is in control in the life of a believer, the believer is perplexed. Thus with Haman and the king on friendly terms and the decree of death pronounced upon the people of God, *the city of Shushan was perplexed*. Whether we wish to acknowledge it or not, the believer has a constant warfare between his own desires seated in the

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flesh, and the desires of God seated in the Spirit and Word of God. Haman, who represents the flesh of Ahasuerus, in a larger sense represents the fleshly desires of all believers, which given the right set of circumstances might seek to destroy the spiritual lives of themselves for a few moments of pleasure, or self-aggrandizement. Despite the fleshly desires of a believer, the Spirit of God is present to help:

When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry; and came even before the king's gate: for none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes. (Esther 4:1-3)

This pitiful condition portrays the lamentable condition of a believer who has little or no spiritual input in his life. Consequently the Jews, who represent that which is spiritual in the realm of Ahasuerus (the life of a believer), are clothed in sackcloth and ashes and mourn, because they are under the sentence of death, imposed by Haman (who represents the flesh). These conditions should never arise in the life of a believer; but given the right set of circumstances, they do arise. Thus the believer is admonished *grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption* (Ephesians 4:30). And the Scriptures further admonish the believer: *In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings [preaching]. Prove all things [by the Word of God]; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil [the evil one]* (I Thessalonians 5:18-22).

It was not long, then, before the conditions in Shushan came to the attention of Esther; because the Spirit of God, Who indwells the believer, cannot be grieved by the conduct of the

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believer without producing grief and conviction in the regenerated spirit of the believer:

So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and told it her. Then was the queen exceedingly grieved; and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him: but he received it not. Then called Esther for Hatach, one of the king's chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her, and gave him a commandment to Mordecai, to know what it was, and why it was.

So Hatach went forth to Mordecai unto the street of the city, which was before the king's gate. And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and of the sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them. Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to show it unto Esther, and to declare it unto her, and to charge her that she should go in unto the king to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him for her people. (Esther 4:4-8)

The communications that transpired between Esther and Hatach and Hatach and Mordecai and visa versa can be likened to the communications between the believer and God: by prayer; by reading the Word of God; by hearing the Word of God preached; and by conviction of the Holy Spirit, etc. So that, in any given set of circumstances, the Holy Spirit may speak to the heart of the believer to persuade him of the action to be taken. Now that this had been done, it was left to Esther to communicate the conditions of the kingdom to Ahasuerus. She knew what she should do, but she did not do it. She sought first to placate Mordecai with a change of apparel.

And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai. Again Esther spake unto Hatach, and gave him commandment unto Mordecai; all the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.

And they told to Mordecai Esther's words. Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this? (Esther 4:9-14)

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Esther's responses to Mordecai revealed her fears, which produced excuses why she could not do what Mordecai had revealed she should do. He then revealed that her supposed fears were nothing compared to the real danger she would face by the decree of Haman. Under Haman's decree all of the Jews, without regard to their station in the kingdom of Ahasuerus, were under the sentence of death.

Then Esther and her servants requested prayer for three days and three nights: the period of time our Lord was in the tomb. This, in the typology of Scripture, would place Esther on resurrection ground. This ground was secured by our Lord for Esther and for all who have their trust in Him:

Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer, Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish. So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him. (Esther 4:15-17, emphasis mine)

Buoyed up by her relationship with the Lord, Esther was determined to do the will of the Lord which had been revealed to her by Mordecai. She and her servants prayed according to their covenant relationship with the Lord. This is the key to success in prayer, and it can be observed in Elijah, who prayed for God to cause the rains in Israel to cease; and it ceased to rain for three and one-half years. Elijah's power in prayer was not because of any special power or holiness of his own, for James tells us:

Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. (James 5:17-18)

It was not Elijah's personal qualifications that gave him the power to pray and have the

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heavens closed for three and one-half years; it was the promise of God contained in the covenant He made with Israel before they entered the land of Canaan: *But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee* (Deuteronomy 28:15). And again: *The LORD shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed* (Deuteronomy 28:24).

Elijah simply observed that Israel had failed in her covenant relationship with God and was thus subject to the conditions of her failure. After the three and one-half years of drought, Elijah called for a meeting between himself, Ahab king of Israel, and the eight hundred and fifty false prophets of Baal and of the groves to determine if Jehovah or Baal was God. When it was proved that Jehovah was God, Elijah and Israel killed the false prophets.

And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: and all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. (Deuteronomy 28:1-2)

Just as a failure under the covenant had produced the removal of the rains at the prayer of Elijah, so the return to the terms of the covenant allowed God to restore the blessing of the early and the latter rains by the prayer of Elijah, because God had promised:

The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow. (Deuteronomy 28:12)

In a manner similar to Elijah, Esther came to the place where she prayed on the basis of the word of Mordecai (which represents the Word of God). Once Esther was in agreement with

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Mordecai, Mordecai went into action in her behalf: much the way the Lord had done in behalf of Elijah. Prayer is a wonderful privilege of the believer, but sometimes believers halt and stutter in prayer, not knowing what we should pray for as we ought. Despite this the Spirit of God conveys our prayers unto the Father in clear and precise terms, according to His will:

Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house. And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre.

Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? And what is thy request? It shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom. And Esther answered, If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him. The king said, Cause Haman to make haste, that he may do as Esther hath said.

So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared. And the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition? And it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? Even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed. Then answered Esther, and said, My petition and my request is; if I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do tomorrow as the king hath said. (Esther 5:1-8)

Haman was ecstatic and his chest must have swelled with pride. He alone had been the guest of the queen and king. Besides this, he had been invited to a second banquet, a special banquet on the next day. Of course with his inflated ego, he presumed the banquet was to honor him. He was anxious to boast before family and friends of his accomplishments and savor the events of the day:

Then went Haman forth that day joyful and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai. Nevertheless Haman refrained himself: and when he came home, he sent and called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife. And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the

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king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king. Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and tomorrow am I invited unto her also with the king. (Esther 5:9-12).

It had not been easy for Haman to refrain himself over Mordecai's impudence, if the *Spirit's* refusal to bow to the *flesh* can be called impudence; but the thought of being able to boast himself before family and friends gave him a temporary respite. Upon arriving home, he called his family and his friends about him, and his joy was unabated until he had finished telling them of his glories and of all that would transpire on the morrow. Then, he said:

Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate. Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him, Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and tomorrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon: then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman; and he caused the gallows to be made. (Esther 5:13-14)

Fifty cubits is about seventy-five feet. The unusual height of the gallows seems to have conveyed Haman's thoughts -- that all might see the consequences of anyone failing to do him honor. He was sure, because he alone had been invited to the queen's banquet, it would not be difficult to gain permission from the king to hang Mordecai. After the hanging, he could go merrily into the banquet with the king and queen. Zeresh's plan had changed Haman's depression into elation. He ordered the immediate construction of the gallows and comforted himself with the thought of hanging his enemy, but:

On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king. And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him. (Esther 6:1-3)

Lessons From Haman and Mordecai

Sometimes in our affairs as believers in Jesus Christ we find ourselves unable to sleep because the Spirit of God makes us aware of conditions and events that are taking place in our lives. We are weary and desire to sleep, but we cannot. There is a definite parallel between the conditions in the life of Ahasuerus and those in the life of a believer. Ahasuerus may have thought he could get back to sleep if he had the chronicles read to him. But rather than inducing sleep, the record of the chronicles of his kingdom made him aware of his neglect of Mordecai, who had provided his salvation.

About that time, Haman arose early to be able to petition the king for permission to hang his enemy. Of course he could not know of the king's discovery from the chronicles during the night and hurried to arrive at court:

And the king said, Who is in the court? Now Haman was come into the outward court of the king's house, to speak unto the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him. And the king's servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come in. So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour?

Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself? And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honour, let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head: and let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour. (Esther 6:4-9, emphasis mine)

The flesh is an insidious blight upon the believer and should be a constant reminder of our relationship to the fall of Adam. Nevertheless the flesh seeks to credit itself for any spiritual accomplishments, while at the same time requiring the believer to satisfy his other fleshly appetites. Unless the flesh is suppressed through growth *in grace and in the knowledge of our*

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Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, it will magnify itself more and more. It is through the preaching and teaching of the Word of God and the convicting power of the Spirit of God that real spiritual growth occurs in the life of a believer. This makes Mordecai (who represents the Spirit of God) the archenemy of Haman (who represents the flesh).

Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken. Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour. And Mordecai came again to the king's gate. But Haman hastened to his house mourning, and having his head covered.

And Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends every thing that had befallen him. Then said his wise men and Zeresh his wife unto him, If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him. And while they were yet talking with him, came the king's chamberlains, and hastened to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared. (Esther 6:10-14)

Sometimes it is remarkable to see how rapidly circumstances can change. On the previous night Haman was revelling in the prospect of hanging Mordecai. This very morning he had come to the court of the king hoping to gain permission to do just that, but the insomnia of the king had changed everything. The king now wished to honor Mordecai. Only a blatant fool would try to gain permission to hang *the man whom the king delighteth to honor*. Haman was no fool. He carried out the plan of Ahasuerus to honor Mordecai, even though it galled him.

Throughout the lifetime of the believer there are occasions when the believer will gain the victory over the flesh by faith in the Word of God. What the believer must come to realize is: a victory gained today does not assure the same victory tomorrow. Each occasion requires the same tactics as those revealed in the book of Esther. The victory over the flesh is gained by faith in,

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and dependence upon, the Word and Spirit of God. The believer's strength is not in himself, but in the Lord. The apostle Paul wrote:

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. (Ephesians 6:10-18)

The battle against the world, the flesh, and the Devil, is a perpetual battle for the believer. It is a battle which shall be fought every day of the believer's life. The battle shall not end until all believers are in the presence of the Lord. The believer should never presume to have the world, the flesh, or the Devil completely defeated. The apostle Peter said:

... Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all of your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. (I Peter 5:5-10)

The Devil is a defeated enemy. He has no claim on the souls of believers because of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary, yet he is still active in the world (cosmos) through the fallen angels and demons. Thus in the book of Hebrews we read:

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself

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likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (Hebrews 2:14-15, emphasis mine)

Esther appropriated the promise of God and stood on resurrection ground when she said, *If I perish, I perish*. She committed herself to the word of Mordecai, which allegorically represents the Word of God. She stood where all believers should stand and her stand for the truth was about to produce the defeat of Haman.

So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen. And the king said again unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? and it shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom. Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request: for we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage. Then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so? And Esther said, The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman. Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen. (Esther 7:1-6)

The allegorical relationship between all of the characters in the book of Esther have portrayed events and circumstances which every believer in Jesus Christ shall experience: the battle between the flesh and the Spirit. These events have brought the spiritual consciousness of the child of God (Ahasuerus) to recognize the evil and corrupt nature of the flesh (Haman) by the preaching of the Word of God and the ministry of the Spirit of God (Mordecai) through his regenerated spirit (Esther) to recognize that there is no good thing in his human nature (Haman and Vashti). There is absolutely nothing in the flesh which can bring honor to God, because the flesh, or *carnal mind, is at enmity with God*.

And the king arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath went into the palace garden: and Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; for he saw

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that there was evil determined against him by the king. Then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther was. Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon. So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified. (Esther 7:7-10)

The treacherous Haman was finally revealed for what he was. Thus:

On that day did the king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman the Jews' enemy unto Esther the queen. And Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had told what he was unto her. And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews. Then the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther. So Esther arose, and stood before the king, and said, If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are in all the king's provinces: for how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?

Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews. Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse.

Then were the king's scribes called at that time in the third month, that is, the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth day thereof; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces which are from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven provinces, according to their language. And he wrote in the king Ahasuerus' name, and sealed it with the king's ring, and sent letters by posts on horseback, and riders on mules, camels, and young dromedaries: wherein the king granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey, upon one day in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, namely, upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar.

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The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, and that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge themselves on their enemies. So the posts that rode upon mules and camels went out, being hastened and pressed on by the king's commandment. And the decree was given at Shushan the palace. And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad. The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour. And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them. (Esther 8:1-17)

What a marvelous reversal! All that Haman had devised against Mordecai had fallen upon Haman. Haman had been second only to king Ahasuerus. The king's ring had been upon his finger. All that he devised against the Jews was sealed with the king's ring and had become law, as if the king had decreed it himself. Nevertheless *the powers that be are ordained of God* (Romans 13:1). God sets up one authority and puts down another, and Haman had gone too far in his attempt to destroy the people of God.

So, too, it is with the believer. The believer can choose to empower the flesh to do all kinds of things contrary to the Word of God, or he can operate through his regenerated spirit by the gifts and power of the Spirit of God to perform the will of God. If the believer chooses to live his life in the flesh, the Spirit of God will only allow the believer to go so far before He speaks to his heart through his regenerated spirit by the Word of God and the convicting power of the Spirit of God. If the believer persists in living only for the flesh, the Scripture says, *There is a sin unto death, I do not say that ye shall pray for it.*

After his death, all that was Haman's was given to Esther. What was true of Esther is true of the believer. All of the natural talents and possessions of the flesh should come under the

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jurisdiction of the spiritual consciousness of the believer as that consciousness is controlled by the Word and Spirit of God. As Haman had been second to Ahasuerus, Mordecai came to be second in command in the realm of Shushan. From these relationships we learn that the controlling factor in the life of a believer, whether it is the flesh or the Spirit, is the choice of the believer. For this reason, the apostle Paul said, *Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.* Conversely, as we have seen at Shushan, if we do not walk in the Spirit, we shall fulfill the lust of the flesh. Of course, the walk in the Spirit brings the believer his greatest happiness, joy and contentment.

With Mordecai's rise to second in command in the realm of Ahasuerus, the Jews were no longer the prey of their enemies. In fact many Gentiles converted and became Jews because of Mordecai's rise to power, and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad. With Mordecai's rise to power there was a new outlook in Shushan:

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: in the which ye also walked sometime, when ye lived in them.

But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all. (Colossians 3:1-11)

In Ahasuerus' realm there were enemies of the Jews throughout the whole realm. In fact they were the ones who were to carry out the decree of Haman. Haman's decree was still in

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effect. However when Mordecai came to power, he enacted a decree which would allow the Jews to defend themselves, when their enemies would seek to destroy them on the 13th of Adar. So, too, shall the believer, clad in *the whole armor of God*, be able to defeat his enemies: *the world, the flesh, and the Devil*. When the 13th of Adar arrived, there were some wonderful victories gained by the Jews throughout the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, which made up the realm of Ahasuerus:

Now in the twelfth month, that is the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them;) the Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them fell upon all people.

And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king, helped the Jews; because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them. For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater. The Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them. (Esther 9:1-5)

The destruction of the Jews' enemies throughout the one-hundred and twenty-seven provinces of Ahasuerus' realm is a literal part of history. Haman, Ahasuerus, Mordecai, and Esther were real people and the city of Shushan was a real place. Yet the spiritual significance of the people and the events cannot be overlooked. If they are overlooked it will be to the detriment of Christian people everywhere, because the allegorical significance of the people and the events portrays the information which the believer needs to live his life by faith in this present evil age.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;

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casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; and having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? (II Corinthians 10:3-7a)

In respect to the Christian's spiritual warfare the apostle Paul asked an important question:

Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? Obviously, Paul's enemies at Corinth did view things on the basis of outward appearance because Paul said to them:

For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. But we will not boast of things without our measure [i.e: the Word of God], but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. (II Corinthians 10:12-13)

Haman was like the men at Corinth of whom Paul spoke: he measured himself by himself and compared himself with his friends, who were of the same nature. He exalted himself. Haman and his kind did not all die by the decree of Mordecai. There were many of them around in the apostle Paul's day, and there is a great proliferation of them in this present age. They judge outwardly, according to the flesh. They have no spiritual discernment, and they are the enemies of the truth.

One victory wrought by the Holy Spirit does not make the spiritual man safe from the effects of the flesh. Even though Haman was dead, Haman had ten sons to continue his nefarious work.

And the king said unto Esther the queen, The Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the palace, and the ten sons of Haman; what have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? now what is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: or what is thy request further? and it shall be done. Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which are in Shushan to do to morrow also according unto this day's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows. And the king commanded it so to be done: and the decree was given at Shushan; and they hanged

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Haman's ten sons. (Esther 9:12-14)

Totally, on the two days of Purim, there were seventy-five thousand enemies of the Jews slain throughout the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the kingdom. The flesh is a mighty force. It does not go away with a single victory. In fact, the battle is *from generation to generation*. The only way that victory can be obtained in any confrontation with the flesh is when the believer's trust is in the Word and Spirit of God. Self-effort will always fail. The battle is the Lord's.

As we come to the end of the book of Esther, we find that great victories have been wrought by Mordecai. The city of Shushan is at peace and there is joy and gladness. Would to God this were the perpetual condition of the believer in Jesus Christ, but it is not. It is a temporary condition. There will be other Hamans with which to contend. The believer's life is characterized by a continual battle with the world, the flesh, and the Devil. This battle will continue until that day when the dead in Christ rise first and those of us that are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air. Then shall we ever be with the Lord. Then shall we be changed through resurrection and glorification and shall be like our wonderful Lord.

Until then, with faith there is also failure, but the failures have been covered by the blood of Christ, so that believers are always accepted of God in Christ. We have the promise of our wonderful Lord that He shall be with us and that He shall be in us. He said, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*. Thus Mordecai, who represents the Spirit of God, is present to counsel us by the Word of God each step of our Christian sojourn.

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And the king Ahasuerus laid a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea. And all the acts of his power and of his might, and the declaration of his power and of his might, and the declaration of the greatness of Mordecai, whereunto the king advanced him, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia? For Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed. (Esther 10:1-3)

Chapter IX

LESSONS FROM CHRIST OUR PASSOVER

To this point in our studies we have considered Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Abraham and Sarah, Ishmael and Isaac, Jacob and Esau and various others who were associated with them, as well as Haman and Mordecai. The historical events surrounding their lives have revealed much concerning the relationship between the firstborn and the second-born. They have given us vital information about the relationship between these two, which relates spiritually to the relationship between the flesh and the Spirit. Even so we shall not continue to delve into their lives, or the lives of their immediate families, even though there is much more recorded in Scripture concerning them. Our purpose shall be better served by pressing forward to one of ten events which provided the deliverance of the Jews from Egyptian bondage.

This was the sacrifice and application of the blood of the passover lamb. Egypt is presented in Scripture as a type of this world, so the judgment of the firstborn in Egypt and the deliverance of the Jews by the blood of the Passover lamb represents to us the judgment of the sins

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of this world in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. This is confirmed by a statement of the apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians, when he wrote, *Christ our passover was sacrificed for us.*

The blood of the Passover lamb was used of God to make a distinction between the firstborn in Israel and the firstborn in Egypt:

And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, this month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: and if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: and ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.

And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD's passover.

For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. (Exodus 12:1-13)

In addition to revealing to the Corinthians that Christ is our Passover, the apostle Paul also revealed Israel to be the believer's example. Consequently everything that happened to Israel, both positively and negatively, is for the believer's admonition and instruction. This means the Passover and subsequent events in the history of Israel are of extreme importance to the believer's

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spiritual understanding and growth.

The distinction God made between Israel and Egypt was not made because of a difference in conduct between the Jews and the Egyptians, but it was made because of the elective purpose of God, which was put into effect through redemption:

And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem. (Exodus 13:15)

In the New Testament redemption in Jesus Christ is referred to as *regeneration* and regeneration is referred to as a new birth, which, literally, is *a birth from above*. Thus there are two births which can be experienced by the human family: a natural birth and a spiritual birth. The natural birth produces children of this world who are spiritually dead because of their relationship with Adam. Conversely the spiritual birth produces children of God, who are spiritually alive because of their relationship with Jesus Christ. Our Lord spoke of this birth to Nicodemus, who came to Him by night and said:

Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? (John 3:2-9)

Even though Nicodemus was a religious man, a Pharisee, and a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin council, he did not understand our Lord. This was evidenced by his question: *How can*

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these things be? Nicodemus could not understand what Jesus said, because the natural mind does not understand or receive spiritual truth. Even though he was religious, he was unsaved, and the unsaved natural mind is dead to spiritual truth. The only life which the natural man has is his natural life and the only nature which he can manifest is the Adamic nature, which is in rebellion against God and *is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can it be.* Consequently *there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not* (Ecclesiastes 7:20).

Under the terms of God's promise to Israel the blood of the Passover lamb was to be applied to the door post and lintels of the houses at the time of the sacrifice. The application of the blood was to effect the salvation of the firstborn. The fact that the lamb was spotless was not enough. The fact that it was taken on the tenth day of the month and examined until the fourteenth day of the month, to prove its spotless character, was not enough. The fact that the lamb was slain in the evening by the whole congregation of the nation of Israel was not enough. The fact that not a bone of the lamb's body was broken was not enough. The fact that the uneaten portion of the lamb, which remained until morning, was burned so that it would not decay was not enough. The fact that the whole congregation ate of the lamb, which was roasted with fire and served with bitter herbs, was not enough.

All of these things were required, but unless the blood was applied to the door posts and to the lintel, so that it could be viewed by the Lord when He passed through the land about midnight, the firstborn in Israel would die along with the firstborn in Egypt. The sole distinction between the firstborn of Israel and the firstborn of Egypt was the application of the blood to the door posts and lintels of their houses, which declared their faith in the promise of God.

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When Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, during the Passover season, our Lord sidestepped his flattering words and said:

... Art thou a master [Rabbi] of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:10-16)

As our Lord talked with him, He questioned how Nicodemus could be a Rabbi of the Jews and not know about the new birth. The new birth, that birth from above, had been revealed to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. It had been revealed in all of the sacrificial system and particularly in the Passover. Therefore it was Nicodemus' responsibility not only to know it, but to teach the truth of it to the nation of Israel. Yet he knew nothing of the new birth. Like so many others in Israel, he was spiritually blind; and when the blind lead the blind, they both fall into the ditch.

Consequently our Lord told Nicodemus about the incident in the history of Israel when Moses lifted up the serpent before the nation to preserve them from their deadly wounds, which had been inflicted by serpents. The Jews involved were the children of the Jews who had been delivered by the blood of the passover lamb, forty years earlier. These Jews were born in the wilderness, or they were of that group that were not of age at the time of the unbelief of their parents. Thus Moses wrote of them:

And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And

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the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.

And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived. (Numbers 21:4-9)

The lifting up of the serpent was to these Jews what the Passover had been to their parents: that is, it was an allegorical portrayal of the salvation that is available in Jesus Christ. The significant events are quite evident. The Jews had sinned against the Lord with their murmurings. Therefore God judged them by sending poisonous serpents into their midst. As a consequence of the serpents' bites, the Jews were dying from the injected poison. Moses intervened for them and God was merciful; so He told Moses to make a serpent of brass and place it upon a pole and lift it up before the people. God promised that whoever looked upon the serpent would be saved from the consequences of their sin. Thus salvation came to them because of the mercy and grace of God through faith in the promise of God.

The allegorical significance of the events is also evident. Sin is represented by the poisonous serpents, because it was through a serpent that Satan introduced sin into this world. The effect of the poison injected by the serpents was death, and this was the effect of the introduction of sin into the human family. The placing of the brazen serpent upon a pole represented the judgment of sin upon the cross of Calvary, because it was upon the cross of Calvary that He who knew no sin, became sin for us (II Corinthians 5:21).

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Our Lord referred to the account of the serpent because the Jews, who looked by faith, represent those who hear the truth of the gospel and believe it and are saved. Further, after they looked by faith, they were given entrance into the land of Canaan. In a similar fashion, the individual who looks by faith to the judgment of his sins in Jesus Christ, upon the cross of Calvary, is given spiritual life and is made a citizen in the kingdom of God.

We have seen that the new birth is also called *regeneration*. Regeneration carries the idea of being created anew. This is what Jesus told Nicodemus. When an individual is born-again, he has a new standing before God. All that the born again individual was, is, and ever shall be in his sin nature was judged in Jesus Christ upon the cross of Calvary and was buried with Christ. All that Christ is, in His pristine Righteousness, has been imputed to the born again believer's account. Therefore the believer in Jesus Christ stands before God as a new creation in Christ Jesus. God has made him an object of His grace and is absolutely just in accepting the believer on this basis, because the Lord Jesus Christ stood in his stead in life to fulfill the law and all righteousness, and in death to bear the sinner's judgment:

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [creation]: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled [Greek: *katallaso*: changed completely] us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (II Corinthians 5:17-21)

Towards the end of the gospel of John we learn that Nicodemus became a believer in Jesus Christ (John 19:38-42). Through the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of

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the Spirit of God, he recognized that Christ had become the expression of God's love to a lost world; he recognized that the Lord Jesus Christ, *who knew no sin*, had offered Himself as a vicarious sacrifice for sin, dying the Just for the unjust; he recognized that his sins, as well as the sins of the whole world, had been judged in Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary.

God had promised the Jews in Egypt that if they applied the blood of the passover lamb to the door post and to the lintels of their houses, then He would pass over the judgment of the firstborn in every house where the blood was applied. The apostle Paul has shown us there is a connection between Christ and the Passover, so we can expect to see the things that were required of the passover lamb fulfilled in Jesus Christ. We can also expect to see most of the Jews observing the Passover out of tradition, with no understanding of its spiritual significance. For had they understood its significance, they might have been looking for their Savior, rather than a political leader to deliver them from Roman bondage.

Nevertheless let us assume the Jews observed the passover in accordance with the twelfth chapter of the book of Exodus. In that case, on the tenth day of the month of Abib, each Jewish family was required to select a male lamb of the first year from the sheep, or from the goats; they were to examine it until the fourteenth day of the month to find it without spot or blemish; they were to kill the lamb on the afternoon of the fourteenth day of the month; they were to catch its blood in a basin and apply the blood to the door post and lintel; they were to roast the lamb whole, with bitter herbs and were to eat the lamb with unleavened bread and wine.

After their meal, they would sing the Hallel, which means *praise*. The Hallel is a group of Psalms (113-118 and 136), which emphasizes the fact that God's *mercy endureth for ever*. In

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Psalm one hundred eighteen, Christ is identified as the source of God's enduring mercy:

The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. (Psalm 118:22-24)

The day that Jesus Christ was rejected by Israel is a day to be rejoiced in. Not because Israel rejected the Lord, but because it was the day He was sacrificed for our sins. Thus it is a day of gladness. It is the day which God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is the day which was portrayed in the offering of Isaac, when God gave Abraham a preview of the sacrifice of the Beloved Son of the Father. In that preview, Abraham called the mount where he took Isaac, *Jehovahjireh*, which, as we have seen, means, *In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen*. In the sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham was privileged to see a portrayal of the day which the Lord had promised to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden: *And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel* (Genesis 3:15).

God's promise to Adam was portrayed in the mount of the Lord, and it was fulfilled in the *seed of the woman*, who is Jesus Christ, so that *when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons* (Galatians 4:4-5).

The day *which the Lord hath made* was predetermined in *the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God* to be accomplished by the second Person of the Godhead, when, *in the fullness of the time*, by the sacrifice of Himself at the hands of the Jews and the Romans, He would provide a remedy for sin. Further it was predetermined that until this sacrifice was made, it would

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be prefigured by animal sacrifices. There was a continual portrayal of the *day that the Lord hath made* in all of the sacrifices from the garden of Eden to the cross of Calvary:

For it [was] not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt-offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Hebrews 10:4-10)

Thus the animal sacrifices were offered as tokens of the one sacrifice that would be made by Jesus Christ. Christ came to take away the first system with its types, that He might establish the second system that fulfilled the types. The second system was heavenly and was completed by Him Who is heavenly. Therefore all of the sacrifices offered in obedience to the command of God throughout the Old Testament have their spiritual substance and fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

This, of course, included the passover lamb, which was taken on the tenth day of the month of Abib (Nisan) and was examined from the tenth day of the month until the fourteenth day of the same month to determine if it was suitable for sacrifice. It had to be without spot or blemish according to God's command. Consequently, if the Scriptures are read with understanding and are not wrested to fit traditional views, we will, as already suggested, observe a perfect fulfillment of the examination and sacrifice of the Passover Lamb in Jesus Christ.

Many times we find that traditional views can obscure the truth rather than clarify it. According to church tradition, the Lord Jesus Christ made His *triumphal entry* into Jerusalem on the Sunday before Easter. Thus, because of the strewing of palm branches in His path, it has been

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called *Palm Sunday*. According to the same tradition, Christ was crucified on the following Friday, which has resulted in it being called *Good Friday*. Despite the devotion of those who hold these traditions, they do not fit the facts disclosed in Scripture.

Every believer in Jesus Christ has the obligation to be like the Berean Jews who heard the apostle Paul preach. Paul said of them, *These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.* If we examine the Scriptures carefully, we shall see that an insistence upon holding to the traditional view of *Palm Sunday* and *Good Friday* causes a discrepancy by creating an artificial contradiction in the Word of God. Since the Bible is the Word of God and God cannot lie, there cannot be a contradiction in these events. If there appears to be a contradiction there must be a misunderstanding of the facts.

One of the first facts we must consider is the length of time our Lord said He would be in the tomb. This is easily discovered, for in the twelfth chapter of Matthew, He said: *An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah: for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here* (Matthew 12:39-41, emphasis mine).

The Good Friday theory states that our Lord was crucified on Friday and placed in the tomb just prior to sundown, which, according to the Jewish calculation of time, would be the beginning of their sabbath. Further the Scriptures tell us Joseph of Arimathaea claimed the body

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of our Lord at that time, or so it appears, ... *because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath* (Mark 15:42). By this, it would seem our Lord was crucified on Friday but for the text cited above, which demands that our Lord be in the tomb for three days and three nights.

The Jews observe a different system of counting days, as we have alluded, than the Roman system which is now in common use. We must remember that it is in accordance with the Jewish method that time is reckoned in the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) and Roman time in the gospel of John. Now, according to Jewish reckoning, the day begins and ends at sundown. This is common knowledge and requires no proof, even though the Scriptures provide abundant proof that this is so.

If we apply this information to the *sign of the prophet Jonah*, which Jesus gave the Jews, we can expect the *three days and three nights* to be counted from sundown to sundown according to the Jewish method, in which the night precedes the day. Obviously then, according to this division, the night is from sundown to sunrise, and the day is from sunrise to sunset. If we utilize this method of counting days, there cannot be three days and three nights from sundown Friday to before sunrise on Sunday. I am a stickler for the Word of God, so I take the position that our Lord fulfilled the *sign of the prophet Jonah*, because it was given as a proof to the Jews that He was (is) the Christ. If He fulfilled it, we must conclude that Jesus was not crucified on Friday.

However for the sake of considering all sides, there is a theory, which was espoused by the late Dr. A. T. Robertson, which says, *The well-known custom of the Jews was to count a part of a day as a whole day of twenty-four hours*. However in Dr. Robertson's explanation, he only counted days between Friday and Sunday. He counted a small portion of Friday and of Sunday

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as whole days; but the *sign* specifically divided the day into its two component parts: *night and day*. Using Dr. Robertson's theory, I can only obtain two days and two nights between the time just before sundown on Friday and just before sunrise on Sunday.

Observe, counting according to Dr. Robertson's theory, the time that remained on Friday after Christ's crucifixion and before and including His burial is counted as one day. Sundown Friday to sunrise Saturday is counted as one night. Sunrise to sundown Saturday is counted as the second day, and sundown Saturday to sunrise on Sunday is counted as the second night. Thus we arrive at the time when the women came to the tomb on *The first day of the week ... when it was yet dark* (John 20:1); and we discover that we have only counted two days and two nights, using the partial day theory. This by no means satisfies me, and it certainly does not satisfy the statement of our Lord concerning the period of time that He was to be in the grave.

Either our Lord did not fulfill the *sign of the prophet Jonah*, or He was crucified on some day other than Friday, as has been assumed. It is interesting to note that those who believe in a Friday crucifixion also believe that Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Sunday, which they call *Palm Sunday*. The apostle John supplies the second fact which must be considered concerning the chronology of those days:

Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this.

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For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always. Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.

On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. (John 12:1-13, emphasis mine)

For the sake of argument, let us assume that Christ was crucified on Friday according to the traditional view. If Christ was crucified on Friday, then that particular Friday was the preparation day for the Passover because the apostle John said:

The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. (John 19:31)

Now, according to the previous text, Jesus came to Bethany six days before the Passover, and on the next day He made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. According to the Scriptures, the Passover always began at sundown. Therefore if Christ was crucified on Friday, Passover began at sundown, which was, in this example, Saturday. Counting back six days, according to the passage in John twelve, we come to Sunday, the ninth of Nisan, the day Jesus came to Bethany. John tells us that it was on the next day, the tenth of Nisan, that Christ made His entry into Jerusalem. Therefore if Christ was crucified on Friday, His entry into Jerusalem was on Monday. Thus *Good Friday* necessitates a *Palm Monday*, not a *Palm Sunday*.

The problems surrounding the Friday crucifixion of our Lord arise because of an assumption. The assumption is that the impending sabbath following the crucifixion was a Saturday sabbath. However there is a parenthetical note supplied by the apostle John in the above

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text which provides the solution. John said, *For that sabbath day was an high day*. That is, that sabbath was one of the *high*, or *holy days*, in the Jewish calendar. The truth that is missed by most people who hold to a Friday crucifixion is that every Passover was observed as a sabbath. This can be seen in the instructions for the Passover, found in Exodus chapter twelve: *And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you* (Exodus 12:16, emphasis mine). This means that the first day of unleavened bread, which was the Passover, and the last day of unleavened bread were observed as sabbaths; which means it was not necessary for Christ to have been crucified on Friday in order to have a sabbath imminent at sundown.

The assumption that Christ's crucifixion coincided with a Saturday sabbath has caused grave concern on the part of those who recognize that there are not three days and three nights in the period between Friday evening before sundown and Sunday morning before sunrise. The question then arises, when was Christ crucified? My personal belief is that Christ was crucified on Wednesday, because a Wednesday crucifixion fits all of the circumstances dictated by the Scriptures.

The Bible says that Jesus came to Bethany from Jericho six days before the Passover. If Jesus was crucified on Thursday instead of Friday, as some have supposed, His trip from Jericho to Bethany would have been on a Saturday. This is not possible, because this would have caused our Lord to violate the sabbath. Our Lord tested the rabbinical interpretation of sabbath law, but He would not have actually broken the sabbath by traveling first from Ephraim to Jericho and then

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from Jericho to Bethany, which, totally, would far exceed a sabbath days journey. Therefore the distances involved negate the possibility of a Thursday crucifixion:

And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethpage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, [Insert John 12:12: *On the next day...*] he sendeth forth two of his disciples. (Mark 10:46-11:1)

Now, according to the Scriptures, the Passover was observed between the evenings of the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Abib (Nisan). Therefore the calendar date for Passover was the fifteenth day of the month. Subtracting the six days of John chapter twelve brings us to the ninth day of Abib, which was the day that our Lord came to Bethany. He arrived there, after traveling from Jericho, which, considering the distance, was probably just before sunset, which would begin the tenth of the month. In Bethany He and His disciples stayed in the house of Simon the leper, where they made Him a supper.

After supper Mary came and anointed the feet of the Lord with an ointment of spikenard and wiped His feet with her hair. Judas Iscariot became indignant, because the ointment was very expensive, and he wanted to know why it had not been sold and the money given to the poor. The apostle John is careful to tell us: this bit of hypocrisy was not because he cared for the poor, but Judas was the keeper of the purse and he was a thief. It was then that Jesus said, *Let her alone:*

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against the day of my burying hath she kept this. This statement is significant, because by this time, the sun had set and it was the evening of the tenth of the month, the day when the passover lambs would be presented for examination and death on the fourteenth.

If, as we believe, Jesus was crucified on Wednesday, that would mean our Lord's trip to Bethany from Jericho was on Friday. The entry into Jerusalem on a colt, the foal of an ass, was on the next day. The question then arises, was it lawful for Jesus to travel the distance from Bethany to Jerusalem on the sabbath day? The answer is found in the first chapter of the book of Acts, where we read: *Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey* (Acts 1:12).

Our Lord used Bethany, at the mount of Olives, as His base of operation during much of His Judaeen ministry and especially during this final week of His life on this earth. After His entry into Jerusalem, He returned to Bethany:

And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves: for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves; and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? But ye have made it a den of thieves. And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.

And when even was come, he went out of the city. And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. (Mark 11:12-20)

At this stage in Israel's history, she was in a state of apostasy, which was evident by their rejection of Jesus as the Christ. The barren fig tree was like Israel, it had an outward show of life

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and fruitfulness but was useless in terms of producing any real fruit. The practices in the temple had become empty sacrifices for financial gain. The priesthood was void of any understanding of the truth and merely perpetuated the commandments of men while rejecting the Word of God. It was time for God to break off Israel, the natural branches, and graft in the Gentiles, the wild branches, according to Paul's prophecy in Romans eleven:

For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. (Romans 11:15-21)

Thus the cursing of the fig tree was synonymous with the cursing of Israel, and almost as quickly as the fig tree withered, Israel ceased to exist as a nation. This took place in 70 A.D. when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. The Jews who were not killed, or starved to death during the siege, were scattered among the Gentile nations of the world.

Even so, in accordance with the promise of God, Israel was restored to the status of being a nation among the nations on May 14, 1948. The *dry bones* of Ezekiel thirty-seven had risen from their graves among the nations of the world, where they had been buried for the better part of nineteen hundred years. On that day she became a nation once again. Even so, at this time, she does not have the breath of God within her, because she has not yet trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as her Savior.

In the mean-time we await the day when the true church, made up of Jews and Gentiles,

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will be caught away in the first resurrection, *to ever be with the Lord*. After that the antichrist will come to this earth; and professing Christendom, which has no better record than Israel, will be completely seduced by him.

The same conditions which caused the fall of Israel shall cause the fall of professing Christendom. The neglect of sound doctrine, the failure to separate herself from the false religious systems in the land and her ignorance of the Word of God produced Israel's fall. The prophet Hosea said, *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*, and Amos wrote of a time when there would be a famine, not for bread, but for hearing the Word of God. Professing Christendom has not learned from Israel's mistakes and has plunged itself into the same kind of error, even though everything that happened to Israel, happened for the church's admonition and instruction. The conditions which existed in Israel shall continue unheeded in the churches until there is a complete departure from the truth and the man of sin is revealed:

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away [apostasy] first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition: who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. (II Thessalonians 2:1-4)

When Jesus purged the temple, He did so because of the corruption of the whole Judaic system. Afterward He returned with His disciples to Bethany. On the next day, Monday, the twelfth day of Abib, Jesus came again to Jerusalem. On His way into the city, He and His disciples came to the fig tree which He had cursed the previous day. The disciples marveled that the fig tree was already withered. The rapid decline of the fig tree was an object lesson to the

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disciples of the impending judgment of the nation of Israel. In about forty short years Jerusalem would be destroyed, and the Jews who would survive would experience our Lord's pronouncement, *Behold your house is left unto you desolate* (Matthew 23:38).

As they stood before that tree, already withered at the root: ... *Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith* (Mark 11:21-23).

The sea is used to represent the Gentile nations of the Mediterranean world in the seventh chapter of Daniel, and a mountain is used to represent a kingdom in the second chapter of Daniel. If we apply this usage to the above statement of our Lord, it becomes a prophetic description of Israel's dispersion among the Gentile nations of the world. Now, as we have seen, Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D., and the Romans drove almost all of the remaining Jews from the land of Israel after the insurrection of Bar Kochba in 135 A.D., thus fulfilling this prophecy.

After viewing the fig tree, our Lord and His disciples continued on into the city to the temple, where our Lord faced the close scrutiny and examination of the religious leaders. They impudently asked Him: *By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? From heaven, or of men?* The Jews were astounded by His question and so *they reasoned*

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with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet (Matthew 21:24-26). With all of their powers of reasoning the Jews could not come up with a solution to their dilemma, *And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things* (Matthew 21:27).

The Jews' desire to find fault with our Lord was born out of self-righteousness and jealousy, and though the different sects of the Jews would not ordinarily agree on anything, when it came to their hatred of the Lord Jesus Christ they had a common cause. They came purposely trying to find fault with Him, and this, unwittingly, became an examination of the Passover Lamb. The Pharisees came with the Herodians. This was a rare pairing, because the Pharisees were the fundamentalist of Judaism and the Herodians were the radicals:

Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?

But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he said unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way. (Matthew 22:15-22)

This encounter must have brought great disappointment to the Pharisees and Herodians, because they believed they had the perfect question to ensnare Him. If He answered in favor of the Pharisees, the Herodians would be offended; and if He answered to the satisfaction of the Herodians, the Pharisees would be offended. Nevertheless their duplicity was rendered impotent

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when He answered, *Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.* Defeated by the wisdom of the spotless Lamb of God, they *went their way.*

The Sadducees also came to question Him. They came with the same dishonesty that had been displayed by the Pharisees and Herodians, hoping to find fault. The Sadducees were to Judaism what the modernists have been to the church. They were the rationalists, the so-called scholars who explained away spiritual truth. They did not believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God, nor did they believe in heaven, or hell, or in angels, or in the resurrection of the dead. The doctrine of the resurrection was the primary basis for the rift between them and the Pharisees. Nevertheless, like the Pharisees and the Herodians, they came to our Lord with a question which they believed was of such a nature, it could not be answered by anyone who believed in the resurrection of the dead. So they said unto Him:

... Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? For they all had her.

Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine. (Matthew 22:24-33)

The Sadducees' question rivaled the question which was devised by the Pharisees and the Herodians. Whether the woman who was the subject of their question existed or not, or whether she was a figment of their imagination, does not really matter. The Sadducees must have searched

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long or dreamed hard to come up with her. It is amazing how hard some people will work to deny the truth of the Word of God, so that they might go to hell.

Jesus said to them, *God is not the God of the dead, but of the living* and *Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God*. Therefore the Sadducees were silenced by the fact that God is a living God, Who reigns over the living. They were also shamed by their ignorance of the Scriptures and the power of God. Thus before Jesus, they were silenced. The Pharisees' problem was self-righteousness based upon a legalistic view of what constituted a proper relationship with God. The Sadducees believed themselves to be intellectually superior, but they were ignorant of the Word of God. The respective errors of the Pharisees and the Sadducees caused them to fail to recognize that Jesus was the Christ.

Each of the groups which came to examine Jesus had its own particular reason for rejecting the truth. The Herodians' allegiance was to Herod, because they believed him to be the Christ. The chief priests' allegiance was to themselves, because they were afraid of losing their high positions in the religious life of the nation of Israel. The scribes were of the sect of the Pharisees and were steeped in Talmudic teaching; so they held to the traditions of the elders, which made the commandments of God of none effect (Mark 7:6-13). Therefore each of the groups were alienated from the truth of God's grace in Jesus Christ for their own selfish reasons.

Each of the groups confronted Jesus, hoping to find fault, but each confrontation was met with Godly wisdom by the Word and power of God. Finally the efforts of the Jews to find fault were exhausted, because, like Pilate, they could find *no fault in this just man*. Jesus was indeed the Lamb of God; He was spotless and without blemish, and He was willing and ready to offer

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Himself as the only sacrifice for sin. He was their Passover: the Author of eternal salvation, but they failed to recognize Him. Therefore He was in Jerusalem to carry out what He had determined to do *before the foundation of the world*. The Jews had hoped to discredit Jesus with their questions. But when that failed *no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions* (Matthew 22:46).

After our Lord was questioned by the various groups which came trying to find fault, He brought a scathing denunciations upon His examiners. He revealed the emptiness of Judaism as it existed in that day, with its outward show and inward corruption. The Judaic system, as it existed then, was not too different from many of the religious systems in the world today. It exalted man; it had zeal and an outward purity; it was steeped in tradition; it had a revered priesthood who performed an impressive liturgy in a spectacular temple; it had all that men, who think according to a way which seemeth right unto them, desire of religion. It certainly gave the Jews something about which they could boast and think themselves holy.

However Judaism was inwardly corrupt. It was full of hypocrisy and it was totally blind to the truth. The greatest problem in Judaism, despite the fact that the oracles of God were committed to them, was that it was virtually powerless to bring a sinner to God. The truth of the grace of God had been revealed to the Jews in the sacrificial system. However through their traditions and their attempts to establish their own righteousness, the truth of the grace of God had been completely lost to the Jews' understanding. They were puffed up in their fleshly minds and blind to the truth. Therefore Jesus preached the message which is contained in the twentythird chapter of Matthew, exposing the Jews' blatant hypocrisy: *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees,*

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hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity (Matthew 23:27-28).

This message stripped the Jews bare and should have caused them to cry out, *Lord, what would you have us to do?* But it did not. Their hearts were as hard as flint. They were professional hypocrites and saw themselves holy, despite the convicting power of our Lord's message. Rather than repenting, they continued their facade.

To their minds, it would be easier to get rid of the source of their conviction than it would be to change years of finely honed skills, which perfected their hypocrisy. On the next day, Tuesday, the thirteenth of Abib:

Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people. (Matthew 26:3-5)

At this point in the narrative, Matthew and Mark tell the story of the anointing of Jesus by Mary, which had taken place after supper on the tenth day of the month, after our Lord and His disciples had made the trip to Jericho and then from Jericho to Bethany, six days before passover. The fact that Matthew and Mark place the anointing of our Lord for burial in a different context than the apostle John is not a contradiction. Matthew and Mark simply recorded the account in the context of the events of the thirteenth day of the month to establish Judas' motive for betraying the Lord.

Thus it was on the thirteenth day of the month of Abib that the Jews counseled together to put Jesus to death. On the same day Judas declared his intentions of betraying Jesus into the hands

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of the Jews. (It is interesting to note: four hundred and fifty years earlier, a man named Haman had plotted the death of God's people on the very same day of the very same month.

This is recorded in Esther 3:12-13).

Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him. (Matthew 26:14-16)

The Lamb of God had been selected, examined, approved for death, and promised for delivery at the appointed time. On the beginning evening of the fourteenth day of the month, the disciples inquired where they should prepare for the Passover. (The beginning evening may seem like an odd expression, but since each day began and ended at sunset, each day would have a beginning and ending evening.)

Now the first day [i.e., the preparation day] of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover? And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. (Matthew 26:17-20)

This day is the day that the apostle John refers to as the *preparation* day. It is the day on which the Passover lambs were slain. The lambs were slain about 3:00 p.m., as the fourteenth day neared its conclusion. As we consider the events of this day, we must remember that the events in the upper room and the subsequent events in the garden of Gethsemane took place in the night, which precedes the day in Jewish reckoning. All of the events from the meal in the upper room to the crucifixion and burial of Jesus Christ took place on the fourteenth day of the Jewish month of Abib.

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There has been much discussion about whether Christ ate the Passover with His disciples or not. I believe it is very unlikely that Christ and His disciples ate the lamb roasted with fire, because the Passover lamb was not slain until the afternoon of the fourteenth day of the month. At that time, the whole lamb was roasted, which would take several hours, and it was eaten between the evenings of the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month. We know that at the time that the Passover lambs were slain, *Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us* (I Corinthians 5:7). Therefore the lamb had not yet been prepared when the Lord and His disciples met in the upper room.

On the preparation day of the Passover all leaven was removed from the houses in anticipation of the week of unleavened bread. Therefore the disciples prepared the upper room for the Passover. Jesus then came with His disciples to the upper room where they ate their evening meal. They were all together on the eve of the Passover. During the meal Judas was revealed as the traitor, when Jesus dipped the sop and gave it to him. After that Judas went out to betray the Lord into the hands of the Jews, as he had promised the day before. It is likely that Judas had left the upper room before the Lord's supper was observed.

The Lord's supper is a remembrance feast. It was instituted by the Lord Jesus so that believers would have the opportunity to remember what it cost the Lord to produce their salvation. Therefore, in the observance of the supper, the believer reflects upon the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ until He comes again. Thus the Lord's supper provides an opportunity for the believer to remember that *Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us*.

In the observance of the supper, the grace of God is magnified. Thus the believer is

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motivated by the constraining love of Christ to keep Christ's commandments, which are not grievous. Christ gave this age three commandments: *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment* (I John 3:23). These two commandments provide the motivation for the third: *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen* (Matthew 28:19-20).

Thus all service for Jesus Christ is produced by the constraining love of Christ and not by law and the efforts of the flesh. The actual supper is simple. Believers assemble together for the purpose of remembering the Lord Jesus Christ until He comes again in His second coming. This is done by eating bread and wine. The bread is unleavened, and it represents the body of our Lord, and the wine represents His blood.

The two elements which are used in the remembrance feast have tremendous significance. The unleavened bread, which speaks of Christ's body, is made without a leavening agent, because, in the Bible leaven speaks of sin and false doctrine. Therefore for the bread to represent Jesus Christ, it has to be without leaven, because *in Him was no sin at all*.

The unleavened bread is made of wheat flour, which speaks of the humanity of Christ. Jesus said, *Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone*. Therefore the grain of wheat is Christ. In order for wheat to become flour it must be ground. Therefore the grinding of the wheat into the flour, which is used in the unleavened bread, speaks of Christ's sufferings and trials in His body as Jesus of Nazareth. The flour is combined with olive oil. The

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olive oil speaks of the Deity of Christ. Throughout the Scriptures olive oil is used to represent the Holy Spirit. The priests were anointed with oil. The seven-branched lamp in the tabernacle was fueled by olive oil. Therefore the combination of wheat flour and olive oil speaks of the infusion of humanity and deity in one Theanthropic person, Who is Jesus Christ. To the flour and oil is added salt. Salt is a preservative. Therefore salt speaks of Christ's work of Salvation. In the instructions for the various sacrifices, which were given by Moses, God commanded that no offering could be made without salt. Jesus said to the Jews, who were the custodians of the message of salvation before this church age, *Ye are the salt of the earth*. Therefore as the flour and oil speak of the Person of Christ, the salt speaks of the work of Christ. Finally, the last element which is added to the flour, oil, and salt, is water. Water speaks of life. The Bible declares that Jesus is the Water of Life. Jesus said, *Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*. The water in this verse is rain water, i.e., it is the water of life, which comes down from heaven. Therefore the water supplies the purpose for the sacrifice, which is to provide life for all who will receive Jesus Christ, the Water that came down from heaven.

The flour, olive oil, salt, and water are combined and beaten to form the dough which is baked to make the unleavened bread. The process of beating the dough speaks of Christ's suffering in His trial before His crucifixion. Finally the loaf is sprinkled with frankincense and baked in an oven. The baking speaks of Christ's crucifixion, and the frankincense speaks of the bitterness of death. *He who knew no sin became sin for us*.

The other element which is used in the feast is wine. It is not grape juice. The wine speaks of the blood of Jesus Christ. The Jews always use wine in the observance of the Passover.

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The Scripture says, *Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission.* And it says, *The life of the flesh is in the blood.* Therefore there must be a distinction between blood and blood. The distinction between the blood of man and the blood of Christ can be compared to the difference between grape juice and wine.

In this book we have observed a difference between the first and second-born and those things which are first and second in order of time or authority. In the relationship between grape juice and wine that difference is again observed. Of the two, which comes first, grape juice or wine? The answer, of course, is grape juice. Paul said, *that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.* By this analogy wine represents the spiritual, i.e., the blood of Christ

There is an interesting difference between grape juice and wine besides the alcoholic content of the wine (see Ephesians 5:18). Grape juice contains leaven. That is why grape juice will ferment. However after the process of fermentation, which changes grape juice into wine, the wine is unleavened. Therefore I believe that grape juice can represent the blood of ordinary men, but it cannot represent the blood of Jesus Christ. The blood of Christ must be represented by wine, because it is unleavened; and the Jews were required to remove every trace of leaven from their houses before they observed the Passover.

Traditional observances of the Lord's supper have made it a sad occasion because the emphasis has been placed upon the life of the believer and the confession of his sins, lest he should eat of the bread unworthily. This remembrance is not of the believer and his sins, but is a remembrance of the Lord in His Person and in His work. Thus it is a time of rejoicing:

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The stone [Jesus Christ] which the builders [the religious leaders in Israel] refused [crucified] is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. (Psalm 118:22-24)

After Jesus instituted the Lord's supper, He and His disciples sang a song (probably Psalm 118), and they left the upper room. They crossed the brook Cedron (Kidron) and came to the garden of Gethsemane. In the garden Jesus suffered tremendous agony. Perhaps the agony which He suffered there was even greater than the physical agony of the cross. In the garden Jesus was so identified with the sins of the whole world that it caused Him to sweat great drops of blood.

Under the sacrificial system, which God gave to Moses to portray the grace of God, the priest identified the sins of the offender with the sacrificial lamb by placing the hands of the sinner upon the head of the sacrifice. This laying on of hands was a portrayal of the transferral of the sins of the offender to the victim.

Jesus is our Great High Priest. At the same time, Jesus is the only suitable sacrifice for sin. Therefore Jesus appropriated to Himself the sins of the whole world by an act of judicial imputation. It was this identification with sin that occasioned the Lord's request: *If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.* This request was not out of the fear of death nor out of a desire to sidestep the purpose for which Jesus came into this world. The request was for our benefit and understanding. Jesus said these words so that everyone would realize that there is no possible means of salvation other than in Jesus Christ.

Nevertheless, even though Jesus knew that He must take the sins of the whole world upon Himself, His understanding did not reduce the agony of such a prospect. Jesus was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Therefore Jesus' anticipation of the transferral

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of the sins of the whole world to Himself, upon the cross of Calvary, produced the blood sweats.

Medically, the sweating of blood is called *diapedesis*. Webster defines it as, *1: The passage of blood cells through capillary walls into the tissues; especially: active amoeboid passage of leukocytes between the enclosing endothelial cells. 2: loss of blood without detectable gross lesions* (Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged). In the garden of Gethsemane, the blood passed through the body tissues of our Lord by diapedesis. As the blood formed on the surface of the skin, it coagulated, because the word for drops is *thrombos* in the Greek text, which means *blood clots*. Please take note of the Biblical account:

And he came out, and went as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, and said unto them, Why sleep ye? Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. (Luke 22:39-46)

The agony of Gethsemane was the anticipation of being *made sin for us*. It is difficult for us, with our sin nature, to realize the total agony this would bring to our Lord; but we must not forget He is God: thus without any taint of sin from all eternity. His nature is not just sinlessness, in a negative sense, but complete righteousness in a positive sense. In this regard, some have posed the question -- "Could Christ have sinned, when He was tempted of the Devil, or at anytime during His earthly ministry?" The answer is, Absolutely not!

Even so, by the judicial reckoning of God, *He who knew no sin was made sin for us*. Thus He willingly partook of the cup which was before Him, because He was committed to the will of

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the Father. This can be seen from His remarks on the day He made His entry into Jerusalem on a colt, the foal of an ass:

... The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour. Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. (John 12:23-27)

As Jesus agonized in the garden, God sent an angel to minister to Him in His hour of trial.

The disciples, who a few hours earlier had pledged undying devotion, were asleep. There was no comfort there:

And he went a little farther and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. (Matthew 26:39-41, emphasis mine)

This human spirit of ours aspires to loyalty and the doing of great things, but we do not know how weak it is. The disciples' pledges of a few hours earlier were already broken. Three times Jesus encouraged them to watch and pray, and three times they were overcome by weariness:

And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed unto the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me. (Matthew 26:44-46)

Earlier that evening, Jesus told Judas to do his work quickly. An hour or two elapsed between the identification of Judas as the traitor and the moment when Judas came to the garden:

And while [Jesus] yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a

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great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.

And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled. (Matthew 26:47-56)

When we consider the events of that night we can be very self-righteous in our judgments of the disciples. It is easy for us to say *How could they forsake Him?* It is easy to forget that we are no different than they. What Jesus said to them applies to us as well: *The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak.* We dare not judge them, lest we judge ourselves. No one has any merit, or power of his own, to overcome the weaknesses of the flesh. Our victories come by the power of the Spirit of God and the Word of God by faith.

The Jews took Jesus into custody and led him away to an examination and trial before Israel and Rome. At that moment He was forsaken by the disciples. They all fled. However Peter and John followed *afar off*. John was known by the high priest; therefore he was able to gain access to the trial for both himself and for Peter. It was at the court of the high priest that Peter denied the Lord three times. This one who had pledged undying devotion, who also had drawn the sword in the garden, now cowered before a maid. Our fleshly weaknesses are almost inexplicable. After his final denial, Peter looked into the eyes of our Lord and, at that moment,

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he realized what Jesus meant when He said, *The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak*, and he wept bitterly:

And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying, Art thou the Christ? Tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: and if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. Hereafter shall the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of God. Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am. And they said, What need we any further witness? For we ourselves have heard of his own mouth. (Luke 22:66-71)

Our Lord had shown, in the parable of the *Husbandmen*, the Jews had killed the Son of the *Householder*. As prophesied, they would kill Him, the Son of God, but they preferred that He die by crucifixion rather than by stoning:

And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King. And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it. Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man. And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. (Luke 23:1-5, emphasis mine)

Pilate knew enough about the Jews and their traditions that he did not want to be involved in the crucifixion of their Messiah:

When Pilate [therefore] heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time. And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.

And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him. And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves. (Luke 23:6-12)

It is interesting to note the strange alliances which were formed in the judgment and

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condemnation of our Lord. The Pharisees had come with their enemies, the Herodians, to try to find fault with Him. Herod and Pilate, who formerly were enemies, had joined together in friendship for the purpose of crucifying the Christ; and the Jews, who despised the Romans, had brought Jesus before Pilate and then before Herod so that Jesus would be crucified.

Then upon the return of our Lord to the jurisdiction of Pilate, Pilate made one last attempt to avoid crucifying the Christ when he inquired who should be released according to custom, Barabbas or Jesus? Barabbas was guilty as charged, but he would be set free. Jesus was innocent, but He would die. What a marvelous picture of the doctrine of imputation. The sins of the whole world were charged to Jesus Christ. The Righteousness of God was then judicially charged to everyone who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. All of us, like Barabbas, were and are guilty as charged. Even so, because Jesus stood in the stead of sinners, all sinners, who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ are set free from the penalty of sin. As the blood of the passover lamb prevented the judgment of the firstborn from falling on the Jews in Egypt, so the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin.

The trial was over and the Jews led Jesus to Calvary where they nailed Him to the cross. Jesus was hanged on a cruel tree at the time of the morning sacrifice, about nine. He hung there until the afternoon. At the time of the evening sacrifice, about three, Jesus said, *It is finished: and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost.* He was dead. *Christ our Passover had been sacrificed for us, dying the Just for the unjust.*

Abraham had said, *In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.* Moses had said that the Jews were to remember the Passover as a memorial forever. On that day God sacrificed His Lamb to

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cover the sins of the whole world. Every detail of the Passover was fulfilled in Christ, from His presentation at the right time to His crucifixion at the right time. Jesus was the Lamb of God, without spot or blemish, Who was slain by the whole congregation of the nation of Israel in the evening, and is remembered by all who trust in Him, forever!

There is one more requirement of the Passover lamb which we have not yet considered. Not one bone of its body could be broken. This was also fulfilled by our Lord.

The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another Scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced. (John 19:31-37)

The apostle John reveals some pertinent information in this passage. First, John reveals that the legs of Jesus were not broken, even though the soldiers came for the expressed purpose of breaking the legs of each of the victims. This was a fulfillment of one of the requirements of the Passover lamb. God had said that not a bone of the lamb's body was to be broken. Second, Jesus did not die from the effects of crucifixion. Death by crucifixion usually took from twenty-four to thirty-six hours, but Jesus died just six hours after He was nailed to the cross. Jesus willingly gave up His life in fulfillment of a promise which Jesus made to His disciples, when He said: *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father* (John 10:17-18).

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Third, John gives us a description of the soldiers as they came to break the legs of Jesus. When the soldier, who checked the body of Jesus, found that Jesus was already dead, he did not break his legs but thrust a spear into His side. That spear thrust provides us with a postmortem, so that we know the exact cause of our Lord's death. He did not die from crucifixion. He died from a broken heart.

The spear thrust caused both blood and water to gush from the wound. The blood was distinctly separated from the water, or fluid in the pericardium and the serum in the blood. According to "Dr. Stroud (On the Physiological Cause of the Death of Christ, London 1847) basing his remarks on numerous postmortems, pronounced the opinion that here we had a proof of the death of Christ being due not to the effects of crucifixion but to *laceration or rupture of the heart as a consequence of supreme mental agony and sorrow.*" (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. I, pg. 489, Eerdmans, 1946).

This opinion, I believe, is in agreement with the statement of our Lord that no man could take His life from Him. Jesus had the power to lay His life down and He had the power to take it up again. The spear thrust provided the proof of His statements:

And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand. (John 19:38-42)

Joseph and Nicodemus were pressed by the nearness of the Passover sabbath to obtain the

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body of Jesus. If they hurried, there was just enough time to obtain the body and prepare it for burial. They were aided by the use of Joseph's tomb, which was nearby. Thus our Lord was buried in Joseph's tomb as sunset loomed on the preparation day of the Passover.

Before the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, there were at least six occasions when Jesus predicted His death and resurrection. The following is one of those predictions:

And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again. (Matthew 20:17-19)

The death of Jesus Christ was no accident, neither was it a fortuitous concord of circumstances. It was carefully planned by the Godhead before the foundation of the world. Jesus came into this world by the virgin birth at the appointed time. He lived His life in fulfillment of the law and all righteousness. At the precise time, which was determined before the foundation of the world, He died for sin. Jesus freely gave His life as a substitutionary sacrifice for sin. However death was not the end of Him. The grave could not hold Him. At the precise time, which was after *three days and three nights*, Jesus arose from the dead.

After His resurrection, our Lord showed Himself alive to His disciples and to over five hundred witnesses at one time. He had repeatedly predicted His death and resurrection. It was no fluke. Jesus was raised from the dead by the power of God. The same resurrection life, which raised Jesus from the dead, is promised to all who put their trust in Him: *Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also* (John 14:19).

God's instructions to the Jews about the eating of the Passover lamb required that if any

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part of the paschal lamb remained unto the morning uneaten, it was to be burned with fire. The reason for burning the residue of the lamb was so that it would not decay. The significance of burning the residue is resurrection. When the residue of the lamb was burned it was turned to gases by combustion and ascended as smoke. In the observance of the Passover, there was always a residue to burn because the lamb was roasted whole, with *its purtenance*, which means entrails.

The Psalmist David said:

Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [Sheol: the grave]; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption [decay]. (Psalm 16:9-10)

There is no question that Jesus Christ is our Passover, which was sacrificed for us. Jesus fulfilled the Passover. He fulfilled the *sign of the prophet Jonah* and He will fulfill every promise which He has made to us that remains unfulfilled. Jesus Christ provides hope for the myriad of firstborn of this world, who have not yet put their trust in Him as their personal Savior. If the firstborn, the unsaved of this world, will trust Him, they can become-second born, i.e., they can be born from above and have eternal life. In addition to eternal life they will have *an inheritance that is incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time* (I Peter 1:4-5).

Chapter X

The Flesh and the Spirit in the Church Age

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Early in this work we established the premise that the Bible is God's unfolding drama of redemption. In consideration of this, Lucifer (who was created as the highest of God's angels and was perfect in all of his ways, until iniquity was found in him) introduced sin into the universe. Ezekiel tell us, he was lifted up in pride because of his great beauty (28:15-17) In pride he lifted himself up against the throne of God. In pride he said, *I will be like the Most High* (Isaiah 14:14). In pride he extended his sin to one-third of the angels of God (Revelation 12:4) by convincing them he could, indeed, be the Most High. In pride he was changed from the glorious position of being the highest of God's angels to the devil, the archenemy of God. In his pride he was not content with the corruption of himself and of one-third of the angels, but extended his sin to the human family through the temptation of Eve, when, through the serpent, he contradicted God and said: *Ye shall not surely die: for God [Elohim] doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your*

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eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods [Elohim], knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:4-5).

We know Adam also ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This sin resulted in the fall of the human family (through the federal-headship of Adam), and it also resulted in the forfeiture of Adam's dominion over the earth: placing that dominion under the jurisdiction of the devil. This made the devil *the god of this world*, and it made the whole human family subject to *the world, the flesh and the devil*. Consequently the whole world lies in the power of darkness.

In our studies thus far we have traced the results of the sin of Adam and God's promise of a Savior through Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, the age of Noah, Abraham and his two sons Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, the allegorical interpretation of the historical events in the book of Esther, and finally through Christ our Passover. We could have expanded our study to include many other persons in many of the books of the Old and New Testaments, but this was not necessary, nor very practical. What we have supplied is sufficient to have viewed the following principle:

Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. (I Corinthians 15:46-49)

We have come to the place in our studies where we shall endeavor to bring all that we have learned from the Old Testament into focus with the conditions which exist in the New Testament. In the thirteenth chapter of Matthew our Lord spoke seven parables which give us a view of the entire church age. These parables will take us from the first advent of our Lord until He returns to this earth as *King of kings and Lord of lords*. Consequently they will give us a view of the

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propagation of the gospel and the spiritual battles believers shall face until the Lord comes to receive us by *death* or by *life* at His coming in the air. In other words these parables will give us a view of *The Flesh and the Spirit in the Church Age*.

In order to accomplish our purpose in an orderly fashion, we shall consider each parable in the order in which it is given and the interpretation of each. As we consider all of the parables in this chapter, we shall discover that they are interrelated. The truths learned in one parable are applicable to the succeeding parables as well as to the preceding parables.

The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them. (Matthew 13:1-15)

First, it is important to note that our Lord came out of the *house* and sat by the *sea side* and then entered into a *ship*, while the multitude and His disciples listened to Him speak the first

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four parables as they stood on the shore. Since Israel is spoken of in Scripture as the *whole house of Israel*, and the church is spoken of as a fellowship, and the seas represent the Gentile nations of the world, it appears the seven parables in this chapter relate to the time when the truth of the kingdom would be taken from the nation of Israel and would be given to the church (made up of Jews and Gentiles) to preach the gospel of the saving grace of Jesus Christ until the end of the age and the return of the Lord to this earth to establish His kingdom.

Second, it is important to note the people who were in the audience when our Lord spoke these seven parables. They consisted of a multitude of Jews and the disciples of our Lord. It was a homogenous audience of believers and unbelievers, which undoubtedly contained scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, and representatives of the priesthood, as well as the common people. For the most part, despite the fact that this audience was made up of Jews who should have been aware of the truth of God, it was an audience who could not understand the parables of our Lord.

Third, it is important to understand what a parable is. Parables are stories about familiar things or persons which were used of the Lord to convey spiritual lessons and truths. Thus if one understands the natural circumstances associated with the things or persons and has *eyes* and *ears* to perceive spiritual truth, an understanding of the natural helps to convey the spiritual; but if one is without the spiritual ears and eyes to perceive, then there can be no understanding.

Fourth, our Lord spoke the parables for the specific reason of conveying spiritual truth to believers, while hiding the truth from unbelievers and counterfeit believers, for He said: *Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from*

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him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have (Luke 8:18, emphasis mine).

Our Lord began with the parable of the sower. It was concerned primarily with the different types of ground upon which the seed sown could fall. In that era it was common knowledge that a sower would carry a bag of seed, like a sling about his neck. It would have an opening into which the sower could reach the seed, which he would cast in an arc before him, allowing gravity and the wind to settle the seed to the ground. Our Lord's audience, being familiar with the process, would have understood that seed sown to the wind could fall in places other than the ground which had been specifically prepared for it. So He said:

Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. (Matthew 13:18-19)

Our Lord's interpretation of the seed that fell by the *way side* indicates to those of us who have been called to preach the gospel: we are in a spiritual battle against the devil and his angels. All of the seed which we sow, by the preaching of the gospel of the saving grace of Jesus Christ, is not going to produce. Some of it will fall on ground too hard to receive the seed that it might germinate (be quickened by the Spirit of God) and spring forth unto eternal life. Since the Spirit of God does not allow this ground to understand the Word preached, the seed will lay where it fell until the devil or his angels come and catch it away.

The next type of ground upon which the Sower's seed fell was *stony places*. This ground was shallow, with a minimum of arable soil on top of a stony base. Our Lord said: *[H]e that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or*

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persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended (Matthew 13:20-21).

It is important to note that of the four types of ground upon which the seed fell, only the first, or *way side ground*, failed to produce. Since the seed is the Word of God and the field is the world of unregenerate men, the various types of ground represent the different types of men in a lost world who hear the Word of God. In each case where the seed germinated and produced a plant, it must be concluded that the plant represents one who has life in Jesus Christ. Our Lord said, *And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand* (John 10:28).

Since the various types of ground affected the status of the plants, this characterizes different types of believers. Some believers in Jesus Christ are not fully dedicated to the production of fruit in the kingdom of God. This is the point of the parable -- to reveal some of the pitfalls which interfere with the believer and cause him to be unproductive in his life as a believer. Remember, our subject is the flesh and the Spirit in the church age.

The *stony places* believer was one who did not have much of a root system in the things of God. He quickly received the Word of God *with joy*, but having only surface ground in which to grow, he soon languished for lack of nutrients. The plant in *stony places* can be likened to one who joyfully receives the Lord as Savior, but rarely avails himself of the preaching of the Word of God that he might grow. Thus he is like those believers at Corinth of whom the apostle Paul wrote: *And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ* (I Corinthians 3:1).

Carnality is the antithesis of spirituality. And, as we have seen in previous lessons,

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spirituality is predicated of the Word of God. As suggested in the parable, the *stony places* plant was prevented from having all of the moisture and nutrients it needed for growth because of the stones in the ground. Thus it did not do well in extreme heat.

It appears, then, the *stony places* believer has many activities (which may be likened to the stones in the ground) which give him an excuse for not availing himself of those things which could aid his growth. To his way of thinking, all of these stones are important to his life. Even though he started out well in his Christian life (*with joy*), he is not capable of withstanding adversity. He is saved, but he cannot take the heat because of a lack of resources. Peter wrote to encourage believers like him:

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. (I Peter 1:23-2:3)

The *stony places* believer remains a babe and carnal because he does not receive the unadulterated milk of the Word of God, that he may grow. This may not be altogether his fault. For throughout the world today, there are many churches where their attendance and wealth is soaring because of fleshly programs, concerts and the like, which bring in many people, but they give them little, or nothing of the Word of God to sustain them. In addition to the Word not being preached, Peter suggested envy, malice, evil speaking, and hypocrisy could also hinder the believer from receiving the pure milk of the Word. Thus the seed sown on this kind of ground does not produce because of a lack of spiritual food, whatever the specific cause.

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The next type of ground, described by our Lord in the parable of the Sower, was the seed which fell *among thorns*. He said: *He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful* (Matthew 13:22). The believers represented as being *among thorns* can be doctrinally sound. They can be knowledgeable and attend a church where the truth is proclaimed faithfully. Their problem is not a lack of sound teaching, but *the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches*. And one of the company said unto him, *Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth* (Luke 12:13-15).

The flesh is manifested in this believer too, but in a different way than with the *stony places* believer. The *stony places* believer does not grow because of a neglect of the Word of God, but the seed *among thorns* believer can show all kinds of signs of outward growth. His problem is that he is motivated by money. His decisions are based upon furthering his ability to produce money, rather than producing spiritual seed. This believer is afraid he might have to do without. He has many anxieties which interfere with his spiritual production and occupy his mind with the state of the world and his ability to make and keep his money.

A believer from the seed *among thorns* could even be an uncalled man in the ministry. He would have to be uncalled of God because one of the qualifications of a pastor is not to be greedy of filthy lucre. Despite this qualification there are many in the ministry who are in fact *greedy of filthy lucre*. Some of these are not believers at all. Even so the apostle Paul wrote:

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Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. But godliness with contentment is great gain.

For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But 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. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. (I Timothy 6:1-12, emphasis mine)

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with money. The problem with money is the insatiable desire for it. Many of God's servants, especially in the Old Testament, had a degree of wealth. It is not money, but the love of money which is the root of all evil. The love of money in the preacher, who is charged with the responsibility of good stewardship of the truth: results in a conflict of interest. Thus our Lord said:

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

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(Matthew 6:19-25)

Too much emphasis upon the needs of life can cause the man of God to be diverted from the purpose for which God called him: to faithfully proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ. With too strong an interest in temporal things, the man of God, just like the believer, might find himself *among thorns*, where *the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful*.

The believer that is represented by the seed that fell *among thorns* has forgotten some things. He has forgotten that the Lord promised to meet all of our temporal needs. The believer's responsibility is simply to seek the kingdom of heaven first. The seed *among thorns* believer has forgotten that the Lord provides for the birds of the air and the beast of the field, who perform no labor. He has forgotten that Solomon in all of his glory was not arrayed like the lilies of the field. He has forgotten that God always keeps His promises. Our Lord said:

... take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. (Matthew 6:31-34)

The last type of ground that our Lord spoke of in the parable of the Sower was the seed that fell into *good ground*. He said: *[H]e that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty* (Matthew 13:23).

The *good ground* seed produced a crop the same as the seed in *stony ground* and the seed *among thorns*; but the *good ground* seed produced a bountiful harvest, while the other two grounds

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produced scant little. The *good ground* believer can have his problems with the flesh, like the other two; but the believer represented by this ground is committed to the purpose for which he was saved -- to labor in His Father's field in the truth of the gospel, so that with the increase of the Lord, the yield is *some an hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty*.

It is important for us to determine what is meant by this threefold type of yield. The patriarch Noah can supply us with important information about what a yield of an hundredfold might mean. First of all Noah is named with the so-called heroes of faith in the eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews. We have the testimony of the Holy Spirit of God to his life of faith:

By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. (Hebrews 11:7)

We know that *without faith, it is impossible to please God*, and Noah is listed with those who lived their lives by faith. Consequently he must be included as a type of the good ground that brings forth an hundredfold, some sixty and some thirty. Now the implication from the book of Genesis is that Noah labored for one hundred and twenty years in the preparation of the ark, which is a type of Jesus Christ, and in doing so (according to the above text) condemned the world that then was. It is evident then, despite Noah's intense labors for all of those years, the Lord gave him but seven souls, besides his own, to enter the refuge of the ark. There can be no doubt about Noah's faithful labor, nor can there be any doubt about the number of souls saved; so despite what man might think, Noah's good ground brought forth an hundredfold.

God is an immutable God. He does not change. We know God is the only One Who can save souls. Noah's increase, like our own was (is) predicated of God. Further according to our

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Lord's statement to His disciples in the fourth chapter of the gospel of John -- not all who sow, reap and not all who reap, necessarily, sow: *Herein is that saying true, one soweth, and another reapeth, that they may rejoice together.* It should be evident, the responsibility of the believer is faithfulness to that which is committed to his trust, while it is the Lord's responsibility to give the increase, and the increase He gives will be every soul He gave to the Son before the foundation of the world.

Today there is a great emphasis placed upon the reaping of souls by mass evangelism. It is wonderful to see souls saved. In fact, the salvation of souls is and should be the desire of all believers. Nevertheless it is not possible to reap a crop that has not been sown. In this respect, Jesus said:

... Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours. (John 4:35-38)

Therefore the salvation of souls is a joint effort of believers in Jesus Christ, with no greater glory accorded to the one who reaps than to the one who sows. In fact, Jesus stated that His disciples would reap what they had not sown. Jesus told His disciples they would enter into other men's labors. Therefore the disciples reaped a harvest of souls as a result of the work of men like John the Baptist and other Old Testament saints. Nevertheless, at the resurrection, the disciples will rejoice with those who preceded them when they view the results of their combined labors.

How different the teaching of the Word of God is from the ridiculous statements of some preachers. When I was in Bible College, we were told, *If you have not won a soul to Christ this*

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week, you are backslidden. That is quite a statement! Where does that kind of thinking fit into a proper understanding of the Word of God? It certainly does not allow the increase of souls to be of God, neither does it allow for the joint efforts of the sowers and the reapers. It is simply an overzealous statement from a spiritual ignoramus.

Genuine spirituality and fruit bearing does not always fit the preconceived ideas of some professed authorities. Often, as in the case of the statement about soul winning, we find that these authorities judge by the flesh and not by the Word of God. Their judgment is not spiritual. It is carnal. This is true because the work of the Spirit of God always agrees with the written Word of God.

The *good ground* believer believes the Word of God for salvation and for life. For him, salvation is not just preservation from judgment and hell, it is a message to be taken to the lost so that they can also taste of the grace of God. The *good ground* believer reflects the interest of the One Who saved him. Therefore he seeks a local church which is sound in the faith, with a solid teaching ministry, so that he can grow in grace and in the knowledge of his wonderful Lord. This is the basic difference between the *good ground* seed and the *stony places* and *thorny ground* seed.

The apostle Paul wrote:

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge [Greek: *epiginosis*: full knowledge] of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge [Greek: *epiginosis*: full knowledge] of God. (Colossians 1:9-10)

These parables are spiritual lessons to those who have the eyes to see and the ears to hear *what the Spirit sayeth unto the churches.* In these parables there are truths which have the capacity

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to add to the believer's full understanding of the Word of God. A proper understanding of these parables provides the believer with the capacity to avoid much of the error that will come upon the church before the return of Jesus Christ to this earth. This is true because these parables give the believer in Jesus Christ a fore view of the problems and conditions that shall confront believers throughout the church age.

Chapter XI

The Flesh and the Spirit in the Church Age

THE PARABLE OF THE TARES AND THE WHEAT

After our Lord explained to the disciples why he spoke to the Jews in parables: *Another parable put he forth unto them saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn (Matthew 13:24-30).*

This parable is a continuation of the first parable. In the first parable our Lord used the

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sower and the seed to represent the preaching of the gospel in the world and the various types of people who would hear the gospel; but our Lord did not identify the type of seed that was sown, only the types of ground upon which it could fall. In this second parable we learn that the seed was wheat, and we learn that the enemy of the householder came and sowed tares (*zizania*: spurious wheat) among the wheat and went his way. Now if the wheat represents the gospel, as it did in the first parable, the tares must be a reference to *another gospel*, and this agrees with our Lord's interpretation of the parable.

After relating the parable of the sower and the parable of the tares and wheat, our Lord spoke two more parables to the multitude: the parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the leaven; and then He sent the multitude away and called His disciples into the house, where they said:

... Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do [the] iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. (Matthew 13:36-43)

In the first parable we learned that the birds of the air, which caught away the seed that fell by the wayside, represented the wicked one. In this parable we learn that the enemy, represented by the birds in the first parable and identified as the devil in this parable, has a more active role than just catching away good seed: he is also actively engaged in planting his own seed (*zizania*:

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spurious wheat: translated as tares). Further we learn that he has done this nefarious work while men slept. The men who slept must be those who had the responsibility of caring for the wheat. Thus, by interpretation, they must be ministers who have neglected to warn the people who hear them of the insidious nature of the lie of the devil. Remember the admonition of the apostle Paul to the church at Corinth:

Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present ... a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him....

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. (II Corinthians 11:1-4 & 13-15, emphasis mine)

In this church age the devil is using his lie, as represented in the tares, as he used the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden of Eden. There is a parallel, then, between the deception of Eve and the deception of the nations with *another gospel*. The lie was, *Ye shall not surely die: for God [Elohim] doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods [Elohim], knowing good and evil*. This lie produced death and not life. It produced the concept that man could be like God (or have a right relationship with God) by his knowledge of good and evil (right and wrong), which he received in disobedience to God. The devil continues to sow his counterfeit gospel of moral goodness in the field (the world) where the gospel of the saving grace of Jesus Christ has been sown.

Our Lord said, *Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables* (Mark

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4:13)? This statement is about the parable of the sower. Thus the understanding of the parable of the sower leads to the understanding of the parable of the tares and the wheat. The parable of the tares and wheat is an enlargement of the first parable and so on with each succeeding parable. Consequently the proper understanding of the parable of the sower provides us with a key to understanding all of the parables.

The devil has something for everyone. If an individual has an aversion to Christianity, and is hardened against it, the devil will catch away the seed as he did in the first parable. If an individual has an inclination to the moral principles and traditions of Christianity, but does not see himself depraved and in need of the saving grace of God, the devil will provide that individual with *another gospel*. The devil operates in the realm of the truth, and the devil operates completely outside of the realm of the truth. It does not matter to him how he keeps a man in darkness, so long as he remains in darkness.

Consequently the devil interferes with the true gospel by the preaching of *another gospel*, or the devil goes outside of the realm of the truth altogether and supplies man with a varied choice among the religions of the world. These, after all, have their origin in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: *a way which seemeth right unto a man*. Thus man worships ignorantly, or if he is not interested in expressing himself religiously, then the devil offers him the allure of the world, or of the flesh to keep him in the realm of darkness.

One of the greatest hoaxes the devil has foisted upon the human race is that he does not exist, or that he is a hideous ogre (out of a fairy tale) who inhabits the pits of hell, reveling in fiendish glee every time someone is cast into hell. This is a far cry from the fact that Lucifer, who

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became the devil, was lifted up in pride because of his great beauty.

Returning to our Lord's interpretation, we find that both seeds were sown in the same field, which is the world, the realm of man. The world has the potential of rejecting the truth, or the lie, or of producing children of God by the acceptance of the truth of the gospel or children of the devil by the acceptance of *another gospel* in lieu of the true gospel. This means there are three kinds of people in the world. There are the children of God, the children of the devil, and the children of wrath (also called the children of the disobedience), which is the potential of unregenerate men among whom both gospels, the truth and the lie, are preached.

The tare system (which has involved man's corrupted sense of morality into his relationship with God) has been so effective that today its advocates make up the greater part of what is called Christendom. The tare system developed coincidentally with the true system. Therefore the early church was confronted with the false teaching expressed by the tares among the wheat, the same as the churches of these latter days. The devil has clouded the truth with his lie from the beginning. When Israel was the custodian of the truth, there was only a *very small remnant* in Israel which believed the truth, and so it is with the church. For this reason, the Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles warned the church about false prophets and false Christs and the counterfeit gospel which they preach:

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the

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world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of [the] truth and the spirit of [the] error. (I John 4:1-6)

The identification of the true and the false centers around the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. A denial of the Person of Christ, or of the work of Christ, or a denial of both the Person and the work of Christ constitutes *the spirit of the error*, which is proclaimed in the world under the guise of Christianity. The apostle John said the spirit of the truth is identified by saying the same thing about the fact that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh as God does. This is the meaning of the statement, *Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ [has] come [or, in II John 1:7, is coming] in the flesh is of God.* *Confesseth* is the Greek word *homologeō*, which means *to say the same thing about something as another*. The other, in this case, is God. The things that God has said about His Son are recorded in God's Word. Therefore to confess that Jesus Christ has come (or is coming) in the flesh is to be in agreement with what God says about His Son in His first and second advents upon this earth. This involves both His Person and His work, as recorded throughout all of the Word of God.

Genuine believers in Jesus Christ have an immediate bond with one another because of their love of the truth of the Word of God. Simply stated, God's children love God's Word. Even so a counterfeit believer in Jesus Christ may give lip service to the Word of God; otherwise he would not be much of a counterfeit. A really good counterfeit will state that the Bible is the inerrant, infallible Word of God. He will also declare his belief in many of the fundamental truths of the Word of God; but despite the confession of many truths, at some point he will deny either the Person or the work of Christ, or both His Person and His work. Some deny the deity of

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Christ; others deny the total sufficiency of His work by requiring a cooperation between man and God in man's salvation. Thus there is almost always a denial of the sufficiency of God's grace as provided in the work of Christ.

The deceiver may give lip service to the grace of God, especially for salvation. Despite this, he will deny the total sufficiency of grace in some manner. He often does this by a subtle emphasis upon *holy living* and the works of man. Usually, at some point, he will suggest it required his faith for his salvation. Then, by human reasoning, he will say if he produced the faith to believe, he could also quit believing and lose his salvation. This is a denial that *Salvation is of the Lord* and that faith is a gift from God. When this error is refuted they will flee:

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us: but they went out, for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. (I John 2:18-23, emphasis mine)

Thus it is so very important for the believer to fully understand the basis of the gospel. It is predicated on federal headship. Paul wrote, *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive* (I Corinthians 15:22). Thus man is under the sentence of death because of Adam's sin. He does not die because of personal sin, he dies because God said to Adam, *the day thou eatest thereof, dying, thou shalt die.* Adam died spiritually and began to die physically, and as the federal head of the human race he transmitted this condition to his entire race.

Nevertheless God promised salvation in the *Seed of the woman*, so that the hope of

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salvation from the awful condition imposed on the human family by Adam was predicated of Jesus Christ. God could not be merciful and gracious towards man without a righteous basis for doing so: *But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons* (Galatians 4:4-5). The Son provided the righteous basis for the bestowal of God's love, mercy and grace upon the human family. Christ, as the Federal Head of a redeemed race, stood in the stead of sinners in life and in death, fulfilling every jot and tittle of the law and then dying the Just for the unjust. Consequently our Lord said, *I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me* (John 14:6).

It is evident then that salvation was accomplished by the grace of God through the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no place in the gospel of the grace of God for the corrupting influence of man's self-efforts, because *no lie is of the truth*. In this regard our Lord made an interesting statement to the Jews when He said, *Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness* (Luke 11:35).

It must be remembered that Jesus made this statement to the Jews while they were the custodians of the truth. If a man's hope is based upon a lie, it is a false hope. He is in darkness. No matter how much of the truth the tares express, they are still in darkness. The more truth they espouse, the more difficult it is to identify them. Nevertheless one of the primary keys to their identification is found in the heresy that was preached at Galatia. Paul wrote:

O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect

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by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? (Galatians 3:1-5)

The teaching of the Judaizers who came to Galatia is typical of the teaching of the tares.

The Judaizers said the Gentiles could not be saved unless they were first circumcised according to the law of Moses. After their circumcision, the Judaizers required the Galatians to keep the law of Moses in order to be saved. This requirement of ritual and law for salvation was a corruption of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and Paul called it *another gospel*. This error has not disappeared. There are many churches under the canopy of Christianity that have substituted baptism for circumcision; and, from puberty on, they have made their members responsible to the law of Moses, as well as the laws of the church, to maintain their salvation. Those who hold this kind of a position preach *another gospel* instead of the gospel of the saving grace of Jesus Christ. They are tares and not wheat.

Paul's warning to the Corinthian church is a disclosure of the truth contained in the parable of the tares among the wheat. The ministers of Satan transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, so they profess to be ministers of Jesus Christ. Instead of preaching the Righteousness of God, which is Jesus Christ, they preach the righteousness of man. Consequently they have a form of godliness, but they deny the power of genuine godliness, which is imputed to the believer by judicial decree. They preach a counterfeit gospel, with a counterfeit Jesus, and by the power of a counterfeit spirit. This should not awe us. Satan has already done the same thing during the public ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember our Lord said: *Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he*

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it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve (John 6:70)

Judas was declared to be a devil, *diabolos*; so he must have been possessed by, or an incarnation of the devil, because there is only one devil (despite the fact that in the King James Bible the Greek word for *demon* is translated *devil*). Satan himself was transformed into an angel of light, a minister of Jesus Christ, in the person of Judas Iscariot, and his ministry was indistinguishable from the ministries of the other apostles. The devil's counterfeits are very effective, because the devil is not opposed to giving lip service to Jesus Christ, if by doing so he can keep the unsaved of this world in darkness.

Finally, in the sermon on the mount, when our Lord spoke of the broad gate and the narrow gate, it is evident that the broad gate that leads to destruction encompasses the tares, who preach in Jesus' name, and cast out demons in His name, and do many wonderful works in His name. He said of them, ... *depart from me ye who work [the] iniquity, I never knew you (Matthew 7:23)*. This roadway also includes all of the other religious systems of this world, as well as all of those who believe nothing at all because they have all accepted *a way which seemeth right unto a man* as a way of life.

Our Lord invited the nation of Israel (as well as the Gentile nations of the world) to: *Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it (Matthew 7:13-14)*.

The strait gate is entered in by the good seed of the Sower; which has been, and is, sown by the preaching of the gospel of the saving grace of Jesus Christ, *which is to them that perish,*

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foolishness, but unto us who are saved, it is the power of God (I Corinthians 1:18).

Chapter XII

The Flesh and the Spirit in the Church Age

THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

The third parable spoken by our Lord in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew was the parable of a grain of mustard seed. He told the multitude who were gathered to hear Him: *The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof* (Matthew 13:31-32).

This parable, as well as all of the parables in the thirteenth chapter of the book of Matthew, is concerned with the kingdom of heaven, which is the realm of the truth. The realm of the truth was once under the custodianship of Israel; but with her apostasy and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the realm of the truth is presently under the custodianship of the New Testament Church. Thus, as we consider each of the parables in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, we shall see a progressive revelation of the realm of the truth between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks

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of Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27).

The seventy weeks of Daniel are concerned with Daniel's people and Daniel's city, the Jews and Jerusalem (Daniel 9:24); but even though it could not be seen when the prophecy of the seventy weeks was given to Daniel, there is a gap between the sixty-ninth week and the seventieth week of the prophecy. Christ was to be crucified (*cut off*) at the end of the sixty-ninth week according to the prophecy, and the seventieth week will not begin until the prince from the fourth world empire makes a covenant with Israel for one week (Daniel 9:24-27; Revelation 17:8-11). This gap (of nearly two-thousand years to date) between the sixty-ninth week and the seventieth week provides us with an overview of the present church age.

In keeping with this, our Lord said to Israel, *Behold, your house is left unto you desolate*. He also said to those believers who would be used of the Lord to start this church age, *Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it* (Matthew 16:18). Thus, ten days after our Lord's ascension into heaven (on the day of Pentecost), the Lord empowered His church to be the custodian of the truth until the main harvest of the first resurrection, when the church age will end. Consequently the realm of the truth in the age between our Lord's ascension and His coming in the air is found in the church and not in Israel; but, with the rapture of the church, Israel (in the one hundred and forty-four thousand witnesses) will become the custodian of the truth again during the seventieth week of Daniel.

With this in mind, as we consider the mustard seed, we must compare it with the other seed sown by the sower and by His enemy. The wheat, by our Lord's interpretation of the second parable, was the word of the kingdom, which is the proclamation of the Word of God in the

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gospel. This makes the tares sown by the enemy *another gospel*. The sower and the enemy both sowed a considerable amount of seed in the field, but in contrast to this, the sower planted a single seed of mustard. This seed then grew into a tree. This means it grew far beyond its cultivatable size, which becomes the point of the parable. It grew so large it became a habitation for birds, which were interpreted by our Lord in His first parable to be the devil.

In this age we use mustard for a condiment or as a spice; however, in time past (in the age in which the parable was spoken), mustard had several medicinal uses. It was used as a diuretic, an emetic, and as a counterirritant. It would seem, because of these medicinal values, the mustard was planted for the spiritual healing of those who are dead in trespasses and in sin. This is the role of the church. Comparing the church with the Word of God, which it is to preach, the church certainly has a subordinate role to the Living Word and the written Word of God. Consequently our Lord was not making a reference to the physical size of the mustard seed when He said it was *the least of all seeds*, but to the fact that the mustard seed was of less importance than the other seed sown by the sower.

The reason there was but one grain of mustard planted is that all genuine believers are a part of the singular body of Christ, which is called the church: His called-out assembly. Even so there are many churches of many denominations, but all of the true believers in those churches are a part of the one true church, which is the body of Christ. Multiple churches are addressed in the second and third chapters of the book of the Revelation; there are seven letters to seven churches. Yet in the twenty-first chapter of the Revelation there is an invitation of the angel to the apostle John to *Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife*. John was then able to see the

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new Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God. The description of the city reveals that everyone in the Lamb's book of life is a resident of that city. Thus, the called-out assembly of our Lord Jesus Christ, which we call the church, is the bride of Christ, which are the redeemed of all ages and of all nations, both Jews and Gentiles, and not just those who are redeemed in what we call the present church age.

The Scriptures teach us that our Lord Jesus Christ is the living Word which came down from heaven: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth* (John 1:1-3 & 14).

Further, our Lord said, *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my Word shall never pass away.* Thus our Lord Jesus Christ is the living Word; and in the interpretation of the parable of the tares and wheat, we have seen that the sowing of the wheat seed represents the preaching of the Word of God: which declares the living Word. Later in the same gospel, our Lord said: *Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit* (John 12:24).

As a result of the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the proclamation of this in the gospel, God has brought forth a crop of *children of God* in the kingdom of God. These children of God, assembled together for the furtherance of the gospel, make up the church of God: the singular mustard plant. All who are a part of that plant are to have the

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attitude of John the Baptist, *He must increase, but I must decrease* (John 3:30). Therefore the mustard seed is indeed less than the other seed sown by the sower.

Despite the fact that the church in Jerusalem started out well and maintained its subordinate role to the Lord Jesus Christ and the message He gave it to preach, it had its problems with the legalistic *other gospel* of the Judaizers. Then, with the expansion of the gospel into the Gentile nations of the world by the ministry of Paul and Barnabas, almost immediately there was a corruption of the churches by the *other gospel* of the Judaizers. Paul fought this *other gospel* in all of the churches he had established, counteracting *a way which seemeth right unto a man* with the truth of the Word of God. Nevertheless the devil's lie had its effect.

This brings us to the unchecked growth of the mustard plant, which manifested itself primarily in Rome, the capital city of the Roman world. Emperor Constantine professed to be a believer in Jesus Christ. He also professed to have seen a vision of a cross in the air, with the command, *By this sign conquer*. As the Roman legions went forth into the world, they did not preach the gospel, but forced the conquered into streams and lakes, under threat of death, to become, by this so-called baptism, Christians. Thus with the political and religious expansion of Rome, the mustard plant became like a tree, which provided a place for the devil to lodge in its uppermost branches, or under the shade of it.

The church, which had been planted for the healing of the nations, had become (in its several parts) a place for Satan's ministers to operate. Consequently, from most of the so-called churches of Jesus Christ, we find the devil's ministers spewing forth *another gospel*. The whole system has the approval of the world, because it preaches a message which agrees with the way

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the world thinks. As the mustard plant gets larger and larger, the larger it gets, the more approval it gains from the world, and the more apostate it becomes towards God.

In previous studies, we have learned that man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart. Consequently the unchecked growth of the mustard plant has the approval of man. It has his approval because it gives him something of which he can boast. It gives man a message that agrees with his natural mind. It gives man a sense of superiority and pride because it is big. And it gives man a sense of importance because his church is recognized throughout the world. Thus the devil continues his seduction of the human family by providing them with exactly what they want.

Chapter XIII

The Flesh and the Spirit in the Church Age

THE PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN

The fourth parable in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew is about leaven. Our Lord was still speaking to the multitude when He said: *The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; without a parable spake he not unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world* (Matthew 13:33-35).

Our Lord's statement, *The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven*, has been misinterpreted by some to be a good thing. They have represented the leaven to be the gospel. Postmillennialism holds the position that the whole world will be converted by the gospel, just as leaven causes a loaf of bread to rise, and then the Lord will come to His Kingdom.

This theory fails of sound interpretation in many respects, even though the gospel will be

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preached in all of the world before the coming of our Lord. First, leaven is never used in the Scriptures in a good, ethical sense. For example, Paul referred to the false gospel of the Judaizers as leaven. He wrote, *A little leaven, leaveneth the whole lump*; and after our Lord's feeding of the four thousand *when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread. Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisee and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees (Matthew 16:5-12, emphasis mine).* Further, in the account recorded in Mark's gospel, our Lord *charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod (Mark 8:15, emphasis mine).*

By putting these two accounts together it is easily seen that our Lord warned of three kinds of leaven: the leaven of the Pharisees, the leaven of the Sadducees, and the leaven of Herod. The leaven of the Pharisees was hypocrisy (Luke 12:1) born of legalism and self-righteousness; the leaven of the Sadducees was a denial of spiritual truth; and the leaven of Herod looked to establish the kingdom of God on earth by political means. The leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees is easier to recognize in the Scriptures than the leaven of Herod. Even so there is Scriptural and

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historical evidence to suggest that at least two members of the house of Herod (Herod the Great and Herod Agrippa I) believed themselves to be the Messiah; and even though it cannot be stated with absolute certainty, it is likely all of the Herods believed this of themselves. They were Idumaeen usurpers. Their authority to reign over the Jews was given to them by the Romans. Thus, contrary to God's promise to David and the curse placed upon Coniah (Jeremiah 22:24-30), they reigned where only Christ (because of His virgin birth) should reign.

The Pharisees were fundamentally sound in their beliefs. They believed in the authority of the Scriptures; they believed in heaven and in hell; they believed in a literal, physical resurrection from the dead, and many other fundamental truths from the Word of God; but they believed they could establish their righteousness before God by a system of Rabbinical interpretations of the law, which made the law of none effect. Thus they trusted in themselves that they were righteous:

And [our Lord] spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. (Luke 18:9-14, emphasis mine)

While the Pharisees might be termed the *fundamentalists* of Judaism, the Sadducees could be called the *modernists*. They denied virtually everything the Pharisees believed. They did not believe in heaven or hell; nor in angels or spirits; and most certainly they did not believe in the resurrection from the dead. Even so, like the Pharisees, they trusted in themselves that they were

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righteous and could be compared today to the intellectuals under the canopy of Christianity.

The third form of leaven came from the Herodians, who believed that Herod was the Christ. This made them unpopular with the Pharisees and with most of the common people. Despite this, about fourteen years after the nation of Israel rejected Jesus as the Christ and crucified Him, the majority of the nation accepted the view of the Herodians and believed Herod Agrippa I to be their Messiah. The Roman emperor Claudius wrote extensively about his friend Herod Agrippa I in his history translated by Robert Graves and entitled by Graves, *Claudius the God*:

Let me first tell in what an exalted mood King Herod Agrippa came up from Jerusalem to Caesarea to the festival that had been prepared there in honour of my birthday....

He had already revealed himself, in secret, to the High Priest and the Sanhedrin, and they had all with one accord bowed themselves to the ground and glorified God and acknowledged him as the prophesied Messiah. (*Claudius the God*, Robert Graves, Random House, New York, 1935, renewed 1962, pages 315-316)

The apostle Luke, in Acts chapter twelve, also wrote about the occasion when Herod came to Caesarea: *And when Herod had sought for [Peter], and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and there abode. And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country. And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the*

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ghost (Acts 12:19-23, emphasis mine).

After Herod was smitten of worms, it took him five days to die. This information is supplied to us by Claudius, who received a letter from Herod apologizing for his attempt to take over the eastern half of the Roman empire as the Messiah. Claudius wrote the following account:

The Jews put on sackcloth and lay in their tens of thousands prostrate on the ground about the Palace, even in the terrible heat. Agrippa saw them from the window of the upper room where his bed was laid and began to weep for them. "Poor Jews," he said, "You have waited a thousand years, and must now wait a thousand more, perhaps two thousand, before your day of glory breaks. This has been a false dawn. I deceived myself and I deceived you." (op. cit. pg. 320)

The second thing that prevents leaven from representing the gospel is that the world is not going to be wholly converted to Jesus Christ before Christ returns to establish His kingdom on the earth. In fact our Lord promised the revelation of the antichrist and the great tribulation (*the time of Jacob's trouble*) before His return:

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because [the] iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor

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ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. (Matthew 24:4-30, emphasis mine)

It is true that the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all of the world before the return of our Lord to this earth; but the inhabitants of this earth, for the most part, are not going to receive the gospel. Conditions will get worse and worse before the day of the Lord, when our Lord returns to establish His kingdom on this earth; and the day of the Lord, when He returns to the earth with all of His saints, will be a terrible day of judgment.

The third thing that prevents the leaven from being the gospel is the fact that it was a woman who took three measures of meal and hid leaven within the meal. This woman is out of place if the leaven represents the gospel, for women were never ordained of God to preach the gospel. In fact they are specifically commanded not to usurp authority over the man:

I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. (I Timothy 2:8-14. emphasis mine)

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Additionally, while there is a good deal of Scripture which speaks to the qualifications of those who are to oversee the church of God, there is not one word of qualifications for women for this same task:

This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. (I Timothy 3:1-7)

Our Lord's parable declared that the woman took three measures of meal and hid leaven in the meal. Since we have discovered three different types of leaven in Scripture -- the doctrine of the Pharisees, the doctrine of the Sadducees, and the doctrine of Herod -- it would seem that the three measures of meal is a reference to this fact.

The fourth thing about the leaven and the action of the woman that prevents it from representing the gospel is that the woman hid the leaven in meal; whereas the preaching of the gospel, by its very nature, is an overt, not a clandestine, operation. Our Lord said: *All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen* (Matthew 28:18-20).

The fifth and final thing that prevents the leaven from representing the gospel is that the leaven was placed in three measures of meal. The meal is a product of the seed that was sown in

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the first two parables, so that the wheat has now been ground into meal. Thus it seems to represent an assembly of believers in Jesus Christ, which suffered for a while by its faithful ministry, but was then corrupted with false doctrine by a woman, perhaps the whore, Babylon the great, of the seventeenth chapter of the Revelation.

It is certainly true of the Roman church, which is the woman of the seventeenth chapter of the Revelation, that she has corrupted many under the canopy of Christianity. This ultimately produced the protestant reformation movement and a separation from her. Despite this, the ecumenical movement of these last days is causing a return to Rome of the churches that separated from her during the reformation movement. Perhaps these churches are the ten toes of Daniel two, or the ten horns of Revelation seventeen. Further there is no question that the Roman church is steeped in self-righteousness, the denial of spiritual truth, and has sought to rule over the kings of this earth.

Since the leaven is the false doctrine of the Pharisees, the Sadducees and Herod, we can expect false doctrine to be preached in the body of Christ until the whole body has been affected by it. The apostle Paul spoke of the apostasy of the church in the eleventh chapter of the book of Romans; and in his letter to the Thessalonians, he taught that apostasy within the church would be one of the signs of the soon return of our Lord to this earth:

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first [an apostasy], and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. (II Thessalonians 2:1-4, emphasis mine)

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In this parable about leaven, our Lord was teaching His disciples that in the realm of that which is called the kingdom of God (Christendom), before His return to this earth the so-called church of Jesus Christ will be permeated with false teaching of three different varieties: hypocrisy, born of self-righteousness by the adding of the commandments and doctrines of men into the gospel of the saving grace of Jesus Christ; denial of spiritual truth, born of so-called scholarship which has replaced the clear teaching of the Word of God with the so-called wisdom of men; and finally the incorporation of civil law upon the inhabitants of this earth to make them subject to laws of *touch not, taste not and handle not*: to establish a moral society -- what they believe to be the kingdom of God upon this earth.

From what I have been observing in the flyers and papers I receive, this permeation of leaven has also included an attempt by man to preserve the environment to the exclusion of using the resources God has given us. There is a vast difference between the proper use of the resources of the earth and the maniacal declaration that virtually everything is on the endangered species list. Further I believe this explains the judgments that will come upon the earth during the great tribulation period when, in a moment of time, one-third of all sea life will perish, as will one-third of the trees and the vegetation of the earth. Rather than using (not abusing) the resources of this earth as God has commanded, man is bent on preserving them in denial of the Word of God. This is merely a reiteration of the truth, *Man by wisdom knows not God*.

Thus, in closing this chapter, I have one final thought on the statement, *till the whole was leavened*. This totally leavened condition cannot exist as long as there remains a testimony to the truth upon this earth; but when the Lord resurrects the true church out of this world, the whole

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of professing Christendom that remains will be leavened.

Chapter XIV
The Two Sons of God

The Flesh and the Spirit in the Church Age

By

THE PARABLES OF THE TREASURE HID IN THE FIELD
AND THE DEAR OF GREAT PRICE

After completing the parable of the leaven, our Lord sent the multitude away and went into the house. There the disciples asked the interpretation of the parable of the tares and wheat, which our Lord readily supplied. The Lord then spoke three more parables to his disciples, which were meant for the ears of believers and not for the multitude. The first of these was the parable of the treasure hid in a field. Our Lord said: *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field* (Matthew 13:44).

Once again the understanding of this parable is dependent upon the parables that have preceded it. The field is the world. The man who found the treasure in the field is the Lord. There is only one new thing in this parable. It is the treasure, and the treasure is Israel. This corresponds to Biblical history. Seven generations of the lineage of Jacob went into Egypt where,

Eugene, Oregon

The Parables of the Treasure Hid in the Field and the Pearl of Great Price under the rule of Joseph, they were in favor with the Egyptians and grew into a great nation. This nation was named for Jacob, whose name God changed to Israel. After some time in Egypt, Israel came into bondage to the Egyptians by a pharaoh who knew not Joseph.

Four hundred and thirty years earlier, God had promised Abraham, *thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs*. As the plan unfolded, God promised to redeem Israel out of Egypt by the sacrifice of the Passover lamb, which was a portrayal of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Both prophetically and typically, the redemption of Israel out of Egypt represents the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. This, in turn, corresponds to the man in the parable of the hid treasure, who sold all that he had to purchase the field. The Lord purchased the field to obtain the treasure. This not only provided redemption for the elect of Israel, but also for the elect out of the nations of this world by the one sacrifice for sins forever.

Despite God's deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage, Israel immediately put herself under bondage through the Mosaic law. This law was not made to provide for Israel's self-justification before God, but rather her condemnation, which would reveal her absolute need of salvation in Jesus Christ. While pledging her allegiance to Jehovah, she became enslaved to the idolatry of the nations round about her, which necessitated her judgment. The northern ten tribes of Israel were carried into Assyrian bondage; and less than two hundred years later, the tribes of Benjamin and Judah were carried away to Babylon.

After spending seventy years in captivity, less than fifty thousand Jews returned to the land to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and the temple. These continued to the time of Herod the Great, who made a covenant with Israel to completely rebuild Zerubbabel's temple. It was during the

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time of the rebuilding of this temple that our Lord came in His first advent to be born of a virgin; to fulfill every jot and tittle of the law; to die a vicarious sacrifice for sin; to be raised from the dead after three days and three nights; to ascend into heaven to be the believer's eternal High Priest and intercessor. The apostle John declared this, when he wrote:

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But 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 man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:10-14)

While this portion of Scripture speaks of the fact that the majority in the nation of Israel did not receive the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, this could not dissuade Him from His ministry to fulfill all righteousness and every jot and tittle of the law, and then to willingly offer Himself as a ransom for the sins of the whole world.

At the coming of our Lord to perform His predestined ministry in behalf of Israel and the world, He was openly rejected by the religious leaders in Israel. They, in turn, persuaded the majority of the people to reject Him. In the rejection of our Lord, the Jews cried, *His blood be on us, and on our children*. This self-inflicted curse fell upon the nation almost immediately in the destruction of Jerusalem and in their many persecutions throughout the years when they were scattered among the Gentile nations of the world.

The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. caused Israel to be re-hidden in the field. In this judgment, the Jews were dispersed among the nations, where they have been hidden all of these years. In fulfillment of numerous prophetic statements in Scripture, on May 14, 1948, Israel became a nation again. Thus the treasure hid in the field has reemerged to announce the soon

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return of the Lord Jesus Christ to this earth. Israel's reemergence as a nation proves God has not cast away His people, whom He foreknew. *The man* purchased the field to obtain the treasure.

Therefore a remnant in Israel shall be saved. The apostle Paul wrote:

... Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of [Elijah]? How he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (according as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompense unto them: let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway. I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them [Israel] to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness? (Romans 11:1-12)

God has had a remnant of genuine believers in every age who have accepted the truth of the gospel. The treasure hid in the field is the remnant out of Israel. God promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that all of the families of the earth would be blessed through *their seed*. Jesus Christ is that *Seed*. Thus Jesus is the only man who could sell all that he had and purchase the field. When Jesus bought the field to obtain the treasure, He also provided for the salvation of the world. Thus all of the families of the earth are blessed by the purchase of the field. This leads us to the sixth parable in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew. This parable is the parable of a merchant man seeking goodly pearls. Our Lord said: *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went*

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and sold all that he had, and bought it (Matthew 13:45-46).

The merchant man corresponds to the man in the previous parables. His identification is further corroborated by the price he paid for the pearl. The merchant man sold all that he had to purchase the one pearl of great price. The price that was paid for the pearl is the same price that was paid for the field, which contained the treasure. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary paid for the treasure hid in the field, and it paid for the pearl of great price.

The new thing in this parable is the pearl. Pearls are formed in the sea. The pearl represents something of great value, which is drawn from the sea. Since the sea represents the Gentile nations of the world in Scripture, the pearl of great price represents the redeemed out of the nations of the world, both Jews and Gentiles. This is true because the church (God's called-out assembly) is the one thing of great value, which is drawn from the Gentile nations of the world by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary.

The treasure hid in the field awaits its redemption at the end of the age, when they will look on Him, Whom they pierced. Even so, at the present time, both Jews and Gentiles are being saved through the world-wide ministry of the church, in which there is neither Jew nor Gentile, male or female, bond or free. The apostle Paul wrote:

... God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

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that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of [the] promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both [Jew and Gentile] one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us. Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain [Jew and Gentile] one new man [His called-out assembly], so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body [His called-out assembly] by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off [the Gentile], and to them that were nigh [the Jew]. For through him we both [Jew and Gentile] have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints [Old Testament saints], and of the household of God [New Testament saints]; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles [New Testament saints] and prophets [Old Testament saints], Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:4-22)

Thus the church, the pearl of great price, is a homogenous body of believers, both Jews and Gentiles, who have become one body by faith in Jesus Christ. The church is the only place where Jews and Gentiles have an opportunity to serve the Lord in this present age. Judaism has been abandoned because of its apostasy. The treasure has been re-hidden in the field. The treasure will reemerge to be the witness to the truth during the tribulation period; but at the present time God is operating through the pearl of great price until the time of the first resurrection. Once this age is complete, the term church (*ekklesia*: a called-out assembly) will take on its larger meaning and will emerge as the bride of Christ, which according to Revelation 21:27 will be *they which are written in the Lamb's book of life*. Thus the treasure hid in the field and the pearl of great price will merge into the one body of Christ, which is His bride, at the end of the age.

Chapter XV

The Flesh and the Spirit in the Church Age

THE PARABLE OF A NET CAST INTO THE SEA

We come now to the seventh and final parable. It is the parable of a net cast into the sea. Our Lord said: *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth* (Matthew 13:47-50).

At the beginning of this study of the seven parables in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, we stated, the sea represents the Gentile nations of the world. This is borne out in a vision of Daniel's in the seventh chapter of the book of Daniel, where he revealed a vision in which four beasts arose from the sea. Prophetically this indicated that there would be four Gentile world empires that would arise from the Mediterranean world. They were to reign from the time of the

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prophecy until the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon the earth.

Daniel had been carried into captivity in Babylon by the emperor of the first kingdom, and near the end of his life, Daniel saw the Jews returned from captivity by the emperor of the second kingdom. Daniel related his vision as follows: *And four great beast came up from the sea, diverse one from another. The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it. And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh. After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns* (Daniel 7:3-7).

The four beasts of Daniel's vision are four world kingdoms. The first three have passed into history, and the fourth kingdom is still in existence. The three kingdoms which have passed into history are Babylon, Persia and Greece. The fourth kingdom is the Roman empire. It declined politically about 480 A.D. However it still has existence in the Roman church, and it will have political power once again under the rule of the antichrist prior to the return of Christ. Thus, in the prophetic language of the prophecy, it is revealed that the fourth empire was to be in power at the first advent of Christ and also at His second advent:

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This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.

And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with [brittle] clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with [brittle] clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure. (Daniel 2:36-45)

These two prophecies, one from the seventh chapter of Daniel and the other from the second chapter of Daniel, reveal the same truth: from the age of Daniel until the second coming of Jesus Christ to establish His Kingdom on this earth, there will be four Gentile world empires which will have a relationship with Israel. It is important to understand that Israel's history, prophetically speaking, is defined by another prophecy given to Daniel by the angel Gabriel: *Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and the prophecy, and to anoint the most holy* (Daniel 9:24-25, emphasis mine). Therefore, with regard to the Jews, we are only concerned with Gentile empires that fall within the parameters of these seventy weeks. Further, because the prophecy

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goes on to say that Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself, we know that Christ was crucified at the end of the sixty-ninth week of the prophecy.

When Gabriel gave the prophecy to Daniel it was shrouded in mystery. So at that time it was not possible to know there would be a parenthesis between the sixty-ninth and the seventieth weeks of the prophecy. Neither was it possible to know that each week of the prophecy would be seven years in duration. However, with the crucifixion of Christ four hundred and eighty-three years (69 X 7) after the decree of Cyrus to restore and to build Jerusalem, the time elements of the prophecy are now understood: the first sixty-nine weeks of the prophecy were sequential and the seventieth week is separated from the others by the period of the church age. This separation of the seventieth week from the sixty-nine weeks is not directly stated in the prophecy, but it certainly is implied:

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks [a total of 69 X 7]: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince [Vespasian in 70 A.D.] that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

And he [the eighth ruler of the fourth empire (Revelations 17:9-11)] shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate. (Daniel 9:25-27, emphasis mine)

Therefore we are presently in a parenthetical period of time between the sixty-ninth and the seventieth weeks of the prophecy. This is the period of time of our Lord's seven parables. It is the church age which was revealed prophetically in the feast of Pentecost. This feast was observed between the first three feasts of the Jews (which were fulfilled in our Lord's first advent)

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and the last three feasts of the Jews (which will be fulfilled in our Lord's second advent). The parenthetical period of the church age will end with the first resurrection (probably at the feast of trumpets), and the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy will begin when the antichrist makes a covenant with Israel for the final week of the prophecy (Daniel 9:27).

Even though Julius Caesar came to power more than two thousand years ago, Rome is still in power, not so much as a political empire but as a religious empire. Despite her present non-political status, Rome still wields great political clout in the world, and she shall reign over the nations of world once again with the advent of the antichrist.

In the seventh chapter of Daniel, the fourth empire was described as being *diverse* from the other empires. *Diverse* is a translation of the Hebrew word *shena*. *Shena* comes from *Yashen*, which can mean *to remain a long time*. Thus long-lasting is an apt description of the Roman empire. It existed as a political empire for more than five hundred years; but prior to its political decline, the empire and the church merged during the reign of Constantine in the fourth century A.D. This was the actual beginning of the Roman Catholic Church, even though the Roman church claims a succession of popes all the way back to the apostle Peter.

The parable of a net cast into the sea has its fulfillment in the latter days of this last world empire. It is about reaping a harvest from among the Gentile nations of the world, because in the typology of the Scriptures the sea represents the Gentile nations of the world. Thus this parable is an allusion to gathering a harvest of souls out of the nations of the world. While it is the ministry of the church to harvest souls from the nations of the world through the preaching of the gospel, this ingathering (by virtue of casting a net into the sea) seems to present the method used

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to accomplish mass evangelism.

This method of preaching began to arise late in the nineteenth century, with evangelists like Billy Sunday, Dwight L. Moody, and about the middle of the twentieth century, Billy Graham. The campaigns of these, and many others like them, have stressed results by getting men, women, boys and girls to *make a decision for Christ*. The preaching of these men, at times, seems to have been more about reformation than salvation. Even so the gospel has gone forth and according to the parable of the net cast into the sea, both good and bad have been enclosed within the net.

When Billy Graham began his evangelistic career in Los Angeles during the 1950s, he insisted upon cooperative meetings of everyone under the canopy of Christianity within the area of the meetings. No one was to be excluded on the basis of doctrine. This has been Mr. Graham's *modus operandi* ever since. With this method and with a strong emphasis upon changing one's life, as well as some emphasis upon the gospel, the invitation has been given; and with the efforts of the *personal workers* in the audience, myriads of individual have been drawn into the net to make *decisions for Christ*, whether God gave the increase or not. Thus, according to the parable, it will take the angels to discern those who were redeemed from those who were not.

The parable of the net cast into the sea shows the results of those who have been deceived by two doctrines, the doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes. Balaam was an Old Testament prophet who taught the nation of Israel to violate their separation from the idolatrous people around them. Billy Graham has taught the church the same thing. Thus there is an indictment against this practice in the book of the Revelation, where our Lord said: *I have a few*

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things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate (Revelation 2:14-15).

The spiritual fornication of the nation of Israel, due to the counsel of Balaam, resulted in the ultimate apostasy of the nation of Israel. By the same token, the two doctrines, mentioned in the indictment of the church at Pergamos, are producing the same results in the church. These two doctrines are very subtle. Like everything else that is contrary to God, they have their roots in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and find ready acceptance in carnal minds -- minds ignorant of the Word of God.

The doctrine of Balaam usually calls for unity for unity's sake. It defends itself by indicating that a separation on the basis of doctrine undermines God's instructions to the church that we are to love one another. It totally disregards John's instructions to the church: *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.* *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of [the]*

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truth, and the spirit of [the] error (I John 4:1-6, emphasis mine).

The second false doctrine that seeks to undermine the faith, which will result in the apostasy of the church, is the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes. This doctrine has been misunderstood by many to be the difference between the laity and the clergy in the Roman church. This was the position of Dr. C. I. Scofield. Even so this interpretation does not fit the truth of the Scriptures. The word, *Nicolaitanes* is a compound of two Greek words: *nikao*, which means *to conquer*, and *laos*, which means *the people*. The term, Nicolaitanes, means the opposite of what Doctor Scofield believed. It means *the people rule*. This meaning finds expression all through the Word of God.

The rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram is a prime example of the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes. God called Moses and Aaron to rule and to lead His people, Israel, but Korah, Dathan and Abiram *rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?* (Numbers 16:2-3)

Korah placed himself and his company above the authority of the Word of God, and God showed His displeasure with this action by sending fire from heaven, which destroyed the two hundred and fifty princes, and the remainder of the rebels were swallowed up of the earth. Then God reestablished the authority of Moses and Aaron with the budding of Aaron's rod.

God has always used individual men, called of God, to lead His people. The Scripture says

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the people are like sheep having no shepherd. The idea of congregational rule within the church of Jesus Christ has subjected the man of God, who knows the Word of God, to the whims of the people, who by comparison know very little of the Word of God. The desires of the people, along with their lack of understanding, leads the people away from the truth of the Word of God. In the average church of today, the people have total control of the church, and the pastor does not dare to incite their displeasure.

It is commonly believed that the salvation of souls, within a particular ministry, automatically stamps the approval of God upon the ministry. This is a misconceived idea. God honors His Word no matter who preaches it. It is the Word of God and the Spirit of God which effects salvation, not the schemes of men. In fact the apostle Paul wrote:

Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: the one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel. What then? Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. (Philippians 1:15-18)

It should be evident, by the improper method suggested by the use of a net cast into the sea, the salvation of souls is not an approval of the method. In fact this method has added appreciably to the apostasy of the later-day church: seeing that the net encloses both good and bad fish, and both are accounted as believers within the church. Consequently the increased apostasy is a sign of the soon return of our Lord Jesus Christ:

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away [apostasy] first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition. (II Thessalonians 2:1-3)

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As we race toward the end of this church age, the apostasy within the church of Jesus Christ increases. The errors of Balaam and the Nicolaitanes are both very prevalent: doctrine is disdained and the people rule. All of the failures of Israel, which were written for the church's admonition and instruction, are ignored. The church races along the same course that Israel ran, making the same mistakes and exhibiting the same arrogance.

These parables have given us a picture of the flesh and the Spirit in the church age. After the final parable of a net cast into the sea, Jesus spoke unto His disciples and said: *Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord. Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old* (Matthew 13:51-52).

With our Lord, I wish to ask the same question, *Have you understood all of these things?* I hope your answer will also be, *Yes, we understand.* If so, those of you who are in the ministry, heed the admonition of the Lord. Draw from your treasure things old and new. Teach your people the Word of God. Teach your people the difference between the flesh and the Spirit. Teach them the difference between the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Teach your people to live by faith, by heeding the Word of God and rejecting the counsel of man that is contrary to the Word of God. Teach your people that Jesus said: *It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life* (John 6:63). Finally, be faithful to the truth of the Word of God that you may present your people as a *chaste virgin to Christ.* May the Lord bless those of you who love His Word and long for His coming!