

THE UNFOLDED PLAN OF GOD

by Donald G. Hunt

The God Behind the Plan

Behind everything (except evil), including the plan of God to be discussed in this forthcoming series of messages, there is God. Without arguing the fact, without explaining Him, and without bothering to answer many questions in men's minds concerning God prior to the creation of the world, the Bible simply opens with these words:

"In the beginning God..." (Gen. 1:1).

Thus, behind creation, there was God, and behind the plan to redeem men, there is God.

Paul, in his I Corinthian letter, carries us forward until the plan of God has run its course, until the end of all earthly things has come. God will still be there in all His glorious power and authority that He possessed before anything of earth was created. Listen to I Cor. 15:24-28:

"Then cometh the end, when he (Christ) shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he (Christ) must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he (God) hath put all things under his (Christ's) feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted (not subjected to Christ), which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto (Christ), then shall the Son also himself be subject to him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

Thus, we see God before the plan, and we see Him after the plan has run its course and has brought about the finished product. There are many aspects of this great God that could be profitably considered; however, the three characteristics considered in the following lines all directly relate to the God who is behind the plan.

I. He Is A Merciful God.

A. If He Weren't, There Would Have Been No Plan Devised.

God had planned in the beginning that man would live right and be the caretaker of His creation. But, sin ruined that picture. God was still holy, but man was unholy, and

it was not righteously possible for God to continue on with man. God had every reason to wipe mankind out, but there was something in God that caused Him to devise another plan--the plan of salvation--and that was the mercy of God. It goes without arguing that if God had not been a merciful God, there would have been no plan of salvation devised. Only by means of a husband's mercy can an unfaithful wife hope for a restoration to him. He surely is not obligated to receive her back. Even so, man's only hope of restoration to God lay in the mercy of God that made the plan of salvation possible.

B. God Has Not Dealt With Us According To Our Deservings.

Listen to the Psalmist as he extols the mercy of God in which he emphasizes the above fact:

"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Psa. 103:8-18).

C. In Mercy, He Sent Jesus.

There was no merit in man to call Jesus out of heaven to earth. In fact, He came because man had no merit of his own, and He came to give man a righteous standing with God. In this connection, I cite but two passages:

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:9, 10).

The other passage is II Cor. 8:9:

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

D. In Mercy, God Grants Earthly Provision To Sinners In Hope That They Will Turn To Him For Salvation.

In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, He pointed out the fact that God is providentially good to all men, sinners and godly people both. He said:

"He (God) maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45).

What other reason could God have for doing this than to give sinners those things that are essential to life in order that they might have an opportunity to repent, and that in thus being so good to them, they may also find their hearts turned to Him through His goodness to them?

E. In Mercy, He Allows Us To Be His Children And To Serve Him.

It is an exaltation to us to be called the children of God, but it is a merciful condescension to Him. The apostle John ascribes the credit for this to God's merciful love:

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1).

A very well known passage of Scripture to many Christians is Rom. 12:1. There are so many great truths in that passage, and they are so well stated that I fear that sometimes a very important truth contained in it is overlooked. That truth is the fact that it is the mercy of God that permits us to present our bodies as living sacrifices to God. Notice that truth in that passage cited below:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, BY THE MERCIES OF GOD, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice...."

F. Finally, It Is God's Delight To Show Mercy To Penitent Mankind.

Here is a truth that should warm the heart of everyone who has turned to God for mercy. Some of the closing words in the book of Micah are:

"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because HE DELIGHTETH IN MERCY. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Mic. 7:18,19).

Isaiah also recognized in choice words the mercy of God. Isa. 55:7 says:

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him: and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

John reminds us of the faithfulness of God to forgive in the following words in his first epistle:

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

It is hard to find a verse of Scripture that more ably sets forth the feeling of God concerning the matter of showing mercy than Eze. 33:11:

"As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

Yes, the God behind the plan is beyond question of a God of mercy. But, let us now turn our attention to another characteristic of God as relates to His plan.

II. He Is A Wise God.

A. The Bible Exalts Wisdom As A Cardinal Virtue.

Listen to these words found in Prov. 3:13-18:

"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her."

Another splendid passage exalting wisdom is Prov. 4:5-9, which reads as follows:

"Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee."

B. Whatever God Does Reflects Wisdom.

God is many-sided, and His works are many. But, one thing characterizes them all. That is wisdom. Prov. 3:19,20 says:

"The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew."

This passage beholds God's wisdom both in creation and in perpetual providence. The writing of the Bible, the natural laws of the universe, and whatever He does (including His plan of salvation) manifest His wisdom.

C. The Wisdom Of God's Ways Are Beyond Human Comprehension.

Admittedly, God's wisdom is supreme. One of the reasons is that God has all knowledge at His disposal. In the words of David, we find these words that show the completeness of God's knowledge:

"O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassed my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee" (Psa. 139:1-12).

If the wisdom of Solomon made the queen of Sheba exclaim that the half of his wisdom had never yet been told, it is no wonder that the apostle Paul marveled at the incomprehensibility of God's ways. He said:

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33).

D. The Plan Of Salvation As Revealed To Man Highly Commends The Wisdom Of God.

God has not revealed everything that He could have revealed. He speaks of both revealed and unrevealed things in Deut. 29:29.

"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us."

However, He has revealed all things to us that are necessary. II Pet. 1:3 says so:

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue."

Now, in those things of the plan of God that He has revealed to us, we can surely see the wondrous wisdom of God. Man had made such a mess out of life that He needed someone to show him how to live to be pleasing to God. God sent Jesus to be our example. Man in his guilt needed a sacrifice that God would accept as an atonement for his sins. God accordingly sent Jesus, the Lamb of God, who came to take away the sin of the world. Man needed to know the conditions upon which he could be forgiven of his sins and come into possession of the salvation made possible by the atoning work of Jesus. Thus, Jesus was made the mediator of the new covenant, and He sent His apostles forth proclaiming the terms of pardon and the conditions of heavenly inheritance. Man needed a king to rule his life so that sin would no longer master him. God highly exalted Jesus at His own right hand, giving Him the headship over all things to those who comprise the church. Man needed the constant encouragement of that heavenly hope. God accordingly inspired the New Testament writers to emphasize the hope that is sure and steadfast for those who have fled to Jesus for refuge.

Yes, wisdom is definitely reflected in the God behind the plan. But, there is yet another trait of God relating to His plan that we would like to share with you.

III. He Is A Just God.

A. Mercy Must Not Disregard Justice, Or Mercy Itself Would Become Unrighteous.

If a law is righteous, it ought to be kept. If it is kept, those who have kept it should receive the blessing that that law affords. If that law is not kept, those who have not kept it must receive the punishment of breaking it, or the righteousness of that law has not been upheld. As we have seen, God has shown Himself to be a merciful God toward the fallen family of mankind, and how we praise Him for His mercy! But, has God Himself actually become unrighteous in showing mercy? Since all have sinned, should He not punish all instead of showing mercy to all?

B. The Justice Of God Was Upheld At Calvary.

The third chapter of Romans "grapples" with the very question, or problem, under consideration: "Was God just in bearing with sin and sinners throughout Old Testament times, and is He just in forgiving our sins at the present time?" Paul shows that the only way that God could have been and now is just in His merciful dealing with sinners in times past and at present is that Jesus personally bore the guilt of God's transgressed law when He died upon the cross. Speaking of Jesus, Rom. 3:25,26 says:

"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

Other passages which show that God actually laid upon Jesus the iniquity of us all, and others that show that Jesus met every necessary qualification of an acceptable sin-offering abundantly prove that God did no injustice in being merciful and longsuffering with people in Old Testament times while He waited for the coming of the Savior, and that He is not violating justice today in justifying those who turn to Jesus for salvation.

C. A Withdrawal Of Further Mercy From The Impenitent At Judgment Will Be Necessary To Maintain The Justice Of God.

As we have seen from Rom. 3:26, God can be just in justifying those who believe in Jesus. But, the Bible fails to reveal that He would be just in justifying, or forgiving, those who do not turn to Jesus for salvation. God can forgive and bless those who turn to Jesus, but He cannot those who don't. In this connection, John 3:35-36 reads:

"The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

While God sent Christ into the world in order to save the world, John 3:17,18 shows that not all the world will be saved--only that part which believes in the Christ. Listen to that passage:

"For God sent not his Son into the world (the first time) to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 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."

When Jesus comes, it will be necessary for Him to execute the vengeance of God upon all who have not obeyed the gospel plan of salvation. Otherwise, it would be of no particular profit to have obeyed it. Otherwise, it would be of no particular evil to have disobeyed it. But, Jesus will render vengeance upon all the disobedient:

"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (II Thess. 1:7-9).

D. Finally, The Justice Of God Is Seen In His Having Done For All Alike.

This is a fact that we dare not overlook. All had sinned, but He did not pick out favorites and show mercy to them while abandoning the others without mercy. God loved the world--the whole world. He sent a Savior in the person of Jesus, who died upon the cross as the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. When Jesus arose from the dead and commissioned His apostles to go forth telling the gospel of salvation, He told them to preach it to every creature. With Jesus, no man is included in His mercy because of his money, education, character, or social standing, nor is anyone excluded from His mercy because he lacks these. And when on that great judgment morning, the dead are called before Him, all classes will be there (like the small and great), and they will each be given a judgment according to what they did while on earth, and there will be no respect of persons. Listen to Rev. 20:12:

"And I saw the dead, small, and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works."

Listen to Rom. 2:6, concerning the righteous judgment of God:

"Who will render to every man according to his deeds...For there is no respect of person with God."

How thankful we should be for the plan of God, for without it, we would have absolutely no hope for eternity. And how thankful we should be for the God behind the plan, for were He not a God like He is, there would have been no plan of salvation given!

In the Beginning, God Created

The entire Godhead was present at and took part in the creation. The gospel according to John shows that "the Word" (the second person of the Godhead who took upon Himself the form of man in the person of Jesus--see John 1:14) "was in the beginning with God" (John 1:1,2). Jesus Himself referred in John 17:5 to His presence with the Father before the world was, when He said:

"And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

He was not only back there with God in the beginning, but He also had an active part in the creation of all things. John 1:3 says of Him:

"All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."

Paul referred to the same truth when he said of Him:

"By him were all things created...All things were

created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Col. 1:16,17).

Jesus referred to Himself as "the beginning of the creation of God" in Rev. 3:14 when addressing the Laodicean church. The Greek word translated "beginning" carries the idea of "originator". Thus, He was there to labor in bringing about the creation.

But, so was the Spirit of God, commonly referred to in the New Testament as the Holy Spirit, the other member of the Godhead (see Matt. 28:19). In the very early part of the creation section of Genesis, we read these words:

"And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:2).

The fact that all three comprising the Godhead helped in creation is further borne out in the Hebrew word translated "God" in Gen. 1:1; 1:26; and elsewhere throughout the creative sections. It is the word "Elohim". A common way to convey the idea of plurality in the English language is by adding an "s". Thus, "cow" is singular, denoting one cow, while "cows" is plural, denoting two or more. In the Hebrew language, plurality could be expressed by adding "im" to the word. Thus, "seraph" was singular, but "seraphim" was plural; "cherub" was singular, but "cherubim" was plural. Now, look again at that word translated "God" in Gen. 1:1. It is "Elohim", a word with the plural ending. Certainly, this plural indicates the presence of and the participation of all the Godhead in creation. In the light of this, the "us" and the "our" of Gen. 1:26 becomes perfectly clear:

"And God ('Elohim') said, Let us make man in our image."

With these background thoughts in mind, let us turn our attention directly to a study of the creation itself.

I. The Universe Came Into Existence By The Direct Creation Of God.

A. Three Possible Views Taken Concerning The Universe.

Where did the universe come from? One view says, "God outrightly created it." Another view says, "It came into existence by the evolutionary process, lower forms of life having emerged and developed into higher forms of life, all tracing their existence back to an original cell or two." Some not believing in God and not being able to swallow the evolutionary idea have concluded that maybe the universe has always existed as it now is.

B. The Bible View Is That Of Creation.

The Bible calls God "Creator" several times. Eccl. 12:1 says of Him:

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

Others could be cited, but we shall content ourselves on this point with I Pet. 4:19:

"Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

Surely, the Bible view is that of creation, for it opens

with a two-chapter account of creation (Gen. 1 and 2). Throughout those chapters, the word "create" in its various forms comes from the Hebrew word "bara", which means to bring into existence out of nothing. Surely, we can say that if all that came into existence did so by the evolutionary process, it was not God creating; things were just happening with nobody behind the scenes at all.

C. Where The Theory Of Evolution Fails.

It fails in a number of ways. We today look out upon an orderly universe, whether it be the well organized body of a tiny bug that has its wings with which to fly, its feet with which to walk, its mouth with which to bite, and its shell by which to receive its protection or the vast solar system with all of its uncountable millions of heavenly bodies all whirling in their respective orbits with a precision superior to that of any watch devised and made by the skill of man. Did all of this orderliness just happen? Was there no master-mind behind such wondrous happenings? But, the evolutionary theory also fails because it violates the time-honored and accepted principle that potatoes produce only potatoes, grapes produce only grapes, etc. Yet, the evolutionary theory has one kind of animal producing a totally different kind of animal, finally monkeys producing men. The theory also fails because the whole theory is purely hypothetical guess-work from beginning to end. And how wild and undisciplined some of the guesses are! There is no actual history to uphold the theory, and even fraud (like the "Piltdown man" recently exposed by the secular press, but one of evolution's more important "links") has at times entered in.

D. The Impossibility Of Reconciling Creation And Evolution.

Some with too great a reverence for the publishings of Science and possibly too little reverence (or maybe merely too little understanding) of the Bible have supposed that they can save the day for the Bible, which claims "God created"; by saying, "Why couldn't God have created by the evolutionary process?" But, this will not work. The Bible's account of creation and the evolutionary theory cannot be reconciled, if for no other reason this one: in the creation account, God said:

"Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind" (Gen. 1:11).

Throughout creation, everything was to bring forth after its own kind--something that did not happen if the evolutionary theory is correct. Frankly, it is the Bible vs. evolution, for there is no way that they can both be right.

II. Errors People Make Concerning The Creation Chapters.

A. Modernists Contend That One Man Wrote Gen. 1 And Another Man Wrote Gen. 2.

Any thoughtful reader of the first chapters of Genesis has noticed that after laying out creation by days, the writer then returns to discuss some things more in detail concerning the creation. The modernists, unwilling to accept the Mosaic authorship of Genesis, have spun a highly-

speculative theory of the entire first five books written by Moses to attempt to prove that there was not one author, but many authors involved in the material involved in those books. To people looking for earmarks of dual authorship (actually composite authorship with them), the fact that we have a chronological account of creation (chapter 1) and a discussion account (chapter 2) provides ground for their concluding that chapter 1 represents one man's views and chapter 2 another man's. Of course, their theory has some editor at a much later period than the original writing of these creation accounts assembling them together with all the other material in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy into one volume. But, if such were the case, if the two accounts of creation are actually contradictory, would said editor not be able to see that his work would be thrown out as no good by the time his readers had read merely his first two chapters? Such nonsense! Besides, there is not one single fact that it in any way points to either a dual or a composite authorship of the first five books of the Bible. These two accounts of creation (one chronological by days and the other explanatory of certain details) wonderfully supplement one another, do not contradict one another, and were both written by Moses.

B. Others Contend That Gen. 1:2-2:25 Describe The Second Time God Created Life Upon The Earth.

You would never conclude such by reading the first two chapters of Genesis, but here is what some prophetic teachers say. They show that in Gen. 1:1, God created the heaven and the earth, but the second verse opens by saying that the earth was without form and void, darkness being upon the face of the deep. Now, their contention is that after verse 1, the earth was a beautiful place where angels lived, but when they sinned, God cast them into chains of darkness to await the judgment day. And as one writer setting forth that position said, "It would seem that the chaos into which the world fell was in some way due to that entrance of sin."

The contention is based upon two passages of Scripture, which read as follows:

"For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it; he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited" (Isa. 45:18); "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Gen. 1:28).

It is argued by some (though the weight of scholarship seems to be against them) that the words in vain" in the Isaiah passage could be translated "without form". Thus, they argue that when God got through creating the heaven and earth in Gen. 1:1, the earth was not without form as Gen. 1:2 indicates. Therefore, they argue that for some reason, between verses 1 and 2 of Gen. 1, something must have happened to make the earth without form as we find it in verse 2. But, of the above reasoning, I would reply in two ways: (1) There is nothing wrong with translating the Isaiah passage "in vain". God didn't create the earth in vain. He did create it to be inhabited. I personally see no reason to reject the accepted translation in favor of "without form". (2) Even if it could be translated "with-

out form", what would that prove in this case? To me, Gen. 1:1 is an appropriate heading for all that follows. First, God created a mass of material called heaven and earth, but as yet, life did not exist upon it nor was it in organized form when verse 2 opens. The Spirit of God appears from Gen. 1:2 to have been employed in the organization of life upon the earth as is recorded in the verses that follow. Let me say again that if the Isaiah passage could be translated "without form", that wouldn't prove the theory we are opposing. Here is why: after chapter 1 of Genesis ends, telling of the creation by days, the second chapter of Genesis opens with these words:

"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made."

When God had finished His creative work (spoken of in Gen. 2:1 as "the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them"), there would be no disharmony with the Isaiah passage if it should have been translated as they argue ("He hath established it; he created it not without form").

The other argument that is made is on the word "replenish" in Gen. 1:28. The argument is made that the word "replenish" means to "fill again"; therefore, when God said in Gen. 1:28 to multiply and replenish the earth, it indicates that the earth had once been inhabited. But, there are two considerations that show that we are neither limited to that meaning nor forced to that conclusion. Here they are: (1) Every authority that I have consulted has given two meanings for the word "replenish"; namely, to fill again and to fill completely. As long as there is an obvious meaning of a word that does not demand a totally ungrounded theory for it to be true, we should accept the one that demands no high-spun theory. For God to say to Adam and Eve to multiply and fill the earth would indeed make the best of sense, especially in the light of that which follows, where He added, "and subdue it." (2) Regardless of the definition accepted for this place of "replenish", it is evident that the instructions in Gen. 1:28 to multiply and replenish the earth were given to the entire human race, for Adam and Eve alone could never have filled the whole earth nor refilled the whole earth. It is orthodox to say that in the beginning, God addressed Adam and Eve as humanity, and such instructions as given them as human beings are for the whole human family. If God is thus addressing the human family, He could have been telling them to multiply and keep the earth filled if the idea of "fill again" is insisted upon in the word "replenish". In other words, the earlier generations of the earth were to multiply, and we are to keep the earth populated from generation to generation. In other words, it is certainly not necessary to accept any wild and fanciful theory just because of Isa. 45:18 and Gen. 1:28.

C. Some Hold The Creative Days To Have Been Long Periods Of Time.

I realize the word "day" may sometimes denote a period of time (like in John 8:65, where Jesus said that Abraham had rejoiced to see His day). Yet, the natural meaning

understood by the word "day", especially when using the words "evening" and "morning" in connection with it, would convey the idea of "day" rather than a long period of time. I am sure that the Hebrews, to whom the Genesis account was originally given, would have gotten the idea of days as we conceive of days rather than the idea of long periods of time.

Although a person taking the position of long periods of time would not necessarily be taking the modernistic view of evolution rather than creation, it is my firm conviction that it is not necessary to believe that the creative days were long periods of time and to do so tends to concede too much to the evolutionists. In my understanding of creation, God spoke, and what He said was done. He said:

"Let there be light" (Gen. 1:3),

and that same verse says:

"And there was light."

Not merely to the creation of light, but to other parts of creation did the Psalmist refer when he elaborated on God creating by speaking. Listen to Psa. 33:6-9:

"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast,"

If God were going to speak things into existence, it would surely be far from necessary for Him to use long periods of time for days.

Furthermore, it was on the third day that He created grass and other forms of vegetable life. The fourth day, He created the sun, moon, and stars. If He was going to create sunshine the next day (a day such as we have), I can see why God might have created vegetable life before He did the sun. But, if these are long periods of time, how could vegetable life have existed a long period of time before the creation of the sun?

As far as I can determine, there seems to be only one sound argument against the word "day" meaning a day such as we have, and yet I believe it can be answered. That is: we mark days by sun, but there were three creative days past before God created the sun. But, let us remember this: we human beings need a sun to mark out a twenty-four hour day, but God, who called the first three days "days" before there was any sun is not so limited. Without the sun, He could have three days of the same length as our days, and it would have been no problem to Him!

It is evident that I personally prefer days of our length to those of long periods of time, and I have tried to give you the reasons why.

There are so many fine things and important things that could be said concerning the creation of God. But, in conclusion, we must limit ourselves to only a few matters. When one looks at what God created, we gain some idea of what God must be like. Less than a year ago, I drove

through a section of Ohio after a bad storm. Trees were uprooted and blocked streets. Electric and telephone wires were broken and dangling. Television antennae lay in crumpled masses on the roofs of houses. I did not see the storm hit, but by what all it did, I was able to conclude that it struck with a lot of force and had great destructive power in it. Thus, when I look at the creation of God, I see His great power. Rom. 1:20 says:

"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."

When I look at the creation of God, I also see His great wisdom. Psa. 104:24 says:

"O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches."

Prov. 3:19 likewise comments:

"The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens,"

How well the Psalmist in Psa. 19:1,2 states our thoughts in this matter:

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge."

Finally, the way that God has thoughtfully cared for the various needs of man in His creation ably demonstrates the goodness of God. Psa. 33:5 says:

"The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord."

First, God planned His creation. Then, He spoke, and into existence came the various elements of that creation. Then, when everything was made, God looked it over, and inasmuch as God can do nothing wrong, He was well pleased with His work, for each time He looked,

"God saw that it was good" (Gen. 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31).

Man As He Was in the Beginning

According to the most accepted chronology (Ussher's), man has been upon the earth almost six thousand years. The date of Adam's creation is placed about four thousand years before the birth of Jesus. We have no way of knowing definitely how long Adam and Eve had lived before they committed sin and were, as a result, cast out of the Garden of Eden. But, except for the first two chapters of the Bible, the Bible tells us of man as he became following the entrance of sin. Only two chapters (Gen. 1 and 2) give us a historical look at man as he was in the beginning, which is the subject of our present study.

I. Man Was Made In The Image Of God.

A. Only Man Is Said To Have Been Created In The Image of God.

God created many things, but the only thing said to have been created in His own image was man. When God was ready to create man, He said:

"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen. 1:26).

And the very next verse says:

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him" (Gen. 1:27).

B. What Is Meant By "The Image Of God"?

The Bible has nowhere devoted a section to an actual discussion of this question. Our inquisitiveness, together with our desire to be accurate in our understanding of things, might cause us to say we wish it did. We are not left altogether in the dark, however.

Man is made in the image of God either bodily or spiritually. The Scripture says:

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18).

God has not fully told us in the Bible what all He is like--whether He has an actual body or not--and no man has seen Him at any time so as to tell us what He is like. Jesus, who came from Him, "declared him", but in His declarations concerning Him, He didn't fully discuss this point. Yes, I know that Jesus said that God is a spirit, but that is not the only statement in the Bible to consider on the question. Many scholars think that when the Bible refers to the face of God, it is speaking of God anthropomorphically (that is, describing God in the language of man). That may be, or again it may not be. I do not know, and I do not believe anybody else knows for sure.

If God has an actual body, man's body could be made after God's body. But, not knowing whether God has an actual body, we cannot affirm that man's being made in the image of God involves his body. Most scholars take the position that God and man are both spiritual beings, and in this way man is like God when nothing else of God's creation is. God is righteous, and man has the capacity to be righteous also, but an animal is no sense a moral creature. Man can know God, for they are both spiritual beings, but no animal can know God. Death ends animals forever, for they are altogether of this mundane earth, but death does not end man. He was created for eternal habitation, for he is more than earthy. I believe, as I have tried to point out, that the image of God in man is that man is a spiritual being, for in this he is like God and different from all else of God's creation.

II. Man Was Given Dominion Over The Rest Of God's Creation.

A. Creation Was Incomplete Without Man.

The creation of man was the final act of God's creative

week. All else was awaiting the arrival of man. It was proper also that all else should be here before God created man. The sun was shining by day and the moon and stars by night. The animals were inhabiting the woods and the plains. The birds were flitting from tree to tree. The waters abounded with fish. The grass was growing as were the flowers and the trees, but there was one thing lacking:

"There was not a man to till the ground" (Gen. 2:5).

Thus, it was that God created man.

B. Man Was Made Not Only The Worker, But The Earthly Sovereign Of God's Creation.

When God was ready to create man, He said:

"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:26).

When man had come into being, here are the first words as far as the Bible record goes that God spoke to man:

"Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:28).

Therefore, God Himself allowed Adam to select the names of all the cattle, fowls, and other animals:

"And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field" (Gen. 2:19,20).

C. Mechanical, Medical, Educational, And Other Types Of Progress Are But A Part Of Man's Subduing The Earth.

A man gets hungry. What shall he do? He goes to the garden and gets vegetables for his table, or he butchers a beef or kills a rabbit for food. Does man have the right to take life merely to satisfy his hunger? Yes, that is a part of having dominion--he makes everything else serve his needs. He gets cold, so a sheep must die, and from the wool of the sheep's back are made warm and comfortable clothes for him. Is that right? Yes, man is to have dominion. All recognize man's right to feed and clothe himself from the lower forms of nature.

But, does man's subduing the earth end there? No. His dominion exists far beyond that. For instance, I know of nobody who believes that Thomas Edison committed a great sin when he invented the incandescent light bulb. I know of nobody who thinks our forefathers did wrong to burn candles at night after the sun had gone down. You say, "Well, what does that have to do with the question?" A lot. Gen. 1:14-18 says:

"And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night:

he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good."

If I were to ask any of you what is God's light for the daytime, you would answer that the sun is. If I were to ask you what is God's light for the nighttime, you would answer the moon is. All right, now here is my question: "Is it wrong for man to make a light of his own to turn on when God turns His off?" That is the issue we are talking about. I believe that man has a right to do that--we see it happen numerous times in the Bible with God's full approval. That is not wrong--that is merely a part of man's subduing the earth. If man builds a house to protect himself and his family from the weather, there will be days when it will be too dark in the house to read comfortably or to do fine work (especially in the basement). God had equipped man with ingenuity and has given the elements of the natural world into his hand to invent so as to rule situations rather than be ruled by them.

The same type of reasoning might be applied to irrigation farming. There are vast sections of our country which could produce nothing were it not for irrigation. What would we conclude? Would we conclude that if God wanted the potato fields of Idaho watered, if He wanted the alfalfa fields of Utah watered, and if He wanted the great vegetable and fruit farms of California watered, He would cause it to rain upon them? In other words, since God does not distribute the amount of rain throughout the growing season for those sections, does that indicate that he doesn't want Idaho to grow potatoes, Utah alfalfa, and California fruit and vegetables? No. To drive through those rich valleys and plains luxuriant with green and prosperity, you can say, "This is man subduing the earth," and it is!

Time fails us to consider other equally important enterprises that have been a blessing to mankind, but it becomes greatly evident that there is a lot involved when God said to man:

"Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."

III. Man Was Better Off Than He Realized.

We don't differ too much from Adam in this way. Though we are not as well off in some ways as he was, we don't actually realize that we are better off than we deserve being. And, yet, people murmur and complain, not realizing how good God is to them. But, I am sure that Adam didn't realize how well off he was in the beginning.

A. He Had A Wonderful Home In Eden.

Nobody can picture the Garden of Eden without seeing it as a most wonderful place. How beautiful a picture we get of man's original home, when we read Gen. 2:8,9:

"And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food."

B. He Was Usefully Employed.

We are living in almost too lazy an age--an age with a seat on everything and every labor-saving device imaginable--to appreciate this present consideration. But, work is not only honorable, but a blessing to mankind. "An idle mind is the devil's workshop" is a well known and very true saying. Two verses from Gen. 2 show that God gave work to Adam:

"There was not a man to till the ground" (Gen. 2:5).

That was before the creation of man. Everything else was created, but a man was needed to tend the other things created. Consequently, after man was created, Gen. 2:15 says:

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

C. He Was Given Great Freedom.

For his work, he was to receive the increase of what he grew. Before man became a sinner, God didn't give an endless number of things that man was not to do. But, after men have become besmirched with sin and sinful desires, God had to curb them in many ways. But, in the beginning, man was given the liberty to eat of any tree that he saw except one; that was the tree of knowledge of good and of evil (Gen. 2:16,17).

D. He Had Nothing To Fear But Disobedience To God's One Prohibition.

Actually, the only sorrowing words that God had said to Adam in the beginning were:

"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17).

Aside from telling him that he would die if disobedient (and we might well wonder what thought came to Adam's mind by the word "die"), Adam and Eve had nothing to fear but the fulfillment of those awful words. With all the many fears with which humanity is now beset, we can surely say Adam and Eve didn't realize how good they had it.

E. He Was In Happy Fellowship With God.

Before sin entered, man and God were in perfect fellowship together. God had created man to have fellowship with, and in the beginning, that was realized. As I read Gen. 3:8 (a verse that tells of Adam and Eve after their sin), I conclude that it was customary for God to come down and talk to Adam, though it was not customary for Adam and Eve to hide as they did after their sin. Surely, they were better off than they realized!

In bringing this study to a close, I wish to call your attention to a fine New Testament passage that has bearing upon the present study. It is Heb. 2:6-8:

"What is man that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him."

Yes, God set man over the works of His hands, commit-

ting all things unto him (except the tree of knowledge of good and of evil). But, sin entered, and as a result, we see not everything actually subdued by man. This is but one of the many prices of sin. Had we continued further with the quotation from Heb. 2, we would find that Jesus came as the perfect man, and as a result of His perfection and atonement, He is able to bring man (those who will accept Him) once again to that great high place that God originally intended for him. God created man to exercise dominion, and through Christ, the redeemed are regaining a right of dominion. Rev. 1:5,6 shows that Christ has made us kings and priests unto God, having washed us from our sins in His own blood. Those who overcome will rule with a rod of iron (Rev. 2:26,27) and will be granted the right to sit down with Jesus in His throne (Rev. 3:21).

The First Sin

When God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, He enjoined only one prohibition upon them. He said to Adam:

"Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:16,17).

Though they knew this prohibition, yet there seemed to be no particular temptation to eat of this particular tree until one day when the devil came along. That day must of necessity be marked down as probably earth's most tragic day, and Gen. 3:6 must be marked down as one of the most tragic verses that God ever had written, for it tells of that first sin.

I. The Devil Was Behind This First Sin.

A. This Is The Devil's First Appearance Upon The Pages Of The Bible.

The first two chapters of the Bible tell us of God, the Spirit of God, Adam, and Eve. But, the third chapter opens by introducing a new individual to us. He is the devil, introduced to us as "the serpent", and he is still referred to as a serpent when we get to the last book of the Bible (see Rev. 12:9).

Just where did the devil come from? Who made him? Is it consistent with the complete holiness of God for Him to have created a devil? Would it be in keeping with the wisdom of God to have created a being like the devil who would so turn God's creation against Him that in time God would repent Himself that He had ever made man (see Gen. 6:6)? Would it be in harmony with the exceeding love of God for man to create a being such as the devil who would bring such earthly miseries upon all men and eternal ruin to the majority of men?

Feeling it impossible to accept such conclusions, some have thought that the devil was once a beautiful angel, who in time became rebellious against God in an attempt to overthrow God and who, as a result, was banished from the

favor and the presence of God. Thus, some teach that the devil was once in heaven, but has been cast out of heaven because of his sin. Of course, all of this is supposed to have transpired before the creation of man, for when he came to the woman in the garden, he was already in his evil condition. The two principal proof-texts for the above-mentioned doctrine are Isa. 14:12-15 and Eze. 28:12-17. To conserve space, we shall not print the text of those passages. But, open your Bible to those passages as we point out a few things about them. First, let us consider the Isaiah passage. Before coming directly to the passage itself, it would be well for us to get a brief synopsis to the book of Isaiah that involves the given passage. Chapters 1-11 of Isaiah contain material concerning the sinful condition of Judah and Jerusalem. Chapters 12-23 foretell the destruction to come upon certain foreign nations--Babylon, Assyria, Moab, Syria, Ethiopia, Egypt, Arabia, and Tyre. The Isaiah passage under consideration is found in God's predictions concerning the foreign nations. Now to the passage itself. Notice in verse 4 (the actual beginning of the paragraph involving verses 12-15) that God instructed Isaiah to send a message of destruction to the king of Babylon. He said:

"Thou shalt take up this proverb ('taunting speech' in the margin) against the king of Babylon, and say...."

And with that beginning, he continued to address "the king of Babylon". Begin reading with verse 4 and continue reading throughout the section and see if God wasn't addressing the king of Babylon and not the devil. Don't forget that the great sin of pride brought up in verse 13 and 14 was always a chief sin of Babylonish rulers (see Dan. 4:4-37 and Dan. 5:17-23).

Not desiring to devote a major portion of the material of this study to the present point, let us leave the Isaiah passage and turn to the Ezekiel passage. Ezekiel also has a foreign nation section (chapters 25-32), and the passage under consideration is to be found in the foreign nation section. If you will notice verse 12 (chapter 28), where the passage begins, you will see that God said to Ezekiel:

"Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus (Tyre), and say unto him...."

If you will read that section, you will see that God was speaking to the king of Tyre and not the devil.

Other proof-texts offered by the advocates of that theory are of less importance and are as easily dealt with as the Isaiah and Ezekiel passages. Therefore, at this time, we shall not consider them.

I realize that some angels sinned and did not keep their first estate--Jude 6 and II Pet. 2:4 say so--but whether the devil was one of them, we do not know, for the Bible nowhere says. He may have been, but I am not going to warp passages like Isa. 14:12-15 and Eze. 28:12-17 (or any other passage) in order to believe it. You have a right to ask, "Well, where did the devil come from, then?" and I have a right to say, "Since the Bible doesn't say, we don't know. We may have our ideas about it, but that doesn't mean that we know." And that is my position. There are "secret things that belong unto the Lord" (Deut. 29:29), and there are many things concerning God in the beginning,

creation, and the opening events of Bible history that are not answered for us. I believe the background of the devil is one of those unrevealed things.

B. The Devil Began His Work Of Destruction In Eden.

I Pet. 5:8 gives us the following picture of the devil:

"Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

He began that destructive work upon the first people who lived upon the earth. He came to the Garden of Eden with no good purpose, and before he left, the work of destruction had gotten underway. While Adam's sin has not been passed onto us (for sin is an act, and his act could not have been passed onto us), yet both Biblical statements and Biblical history following man's dismissal from Eden show that all of humanity from Adam onward has suffered because of that first sin. (Note--the entire system of the "mourners' bench", the father of the present-day "altar call", was based upon the false assumption that all descendants of Adam have actually inherited his sin. The same is true of the beginning of baptizing and sprinkling babies.)

II. Eve Was Deceived When She Sinned; Adam Sinned With His Eyes Wide Open.

A. The Scriptures Point Out This Fact.

II Cor. 11:3 refers to this first sin when it says:

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled (that means 'to take by guile', 'to deceive') Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

In I Tim. 2:14, Paul said:

"And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."

All of this is in keeping with what we read in the actual account of the first sin, for it opens by saying:

"Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made" (Gen. 3:1).

He deceived Eve by lying to her. He started off by asking if God had prohibited them in their eating, to which Eve replied that they could eat of every tree except the one. With that as a background, the devil told her why God had forbidden them to eat of that tree. He said:

"God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5).

In other words, there would be profit in eating of it, for to do so, their eyes would be opened, and they would thus enjoy an advancement. Furthermore, the devil assured her that if they ate of it, they wouldn't die. On that day, he came to the woman and posed as a true friend with good advice and welcome news. And for his story, the woman fell. She went to the tree, and here is how it now looked to her:

"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat" (Gen. 3:6).

She THOUGHT it was good for food; it SEEMED good to look upon; she THOUGHT it desirable in order to become wise. But, it was all a lie. There was no truth in it. It ended terribly instead of beautifully as she had supposed. In this account, we see the lying and the murderous nature of the devil, both of which are set forth in John 8:44:

"He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

Poor old Adam, what was he going to do? His wife had violated God's law, and she was urging him to eat. He had not heard the serpent's sermon, and though it was probably repeated to him by Eve, he didn't believe it. He was probably like a lot of people today who know what God says, but who do something else. So, with some motive in mind besides thinking that it was going to turn out gloriously, he ate, for Gen. 3:6 says that Eve

"gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat."

B. That Eve Was Deceived And Adam Wasn't In Sinning Is No Compliment To Either Of Them.

It certainly is no compliment to be deceived. It reflects, as it did in Eve's case, an unreliability concerning standing for that which is already known to be true. It also reflects a gullibility and at other times a lack of faith in that which is true. But, it certainly is no compliment to do as Adam did either. It is a sign of weakness. It is giving in to sin instead of trampling sin underfoot by a steadfast obedience to the known will of God.

III. Adam And Eve Both Tried To Shift Their Guilt.

A. Adam Blamed Eve For His Sin.

God had made Adam first and had given the prohibitory law to him (notice the singular "thou" in Gen. 2:16,17). Through all of these transpirings, God was looking on, fully conscious of all that was taking place. We might ask, "Why didn't God come down and straighten Eve out before she sinned and then kill the serpent?" Simply because God made man a being with the power of choice. Otherwise, there would have been no sense to give man laws and prohibitions. How terrible God must have felt when He saw Eve eating the fruit and giving it to Adam, and then Adam eating. When the act had been committed, there was nothing else for God to do than to come down and deal with them as transgressors. Consequently, when God came down, Gen. 3:8-11 says:

"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?"

When Adam was brought face to face with his sin, he wasn't willing to take the full blame for it--not when it was handy to blame somebody else in part for it. In answer to God's question, he said:

"The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:12).

B. Eve Blamed The Serpent For Her Sin.

Leaving Adam, God went directly to Eve whom he had blamed. What was she to do? Was she going to accept full responsibility for what had happened? No. When God asked the woman what she had done, she said:

"The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:13).

When God approached Adam, Adam said, "The woman whom thou gavest me." When He approached Eve, she said, "The serpent." The first sinners sought to shift the blame and to offer the One dealing with their souls an excuse, and men and women have been doing the same ever since!

IV. A Consideration Of The Sin Itself.

A. It Was An Act Of Disobedience.

Man may sin by failing to do what God has said (we call this the sin of omission). Jas. 4:17 tells of it. But, man may also sin by doing what God forbids. I John 3:4 tells of it. Both are disobedience to the will of God. God had made His will clearly known to Adam and Eve. When the devil asked Eve what God had said, she knew. When Adam ate the fruit, he knew he was transgressing the will of God. It is no wonder, then, that God dealt so severely with both of them. Even though Eve was deceived at the time of eating, she was responsible for allowing herself to be deceived. She knew the truth, and she should not have forsaken it just because of the good words and fair speech of the serpent.

B. It Was A Turning From God's Word To False Doctrine.

Many people have the idea that sin must be some act of drunkenness, thievery, fighting, or immorality. They emphasize only the moral and social responsibilities of man. Many think that doctrine is a matter of little consequence. Many totally reject any preaching that insists that all things be done according to God's Word. While the incident of Adam and Eve's sin is well known, yet many have not stopped to realize that the first sin ever committed was not drunkenness, robbery, war, or immorality--as bad as those are. No, it was listening to false doctrine instead of the truth of God, believing false doctrine instead of what God had said, and a following of false doctrine instead of the Word of God. In Eden, the devil turned preacher. He posed as a possessor of the truth and as one who had the welfare of humanity at heart. He preached, actually violating what God had said. God had said that man would surely die if he ate of the fruit (Gen. 2:17), but the devil said to the woman something else. He said:

"Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. 3:4).

He was a false teacher in his first attack upon the human family, and no greater deception is he pulling upon men today than getting them to believe things contrary to the Bible, to obey the commandments of men instead of the Word of God, and to line up with religious institutions that do not preach the true Word of God and that have had their beginning much this side of Pentecost when God began His church. Indifference is the devil's tool to use upon

the irreligious, but false doctrine is his tool upon the religious.

In conclusion, we might contrast the outcome of the devil's contest with Adam and Eve with his contest with Jesus following His baptism. Adam and Eve fell before the devil upon the first approach that he made, but though he attacked Jesus most severely three consecutive times, He resisted him successfully each time, and though he left Him "for a season", yet each successive attempt to get the Son of man to fall was as unsuccessful for him as those three following His baptism. May we, like Jesus, be equipped with the whole armour of God that we may be able to withstand all the attacks of the evil one.

The Consequences of the First Sin

Surely, we would be safe in saying that if Adam and Eve had realized the supreme importance of obeying God, if they had realized that God meant every word that He had said about what would come upon them if they became disobedient, and if they had realized how terrible the consequences of sin would be, they would never have sinned. But, they sinned, and they found out.

They had never known what a guilty conscience was until after they had eaten of the forbidden fruit. They had never known what it was to be terrified at the voice of God until that day when they hid among the trees. In their innocence, they had thought nothing of being naked, but now that they had become sinful, they sewed leaves together for coverings. To the pure, all things had been pure, but to the defiled was nothing pure. What mighty changes were wrought, and so rapidly, for him whom God had created to be the earthly superintendent of His creation!

There were many consequences of that first sin that could be enumerated and elaborated upon, but in the present study, it is our intention to consider the curses that God pronounced because of that sin.

I. Upon Adam And Eve Personally.

A. Earthly Hardships.

God had placed Adam into the garden to dress and tend it. How wonderful the productions of the ground must have been in those early days. But, when Adam sinned, God said:

"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" (Gen. 3:17, 18).

Part of the strength of the ground would henceforth be diverted from the crop to the weeds and pests. He would grow nothing unless he kept the weeds out, and when he cut the weeds off, they would grow back. Briarless blackberries were the original blackberries, but now when Adam

desired some blackberries to eat, he had to be careful not to run a thorn into his finger. And barefooted as he likely was, he was apt to step on a thorn among the berry vines at any time.

Evidently, Adam had not known earthly hardship such as was to be his after his sin. True, he worked, but it must not have been a burden to him. Though there were seasons, the weather was probably never unbearable. But, now it was different. Work was difficult, and life was no more easy. Gen. 3:19 says:

"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground."

B. Eve Was Made Subject To Adam.

Eve got out of line when she led her husband into sin. Adam "hearkened" unto the voice of his wife (Gen. 3:17) instead of the voice of God. Therefore, God said to woman:

"Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Gen. 3:16).

Every submission to his decisions and desires was a painful reminder of that time when she was the occasion of their mutual downfall. In a sense, she had eaten them out of house and home, and she suffered because of it.

C. Sorrows.

Surely, there was nothing to mar Adam and Eve's happiness before that fateful day. But, upon both man and woman did God pronounce sorrow in future days. To Eve, God said:

"I will greatly multiply thy sorrow" (Gen. 3:16).

To Adam, He said:

"Cursed is the ground for thy sake: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life" (Gen. 3:17).

Before God had said these words, sorrow had already gripped their hearts because of their sin, but little did they realize all the sorrow to come upon them. When Adam found that every curse that God had pronounced was bitter, how sorrowful he must have been. When they were banished from the beautiful garden and were sent forth to shift for themselves, how they must have desired to go back to the beautiful home in Eden. When Adam had to work hard to raise a crop; when the weeds about outgrew the crop; and when they sat in perspiration eating their food, how they must have thought about the sorrow that was theirs. When one day their firstborn son killed his brother, how sorrow must have been their portion. When bad became worse, and when there seemed to be no hope for the future, how dark it all must have been.

D. Pain.

Prior to their sin, we have no record of their suffering any pain. God had told them to multiply, but nothing of pain connected therewith is recorded. But, every child that Eve bore was through great pain, for God pronounced upon her the following curse:

"Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children" (Gen. 3:16).

E. Death.

God had said in warning them of eating of the forbidden tree:

"In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17).

In the very day that man ate of it, God came, pronounced the curse of death upon him, and started the death process by separating him from the tree of life. Gen. 3:19 says:

"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

And that very day, God said:

"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" (Gen. 3:22-24).

How terrible life was. A new day was nothing to look forward to. The future offered nothing prospectively good. These curses were the curses brought in upon Adam and Eve, plus losing their standing and fellowship with God, and they continue to be the curse of the human race.

II. Upon Successive Generations.

A. Adam And Eve Alone Must Answer For Their Sin.

The Bible is against the idea that we shall be eternally punished because of Adam and Eve's sin. We may suffer here because of their sin, but from the day of judgment onward, each will suffer or not suffer depending upon what he himself has or has not done--not what Adam and Eve did. The Bible says:

"What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel (and it is not used in Christianity either). Behold all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Eze. 18:2-4).

In passages relating to the judgment, the Bible shows that each will give an account of himself:

"Every one of us shall give account of himself (not Adam and Eve) to God" (Rom. 14:12); "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body (not what Adam and Eve did), according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10).

From the day that God drove Adam and Eve out of the garden, we know nothing of them except that Cain, Abel, and Seth were born, that Adam lived eight hundred years after the birth of Seth and begat sons and daughters, and that he died at the age of nine hundred and thirty. Whether he repented of his sins and lived for God, we are not told. If he did, then there is no doubt but what the mercy of God will extend to him, and he will be one of that great company over on the evergreen shores of eternity. Surely, suffering as he did in comparison to the bliss that he had originally

enjoyed ought to have caused him to walk before God in all fear. If he didn't repent and live as he should, then the consequences of his sin will deal with him during eternity, and he will find that God's earthly punishments were mild compared with His eternal punishments.

B. Nevertheless, The Bible Does Show That We Do Share In The Earthly Consequences Of Adam And Eve's Sin.

In the great resurrection chapter of I Cor., in which he discusses both death and resurrection, Paul said:

"For since by man (Adam) came death, by man (Jesus) came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Cor. 15:21,22).

Rom. 5:12-14 teaches the same thing. Throughout the Bible, the godly have suffered with the ungodly, and they have both gone to the grave. These tragedies of earth await every baby born into it, and there is no way that any can escape them.

C. All About Us, We Can See The Evidence Of These Consequences.

We do not have to have a passage of Scripture that points out that man suffers pain, endures earthly hardship, knows what sorrow is, and dies. These are all too familiar to us to need arguing that such happen. They have been here as long as man has been wicked before God, but it is the Bible that explains them to us as consequences. Why do women bear children through bitter pain today? Because of the sin of the first woman from whom all women have descended. Why do men find work difficult and sometimes unaccomplishing? Because of the sin of the first man from whom all men have descended. Oh, the far-reachingness of Adam and Eve's sin! Its consequences will reach even to generations yet to be born unless the Lord soon intervenes with His second coming.

III. Upon The Devil And His Program.

A. The Serpent, Through Whom The Devil Approached The Woman, Was Cursed.

The first curse pronounced by God in Gen. 3 was upon the serpent. To the serpent, God said:

"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" (Gen. 3:14).

In other words, the serpent was changed into a creeping animal that day. In Gen. 3:1, he is spoken of as one of the beasts of the field. In Gen. 1:25, beasts are distinguished from creeping things. So, evidently, the serpent lost his legs and had to crawl thereafter.

Modernists have laughed at the Bible's account of the serpent's talking to Eve, for serpents do not talk. But, it is altogether likely that the serpent lost his vocal faculty that day also, the Bible's brief account not narrating it for us, for he did speak in Gen. 3:1, and he doesn't today.

B. The Devil's Doom By The Seed Of The Woman Was Pronounced.

In speaking to the serpent, and evidently referring to the devil himself, God said:

"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" (Gen. 3:15).

There is no question but what the seed of the woman involved the coming of Jesus. The Scriptures show that all living under the law of Moses were under the curse of sin committed, but sin not forgiven. Gal. 3:10 says:

"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse."

Of course, the devil was behind all sin. Thus, the law cursing all under it was because of the devil. Aptly, in view of the promised struggle, does Gal. 4:4,5 tell of Jesus' coming:

"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."

The battle between the Son of God and the devil raged bitterly throughout Jesus' ministry. In every temptation laid for Jesus by the devil, Jesus emerged victorious, though only after bitter struggles. Each victory, however, was in itself but a promise of the ultimate outcome. But, when finally the devil working through Judas, the leaders, and the mob brought about the terrible death of Jesus on the cross, what appeared to be a certain victory for the devil actually turned out to be a deathblow to the head of the devil. Notice Heb. 2:14,15 in this connection:

"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."

From the battle lost at Calvary, the devil has never been able to recover.

"The prince of this world is judged" (John 16:11).

The time will come when all who refuse the Son of God as their Savior will be cast into the lake of fire with the devil, their master, for he will precede them there:

"The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone... And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:10,15).

In those days, the redeemed by the Son of God will be in the new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness (II Pet. 3:13). When sin is done, so will its curses be. In that land,

"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain" (Rev. 21:4).

The reason is:

"There shall be no more curse" (Rev. 22:3).

Patriarchal Religion

Bible students have commonly divided Biblical history into three dispensations: the Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian. The Patriarchal ran from Adam to the giving of the law of Moses; the Mosaic from the giving of the law until Calvary; the Christian from the day of Pentecost in 30 A.D. until Jesus comes again.

It is the purpose of the present study to consider the religion of the Patriarchal period. While our record in Genesis may be somewhat fragmentary upon this subject, yet a gathering together of its several portions will give us a general conception of their religion and of its several institutions.

I. Some Of The Elements Constituting The Patriarchal Religion.

A. Sacrifices.

The altar was the conspicuous piece of religious "furniture" employed in patriarchal times. As early as Cain and Abel, we find men offering sacrifices to God. The first recorded acceptable sacrifice was offered by Abel, who lost his life through the jealousy of his brother Cain, whose sacrifice God had rejected. A brief account of Abel's offering is set forth in Gen. 4:4:

"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."

Notice several things about the above verse. Abel knew to bring the firstlings and of the fat of his flock (probably meaning the firstborn and the best of the others). He knew to sacrifice animals. And the character of Abel, the one offering, was taken into account as well as the offering made, for "the Lord had respect unto Abel" as well as to his offering.

Noah offered an offering of clean animals to God following the flood (Gen. 8:20). Several times, Abraham built altars, offered sacrifices upon them, and called upon the name of God (Gen. 12:7; 12:8; 13:18). We also see Jacob building altars and calling upon God (Gen. 28:18-22; 31:54; 35:6,7). This, I believe, we may fairly conclude to have been man's first religious act unto God.

B. Prayer.

Abraham's prayer for the righteous in Sodom is well known (Gen. 18:23-32). That was the prayer where he asked God to spare the city if he could find fifty righteous in it or even if He could find no more than ten righteous. Gen. 20:17 also records concerning Abraham's prayer for Abimelech. It says:

"So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and

they bare children."

When the servant of Abraham, sent to obtain a wife for Isaac, came to a well outside the city of Nahor, there he prayed this prayer:

"O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come to draw water; and let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master" (Gen. 24:12-14).

When Jacob and Esau neared, after the bitter parting of years before, Jacob realized the predicament that he might be in before the wrath of his brother. Consequently, he prayed:

"O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude" (Gen. 32:9-12).

C. Tithing.

Gen. 14:20 tells of Abraham paying tithes to Melchizidek, a priest of God. When Jacob as a young man fled from the wrath of his brother Esau, as he was going into a strange land in the hope that someday he might return to his own land in peace, he promised God the following:

"Of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee" (Gen. 28:22).

D. Circumcision.

As far as we know, the rite of circumcision was the first religious rite given to one portion to humanity and not to all. It was given to Abraham and his descendants, and with this act, God was giving a forerunner forecast of an entire religion to be given to one portion of people (the Mosaic). All of this had many purposes, but one not to be overlooked is that in Christianity, God has instituted religious rites for His people, but which He did not give to the world. Abraham was ninety-nine years old and had but one son (Ishmael), when God said to him:

"This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of your seed" (Gen. 17:10-12).

Thus, it was that Isaac was circumcised (Gen. 21:4) and others later throughout their generations.

E. Clean And Unclean Animals.

Though we do not know when the law of clean and unclean animals was given to them, we do know that they did have such distinctions. When God was gathering Noah and the animals into the ark He said:

"And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation. Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of the beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female" (Gen. 7:1,2).

The probability is that such a distinction had principally to do with which animals to sacrifice and which animals not to. While the law delivered later through Moses forbade man either to eat or to sacrifice an unclean animal, yet it is generally held from a study of Gen. 1:29 and Gen. 9:2,3 that it was not until after the flood that God had given man the liberty of eating meat. If this be true, then "clean" animals before the flood must have meant animals that could be sacrificed and "unclean" animals those that could not be sacrificed.

After the flood, Noah and the inhabitants of the ark came forth, and a sacrifice of clean animals and clean birds was made to God. Gen. 8:20 says:

"And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar."

F. Moral Laws.

There is strong evidence that God had forbidden murder. Why else would Cain have been convicted of his deed as he was? Why would God have dealt with him as a sinner as He did? Why would God have punished Cain for his deed as He did (Gen. 4:11-13)? Lamech, the first man recorded in the Bible to have taken more than one wife (Gen. 4:19), also was guilty of murder (Gen. 4:23).

Let us remember also that God condemned the old world to be destroyed because it was wicked and sinful. How could they have been sinful if there had been no laws to break? Sin is a transgression of God's law (I John 3:4). Therefore, they must have had laws to break. But, if one would argue that the laws they broke were possibly the laws concerning tithing, sacrificing, and other matters discussed above, we would reply that Gen. 6:5 indicates that their wickedness, though probably not limited to it, was principally one of moral corruption. That verse says:

"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."

So, in closing out this section, we see that the religion of the patriarchal period included a considerable number of elements.

II. The Father, As Head Of His Household, Was A Prominent Part Of The Patriarchal Religion.

The word "patriarchal" comes from the word "patriarch", which means "father". From the fact stated above--the prominence of the father religiously--and to be discussed, this dispensation has derived its name "Patriarchal".

A. The Father Was Evidently The Teacher.

Of Abraham, God said:

"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment" (Gen. 18:19).

When we discuss the final main division of this study, it will be evident why that God needed such a teacher in every home.

B. The Father Was Evidently The Priest.

It is generally held that Job lived during the Patriarchal dispensation. If so, we can turn to his book and possibly learn something of the religion of those days. In the first chapter of Job, we see him performing the duties of a priest to his family. One day after his sons and daughters had feasted together, Job. 1:5 says:

"Job offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually."

It is quite clear, then, that the father was a teacher and a priest to his household in the Patriarchal dispensation. We might also observe that Melchizidek was a priest to Abraham upon one occasion (Gen. 14:18-20), and it appears that Abraham was a priest to Abimilech upon one occasion (Gen. 20:3-7). These references are considerably abstract, at least to the point that I am not sure we can safely conclude too much concerning them. It may be in from the case of Melchizidek that we could conjecture that God may have had special priests of a higher realm at various places for the special needs of people.

III. How Did The People Of Patriarchal Times Know What To Do? Did They Have A Bible?

We have no record of God telling Cain and Abel to bring sacrifices. We have no record of God instituting prayer for the patriarchs. We have no record of God commanding the patriarchs to tithe. We have no record of God distinguishing the clean animals from the unclean animals for the patriarchs. Did God reveal His will concerning these and other elements of their religious life, or did they merely devise these themselves, God accepting the works of their hands because of the sincerity of their hearts to do something for God?

A. Modernists' Position.

As to be expected, modernists have men devising their own religious rites. They say that man in his fallen condition felt that he must do something to atone for his shortcomings. Thus, he devised these various religious rites.

B. The True Position.

We must not suppose with the modernists that men just began practicing these rites. They had their beginning with God. While He probably made no written record of His will, as He later did for the Israelites through Moses, He made known His will for these things to be done nonetheless. Take for instance, the matter of circumcision. We have a definite record of God instituting this with Abraham. Others earlier than Abraham did not practice this. After it had once been given to Abraham, it was to be taught to each

new generation, who was not only to practice it, but to teach the next generation to do the same thing. I believe that we may safely assume that the other rites had similar beginnings and were to be perpetuated in the same way. This is likely why the father was the teacher to his household.

Therefore, I conclude that prior to Abel bringing his offering to God, God had given definite instructions concerning offerings.

"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain" (Heb. 11:4).

A later verse tells us that it was by faith that Abraham offered up Isaac (verse 17). Other verses tell us that by faith Noah built the ark (verse 7), by faith Abraham left his homeland and went out into a strange country (verses 8,9), etc. There is a difference between doing something "by faith" and "by a guess". Abel was assured that he was doing what God wanted and that God would bless him for it. But, if God had given no such commandment, how could he have been so assured? Would it not have been but a guess?

Enoch was a prophet (Jude 14,15) who walked with God (Gen. 5:24) and who pleased God because of his faith (Heb. 11:5). It may be that some of the items of patriarchal religion were first made known through Enoch. We are not able to say to which person or persons some of these matters were first revealed, but we are confident that when they were once revealed, they were to be handed down from generation to generation, and that there was great blessing in keeping the commandments of God. Those patriarchs of the long, long ago did not have a place of religious meeting like the Israelites with their tabernacle nor were they a part of a great fellowship such as we have in the church today. But, they did have a religious life by which their faith and obedience could be tested, and we are assured from various reports throughout the Bible that some of those wonderful characters of the past who walked in the light as God gave it to them, though it was but the "starlight" of God's revelation, will be a part of those who will inhabit the new heaven and new earth forever and ever.

The Great Flood

What child has not shuddered with fright concerning the story of the great flood in Noah's day? In the springtime, when it would rain day after day so that water stood everywhere because the water-soaked ground could drink in no more, and we would have to stay indoors, as a boy I would wonder, "Are we in for another flood like the one that took place in Noah's day? How can we be sure that God will keep His promise that such will never happen again?" As a child, I am afraid that at times fear was possibly stronger than faith!

It is worthy of our notice that not only does the Bible contain a record of the flood, but that since all the present-

day population of the earth has descended from the eight people who were in the ark during the flood, every tribe of the earth (though they did not have the Bible) has as a part of its history the account of a flood that came upon the wicked world, destroying all but a few--one man and his immediate kin--who were in a large boat with some animals. This is true of the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Persians, the Romans, and the Egyptians of the ancient world. This is true of the Chinese and the Hindoos of the Far East and the Mexicans, Indians, Cubans, Chilians, and Peruvians of the West. The Scandinavians and the British Druids of the north and the aboriginal tribes of the South Sea islands all have such historical traditions. As is to be expected, the accounts vary in certain details, but their resemblance in so many features to the Biblical account shows that they have the great flood of Noah's day in mind. If space permitted, how we would like to share a few of these records of the flood with you. Since it doesn't, let us come directly to the body material of this study.

I. A Difficult Decision

A. The Extreme Wickedness Of Man.

All of us possibly have heard preachers say in their sermons, "We are living in the most wicked time in the world's history." While fully recognizing the wickedness of this present age, I have never made that statement, for as wicked as this age is, there is no doubt but what the world was the most wicked of all time in the days of Noah. Notice the bankrupt condition of that age as set forth in the book of Genesis:

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5); "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth" (Gen. 6:11,12).

B. It Took Just Ten Generations From Creation For Man To Corrupt Himself So.

Beginning with Adam and culminating with Noah, we find that there were just ten generations: (1) Adam, (2) Seth, (3) Enos, (4) Cainan, (5) Mahalaleel, (6) Jared, (7) Enoch, (8) Methusaleh, (9) Lamech, and (10) Noah. These generations are listed for us in Gen. 5:3-29. According to the figures given in the Gen. 5 reference, there were 1,656 years from the creation of Adam until the year of the flood. Adam lived 930 years; therefore, let us say that he lived until the year 930. Noah was 600 years old when the flood came (Gen. 7:11). Since Noah was 600 in the year 1656 (the year of the flood), he was born in 1056. Therefore, Adam had been dead but 126 years when Noah was born. We have given these figures that if it be argued that no point should be made of the fact that humanity deteriorated itself morally in but ten generations since they were long generations that one can see that with Adam living contemporarily with most of the pre-flood people--a man created by the hand of God, a man who could tell them what God approved and disapproved, and a man who could warn them from experience about wrongdoing--it seems so inexcusable that things became bankrupt in but ten generations.

C. "I Will Destroy Man Whom I Have Created."

While the world was enjoying its sins, it was ignorant of what God was deciding to do. So often, it is that way. They were probably enjoying their sinful ways, but the Bible shows that their conduct grieved God. Are more remorseful words to be found in the Bible than those found in Gen. 6:6,7 (which follow)?

"It repented the Lord that he had man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them."

Reading the foregoing lines would remind us of a father of a wayward, useless son who disgraces himself and brings shame to his family. He will not listen to instruction nor advice. How his father's heart is broken matters not to him. Inwardly, the father is tempted to say to himself, "Why did I ever bring him into the world?" When God looked the terrible conditions over, He felt the same way. It was a terrible decision to make, but what else could He do? The only way out was to decree, "I will destroy man whom I have created."

II. A Special Assignment.

A. God Informed Noah Of His Plans.

When the record tells of the wickedness of the earth, God's heart-broken grief, His regretful feelings, and His decision to cleanse the earth of man, in remarkable contrast, Gen. 6:8 simply says:

"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord."

We do not have a life-story of Noah from which to draw out the many excellencies that he possessed although surrounded by men of violence and moral rottenness, but we do have these few words concerning him in Gen. 6:9:

"Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God."

It was to this good man that God came to talk over matters concerning the future. His words to Noah were:

"The end of all flesh is come before me: for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth" (Gen. 6:13).

B. He Commanded Noah To Build The Ark.

Before proceeding to tell Noah in just what way He would bring an end to life upon the earth, He instructed him as follows:

"Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be..." (Gen. 6:14,15).

All things done by God or by God's direction have a plan (the tabernacle, the plan of salvation, the church, the ark). Noah was expected to build according to the pattern. This was a long way back in history, yet it was not an experiment as to boat-making. Being six times as long as wide is the very proportion on which modern ships are built. After giving him the plans for the big boat,

He then told him in what way the world would perish:

"Behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die" (Gen. 6:17).

He, then, explained that the purpose of the ark was that he and his immediate family were to be saved in it while the flood was upon the earth (Gen. 6:18).

C. He Also Assigned Him The Task Of Assembling The Animals And Foodstuffs Into The Ark.

He instructed him as follows:

"Of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female. Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive. And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee and for them" (Gen. 6:19,20).

It is noticeable in the above as well as later statements about the flood that no mention is made of fish or water animals being taken into the ark. This would be as we would reasonably expect, for they could survive a flood in abundant numbers without being brought into the ark.

D. He Was A Preacher Of Righteousness.

This fact is nowhere mentioned in the Old Testament, but Inspiration gave that extra portion of information to the apostle Peter, who passed it onto us in II Pet. 2:5. It may be that he had always been a preacher of righteousness (his family showed evidence of something that caused them to walk with God), but we surely believe that he would have preached righteousness in those years preceding the flood, which seems evident from Gen. 6:3 (the verse that also indicates the time from God's announcement to Noah until the time of the flood as one hundred and twenty years). In many ways, this must have been the most heart-breaking of all his work. He was right, and he knew it. Therefore, he stood fast regardless of whether others listened or not. What an example for preachers of the Word today!

Yes, Noah believed every word that God had said, and he did what God told him to do, and as a result, he and his house were saved. How well the writer of Hebrews has summarized it all for us:

"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" (Heb. 11:7).

III. A Terrible Destruction.

A. It Was (And Is To This Day) The World's Worst Disaster.

The world has known some terrible disasters--the Johnstown Flood, the Chicago Fire, the San Francisco Earthquake, Pearl Harbor, etc. Our newspapers carry stories of disaster that make one cringe and shudder to read. But, none of these disasters, as bad as they were, can in any degree of destruction compare with the tragedy of the flood

in Noah's time. Think of every man, every woman, every child, every animal, every bird, all the current year's crop, and all the houses swept to their destruction! When was there ever such a tragedy on the earth? And what a mad-house the earth must have been turned into as the windows of heaven were opened and the fountains of the great deep broken up! Can you not see panic written across every face and fright in every eye as people grabbed what little they could and ran for higher summits? Can you not hear the shouting and the screaming as people saw their end certainly and rapidly drawing near? Finally, every hilltop was covered, and all mankind and ground animals drowned. I see but one thing--the birds flying back and forth with no place to set their feet and with nothing to eat. Finally, as the strength of their wings give out, one by one they fall into the water to splash it out for a few final seconds before joining that great throng of the lifeless dead.

B. All Of This Was A Demonstration Of God's Wrath In Action.

When we think about the terribleness of those forty days of rain which covered land for a full five months, we are led to ask why God would so deal with His creation. There is just one answer:

"The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom. 1:18).

The love of God created man, gave him his every benefit, and wanted him to do right, enjoy himself in a righteous way, and glorify God, but when man would turn against the Creator and live in disobedience to Him, he tasted of the bitterness of God's almighty wrath and power. Man at the time of the flood surely learned the truth of the following two statements in the Bible:

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption (or 'destruction')" (Gal. 6:7,8); "Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord...It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:30,31).

If they had been warned about the coming flood, they paid no attention to the warning, for Jesus said of them:

"For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:38,39).

And so today, when people in general are not expecting the Lord's coming, and when people have either so corrupted themselves with sin or so busied themselves in mere earthly pursuits so as not to give Christ due consideration in their lives, we need to be careful not to become conformed to the fashion of this world, for the Scripture says:

"The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:17).

We need to stop and realize that the ark that God had ordained for the safety of His trusting people was the only place where safety and salvation were to be had in the days of the outpouring of His wrath in the times of

Noah. The people of his day might have laughed him to scorn when they saw him building it. I can hear them say, "So you think you folks are going to be the only ones saved?" Noah kept right on doing what God had told him to do. There was nothing else to do. Had he listened to the voice of the people and turned from the way of God, he would have been lost with them. But, when the flood hit, there was salvation for all in the ark, and there was salvation for none out of it! What a lesson for us today! Jesus and his church is our ark of safety today. I John 5:12 says:

"He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

For those who belittle the meaning and the importance of baptism, there is a lesson in Peter's writings as he makes a comparison. After saying that there were eight souls saved in the ark in the days of Noah, he said:

"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us" (1 Pet. 3:21).

If people wanted to be saved in the days of the flood, they had to be in the ark, for all in it were saved, and all out of it were lost. And if people expect to be saved today, they must be baptized. God has as much commanded baptism of us today for salvation as He commanded Noah to build an ark in his day. May God hasten the day when men will quit quibbling with God about His requirements and quit neglecting specific acts of obedience under the illusion that a sanctimonious attitude toward religion will suffice and begin to take God's warnings and instructions more seriously, even as did Noah of whom it is recorded:

"Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he" (Gen. 6:22).

Post-Flood Happenings

All who have grown up in Christian homes where Bible stories were either told them or read to them will recall the way Noah determined that the flood was past. First a raven was sent forth that never did return (Gen. 8:7). He next sent forth a dove which returned because she found no place for her feet (Gen. 8:8,9). A week later, when he sent the dove forth, she returned with a leaf in her mouth (Gen. 8:10,11). By this, Noah knew that the flood was past. A week later when he sent forth the dove, she didn't return (Gen. 8:12).

God had told Noah to enter the ark before the flood (Gen. 7:1ff), and he remained within the ark until God told him to come forth from the ark, bringing the animals out with him (Gen. 8:15-17). When Noah entered the ark, the world was full of people busy with the affairs of life, but when he emerged, all were gone, and the world was his and his sons to subdue and use.

The book of Genesis contains some very interesting material concerning post-flood happenings which we shall consider in this lesson.

I. God's Rainbow Covenant.

A. Noah's Sacrifice.

Godly people have always thought of God before they have thought of themselves. Before taking anything for themselves, they have ever thought of God with the firstfruits of their increase (Prov. 3:9). When scattered from their homes because of persecution, the saints fleeing from Jerusalem did not first think of obtaining homes, but of preaching Jesus where they went (Acts 8:1,4). The first thing that Noah did when coming forth from the ark was not build a home, but build an altar to God who had taken good care of them during the long months of the flood:

"And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar" (Gen. 8:20).

B. God's Covenant With The New World.

When an offering pleased God, the Bible says it was a "sweet smelling savour" to God (Num. 15:3; Eph. 5:2). When God did not accept a sacrifice, the Bible says it was an "abomination" to Him (Prov. 15:8). One of the leading ideas involved in the word "abomination" is "that which stinks" or is nauseating. When Noah made his offering to God, God was pleased with it, for Gen. 8: 21 says:

"The Lord smelled a sweet savour."

It was then that God said in His heart:

"I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake...neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. 8:21,22).

Having made this decision, He spoke to Noah and his sons about it:

"I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth" (Gen. 9:9-11).

The significance of the rainbow, that beautiful arching blend of colors that is unsurpassed for beauty and that cannot fail to thrill the heart, is brought out in the words of God to the family of Noah:

"This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember my covenant" (Gen. 9:12-15).

Concerning this covenant, let us observe a few facts. It was made with the animals as well as man, for a devastating flood wipes out animals as well as human beings. This

covenant does not mean that God won't punish the wicked. It simply means that God will let the population of the earth live a reasonable life-span, each to stand before God in the last day to give a personal account. A time is coming when God will put an end even to the earth itself--not merely those who live upon the earth--but that time, the destructive element will be fire instead of water (II Pet. 3:7,10). But, as long as the earth stands, God plans to perpetuate nature upon a regular basis of seasons (seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night). God has been faithful to His promise throughout the many centuries of time that have passed since He made this covenant.

C. Why God Decided Against Periodic Purgings Of The Earth.

God had a reason for making the promise that He did. It wasn't because the inhabitants of the earth would maintain themselves in perpetual godliness. Oh that that were the reason! But, quite the contrary was the reason. Gen. 8:21 records God's reason:

"I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth."

In other words, God would be kept busy purging the earth and starting all over again if He sent a flood every time the earth became evil. Man in his unregenerate state is morally degraded. That is why as soon as a person becomes old enough to be taught the will of God, he is to have the gospel of salvation preached to him, for he has sinned already. The imagination of his heart is evil from his youth.

II. God's Special Instructions To The Post-Flood World.

Following the flood, God gave certain instructions to the new world order that are no more dispensational than suffering, sorrow, and death pronounced upon Adam and Eve are dispensational. All of us were involved as descendants of Adam and Eve when God made those pronouncements to them. The same is true of these instructions to Noah and his family from whom all of us have descended.

A. The Commandment To Repopulate The Earth.

With humanity cut back to eight people and the number of animals being limited to the few in the ark, it was fitting that God instruct them to multiply. While Noah was yet in the ark, God said to him:

"Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee. Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee, of all flesh, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth" (Gen. 8:16,17).

B. Meat Given For Food.

Possibly before the flood, animals were not shy of people. As far as we know, men did not hunt them for food, for it appears that mankind was vegetarian in the beginning (Gen. 1:29). Probably only as men made sacrifices did they take the lives of animals before the flood. But, after the flood, God delivered animals into the hand of man for food:

"The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that moveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things" (Gen. 9:2,3).

This fear of man on the part of the animals was probably due to their being hunted by him for food. But, whatever the reason, we see that it is true. Man may not be larger nor stronger than some beasts, but where beasts have not respected the superiority of man by nature (though most of them have, even the most savage beasts evacuating where man moves in), man has retained that superiority by his manufacture of weapons and fire-arms. Man's dominion over the animal world is reflected also in Jas. 3:7:

"Every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind."

C. The Importance Of Blood Stressed.

Though it was not known for long centuries (though it is universally recognized today), the very first book of the Bible said that life was in the blood (Gen. 9:4). Lev. 17:11,14 teaches the same thing. For this reason, God forbade man to eat meat that had the blood yet in it (Gen. 9:4). This was one of the special warnings given to the Gentile Christians (Acts 15:20).

The blood of man was so important that whenever a man killed another, God was not satisfied until the murderer had been killed (Num. 35:30,31). Only blood could atone for the shedding of innocent blood. If the blood of a man was shed by an animal, that animal had to pay for his deed with his own life (Exo. 21:28-32). All of this is involved in Gen. 9:5,6:

"And surely your blood of your lives will I require (in other words, if a man's life was taken, God would require the life of the guilty one); at the hand of every beast will I require it (if a beast had done the killing), and at the hand of man (if a man had done the killing); at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood (the blood of the murderer) be shed; for in the image of God made he man (because of being made in the image of God, the life of man is peculiarly important so that if a man who ought to know it or even a beast who can't know it should take the life of a man, his own blood must be shed for the deed)."

III. The Outcropping Of Sin Once More.

A. The Drunkenness Of Noah.

The devil went to work on the "second beginning" of earth's population even as he worked on Adam and Eve in the first beginning. The Bible does not conceal the weakness of its heroes (whether it be David or Peter, Samson or Barnabas, Moses or Noah). It, consequently, records a sin that Noah committed quite some time after the flood:

"And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: and he drank of the wine, and was drunken" (Gen. 9:20,21).

Some, possibly feeling it necessary to uphold Noah's integrity, have thought that a great change in some things of nature took place as a result of the flood, fermentation

being something unknown to the people before the flood. Therefore, according to them, Noah possibly didn't know that the fruit of his grapes would make him drunk. But, I see no necessity to assume something that cannot be Biblically proven. Too, such a position seems to imply that his drunkenness occurred shortly after the flood, but it appears to have occurred quite some time after the flood. None of Noah's sons had any children at the time of the flood, but by the time of his drunkenness, Ham's fourth son (Canaan--Gen. 10:6) was alive and evidently old enough to have taken part with his father Ham in enjoyably beholding the nakedness of Noah, for he received a curse because of it (Gen. 9:25). We would spank a child for such misconduct, but surely to be old enough for himself and his posterity to be cursed as a result of it, Canaan (Noah's grandson) must have been at least a young man. Therefore, I personally conclude that Noah was guilty of sin by his drunkenness, and Ham (and evidently Canaan also) were guilty of sin in their beholding Noah's nakedness.

B. The Tower Of Babel.

God was not pleased with men's doings in a plain in the land of Shinar. The people were building a city and a great tower. Their intentions were revealed in the following words:

"Let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth" (Gen. 11:4).

Pride seems to have entered into their plans as well as fear. Anyway, the thing they feared (being scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth) was the very thing that happened. Being displeased with the proceedings, God confused their speech, making different languages, so they could not understand each other, resulting in their dispersion from the site and originating nationalities.

C. The Condition Described In Rom. 1:21ff.

That Paul is describing the condition of the Gentile world in Rom. 1:21-32 is clear to every student of the book of Romans. When Noah and his sons came out of the ark, they were righteous, and idolatry was no part of them. But, between the time of the flood and the coming of Jesus, the going deeper and deeper into sin and farther and farther from God described in the following verses took place:

"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 a 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 (and he continues by giving a long, long list of prevalent sins)" (Rom. 1:21-29).

The Gentile world continued in its state of wickedness until after Jesus came and sent the gospel forth to them to redeem the reachable ones among the Gentiles from their sins. The descendents of Abraham (the Hebrews) generally did better--they should have--though at times, they made themselves as abominable to God as were the Gentiles.

IV. Noah's Prophecies Concerning His Sons.

When Noah awoke from his drunkenness, knowing what had happened in the conduct of his sons (Ham having seen his nakedness, Shem and Japheth modestly covering him without looking), he pronounced the following blessings and curse.

A. The Curse Upon Canaan (Ham's Son).

"Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren" (Gen. 9:25).

We might ask why Noah cursed "Canaan" instead of "Ham". A legend among the Jews that comes down to us from a very ancient time says that Canaan was the one who first saw his grandfather's shame and that instead of covering him and concealing his nakedness, he told his father for which cause he and his descendents bore the curse. While Ham's son Cush was the ancestor of the Babylonians, the Ethiopians, and the people of southern Arabia; while Ham's son Mizraim was the ancestor of the Egyptians; and while Ham's son Phut was the ancestor of others who lived in Africa, Canaan was the ancestor of Phoenicians and other tribes inhabiting Palestine (a fact we shall make reference to shortly).

B. The Blessing Upon Shem.

"Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant" (Gen. 9:26).

The Hebrew people, as well as the Armenians, Persians, Assyrians, and Arabians, descended from Shem. The Hebrew, Chaldee, Assyrian, and Arabic languages are called Semitic languages after Shem. The prophecy probably was more concerned with the Hebrew element of his descendents than any other. When the children of Israel (descendents of Shem) came out of Egypt and took the land of Canaan under Joshua, subduing Canaan and making the Canaanites (descendents of Shem) subservient to them, we have a remarkable fulfillment of Gen. 9:26.

C. The Blessing Upon Japheth.

"God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant" (Gen. 9:27).

Truly, God has "enlarged" Japheth. The lands around the Mediterranean, Europe, and most of Asia (and today North and South America and Australia from them) have been populated. Possibly in several ways has Japheth dwelt in the tents or place of Shem. Japheth long ago replaced Shem as the world power, earlier world powers having been of Shem while later world powers have been of

Japheth. Religiously, Gentile people of Japheth have replaced Hebrew people as the people of God. Truly, then, Japheth is dwelling in the tents of Shem. Canaan also was to serve Japheth.

From these three sons of Noah was the whole earth repopulated (Gen. 9:19). Gen. 11:10-26 traces the generations from Shem to Abraham, the great man in the plan of God who will be the subject of our next study.

Abraham's Place in the Plan of God

Abraham (originally known as "Abram") is introduced to us in Gen. 11:26, the son of one Terah of Chaldea, and although Gen. 25:8 records his death at the age of one hundred seventy-five, the Bible never loses sight of this great man of the patriarchal world. He was given a great place in the plan of God, and no one can be properly referred to as a mature student of the Bible who does not generally understand his place in the unfolded plan of God.

The time of Abraham marked the time when God began to work visibly toward the salvation of the human race that He had promised in Gen. 3:15, a verse of "beginning again" for the human family. The time of Abraham was also a time when the ancient world was steeped in idolatry, even Abraham's father, being an idolater (Josh. 24:2). The call of Abraham was also the beginning of God's particular dealings with one people to the exclusion of all other peoples as far as special revelation was concerned. He began to work with and through one nation of people (the Hebrews) seemingly to the disregarding of all the other nations as far as dealing with and through them was concerned. To this, Paul referred when he said:

"Who in times past suffered all nations (Gentiles) to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons" (Acts 14:16,17).

Let us, then, consider this man who plays one of the major human roles in the plan of God.

I. Abraham Was A Man Of Great Faithfulness.

Like all who are human, he was not sinless, but he must certainly be regarded as one of the great characters of the Bible. Particular mention is made by Biblical writers of his faithfulness to God and his faith in God.

A. He Obeyed God's Call.

Acts 7:2,3 and Gen. 12:1 show that God first appeared to Abraham in Mesopotamia and later in Haran, both times

calling him to leave where he was and to go where God would show him. The faith and faithful obedience of Abraham are noted by the Hebrew writer as follows:

"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" (Heb. 11:8).

B. He Believed God's Promise Of A Multitude Of Descendants.

God had spoken to Abraham about his "seed", but years had passed, and no children were born to him. He took occasion one day to speak to God about the matter. One night, God took him out into the open and spoke to him as follows:

"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" (Gen. 15:5).

In other words, Abraham was to become the progenitor of an innumerable multitude. Later, He changed his name from "Abram" to "Abraham" (Gen. 17:1-7). "Abraham" means "father of a multitude". But, the largeness of the promise did not find Abraham staggering in unbelief. The next verse after the promise says:

"And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6).

All of this is the more remarkable when we consider the extreme age of both Abraham and his wife. True faith in God staggers not in the face of difficulties. Because of great faith in connection with numerous offspring, the Hebrew writer has not failed to include this in his report:

"Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable" (Heb. 11:11,12).

C. He Obeyed God's Commandment To Sacrifice His Son Isaac.

It was a great trial of his faith when God said to him:

"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" (Gen. 22:2).

The Hebrew writer took into account that it was a great trial of faith, but recorded that his faith was equal to the commandment:

"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure" (Heb. 11:17-19).

II. Promises To Abraham Concerning His Physical Descendants.

God made several important and far-reaching promises to Abraham concerning his physical descendants. We desire to consider four important such promises below.

A. A Promise Of Becoming A Great Nation.

Gen. 12:2 contains the following promise:

"I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great."

Thus, Abraham became the father of the Hebrew people. Actually, Abraham was the father of several nations (Gen. 17:5,6)--the Ishmaelites through his son Ishmael, the Edomites through his grandson Esau, the Israelites through his grandson Jacob, and even other nations.

B. A Promise Of Land.

When Abraham was called, God told him to go to a land that He would show him (Gen. 12:1). When he passed through the land of Canaan, God said to him:

"Unto thy seed will I give this land" (Gen. 12:7).

After he and Lot separated, Abraham having shown such unselfishness as to let Lot choose his preference of land, God assured Abraham of much land. He said:

"Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever" (Gen. 13:14,15).

The actual boundaries of the land to become that of his descendents was from the river of Egypt unto the Euphrates River (Gen. 15:18). After the exodus, several hundred years later than Abraham, this land promise was fulfilled unto his offspring.

C. A Promise Concerning His Friends And His Enemies.

To Abraham, God said:

"I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee" (Gen. 12:3).

It is possibly worthy of notice here that Abraham's friends were spoken of in the plural while his enemies were spoken of in the singular. God was going to work in such a way that many more would be good to Abraham than would hate him.

D. A Promise Involving The Messiah.

Twice (at Haran in Gen. 12:3 and when he had proven himself in the offering of Isaac in Gen. 22:18) did God make the greatest promise of all to Abraham, when He said:

"In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (12:3); "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (22:18).

What was meant by that promise? We are not left wondering, for Paul spoke concerning it in Gal. 3. In verse 14, he spoke of the blessing of Abraham coming upon the Gentiles through Jesus. "All the nations" of the promise in Gen. 22:18 would naturally include the Gentiles, and Jesus was the seed (offspring) of Abraham through whom the blessing came. We are confirmed in this by reading verse 16 of Gal. 3:

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

Matthew, surely the "kingdom" gospel of the four, aptly traced the genealogy of Jesus to Abraham through David. He traced it to David to prove that Jesus had a right to the throne of Israel, and he traced it to Abraham because it was necessary for the Messiah to be of Abraham's offspring in order to meet the promise of Gen. 22:18. Notice the opening verse of Matthew:

"The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham."

III. Abraham Also Has Spiritual Descendents.

A. The Jews Thought They Were "In" Because Of Their Descent From Abraham.

As a people, the Jews made too much out of being physical descendents of Abraham as far as an individual standing with God was concerned. John the Baptist and Jesus both had to deal with this erroneous attitude. When John preached the necessity of repentance, he knew that some of the hypocritical Jews were counting strongly on physical descent from Abraham. Therefore, he said:

"Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father" (Matt. 3:9).

He told them in the next verse that the ax was laid at the root of the trees, and every tree that was not bringing forth good fruit (regardless of physical descent) was going to be cut down and burned.

When Jesus said to certain Jews that they would know the truth, and that the truth would make them free, they immediately answered Him:

"We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man" (John 8:33).

B. Abraham Has Two Kinds Of Descendents.

Of course, Abraham had physical descendents. But, he also has spiritual descendents. Rom. 2:25-29 says:

"For circumcision (being a physical descendent of Abraham) verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore if the uncircumcision (those not of physical descent from Abraham) keep the righteousness of the law (obediently serve God like Abraham), shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision (become a descent of Abraham)? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfill the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly (physical descent); neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew (a true descendent), which is one inwardly (spiritually); and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

It certainly is not true that the physical descendents of Abraham are today the people of God. The above passage shows that they are not. God has a new people, and all of the good things to come from being descendents of Abraham come through being spiritual descendents of Abraham rather than physical descendents.

C. All Who Are In Christ Are Spiritual Descendents Of Abraham.

In Christ, all lineal distinctions are past. All are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus--not by physical descent from Abraham (Gal. 3:26). As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ regardless of who they are (Gal. 3:27). And Paul shows the following concerning those who are in Christ:

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

Now, notice what Paul went on to say concerning those who are Christ's:

"And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29).

In other words, ever since Abraham's day, God's people have been the descendents of Abraham. Prior to Jesus' coming, they were Abraham's physical descendents, but since Jesus has come, they are Abraham's spiritual descendents (those who "walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham").

D. An Argument Based Upon The "Time" When Abraham Was Approved Of God.

Rom. 4 is a wonderful chapter to study in connection with this present study. Verses 1 and 2 deny that Abraham was approved in God's sight by sinless perfection. Rather, in contrast, verse 3 affirms that it was his unswerving faith in God that gained him his approval with God. Verse 3, in support of this, quotes Gen. 15:6, when he believed God's mighty promise concerning the innumerable number of his descendents. Gen. 15:6 says:

"Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."

This state of righteousness with God is the state desired of all. But, who attains that state? The man who seeks it by morality apart from trust in God, or the man who seeks it by trusting in God? The chapter shows that it comes not by works of morality nor by works of the law, but by faith put into obedient action, even as was Abraham's.

But, upon whom can such blessedness come? Upon Jews only, or upon Gentiles also? Paul argues that since Abraham received the approval of God before he was circumcised (the mark of distinction between Hebrews and all others), circumcision (or being a physical Hebrew) necessarily has nothing to do with obtaining that blessed state of righteousness. Follow the train of thought and the logic of his argument in the following verses, and notice the conclusion reached:

"Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision? or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision (This statement of approval came in Gen. 15, but he was not circumcised until Gen. 17). And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also (the Gentiles): and the father of the circumcision to

them who are not of the circumcision only (Hebrews), but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world; was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect; because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (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" (Rom. 4:9-18).

Man having sinned, there was no hope of his acceptance with God on any basis of personal righteousness. A belief in God and an acceptance of the mercy of God extended through the crucified Christ demonstrated through one's obedience was the divinely appointed way of acceptance with God. Though Abraham was not the first Biblical character to be an example of acceptance with God by an obedient faith (Abel, Enoch, and Noah having preceded him in this--Heb. 11:4-7), yet his case if given greater elaboration than any before him or any after him in this regard.

Thus, we see that Abraham occupies an important place in the plan of God from a number of important standpoints, and there are other considerations also that space has not allowed to include.

Isaac's Place in the Plan of God

Isaac was one of the grand old men of the patriarchal world. He was kind and gentle in his ways and attained an age greater than either his father or his immediate descendents (he lived to be 180, Gen. 35:28; his father Abraham lived to be 175, Gen. 25:7; Isaac's son Jacob lived to be 147, Gen. 47:28,29; Isaac's grandson Joseph lived to be 110, Gen. 50:26). No study of the plan of God would be complete without a study of the life of this man Isaac.

I. The Abrahamic Line And Promises Were Continued Through Him.

A. God Revealed This Fact To Abraham Before Isaac Was Born.

At the time that God gave Abraham the law of circumcision, He said the following to him about his wife Sarah:

"I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her (the only son that Abraham had at that time was Ishmael, who was born of Sarah's handmaid Hagar): yea, I will

bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations (the Israelites, Edomites, and others came from her); kings of people shall be of her (Saul, David, Solomon, all the kings of Israel, all the kings of Judah, as well as Edomite kings, and others came from her). Then 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? And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! And 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 (the Ishmaelites descended from him). But my covenant will I establish with Isaac" (Gen. 17:16-21).

B. God Renewed The Promises To Isaac Personally After The Death Of Abraham.

When a great famine arose, Isaac was contemplating taking his family and going into the land of Egypt. But, God appeared to him 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 swore 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" (Gen. 26:2-4).

Thus, the first important thing about Isaac is that he and his descendents became the line through which the Messiah was to be brought into the world.

II. An Incident In Isaac's Life Was Used As An Allegory To Teach A Great Doctrinal Lesson About The Two Covenants.

A. The Incident Took Place At The Time Of His Weaning.

"And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned. And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with thy son, even with Isaac. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son. And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Gen. 21:8-13).

B. Paul's Inspired Use Of This Incident.

The Galatian churches were being turned back to the law by Judaizing teachers. Paul wrote the Galatian letter to correct this situation. To teach that Christians are exclusively under the new covenant and in no sense under the old, Paul wrote:

"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 (Ishmael and Isaac), the one (Ishmael) by a bondmaid (Hagar), the other (Isaac) by a freewoman (Sarah). But he who was of the bondwoman (Ishmael) was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman

(Isaac) was by promise (God made special promise concerning his birth). Which things are an allegory (that is, they teach a lesson): for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai (the old covenant), which gendereth to bondage (it did not bring salvation); which is Agar (Hagar). For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia (where the old covenant was given through Moses), and answereth to Jerusalem which now is (the center of old covenant religion in Paul's day), and is in bondage with her children. But, Jerusalem which is above (the heavenly Jerusalem) is free (brings salvation), which is the mother of us all (all in Christ). For it is written (concerning Sarah before Isaac was born), Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate (Hagar) hath many more children than she which hath an husband (Sarah). Now we (Christians), brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise (our redemption through Christ was that promised to come through the seed of Abraham). But as then he that was born after the flesh (Ishmael) persecuted (at the weaning feast) him that was born after the Spirit (Isaac), even so it is now (the Jews of old covenant loyalty were persecuting Christians of the new covenant). Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman (Ishmael) shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman (Isaac). So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman (the old covenant), but of the free (the new covenant)" (Gal. 4:21-31).

This is one of the most elaborate allegories to be found in the Bible. It is rich in its teaching and easy to follow if one is at all familiar with the births of Ishmael and Isaac and the incident that transpired at Isaac's weaning feast.

III. Interesting Incidents In Isaac's Life.

A. The Time When He Was About Offered As A Sacrifice.

Young Isaac did not know that he was to be the sacrifice when he, his father Abraham, and the two young men set out for the land of Moriah. On the third day, when Abraham saw the mountain, he told the two young men to stay where they were while he and Isaac went to worship. Laying the wood upon Isaac, which probably the two young men had been carrying, Abraham took the torch of fire in one hand and the knife in the other, and they two started toward the mountain. How piercing to Abraham's heart must these words of Isaac been as they journeyed:

"My father...behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" (Gen. 22:7).

Surely, God must have given Abraham the answer that he gave Isaac:

"My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering" (Gen. 22:8).

When they arrived at the place, Abraham built an altar, laid the wood upon it, tied Isaac, and laid him upon the wood. What conversation might have taken place between the two as these proceedings were taking place, we are not told. Nor are we told how Abraham must have felt as he proceeded or how Isaac must have felt when he knew that he was soon to be killed. Though it was difficult, Abraham took the knife and stepped forward to take the life of the lad when an angel called Abraham by name and said:

"Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God,

seeing thou hast not withheld thy son" (Gen. 22:12).

Just then, Abraham looked, and there was a ram caught by his horns in a thicket nearby. The Scripture says:

"Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son" (Gen. 22:13).

God did provide Himself with a sacrifice! And we, like Isaac, faced death, but God provided Himself with a sacrifice in the person of Jesus, who died for us or who was sacrificed in our stead like the ram was in Isaac's stead. How happy father and son must have been as they went down the mountain together, probably hand in hand! Probably Isaac, though already so dear to him, was all the more precious to Abraham after this experience. It is possible that the fright and emotional strain of this event caused Abraham and Isaac never to talk about it even later in life.

B. The Beauty Of His Marriage.

After the death of Sarah, there was a matter that Abraham wanted settled before he died. He, consequently, called in the servant who was over all that he had and made him promise with an oath that he would not take a wife of the Canaanites for Isaac, but that he would go back to Abraham's kindred and obtain a wife among them for him if possible. Accepting the responsibility, the servant set out for the city of Haran in Mesopotamia. As he and his camels were at the watering place where the young ladies came out to draw water, he prayed:

"O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: and let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac: and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master" (Gen. 24:12-14).

Just then came Rebekah, described in the Bible as a damsel very fair to look upon and a virgin. The servant asked her for a drink. He drank from the pitcher in her hand. When he had drunk, she said:

"I will draw water for thy camels also until they have done drinking" (Gen. 24:19).

And the passage continues by saying:

"And she hastened, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels (drawing water in a pitcher for ten thirsty camels was no small chore)" (Gen. 24:20).

When invited by Rebekah to lodge for the night with her people, the servant accepted the hospitality. But, before he would eat, he said that he must state his errand. Gen. 24:34-48 relates his words. As he concluded, he asked them what they would or would not do in view of the transpirings. Then, her father Bethuel and her brother Laban said:

"The thing proceedeth from the Lord: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy

master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken" (Gen. 24:50,51).

Rebekah herself, though it was so sudden and though it meant to be parted permanently from her own people, gracefully bowed unto the will of the Lord, went with Abraham's servant and men, and became the wife of Isaac.

The concern of Abraham for a good wife for his son was commendable. The responsible and spiritual way in which Abraham's servant accepted and conducted all the proceedings reflects deep piety and godliness. And the way that Rebekah submitted to the will of the Lord breathes with the spirit of purity and humility. Though the customs of obtaining a wife have radically changed from Abraham's day, yet that same spirit of purity, prayer, and marrying according to the will of God should characterize everyone getting married today.

C. Redigging The Wells Of His Father.

The patience and big-heartedness of Isaac were expressed in his conduct toward the Philistines. They had filled the wells formerly digged by Abraham's servants. When Isaac digged again those wells, he named them by the names that his father had given them (a commendable act). But, each time his servants got one of them redigged, the herdmen of Gerar strove with his herdmen, saying the water belonged to them. Peaceably, he would withdraw, letting them have the wells. Finally, he found a place where they did not strive with him, so he settled, saying:

"Now the Lord hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land" (Gen. 26:22).

In this world of self-seeking and mercilessly over-running one another, it is difficult for us to appreciate Isaac's attitude as much as we should. Surely, if each person had a full measure of Isaac's spirit, there would be no wars, no labor disputes, no neighborhood rows, no family troubles, and no church strife!

Isaac, like every other human being, made some mistakes, such as having a favorite son (Esau) and one time telling a half-truth about his wife to the king of Gerar. But, he is to be remembered as one who lived a quiet, peaceful, godly life, less eventful than that of his son Jacob, but more above reproach and with fewer difficulties and trouble.

Jacob's Place in the Plan of God

The Bible has much to say about this man Jacob. Though he did not live as long as Abraham and Isaac, he was certainly a key man in the plan of God. Busy struggling with his twin brother in birth, his busy and eventful life was inaugurated which carried him through many interesting incidents in Old Testament history. Let us, then, consider

him who was the father of the Israelitish people.

I. Jacob Rather Than Esau Was Chosen To Be The Line Through Whom The Abrahamic Promises Would Be Fulfilled.

A. A Possible Hint Of This Was Made Known To Rebekah.

Before the birth of the children, God said to their mother Rebekah:

"Two nations are in thy womb (the Israelite and the Edomite), and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people (Israelite) shall be stronger than the other people (Edomite); and the elder (Esau) shall serve the younger (Jacob)" (Gen. 25:23).

B. At Bethel, God Confirmed The Abrahamic Promises To Jacob.

When Jacob fled from the wrath of his brother Esau, he lay down to sleep at the place which later became known as Bethel. Great things transpired there that night:

"He dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 28:12-14).

C. The Frequent Linking Of "Abraham, Isaac, And Jacob" Together In The Bible.

Many, many times the names of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are used together in Scripture without any note or comment. This frequent association of their names has its significance. By way of examples, we cite just a few instances where their names appear together:

"Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 8:11); "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Matt. 22:32); "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out" (Luke 13:28).

Concerning the above three men, Halley has a well stated note in his "Pocket Bible Handbook", page 100, 19th edition: "In the line of promise, all Abraham's sons were eliminated, except Isaac. Of Isaac's sons, Esau was eliminated from the line, and Jacob only chosen. With Jacob the eliminating process stopped; and all Jacob's descendants were to be included as the chosen nation." Acts 7:8 abbreviates history of four generations for us when it says:

"Abraham begat Isaac...and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs."

The twelve patriarchs were Jacob's twelve sons who became the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel--the nation which God chose as His people throughout Old Testament times. The tribe of Judah descended from Jacob's son Judah; the tribe of Dan descended from Jacob's son Dan;

the tribe of Benjamin descended from Jacob's son Benjamin; etc.

II. The Two Names That He Wore Well Describe His Life.

A. His Given Name Was "Jacob" (Supplanter).

Jacob well lived up to his name in the earlier years of his life. No Bible character better deserved the name "Supplanter" than he. The custom was that the firstborn received the chief honor, favors, and blessings. Esau, being the firstborn, would normally have been the recipient of the special favors, but it didn't work out that way. Jacob, ever zealous of accomplishment, showed a remarkable and inexhaustible determination to forge ahead at every opportunity, and before the story was finished, he was at the top of the ladder instead of Esau.

Gen. 25:22 shows that the two boys struggled together in birth, a struggle that never actually ended. Throughout life, there was a constant struggle between them, and their descendants after them inherited that same attitude toward each other. For example, when the Israelites (descendants of Jacob) were coming out of the land of Egypt, the Edomites (descendants of Esau) refused to allow them passage through their country (Num. 20:14-21). In the days of the kingdom of Israel, there were various wars between the Israelites and the Edomites. The one-chapter book of Obadiah is devoted to condemning the nation of Edom to a final overthrow because of its delight over and participation in some military catastrophe that befell the Israelites. Oba. 10-14 reads:

"For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them. But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress. Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity; neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress."

In birth, though Esau was born first, Gen. 25:26 says that Jacob took hold of the heel of Esau. Thus, though it appeared that Jacob had lost in the struggle, Esau having been born first, Jacob was close behind and hanging on. Years later, when the boys had grown up, the Scripture says:

"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 ("Red"). 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 swore unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and

rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright" (Gen. 25:29-34).

Time passed, and Isaac fearing that he would soon die called in Esau, his favorite of the two sons, and told him to obtain and prepare some savoury meat which he relished and that he would bless him before he died (Gen. 27:1-4). In patriarchal times, it seems to have been the custom for the fathers before they died to pronounce the future fortunes of their children. Besides this example, we have the example of Noah (Gen. 9:25-27), the example of Jacob concerning the future of two of his grandchildren (Gen. 48:13-20), and the example of Jacob concerning his twelve sons (Gen. 49:1-28). It appears that Isaac had no intention to bless Jacob, but Esau only. Rebekah overheard all the proceedings, and having Jacob as her favorite son (possibly due to the fact that God made known to her at the time of the sons' births that Jacob was to be the greater), she was determined that Jacob and not Esau should receive the blessing. Consequently, she devised a system whereby Jacob could take food in to his blind father and receive the blessing intended for Esau by the father (Gen. 27:6-17). When Jacob took the food in to his father, Isaac was somewhat reluctant at first, being doubtful that the one in his presence was Esau (Gen. 27:18-24). But, when he felt assured that it was Esau, he ate and pronounced the following blessing upon him:

"God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee" (Gen. 27:28,29).

Jacob had but little more than left when Esau arrived with his meat for his father (Gen. 27:30,31). How troubled the aged Isaac was when he realized what had happened, but the blessing having been pronounced, it could not be changed. When Esau entreated his father for the blessing, Isaac answered:

"Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing" (Gen. 27:35).

Realizing the full impact of what had happened and of what it was going to mean for the future, Esau exclaimed:

"Is not he rightly named Jacob ("Supplanter")? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing" (Gen. 27:36).

Concerning the foregoing blessing, some think that the blessing that Jacob here received was actually what he was supposed to receive as a result of his having obtained the birthright from Esau. Heb. 12:16,17 might seem to indicate that it was the same. Gen. 27:36 might seem to indicate that it was something different. There is a problem here which is not easy to solve. But, there is no question but what Jacob well lived up to his given name "Supplanter". And what he did to his brother Esau, he likewise did (with God's help) to his father-in-law Laban (Gen. 30:25--31:42).

B. Later, He Was Called "Israel" (Prince Of God).

It was while returning to his native land after having been gone for many years that he wrestled all night with

the angel of God at Peniel (Gen. 32:24,25). When daybreak came, he refused to let the angel go until he had blest him (Gen. 32:26). The angel said to him:

"Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed" (Gen. 32:28).

By God's help, he had already prevailed in a great way but through his twelve sons, he was to become the actual progenitor of the Old Testament people of God--the people through whom God brought the Messiah into the world. Through those people were all descendants of Abraham and of Isaac also, they were not called the "children of Abraham" nor the "children of Isaac", but the "children of Israel" (who was Jacob). In a spiritual sense, his name is preserved in Christianity, the people of God today (the church) being referred as the "Israel of God" in Gal. 6:16.

III. Jacob's Prophecies Concerning His Sons.

Twenty-five verses of Gen. 49 are devoted to a remarkable forecasting of the future fortunes and misfortunes of Jacob's twelve sons. Though we would like to, we must not take the space here to consider his prophecies concerning them all. We are primarily concerned about through which son (which tribe) the promised Messiah would come.

A. Reuben, The Firstborn, Lost The Priority Because Of Sin.

It was customary for the firstborn son to be first in line for both honor and authority. But, from Jacob's prophecy concerning Reuben, we see that such did not descend upon the head of Reuben and why it didn't:

"Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power: unstable as water, thou shalt not excel: because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defildest thou it: he went up to my couch" (Gen. 49:3,4).

Instead of "unstable as water", the Revised Version says "boiling over as water". The instance referred to was when Reuben went into Bilhah, his father's concubine (Gen. 35:22). Both translations ("unstable as water" and "boiling over as water") probably fit Reuben in that regard. Anyway, he who should have excelled, being the firstborn, would not excel because of this sin.

B. The Blessing Of Preeminence Fell Upon Judah.

Jacob said:

"Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee...The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver (the ruler's staff--R.V.) from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen. 49:8-10).

The truthfulness of this prophecy is seen in both Old Testament and New Testament times. Judah was the largest of all the tribes, and from it came David, the great ruler of the Israelites to whom the rest of the tribes looked for leadership and protection. The tribe of Judah also produced Jesus (Heb. 7:14), and to His authority all have bowed down, and the gathering of the people has surely been to

Him. Though there are some problems connected with it, it has generally been taken that the word "shiloh" refers to the coming Messiah. This special blessing upon Judah may have come to him because he demonstrated leadership in those chapters relating to obtaining corn in Egypt, even being willing to bear the blame and the penalty both to his father for the life of Benjamin (Gen. 43:3-9) and to Joseph when Joseph was going to keep Benjamin in ward (Gen. 44:18-34). Such a spirit well depicted ahead of time the attitude of Jesus (Judah's descendant), who was willing to be punished that we might go free.

As we bring this study toward a close, we might ask why it was that God chose Jacob instead of Esau. While it is true that Jacob was possibly not as godly in his overall demeanor as were Abraham and Isaac, yet even at that, he was a credit beside Esau. But, more than that, the real reason lay in this difference: Esau treated his birthright and the blessings that would have attended it (especially in coming generations) with contempt from the standpoint of value while Jacob had the utmost regard for the value of being heir to the Abrahamic promises. Heb. 12:16 calls Esau a "profane person", who for one (only one) morsel of meat (something earthly whose value was slight) sold his birthright (that which had time-lasting blessings connected with it). Those many today preferring the pleasures of sin which last but for a season to the joys of the Lord that will last forever are showing the same lack of character as Esau. Truly,

"Esau despised (belittled) his birthright" (Gen. 27:34).

There are surely many things to be observed in the life of Jacob. He fooled his father when he impersonated Esau; his own sons deceived him when they brought back Joseph's coat of many colors stained with blood. He brought sorrow to others; his sons brought sorrow to him when they sold Joseph. He didn't live as long as his forefathers, and his life had many trials and hardships. How apt are his words when he came to Egypt and was brought in before Pharaoh:

"The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage" (Gen. 47:9).

The Israelites in Egypt

In that period of time when God was conversing often with Abraham about his offspring, Abraham having just offered a sacrifice to God fell into a deep sleep about sundown. In his sleep, a horror of great blackness came upon him because of something that was to happen to several generations of his offspring. He was assured, however, that blessings would follow that period of blackness.

This vision that God gave to him is one of the most remarkable in all the Bible. It went:

"Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance" (Gen. 15:13,14).

This prophecy, well known to Bible students, was obviously looking to the time when the children of Israel would be slaves in Egypt and after a long period of time (here referred to in round numbers as 400 years) would come out with great substance, which they did when the time of the exodus came.

With these thoughts as a background, let us study about the Israelites in the land of Egypt.

I. How They Got There.

A. Joseph, Taken There As A Slave, Arose To Great Power.

Jacob had loved Rachel, but because of the custom of the times and place for a father to marry off his firstborn daughter first, he found himself unwittingly married to Leah (Gen. 29:16-26). Loving Rachel as he did (and it not being unc customary for the patriarchs to take more than one wife), he agreed to serve another seven years for her (Gen. 29:27,28). It was Leah who bore Jacob his first four sons--Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah (Gen. 29:31-35)--after which she ceased bearing for a time. Envyng her sister and being unable to bear Jacob children herself, Rachel gave her handmaid Bilhah to Jacob to wife, which resulted in Bilhah bearing him his fifth and sixth sons--Dan and Naphtali (Gen. 30:1-8). Seeing that she was no longer bearing children and seeing that Rachel had given her handmaid to Jacob to wife, Leah decided to give her handmaid Zilpah to Jacob to wife. This resulted in Zilpah bearing Jacob his seventh and eighth sons--Gad and Asher (Gen. 30:9-13). Then, through a bargain between Rachel and Leah whereby Rachel obtained from Leah's son Reuben some mandrakes (a plant believed to stimulate childbearing), Leah was given to Jacob again in the role of a wife (evidently, Rachel was dominating Jacob entirely at this time). The result was three more children by Leah (two sons and a daughter)--Issachar, Zebulun, and Dinah (Gen. 30:14-21). Thus, eleven children had been born to Jacob, but his favorite wife Rachel had not as yet borne him a child. When God finally opened Rachel's womb, and Joseph was born (Gen. 30:22-24), it is easy to understand why Joseph became Jacob's favorite son. Gen. 37:3 also adds the thought that Joseph was his father's favorite because of having been born in Jacob's advanced years. This favoritism caused Joseph's brothers to hate him (Gen. 37:3,4).

Besides, God had given Joseph some inspired dreams whereby Joseph's ultimate superiority to them was made known. Gen. 37:5-10 says:

"And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. And He said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: for, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood