

## Lesson Thirty-One

**WHAT GOD DID THROUGH THE PATRIARCHS**

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Scripture Reading: Heb. 11:1-22.

Scripture to Memorize: "Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). "Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him" (Heb. 11:6). "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things make it manifest that they are seeking after a country of their own. And if indeed they had been mindful of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. 11:13-16).

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49. Q. What was the first revealed religion?  
 A. The Patriarchal Religion.
50. Q. What was the Patriarchal Religion?  
 A. It was the religion which prevailed in earliest times, and which was administered by heads of families, men of great faith in God.
51. Q. By what name are these men of faith of the most ancient times, known in the Scriptures?  
 A. They are known as the Patriarchs.

Acts 7:8, 9—"and Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob the twelve patriarchs. And the patriarchs, moved with jealousy against Joseph, sold him into Egypt." Heb. 7:4—"Abraham, the patriarch." Acts 2:29—"the patriarch David." etc.

52. Q. Where do we find the history of the Patriarchal Era?  
 A. In the book of Genesis.
53. Q. Who were the Patriarchs?  
 A. They were men of the most ancient times, who governed their respective families or descendants by paternal right.
54. Q. What is the common designation for Patriarchal government and religion?  
 A. It is commonly known as family government and religion, in that the family was the social unit.

As a matter of fact, the family, and not the individual, has been the primary social unit from the beginning of time. The race began with the first family, of which Adam was the father and head, and Eve the mother. God Himself instituted marriage, the home and the family. See Gen. 2:18-25.

55. Q. What was the Patriarchal form of government?  
 A. It was that form of government which prevailed in the most ancient times, in which the father of the family retained and exercised authority over his descendants as long as he lived.
56. Q. What was the Patriarchal form of religion?  
 A. It was that form of religion in which the Patriarch or father of the family acted as mediator between God and the members of his household.
57. Q. What three offices were administered by a Patriarch by divine authority?  
 A. The offices of prophet, priest and king.

(1) As prophet, the Patriarch received God's revelations and handed them on to his household. (2) As priest, he acted as mediator between God and his family, in all the exercises and ordinances of worship; and offered sacrifices for his own sins and the sins of his household. (3) As king,

he was the ruler of his household, and his will was the absolute law from which there was no appeal. The Patriarch retained this authority over his descendants as long as he lived, regardless of any new connections they may have formed.

**58. Q. Who were the outstanding men of the Patriarchal Era?**

**A. They were: Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.**

(1) Adam, the first man, was the progenitor of the human race. (2) The name of Abel, one of his sons, has gone down in sacred history, in connection with the first recorded instance of sacrifice, as a man of great faith. Gen. 4:1-8, Heb. 11:4. (3) Enoch, who was in the direct line from Adam to Noah, through Seth, was a man of such great faith and piety that God translated him "that he should not see death." Gen. 5:21-24, Heb. 11:5. (4) Noah is described as "a righteous man, and perfect in his generations" (Gen. 6:9). It was through Noah that God perpetuated the human race and preserved His Plan of Redemption for man, after sweeping away the iniquitous antediluvian world in the Deluge. The name of Noah will always be associated in our thinking with the building of the Ark. Gen. chs. 6-9, Heb. 11:7. (5) Abraham was perhaps the greatest of all the Patriarchs. He was originally a Chaldean, until God called him out of Ur of the Chaldees and made him the father of the Hebrew people. It was with Abraham and his posterity that God originated and established the old testament. Gen. chs. 12-25, Heb. 11:8-19. (6) Isaac, the child of promise, was the son of Abraham and Sarah. Gen. chs. 21-27, Heb. 11:20. (7) Jacob was the son of Isaac and Rebekah. His name was later changed to Israel, from which the terms "children of Israel" and "Israelites" were derived. He was the father of the twelve "princes" who became the heads of the twelve tribes. Gen.

chs. 27-49, Heb. 11:21. (8) Joseph, the son of Jacob and Rachel, was sold by his brothers into Egyptian bondage, and was subsequently exalted to the high office of Prime Minister of that great nation. Gen. chs. 37-50, Heb. 11:22. The Hebrew people still look back to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as their national forbears.

59. Q. **What fundamental institution of true religion did God establish through the Patriarchs?**

A. **The Altar.**

60. Q. **What fundamental ordinance of true religion did God establish through the Patriarchs?**

A. **The ordinance of Sacrifice.**

61. Q. **What first essential principle of true religion did God establish through the Patriarchs?**

A. **The very first principle of true religion, namely, that apart from the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin (Lev. 17:11, Heb. 9:22).**

62. Q. **Why did God require that sacrifice for sin should include the shedding of blood?**

A. **Because life is in the blood; consequently a blood sacrifice is the only fit atonement for sin.**

Lev. 17:11—"it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life." Heb. 9:22—"apart from shedding of blood there is no remission."

63. Q. **Does this mean that the ancients received actual remission of sins through animal sacrifices?**

A. **No. It means that their sins were passed over from year to year, until the fulness of time came, in which the Perfect Atonement was made for the sins of the whole world.**

(1) The animal sacrifices of the Patriarchal and Jewish dispensations could not and did not take away sins. Heb. 10:1-4, "For the law having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things, can never with

the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect them that draw nigh . . . but in those sacrifices there is a remembrance made of sins year by year. For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin." Rom. 3:23-25, "Christ Jesus whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God." (2) Animal sacrifice was typical of the Supreme Sacrifice of the Lamb of God. It "could only prefigure a life and a blood that could truly, and justly, and honorably expiate sin" (Campbell, *Christian System*, p. 51). The law had merely "the shadow of the good things to come" (Heb. 10:1). (3) Animal sacrifice was the substitute provided by Divine grace for all the faithful, until such time as the actual and all-sufficient Atonement should be made. John 1:29—"Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" The sublimity of this text is in the fact that here the sins of all humanity are all bundled together and contemplated as a unit. Note well: "the sin of the world." Gal. 4:4-6, "but when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son . . . that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Heb. 9:11-12, "but Christ . . . through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." Heb. 9:26—"but now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Heb. 10:10—"we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." (4) "The sacrifices of bulls and goats were like token-money, as our paper-promises to pay, accepted at their face-value till the day of settlement. But the sacrifice of Christ was the gold which absolutely extinguished all debt by its intrinsic value. Hence, when Christ died, the veil that separated man from God was rent from the top to the bottom by supernatural hands. When the

real expiation was finished, the whole symbolical system representing it became *functum officio*, and was abolished. Soon after this, the temple was razed to the ground, and the ritual was rendered forever impossible" (A. A. Hodge, *Popular Lectures*, p. 247).

64. Q. What second principle of true religion did God establish through the Patriarchs?

A. The principle that acceptance with Him is always on the ground of faith.

(1) Heb. 11:4—"by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Heb. 11:7—"By faith Noah . . . prepared an ark to the saving of his house." Heb. 11:8—"By faith Abraham . . . obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance." Heb. 11:13—"these all died in faith," etc. (2) Heb. 11:6—"without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him." Rom. 5:1—"being therefore justified by faith," etc.

65. Q. What third essential principle of true religion did God establish through the Patriarchs?

A. The principle that true faith always manifests itself in works of faith, i. e., in obedience to the laws and commands of God.

(1) Heb. 11, v. 4—by faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice. v. 7—by faith Noah built an ark to the saving of his house. v. 8—by faith Abraham obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance. v. 17—by faith Abraham offered up Isaac. (2) Jas. 2:21, 22—"Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect." (It should be explained that by "works" as the term is used here by James, is meant works of faith; not works of the moral law, such as Paul contemplates in Rom.

3:20, by which, he says, no flesh shall be justified). Faith that does not manifest itself in acts of faith, i. e. in obedience to the commands of God, is lifeless and impotent; it is mere intellectual assent to testimony, that is barren of beneficent results or accomplishments. Jas. 2:26—"For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead."

**66. Q. On what grounds, then, were the faithful souls of Patriarchal times accepted with God?**

**A. They were accepted on the ground of their faith which manifested itself in their obedience to the law of Sacrifice and to all the laws of God which were in force throughout the Patriarchal dispensation; and on the further ground of the certainty of that Perfect Atonement for sin which was made once at the end of the ages.**

(1) This Atonement was a matter of Divine decree. Acts 2:23—"him being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." This Atonement procured actual remission of sins for the faithful of all dispensations. See Gal. 4:4-5; Heb. 9:11-12; Heb. 9:26; Heb. 7:27; 1 Pet. 2:24, etc. (2) Although the faithful of the Patriarchal and Jewish dispensations did not actually receive the remission of their sins until Christ died on the Cross, yet they were obviously well-pleasing unto God and accepted with Him on the grounds stated above. Consequently, although they could not enter heaven in advance of Christ, yet they could and did, by virtue of the mercy extended to them on account of the Redeemer to come, prove themselves worthy of the divine inheritance and enter into it with Him. Heb. 9:15—"And for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance." Eph. 4:8—"when he ascended on high, he led

captivity captive," etc. That some sort of an **intermediate** state was provided for these faithful souls of ancient times, until Christ came and died for them, is the view of some Christian scholars. Note, in this connection, the significance of the phrase, "Abraham's bosom," as used by Jesus, in Luke 16:22-23. However, we must always keep in mind that the kingdom (reign) of God is characterized by **timelessness**, and any attempt to apply our human measurements (chronology) to it is hardly warranted. (Cf. 2 Pet. 3:8.) With the God of the Bible there is no past, no future, but always the Everlasting Now (2 Cor. 6:2).

### REVIEW EXAMINATION OVER LESSON THIRTY-ONE

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66. Q. On what grounds, then, were the faithful souls of Patriarchal times accepted with God?

### Lesson Thirty-Two

#### WHAT GOD DID THROUGH ABRAHAM

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Scripture Reading: Gen. 17:1-14, 22:15-18; Gal. 3:15-29.

Scripture to Memorize: "For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus. And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:26-29).

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67. Q. What was the Patriarchal Dispensation?
- A. The Patriarchal Dispensation was that particular period in which God revealed His laws, established His institutions, and dispensed the benefits and blessings of His grace, through fathers or heads of families who were known as the Patriarchs.

(1) The Standard Dictionary defines a dispensation as "the particular way by which, at different periods, God has made known His dealings with mankind." (2) The history of Redemption, as recorded in the Holy Scriptures, extends over three dispensations, viz., the Patriarchal Dispensation, the Jewish or Mosaic Dispensation, and the Christian Dis-