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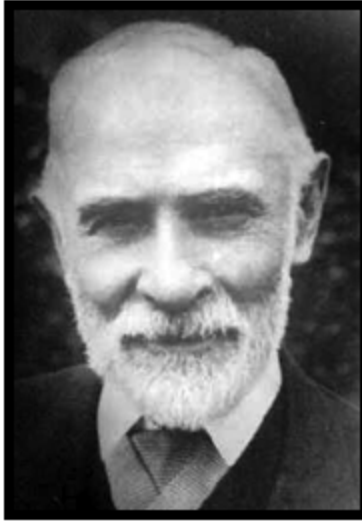
V01 Outline of Genesis

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PREFATORY NOTE

The wide-spread interest amongst the children of God in the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, is a feature of the present time which one recognises with deep thankfulness. It may be regarded as the divine answer in the saints to the infidelity now so current in the religious world.

This "Outline" is largely the substance of a series of readings on the book of Genesis during the years 1919 - 20. It is sent forth in this form with the desire and earnest prayer that, through the blessing of God, it may be spiritually helpful to those who are of the household of faith.

It may be remarked that quotations from Scripture are generally, throughout this book, from the New Translation, by J. N. Darby.

C. A. C.

GENESIS 1

Genesis 1

In the book of Genesis we have brought before us the beginning of those things which work out in result in the Revelation. It is a most important book as the basis of all Scripture, and as presenting in principle most of the great subjects of Scripture. Creation, sin, judgment, promise, sacrifice, resurrection, God's election of grace and His covenant, the separation of His people from the world, the pilgrim life of faith, translation, the final bringing of Israel and the nations into blessing under Christ as typified by Joseph, all have a place here. And there are many precious types of Christ and the church.

It is especially important that we should be established in the truth of this first chapter in an infidel age like the present, when all kinds of theories as to the origin of things are abroad. We need to be in the faith of God's creative wisdom and power. It is "by faith we apprehend that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that that which is seen should not take its origin from things which appear" (Hebrews 11: 3). I doubt whether it lies in the power of man's mind to conceive *creation*; it is a thought which can only be entertained really by faith. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth". Man's mind leaves God out, and wearies itself in endless speculations; faith brings Him in, and everything is simple. No one need be afraid that discoveries of geology, or any other science, will ever shake the truth of this chapter. It is God's record, and all true science will be found in harmony with it. Any theory which definitely conflicts with the account here given is certainly wrong.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth". That is all we get about the original creation. Then in the second verse we find things fallen into a state of ruin. "And the earth was waste and empty, and darkness was on the face of the deep". This was certainly not as it was created — for we are expressly told that "not as waste [the same word as in Genesis 1: 2] did he create it" (Isaiah 45: 18). The same words 'waste' and 'empty' are used of Edom (Isaiah 34: 11), and of Israel (Jeremiah 4: 23), when those nations have come under Jehovah's vengeance and fierce anger. So that a solemn change had come about between the first and second verses of Genesis 1. We do not know what length of time elapsed between those two verses; possibly the long periods of which geologists speak might come in there. In verse 2 we find the earth a scene of disorder and darkness. It is in such a scene that God's movements and activities are presented as taking place — activities which come to an end on the sixth day, so that on the seventh day God rested.

This indicates at the very outset the whole subject of Scripture. It is the unfolding of how God has worked, and will work, in a scene of moral disorder to bring about a state of things in which He can rest — a scene of order and life and fruitfulness where all will be under the dominion of Man in His image and after His likeness. This blessed end will be reached in the world to come, when God will “head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth”. This is the “good pleasure which he purposed in himself for the administration of the fulness of times”, Ephesians 1: 9, 10. Thus Genesis 1 has in view the ordering of the world to come, and the different elements which are essential to it. God had the end before Him from the very beginning. So that we have here, not only a divine account of how the earth was prepared to be the dwelling-place of man, but, underlying that, much that is of spiritual import. I think we might expect that it would be so, that there would be some correspondence or analogy between God’s material works and His actings in the spiritual sphere. This chapter makes us acquainted in a perfect and divine way with the ordering of the present material creation, but it also suggests typically great principles which are of the deepest interest and importance.

In “the earth ... waste and empty”, and “darkness ... on the face of the deep”, we behold a scene in which God could find no pleasure or rest — a striking figure of the state of man as fallen under the power of sin, Satan, and death, and without the knowledge of God. But it is blessed to see that, though God could not rest in such a state of things, He did move and work there. “The Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters”. The word used is suggestive of affectionate interest, for it is the same as in Deuteronomy 32: 11, “As the eagle stirreth up its nest, hovereth over its young”. It has something to say of the solicitude of divine love which would put forth its activities where all was ruin in order to bring about conditions which could be pronounced ‘very good’, and in which God could rest.

Before the work of the six days began there was this primary movement of the Spirit of God. In a fallen and ruined world, where all have come under sin and death, there must be a movement of the Holy Spirit in the souls of men as the starting point of any result for God. The new birth must be effected; otherwise divine light would shine in vain. In all ages and dispensations this has been essential, and ever will be. We read that “Jesus himself did not trust himself to them, because he knew all men, and that he had not need that any should testify of man, for himself knew what was in man”, John 2: 24, 25. There is nothing in man that God can trust until men are born anew. Of the natural man it is said, “There is not a righteous man, not even one; there is not the man that understands, there is not one that seeks after God ... There is no

fear of God before their eyes", Romans 3: 10 - 18. Therefore God has to prepare the way for divine light to come in by that mysterious operation which cannot be traced. "It is needful that ye should be born anew. The wind blows where it will, and thou hearest its voice, but knowest not whence it comes and where it goes: thus is every one that is born of the Spirit", John 3: 7, 8. The preaching of the gospel would effect nothing if God did not move sovereignly in the souls of men by His Spirit causing them to be born anew. Man, the fallen sinner, is, as such, hopelessly lost, for he does not desire God, and when the light of God in Christ is brought to him he hates and rejects it.

The photographer's plate has to be put into a bath of solution to make it sensitive to light, and it is by new birth that man becomes sensitive to divine light, so that when that light shines for him it stirs his conscience and moves his heart in an effective way God-ward. But apart from new birth even the shining of divine light would effect nothing, for there would be nothing in man to appreciate or respond to it. So that the new birth is a fundamental necessity.

Then on the first day "God said, Let there be light. And there was light". God commanding light is very significant of the bringing in of Christ, for all true light that has shone for man has been the light of Christ. He shone in promise four thousand years before He appeared in Person. All through the Old Testament the light was shining more and more in promise, but now that Christ has come, and has died and risen, and been glorified at God's right hand, there is perfect day. "It is the God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine who has shone in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ", 2 Corinthians 4: 6. That is the full glory of the light. But the light was 'good' from the very outset: how good, for example, was the light of Genesis 3: 15 and chapter 22: 18!

When light was brought in "God divided between the light and the darkness". This is a fundamental principle; light and darkness could not go on together. Satan is always trying to mix them. But Paul says, "Be not diversely yoked with unbelievers; for what participation is there between righteousness and lawlessness? or what fellowship of light with darkness? and what consent of Christ with Beliar, or what part for a believer along with an unbeliever?" (2 Corinthians 6: 14, 15.) And in Isaiah 5: 20 we read, "Woe unto them who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness". It is important to call things by their right names. "God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night". As Christ becomes light to our hearts we discern that whatever is not according to Christ is darkness, and therefore we cannot have fellowship with it. The rejection of Christ has left the world, as such, in

darkness, but He is coming again, and will bring in the day. In the meantime believers are of the day — sons of light. Hence they are to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. People in the world may talk of progress and increased light, but the sons of light regard it as darkness because Christ is not in it. They confess Christ, and stand in separation from the moral darkness around them.

The words, "There was evening, and there was morning", are six times repeated in this chapter, but there is no mention of 'evening' in connection with the seventh day. This is in keeping with the fact that in the millennium there is no evening lamb (see Ezekiel 46: 13 - 15). The thought of evening drops out. On the other hand Daniel 8: 14 has the remarkable expression 'evening mornings' (see margin to A.V.) in reference to the time of apostasy. All those mornings have really the shade of evening upon them, for there is no divine light in them. Indeed all man's mornings are really evenings. Every now and then men think they are going to have a new day by some new form of government, new legislation, education, a league of nations, or something of that kind. But man's new days are all evening-mornings; they are mornings which have the shade of evening on them from their very dawn. The true Light is absent from them. But a day is coming whose morning will be without clouds, ushered in by the rising of the Sun of righteousness, and there is no evening to that day. It passes, so far as the saints are concerned, into the endless day of eternity.

On the second day God brings in the firmament, or expanse, and it becomes a division between what is under it and what is above it, and God calls it Heavens. It is, I suppose, really the atmosphere; a sphere quite distinct from the 'waters' which it divides. It speaks morally, one would suggest, of a heavenly character of things brought in, which becomes the native air in which faith can breathe freely. We have remarked how God gave the light of Christ in precious promises, but He also gave from very early days to His saints the thought of what was heavenly, and this became a very separating principle, as we see in Hebrews 11: 8 - 16. Abraham waited for the city which has foundations, and that city is a heavenly one. Isaac and Jacob were heirs of promise with Abraham, and they sought a heavenly country. They breathed, we might say, the atmosphere of heavenly hopes, and its separating power made them "strangers and sojourners on the earth". This dividing principle between what is 'under' and what is 'above' has made its power known from that day to this, and has marked off the saints as heavenly in hope and character.

If we really have the light of the knowledge of God in Christ we need a new atmosphere. There is no one in the world to share or to sympathise with our joys or our exercises; we can only find our suited atmosphere in the circle of the brethren. How could a man truly converted to God breathe in an atmosphere made up of idolatry, hatred, and lawlessness? He longs to be with his own company; he loves the brethren, and thus has evidence that he has passed from death unto life.

Then on the third day the dry land appears. In the dry land I think we may see a figure of what subsists in stability, and becomes fruitful for God. It may be taken as typical of the special place which Israel had as divinely called, separated from the nations around them, and ordered by God. We cannot fail to see in Scripture how distinctive was the place of Israel, and how it was God's thought that they should be a divinely ordered and fruitful people, so as to show forth His praise before the nations. As the custodian and cherisher of the promises, and partaking morally of the stabilities of those promises, and as ordered by the divine law and testimony, Israel would answer to the 'dry land'. This was only true, however, in reality in a small remnant; Israel after the flesh failed to answer to the divine thought. They were under sin and death as other men were, and were law-breakers also. The consideration of this prepares us to appreciate the fact that the third day has often in Scripture a reference to resurrection.

The promises given to Abraham brought in the light of an order of things which will be established in the world to come, and which is dependent — man being what he is — on the coming in of Christ, and His death and resurrection. Abraham had to learn that the God whom he believed was One who quickens the dead. The promise came to one whose own body was already become dead so that he might learn at the very outset the character of the power which would substantiate the promise. That he had learned the lesson was plainly seen when he offered up Isaac. The promises which he had received to himself he held in the faith of God's resurrection power, so that he could offer up Isaac, and receive him, in a figure, from among the dead. Thus faith was taught to look for the establishment of all that was in the thought and promise of God by a power that could act where, on man's side, all was death. It was not only that a man and his seed were separated from the confusion and idolatry of the Babel world, but they were taught something of the fact that death was upon themselves, and that therefore all divine promise and blessing must be substantiated in resurrection power.

Later on, at a new starting-point of Israel's history, Jehovah gave them the passover — a plain typical lesson as to their own state under death and

judgment, and that Jehovah's promises and covenant could only be established on the ground of the death of Christ for them. And just as all that they were in the past was based typically upon this, they will have to come to the apprehension of it in moral reality in a future day before they will be truly seen as a divinely ordered and fruitful people.

Christ has come in infinite grace into the death that lay upon man, but He has emerged from death to become the stable and imperishable foundation of an order of things marked by fruitfulness and life. We have come to 'sure mercies' now, to things which are ordered in all things and sure. We can be to Another now, even to Him "who has been raised up from among the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God", Romans 7: 4. Consequent upon the, 'dry land' appearing, we find "herb producing seed", and "fruit-trees yielding fruit after their kind, the seed of which is in them, on the earth". Nothing but what stands in relation to Christ is really stable or fruitful for God. The assembly is in relation to Him now; Israel will be in a future day; then as having the sure mercies of David in a risen Christ they will be stable and fruitful for God's pleasure. Meanwhile the saints of the assembly have that place.

Then on the fourth day lights are set in the expanse of the heavens "to give light on the earth ... the great light to rule the day, and the small light to rule the night, and the stars". This seems clearly to intimate the thought of God that the earth should be in the light of what is set in the heavens, and under heavenly rule or influence. Jesus glorified is 'the great light' in the heavens. When He was here "the dayspring from on high" visited men, and He was "the light of the world", but the moral darkness in which He appeared was so dense that it did not apprehend the light. He is now as a risen and glorified Man in heaven, and in the world to come He will shine forth publicly as the Sun of righteousness. But in the meantime those who believe on Him are in the light of His shining. "The world sees me no longer; but ye see me" (John 14: 19); "We see Jesus ... crowned with glory and honour", Hebrews 2: 9. What will be true in another day of Jerusalem, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come", is true spiritually for His saints now. "Wherefore he says, Wake up thou that sleepest, and arise up from among the dead, and the Christ shall shine upon thee", Ephesians 5: 14.

It is because the assembly is in the light of Christ that she answers to the moon — the subordinate light. Israel will also be in the place of 'the small light' in a future day, when as the 'new moon' (Psalm 81: 3) she will come afresh into the shining of Christ. The moon only shines as she is in the light of the sun; so the church abiding in the light of Christ becomes a luminary through the night of Christ's rejection. The saints are in the light of the day;

indeed, they have been begotten by that light; they are sons of light and of the day; hence their walk is to be of a character suited to the day. They are to shine as heavenly luminaries in the world; Philippians 2: 15.

Christ is the Sun of the spiritual universe, and all other light is His light reflected, whether in the assembly, or Israel, or individual saints. While the sun is absent the moon shines; so heavenly light now shines through saints of the assembly; and by and by when the moon has gone the stars will appear. Daniel 12: 3 says, "And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the expanse; and they that turn the many to righteousness as the stars, for ever and ever". That refers to the remnant of instructed ones in a future day. Christ has gone, and the church will soon go; then after that other saints will come into view as vessels of divine light, as we see in and after Revelation 7.

The lights are made, and set, to rule. It will be so in the world to come; the nations will walk by the light of the heavenly city. There will be no insubordination or lawlessness; they will walk by the light of God which shines in the city. In the present day the assembly rules in the sense of shedding abroad holy and divine influences upon men. There is a shining out of divine light from those who are walking in righteousness, holiness and love. It has often been noticed that men who are in the habit of using bad language will refrain from doing so in the presence of a Christian. There is an influence there. The saint in the light of Christ is clothed with shining armour; he has on the armour of light, and it affects people: How often those in difficulty or danger are glad to have a Christian near them! They recognise the shining, and know that there is something beneficial in it.

Then we have the thought of the lights being "for signs and for seasons, ... and to divide between the light and the darkness". This is most important in a moral sense. The Christian should be intelligent as to times and seasons. The sun set in this world by its rejection of Christ. Now the assembly is a luminary as the vessel of the Holy Spirit; there is a divine Person dwelling here in the saints, and divine light is shining for men through a vessel that corresponds anti-typically to the moon. By-and-by light will shine through other saints. Some years ago a book was written to prove that the millennium had come! He could hardly have known the seasons, or the difference between day and night; subsequent events must have rather upset his theories!

The first four days may be regarded as giving the establishment of the conditions of life; then on the fifth and sixth days life itself is introduced. The conditions of life are light, atmosphere, food, and rule. The *light* in which spiritual life is possible is the revelation of God. Then an *atmosphere* suited to those who know God is found, as we have already observed, in the circle of

the brethren, where spiritual affections are in activity. Then life must be sustained by food;

this is very essential. John 6 speaks of food — the bread of life. And, finally, there is heavenly *rule*; there is no lawlessness in the sphere of life. Darkness, ignorance of God, idolatry, hatred and lawlessness; all that is *death*. But when the light of God is brought in, love and obedience are set in movement in an appropriate atmosphere, and sustained by suitable food, and under heavenly rule, and there is *life*.

On the fifth and sixth days we view a scene teeming with life. God is the *living* God, and He delights in life; one is struck with that even in nature. God, having established the conditions of life, takes pleasure in exuberance of life, and in growth and increase. 'Living souls' are such as can enjoy the conditions of life. God's thought even as to unintelligent creatures was that they should enjoy the conditions in which they were placed. As soon as living souls were created He *blessed* them; it was His first moral act; and the evidence of His blessing was fruitfulness and increase. This is the unfailing accompaniment of the energy of life. The conditions of life in a spiritual sense are now established, and our exercise should be to avail ourselves of them. In doing so we shall enjoy the blessing of God.

On the fifth day the waters swarm, and on the sixth day the earth brings forth living souls. Both the fish of the sea and the living creatures of the earth have been taken up by the wisdom of God as figures to set forth the present working of His grace. The fish in the sea represent men in their natural state and element, from which they have to be taken if they are to enter into the blessing of God's kingdom. The Lord makes those who follow Him 'fishers of men' (Matthew 4: 19),

and the seine cast into the sea is one of the similitudes of the kingdom of the heavens. In this connection we find there are good fish and worthless, the good fish representing those in whom there is a divine work, who can be gathered into vessels. And no doubt the net full of great fishes drawn to the land in John 21 is a figure of the great gathering for millennial blessing in another day. The net does not break then, and there is no suggestion of any worthless fish in *that* net.

While speaking of the sea we may remark the striking fact that in the new earth "the sea exists no more", Revelation 21: 1. The sea, and the life connected with it, is only for time; but the earth continues in the eternal state, it speaks of what is stable and abiding, what is really of a spiritual order. The spiritual alone is eternal.

Then the living creatures of the earth are seen in the vessel which descends "as a great sheet, bound by the four corners and let down to the earth", for Peter's instruction in Acts 10. Peter had to learn not to call any man common or unclean. He had to be moved away from his standpoint as a Jew, from which he regarded the Gentiles as unclean, and to come to a spiritual view of things, according to the universality of the thought of divine and heavenly grace. He had to learn the wide scope of grace, its universal bearing, and to see that God had brought in cleansing for men by the death of Christ so that even Gentiles might have the forgiveness of sins, and receive the Spirit through faith in Christ risen.

All the work of the six days, up to the point of man's creation, was to provide a sphere where man could be set in dominion according to the thought of God. The creation of man was a most solemn and deliberate act. God, as it were, takes counsel with Himself as to it. "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 heavens, and over the cattle, and over the whole earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth on the earth".

Adam was "the figure of him to come"; everything is to come under the dominion of Christ. In Psalm 8 it is said of the Son of man, "Thou hast made him to rule over the works of thy hands; thou hast put everything under his feet: sheep and oxen all of them, and also the beasts of the field; the fowl of the heavens, and the fishes of the sea, whatever passeth through the paths of the seas". Every created being will be made subject to Christ. And we see in Adam as a figure the character of the influence which He will bring to bear.

The first revealed thought as to man was that he was to be the image — the visible representative — of God in the universe. God intended this peculiar dignity and greatness for the creature of His delight. But in this disclosure of the divine mind we must look beyond Adam to the One of whom he was the figure. God's thought was to have a glorious Head of the whole living system, able to dominate all things and to hold them for His pleasure. Christ is the "image of the invisible God, firstborn of all creation", Colossians 1: 15. That is, when He comes in He takes the first place as Adam did in figure. Everything is to be gathered together in One; whether the heavenly or the earthly, all is to be centred in Christ. Indeed nothing is right in the universe that does not centre in Christ.

"No man hath seen God at any time", John 1: 18.

That made it necessary that One should come in as the Image of the invisible God. "The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him". The God whom no one had seen has now been seen perfectly

in a Man, One in whom has been fully set forth all that God is. It is necessary to be guarded when we speak of 'likeness' in relation to Christ because we must ever remember that Christ *is* God. And no doubt we may see the wisdom of the Spirit in the fact that though He is definitely spoken of in the New Testament as the 'image' of God, He is not so spoken of as the 'likeness'. But we may contemplate Him as the blessed anointed Man who moved in love *God-ward*. "The Christ loved us, and delivered himself up for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour", Ephesians 5: 2. And He is able to give impulse to all that comes under His influence so that it may be found in moral correspondence with God. He will not only as the 'Image' irradiate the whole universe with the light of God, but He will give such an impulse God-ward that there will be 'likeness' — perfect moral correspondence — with God in the whole vast system of which He will be the glorious Head. This 'likeness' will all be derived from Him. God is going to bring all under the domination of that blessed Man.

And He dominates by love, for if He is the Image of God He is necessarily the setter forth of the love of God, for God is love. Image is the revelation side, and likeness is more the perfect correspondence with the revelation in a Man. Everything is to come under the influence and domination of that Man, and under His rule and Headship everything will be held for the pleasure of God. As we come under His rule and Headship everything is adjusted. One under the rule of Christ will be a good husband, father, mother, child or servant; whatever natural relation he is found in will be filled for the pleasure of God; and he will be right in the sphere of spiritual things too.

"Fill the earth, and subdue it". That suggests power in Christ to subdue every contrary element; and then He will bring all into correspondence with Himself as Head. He will "transform our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory, according to the working of the power which he has, even to subdue all things to himself", Philippians 3: 21. In the meantime subduing and transforming are going on now spiritually as the effect of the power of One who is the image and after the likeness of God; it is in bringing the blessed influence of God to bear that everything is subdued.

It is of interest to see that here the woman is, so to speak, included in the man. "Let us make man in our image ... and let *them* have dominion ... God created man ... male and female created he *them*". The assembly is included in Christ; before the world's foundation God had chosen the saints in Christ; Ephesians 1: 4. "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself for the administration of the fulness of times; to head up all things in the Christ ... in

him, in whom we have also obtained an inheritance, being marked out beforehand according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his own will", Ephesians 1: 9 - 11. That answers to what we are reading in Genesis. We see Christ in universal Headship at the end of Ephesians 1, and the assembly with Him, and His fulness.

Then "God blessed them; and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it". Blessing is on the line of increase and multiplication, for God is the living God, and He delights in what is living, and what multiplies; nothing is stagnant with Him. The very glory of the Son of man is that He can fill a world with fruit for God; He has gone into death for that. God delights greatly in the thought of increase; Christianity began with twelve men, and multiplication has gone on until at this moment there are holy myriads of saints on earth in spite of all that people say about the lack of conversions! God has brought in wonderful conditions of fruitfulness and multiplication in Christ, and every soul that is converted through divine grace is the proof of it. It is wonderful that through the blessing of God there are so many hearts able to take in what God is, and to enjoy it, and to give Him praise. That is the fruit God is seeking. God values the human heart; the heart of a creature made so as to be capable of knowing Him; the heart of a creature that has been sunk in the lowest depths, but now brought to God through redemption. God seeks to have such hearts to praise Him.

There was in Adam and Eve a power of natural life which has filled the earth. All the millions on earth are the fruit of that pair. It is a suggestion of the power of life in Christ — the Corn of Wheat that fell into the ground and died and brought forth much fruit. He is able through death to fill the universe with fruit for God.

If this power of life is to work in us we must have living food. So we get at the end of the chapter the thought of food. "I have given you every herb producing seed ... and every tree in which is the fruit of a tree producing seed: it shall be food for you". It is herb producing seed, and fruit producing seed that are given to man for food. There is something living about seed; it is food that has the power of life in it. No one ever saw a more wonderful thing in the natural sphere than a seed; it is often a tiny thing, and yet who can tell the potentiality of it? There may be power in it to produce a forest that would cover the earth. It is important to see that man must have food that has the power of life in it; seed and fruit producing seed contain vital elements. They are marked by reproductive power.

Much spiritual weakness is traceable to the kind of food people live on. We must have sustenance. The Lord could say, "Man shall not live by bread

alone, but by every word of God"; and again, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of"; and again, "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me". The thought of food is carried on into resurrection, for the Lord partook of food as risen; and even in the heavenly city there is the tree of life for food. All this shows what a far-reaching principle of sustainment is suggested by food.

It is important that we should get vital food. We should ask ourselves, Is there the principle of life in what I am feeding on? If not, it is no good. We should always look for the seed principle. Even for the beasts it was 'every green herb'; they were to eat what was fresh and full of sap. If we want to be in spiritual freshness and vigour we must have fresh and living food.

GENESIS 2

Genesis 2

In the opening verses of the second chapter we come to the seventh day, the day on which God rested "from all his work which he had made". It is blessed to consider that a day is coming when God will rest in a scene which is the product of His own work — a scene brought under the influence of Christ, where everything is sustained by living food in the energy of life, and marked by fruitfulness and increase. God will then find pleasure in the result of His own work.

The Sabbath was afterwards a very important institution, a special link between God and His people. God ever kept before His people Israel the thought of His rest, and of the conditions in which alone He could rest, and His desire that men should share that rest. The Sabbath became an everlasting covenant and sign between God and His people.

God inspired Moses to write on the first page of Holy Scripture a suggestive outline of the conditions which will bring in His rest, but it takes the whole of Scripture to unfold the varied divine workings which will issue in the rest of God. It should be noted that in speaking of the rest of God we are not referring to the eternal state, but to the dispensation of the fulness of times, when everything will be headed up in Christ. All the conditions of life will be established and will be enjoyed, so that God's thought as to man on earth will be realised. Christ and the assembly will be in supremacy; God will rest, and His saints will participate in His rest. How blessed!

The Lord when here was "Lord of the Sabbath", and in exercising the rights involved in this title He would heal and deliver men. How could there be a true Sabbath even for men so long as they were oppressed by the devil, and under a thousand ills and infirmities? And how could there be a true Sabbath for God while His creature was in such a state? It is a terrible witness of the state of man that the Lord was never mentioned in connection with the Sabbath except as doing what the Jews regarded as breaking it! Man had fallen under such terrible bondage that no rest was possible for him until a divine deliverance was wrought for him, and so grace made the Lord of the Sabbath a worker on that holy day. Deuteronomy 5: 15 is of much interest as showing that the commandment to observe the Sabbath day was addressed to a people delivered from bondage by Jehovah their God. In a world of sin and bondage there could be no rest for God; hence the Lord had to say, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work".

But the seventh day is figurative of the time when everything will be put into suitability to God's pleasure; it speaks of the millennial rest of the wide creation. We sing sometimes: —

"Joyful now the wide creation
Rests in undisturbed repose". (14:6)

But we sing it anticipatively; it is not really so yet. The first day of the week is the characteristic day of Christianity; it is the beginning of a new period, and really stands in relation to what is eternal. But the seventh day stands in relation to the preceding six days in which God had worked in a scene where disorder and darkness had been, but which He finally brought into suitability to His pleasure. It thus has in view the millennial age when all will be so ordered as the result of divine working that rest will be brought into the very scene where all the disorder and darkness have been. It will be the triumph of God in relation to all the conditions which have come in here as the result of sin and Satan's power.

From verse 4 things connected with the creation of man, and his moral relations with God, are taken up more in detail; hence the name Jehovah is brought in — the name of relationship. The creation of man is of the deepest importance. "And Jehovah Elohim formed man, dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul". It was something altogether different from the creation of the beasts. Man is not only a living soul, but he has a spirit directly inbreathed from God; he became a living soul by having a spirit. He was formed as a creature to be in direct moral relation with God. And it is important to recognise that each human being receives his spirit direct from God.

It is the most direct and intimate thing that could be thought of, for God to breathe into man's nostrils. Man is a creature: he is not God, nor a part of God, as the folly of Pantheism would assert; but his spirit lives in virtue of the inbreathing of God. Man is the offspring of God; "in him we live and move and have our being"; this cannot be too much insisted upon. It is his relation to God that makes man responsible; and nothing will make men right or happy but having their relation with God divinely adjusted. The fall having taken place, man has gone astray from God, and nothing will put him right but being brought back to God. The coming into the world of the Son of God, redemption, and the giving of the Spirit are all in view of man being recovered for the pleasure of God.

When God recovers man through redemption He gives him His own Spirit; that is more than Adam innocent ever had. It is God's way when anything fails

which He has set up to bring in something better. He permits in His wisdom an order to exist in which failure can come, and when it comes He secures greater glory for Himself and greater happiness for His creatures by bringing in a better thing. To be forgiven, justified, and to have the Spirit puts one in a higher and better place — into much greater nearness to God — than Adam had as an innocent being. The Christian through redemption has the Spirit of God, and that is more than living by the inbreathing of God. The believer has his own spirit, but he has also God's Spirit bearing witness with his spirit; Romans 8: 16.

"And Jehovah Elohim planted a garden in Eden eastward, and there put man whom he had formed". Eden means pleasure; it suggests a scene of delight, in which everything was found that could minister to the natural happiness of an innocent man. Every tree that was pleasant to the sight and good for food was there. And man was placed in that garden "to till it and to guard it". Everything was provided, but man had to till the garden. There seems to be a principle in this primary ordering of things which deserves attention. It contained features, too, in the tree of life and the river, which are distinctly typical of Christ and the Spirit. So that from the very outset God gave an intimation that He had in His mind a greater good for man than anything that could be found in the natural sphere. The tree of life in the midst of the garden was a suggestion and promise of something better and greater than all the good with which He had surrounded Adam. It was the promise of life before sin came in, before the ages of time had begun to run their course, and while as yet death was only known as the terrible penalty attached by Jehovah's word to disobedience. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was there also. But this was a question which God alone was equal to; man was not competent to take it up; it meant ruin for him to touch it. Hence God fenced about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil with the most restraining prohibition possible, and with the most solemn penalty attached to disobedience.

The tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil bring in such great and important subjects that they call for much consideration. It seems as if God here plainly declared the two great questions which He purposed to work out in connection with man. And the two trees standing together seem to suggest that the question of life for man was bound up with the solution of the question of good and evil. That question having come into the universe it had to be settled according to God's glory, so that life according to His thought of it might become the portion of His creatures. Man became involved in that question by his disobedience and fall. God knows good and evil, and can take account of both perfectly; but man could only get that knowledge by becoming evil himself. But it was in the purpose of God that man should be as

Himself in knowing good and evil in a holy nature, and this comes about through Christ and through the cross.

The question of good and evil was too great for the creature; God only could solve it; and man, the creature of His pleasure, having become involved in it, God has allowed the whole question to be worked out in connection with him. It was God's intent that it should be so. Now He has made it possible for good and evil to be known in the way of pure blessing, and not simply in a guilty conscience. What a setting forth of good and evil was there at the cross! And good in God brought to light by the evil in man in a way it could never have been known in a world of innocence! We see the evil judged there too, and the death penalty attached to that tree coming upon One who bears it in love, to God's glory. So that streams of life and blessing can flow out from that very spot. Evil has become the background to show out the lustre and glory of good in the blessed God. The revelation of God in Christ is really the tree of life, and when the creature is brought to know God, and to live by what God is as revealed, a power of life is brought in that no evil can touch.

We see in the cross the two trees brought together. Good and evil have been brought to light and disentangled there. We see the infinite goodness of God there, and we see evil both in man and Satan fully exposed, but the good in God has triumphed over the evil. The whole question is settled now, and the One who has settled it has become the Tree of life. But having been involved in that question by the fall, we have to learn its character and solution through moral exercises, in which we make discovery of what we are, and also, through grace, of what God is. And this not only in connection with the first exercises of the soul, which prepare it for the gospel, but through those experiences by which the people of God have their senses exercised for distinguishing both good and evil; Hebrews 5: 14.

There is nothing more wonderful than the opening chapters of Genesis. The tree and the river are here, and we get them again at the end of the Revelation; what God begins with He ends with; He began with Christ in a typical way, and He will end with Christ. He has brought all that Christ is into view, and the very fall of man has become the occasion of his appreciating in a very deep and blessed way, when born again and having the Spirit, all that God is as revealed in Christ. It is wonderful that we should have before the fall such a setting forth typically of grace, and of the outgoings of God's heart.

God has come in and solved the question of good and evil in the cross and death of Christ; He has brought everything into clear light there, and has done it in favour of man, so that from that spot blessing flows out. The rivers suggest that, and *four* points to universality. No doubt they speak, too, of the

outflow of blessing from the heavenly city, and from the sanctuary on earth, in a coming day. See Revelation 22: 1; Ezekiel 47. But at the present time the rivers find their answer in the gospel going out in the power of the Spirit.

The first branch of the river, Pison, means 'Freely flowing', and there was gold in the land where it flowed. How suggestive that is of the gospel! It speaks of grace freely flowing in divine righteousness; instead of demanding righteousness from men God is ministering His own righteousness to men. The gospel does not demand righteousness but confers it. The three things connected with Pison — gold, bdellium, and the onyx stone — seem to indicate three different features of divine grace. The only other place where bdellium is mentioned is in connection with the manna (Numbers 11: 7). And the onyx stone was what the priest had on his shoulders engraved with the names of the children of Israel. Grace flowing out in divine righteousness — and the gold would speak of this — confers everything on man that he needs. It ministers righteousness to him, and food to sustain him in the wilderness pathway, and secures to him the support of Christ as Priest. Indeed, God graces man with all that Christ is.

The second part of the river, Gihon, flows round the dark country. It compasses the whole land of Ethiopia or Cush, which means 'Black', We may see in this a suggestion of being set free from the power of darkness. There is deliverance in the knowledge of God, and in the power of His Spirit, from all the power of darkness. When the fortune-tellers at Ephesus got the knowledge of God, they brought their books and burnt them, and the Spirit of God has told us what those books were worth. Those men had been living in the 'black' country, but they obtained deliverance from the authority of darkness.

Hiddekel means 'Rapid', and it flows toward Assyria. Assyria speaks of man in violent opposition to God and to His people, but this branch of the river seems to suggest a power of divine grace which can overcome and subdue all that. Assyria as a moral symbol differs from Babylon. Babylon is the corrupting influence of the glory of man, but Assyria is man as marked by violence. One like Saul of Tarsus could be reached and subdued in a moment by the grace of God in a glorified Saviour. That grace is a river that is able to sweep away every obstacle in its course, and subdue the proudest will.

Then Euphrates is 'Sweet water'. How sweet is the revelation of God in love, and the shedding abroad of that love in the heart by the Spirit!

The saint who is in the good of the gospel becomes a source of blessing and refreshment to all around him. Out of his belly flow rivers of living water. If there is no outflow it indicates that not much has flowed in; there has not

been the coming to Christ and drinking abundantly. If I am held by some power of darkness or of man, I cannot give expression to what is of God, so that the exercise for us is to be really in the good of the deliverance and blessing which the grace of God has made available for us; then we can be exponents of it.

If we see in the river a figure of what is for man, we may see at the end of the chapter a wonderful picture of what is for Christ. The ministry of the gospel gives expression to what there is for man, but the ministry of the assembly brings out what there is for Christ. Both are suggested here in a typical way.

“It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helpmate, his like”. We get a type of the assembly here before sin came in. The thought of the assembly goes back to the eternal purpose of God, and goes on to eternity. How wonderful that Christ is to have a counterpart — a companion to answer perfectly to Him in moral state, in mind and affection and sensibilities! All the animals passed before Adam, but there was nothing that answered to him — that was ‘his like’. To secure a counterpart for him something had to be taken out of himself; Eve had to be formed out of man.

Nothing could be suitable to be united to Christ but what came out of Him. Think of that glorious Man in heaven! How could anything be suitable to be united to Him but what came out of Him? The assembly is a wonderful formation; she is a divinely formed counterpart to Christ, so as to be for His satisfaction; He can recognise that she is of Himself. One may ask, How much is there in me that Christ could recognise as being of Himself? That is the measure in which bridal formation has taken place in me. Of course the formation of the bride is a collective thought, but it must be wrought in each saint. The assembly viewed as the bride is a divine formation, formed out of Christ. The ‘deep sleep’ is the secret of it. There could not have been any formation if everything formative had not been brought into death. Christ went into death, and all that man is as in the flesh was exposed and judged there, but everything that is excellent and blessed was disclosed there so as to become formative. The assembly derives her spiritual being from what was disclosed in the death of Christ. In Eve as a type it is all viewed as brought about in sovereignty from the divine side.

Think of the varied elements which were disclosed in fulness and perfection in that precious death! The love of God in all its depth and full extent was made known there. Divine holiness in all its purity was there. The perfect love of righteousness was seen there in One who would die to establish it, and such a hatred of lawlessness that He would die to remove it. We behold there, too, the perfection of obedience and devotedness in a blessed Man who would go

to the very lowest point to glorify God. We see there, also, the love of Christ for the assembly expressed in the giving of Himself for her. These are the most powerful influences in the universe, and they have been disclosed in the death of Christ so as to become formative of His bride.

As we come under the influence of Christ we are formed in appreciation of His love, who died not only to secure the good of His own but the possession of them for His own heart. We are formed, too, in the appreciation of the will of God, and of the love of God. And in this way moral accord is brought about between Christ and the assembly; she becomes His counterpart; she answers to Him in mind, in affections, in moral sensibilities. It might be good to ask ourselves sometimes, What is there in my moral being that came out of Christ, that could not have come from any other? Well, that is the measure of bridal formation so far as I am concerned.

It is a wondrous thing for Christ to be able to recognise what is of Himself in His saints — to see such features in them as dependence, meekness, lowliness, obedience, holiness. These are moral foundations. But then He sees, too, a response to His affections, and an appreciation of the love of God, and that His interests are in the heart of the bride. The building of the bride is going on; her members are being fashioned 'during many days'; Psalm 139: 16. As we come under the love of Christ we are formed.

GENESIS 3

Genesis 3

I think all believers realise that this is one of the most important chapters in Scripture. It shows how evil came into this world, the source from which it came,

and its effect and consequences. It is a blessed chapter, too, as showing God's resource in mercy and grace, and that ultimately all the designs of the serpent will be brought to nothing; his head will be crushed. In a certain sense Satan's head is bruised already, it was at the cross. But Romans 16: 20 tells us, "God shall bruise Satan shortly under your feet". The saints will be brought to participate in the complete triumph of Christ, and all that Satan has brought in will have to go out.

We cannot ponder this chapter too much; it shows what the poison of the serpent really is, and that helps us to judge that poison in ourselves. The poison is distrust of God; this lies behind all lust and disobedience. The first seed to be sown in the heart of man by the serpent was distrust of God. If this were admitted all was lost. For God to have lost the confidence of His most highly favoured creature was the most terrible thing possible. To admit the suggestion that God was withholding good was to be inwardly fallen already. We find this same distrust in ourselves, and we have to judge it, and we can do so now in the light of the fact that God has come out and has revealed His love, so that we might have unreserved confidence in unreserved love. There is no reserve in God's love; He has given the best in heaven for the worst on earth, and in this way has rebuked distrust and established confidence, so that "the works of the devil" might be undone in our hearts. If we only want what God gives we shall be perfectly happy. Nothing is of real value to us that we cannot take from God's hand and thank Him for.

The first doubt the serpent instilled into the human heart was as to the goodness of God; and then he said to Eve, in effect, "God is trying to frighten you; what He says will not come to pass; ye will not certainly die". Then, further, "God knows that in the day ye eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be as gods, knowing good and evil". Man before the fall knew that it was right to obey God and wrong to disobey Him, but he did not know good and evil. That was a knowledge which the serpent could rightly attribute to God. God knows good and evil in a holy nature; man could only come into that knowledge by disobedience and therefore in a sinful nature. He could only know good and evil by becoming evil himself.

It was a question purely of obedience to God — of His authority. To eat of the tree would not have been wrong if it had not been forbidden. To disobey God was evil, and the moment they had done it they knew good and evil in their own consciousness. Their eyes were opened, indeed, but opened on their own wretched state as having become evil.

If we once accept a suggestion from the enemy, and begin to reason about it, it is all over. In Eve we see how disobedience presented itself, and, we may say, justified itself to her. She exercised her judgment upon the tree. She saw that it was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise. She judged of it entirely in the light of what the serpent had said, and not at all in the light of what God had said. How solemn is all this! How often we reason ourselves into believing that wrong is right! God and His goodness left out: then the sight of the eyes and the judgment of the mind are sure to be wrong. Nothing is good for me that I cannot receive as God's gift, and give Him thanks for.

We get the three forms of lust here; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life are all here in embryo. It is God excluded from the confidence of His creature, His solemn warning disregarded, and the lust and will of the creature made the deciding factor. That is the fall. It was the utmost outrage that could be offered under the circumstances to the goodness, truth, and authority of God.

Then in Adam's case it was not the direct temptation of the serpent, but the seduction of the woman. "Adam was not deceived; but the woman having been deceived was in transgression". Adam sinned, we might say, knowing what he was doing. He allowed himself to be led by his affections. The whole character and relative positions of the man and the woman were thus reversed. Eve should have been led by her affections, and if so she would have called Adam at once when the serpent spoke to her. Instead of that she parleyed with the serpent and used her judgment. Adam should have been led by his judgment exercised in the fear of God, but instead of that he allowed himself to be led by his affections without giving God any place at all. Satan's object is always to get divine order reversed. Adam was the responsible head; so when things are taken up formally in Romans 5 sin is regarded as coming in by him. The full responsibility rested on him.

"The eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked". Eve had no doubt thought, We shall know wonderful things that we know nothing about now; but all they got was the consciousness of being naked! Conscience applies the knowledge of good and evil to responsibility. Satan had held out as a great prize that they should be as gods knowing good and evil;

but they only gained that knowledge by becoming evil themselves, by disobedience. Hence the moment they took the fruit they became conscious that they were naked. They realised and became ashamed of the miserable state they had got into, before God said a word or came near them. Man became the judge, as it were, of his own state: a very solemn thing. Before God came on the scene they judged themselves; they knew they were naked. What a terrible discovery to make! That is the condition man has come into. That is what the knowledge of good and evil does for man. He is in a state of which he is ashamed. "I feared, because I am naked; and I hid myself". The presence of God only caused alarm, and the fig leaves provided no covering the moment God drew near. Man was conscious that he was in a state utterly unsuited to God; conscious that he had no covering; he was naked before God. At the end of the chapter God meets this terrible consciousness by the coats of skins. That is after faith came in. Adam's legacy to us is that one word, 'Life'. You would have expected it to be the reverse. Eve means life; she was the mother of all living. It has often been said that the name indicates that Adam had faith.

God said to the serpent, "Because thou hast done this", etc. It was really a controversy between God and Satan. Man was the arena of conflict, but the conflict was really between God and the serpent. So the serpent comes at once under the curse of God.

No curse is pronounced on the man or the woman, but the mischief is traced to its source, and comes under God's definite judgment.

It is blessed to see God's intention to have a seed on earth of such a character that it would be hated by the serpent and his seed. The first word of grace is, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed". That leads me to conclude that the woman represents humanity as the subject of divine mercy and grace. There are those who are the seed of the serpent, and there is enmity between them and the seed of the woman. It suggests the thought of a divine seed. Of course pre-eminently *Christ* is the woman's Seed, but in a subordinate sense all God's elect are the woman's seed. It is the first intimation in Scripture of two seeds — two generations; and they come right down the stream of time to the present day. There are those in this world who are the seed of the serpent, though of course we could not point them out: the New Testament calls them the children of the devil, but there are also children of God on the line of righteousness and love, and there is enmity between the two seeds, but the enmity is on the side of the serpent and his seed.

Cain was the first of the seed of the serpent — the first of that generation — and Abel was the first on the line of the seed of the woman. Abel was not only a type of Christ, but he was a vessel of the Spirit of Christ. Christ was in Abel morally, and He is in all saints, so they can all be regarded as on the line of the seed of the woman.

Eve misnamed Cain; she thought that Cain was Christ. Cain means 'Acquisition'; she said, "I have got the man". But Cain was not very old before she found out that he was not Christ, so when Abel was born she called him 'Vanity'. She had learned the vanity of thinking that the promised Seed would come in on the line of nature.

Think what a long line of suffering witnesses there have been whose heels have been bruised by Satan! Abel was the first; and the martyrs witnessed all down the line; but they have all been in measure overcomers — Christ pre-eminently and gloriously so. They have been persecuted and martyred, but the Spirit of Christ was in them and so they overcame. It looked as though Cain overcame Abel, but Abel was the overcomer, and he has had the longest service of any man as a preacher — "He being dead yet speaketh". I think the bruising of the heel indicates the martyr sufferings of the saints, and of Christ pre-eminently; all that the power of evil could do was done against Him.

When God turns to Eve it is most interesting, for there seems to be indicated the way in which all divine blessing would come in for man. What is said to the woman seems to point to those subjective exercises which would mark mankind viewed as the subject of mercy. Blessing comes through deep inward exercise. Indeed there are three great principles indicated here on which blessing comes.

First, travail of soul. Nothing is brought forth for God in a scene where sin has come in except through suffering and travail — deep exercise of soul. God's people have ever been a suffering and exercised people, and not one bit of Christ has ever been brought forth apart from soul travail.

Then, "To thy husband shall be thy desire".

This is another great principle of blessing. God directs the desire of every exercised soul to Christ. This very chapter is the beginning of God directing desire to Christ. Every exercise which God gives is to lead the heart in desire to Christ; He is the divine answer to every exercise. All God's work in man is to lead desire to Christ. We see it all through Scripture, and we have known it individually, that God turned desire to Christ and all true blessing came in on that line. We have had to feel our inward state, and the disappointment and

breakdown of everything here, but under the good hand of God all this has led desire to Christ.

Nothing could be more interesting than to see the way in which God works that Christ may be the Object of desire. He will yet be the "Desire of all nations", Haggai 2: 7. Before He comes God will so work that all nations will turn in desire to Him, and then millennial blessing will come in. In the meantime God is making Him the desire of our hearts in view of the moment when the Spirit and bride will say, 'Come'. One may be very self-centred even as to spiritual blessing; perhaps that is often why we do not get on more rapidly. It is an immense thing when desire goes out to Christ. You get then into the true vein of God's work in your soul.

It is most interesting to see in the Gospels how Christ became the Object of desire. Think of Zacharias, Elizabeth, Mary, the shepherds, the wise men from the east — all quite at the beginning; He became the Object of desire to them all, and to many others afterwards. Indeed, we may see fully illustrated in the Gospels the three principles brought out here — soul travail, desire towards Christ, and His rule.

Each one who came to Jesus could tell his own tale of mercy; each one had gone through soul travail, and had had his desire turned to Christ, and came under His rule. God used the miseries of men to exercise them so that Christ might become the Object of desire, and when He became their desire they were welcome to Him. And so it is with ourselves. None of us get to the true vein of God's work until we turn in desire to Christ. Then there is positive gain and progress, and in result His rule is established in our affections for it is the rule of the One who is the Object of desire. In coming under His rule we escape from lawlessness, and come into the region of God's blessed will. And if His rule is established in our affections, if the Object of desire rules, we are getting near the truth of headship.

Mere mental work and study is fruitless. If anything is to be brought forth for God it must be through soul exercise, and every bit of true exercise turns the heart in desire to Christ, and the result is that we come under His lordship and headship. This is the line of the subjective work in the soul. The disciples went through the deepest soul travail when they lost their Messiah. John 16: 20 speaks of it, but the Lord says, "I will see you again and your hearts shall rejoice". So on the resurrection day He gathered up every desire to Himself — Mary, Peter, the two going to Emmaus, and others. When that was done it was an easy matter to send them the message by Mary, "Go tell my brethren, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God". That

gathered them together, and when gathered He came into the midst, and took His place as Head. We have it all there.

The woman in type sets forth the subjective side — the work of God in the soul. The man speaks more of the responsible side. What God said to Eve indicates the spiritual line on which He would work in those who were subjects of mercy. It is the line of His inward working in the spirits of His elect ones. But in what He says to Adam we get the course of His outward government and discipline in this world. To Adam God speaks of curse, of toil, and of death — the consequences of sin in His holy and righteous government. These effects have never been removed, though the conditions were somewhat relieved in Noah's time; in a general way what we have here is true still. The ground brings forth thorns and thistles, and eventually man after a life of toil returns to the dust. These are the outward governmental consequences of sin having come in. We all have to face the discipline of these things. The two sides go on together — the inward spiritual exercises in God's elect, and the outward government under which all come.

Satan tries to persuade men that this is a happy world; but all the pleasures of the world — theatres, music-halls, balls, etc. — are only froth on the cup of disappointment. Go into any entertainment, and you would not find a single really happy heart; the thorns and thistles are everywhere, and everyone is returning to the dust.

Man put the mark of the curse of the earth — thorns — on Christ. It was a striking figure of the Lord being made a curse; the curse came upon Him, and through His curse-bearing all trace of curse will be removed by-and-by. In the meantime God turns the governmental consequences of sin to man's blessing.

The outward circumstances here under God's government work in mercy for man's good: for instance, what a mercy it is that men have to work; it is a wholesome restraint upon the lawlessness of man. And God turns to blessing for His saints all that is trying to their spirits — things that may answer to the thorns and thistles. The inward exercises I believe to be figuratively set forth in what God said to Eve; the outward government and discipline is set forth in what is said to Adam. We all have to bear the consequences of sin coming in; we all have to accept the discipline of God's governmental ways; it goes on with the work of God and the one helps the other.

It is beautiful to see how Adam rose above all that was said to him; he rose into the region of what God had said to the serpent and to the woman; so immediately he called his wife Eve, which means 'Life', because she was the mother of all *living*. I believe Adam saw in faith that a living generation would come out of Eve — a generation for God. I do not think he called her Eve

merely because she would be the mother of so many human beings. She would be the mother of all living. Every one of us who live God-ward can say that Eve is our mother; that is, we are begotten of sovereign mercy. I think Eve represents humanity as the subject of divine mercy. In chapter 4 we have the line of Seth; God secures a generation — a people calling on the name of the Lord (chapter 4: 26) — they are the living.

Adam is not mentioned in Hebrews 11, and we should not have known that he had faith if he had not called his wife Eve; that is given to us as a witness of his faith. He recognised Eve according to the place she had as the subject of mercy. She was, in his account, the mother of all living. He looked above the sentence passed upon himself, though doubtless accepting it, and he laid hold of the divine thought that life was coming in. It was coming in on the line of what God said to the woman and to the serpent, and Adam laid hold of it.

Faith having come in, God clothed them; He took account of their state as naked, and met it through death; He clothed them with coats of skins. We see in that a figure of divine righteousness founded on redemption. Thus clothed they could lift up their heads boldly. It does not go as far as reconciliation. Reconciliation is for the divine pleasure, but the coats of skins were to meet conscious nakedness. God met that consciousness by clothing them with that which was in figure a righteousness of His own providing. They could stand before Him with the consciousness that they had a righteousness which would bear His inspection because He Himself had provided it.

It was said to the serpent, "Dust shalt thou eat". It sets forth the degradation that rightly attaches to the serpent; it is in marked contrast to the green herb and the fruit yielding seed provided for the rest of creation. God has put a mark of special degradation on the serpent; and, in truth, Satan will be the most abject of all lost creatures. This is to indicate the depth of his fall. He was the most beautiful of all God's creatures, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty; there was no blemish in him until his heart was lifted up with pride because of his beauty, and he fell. God has marked the degradation of such a creature; from the highest place he has fallen to the lowest.

In 2 Corinthians 11 we are warned not to be corrupted from simplicity as to Christ, and Satan is said to be transformed into an angel of light. If we want to be preserved we must watch against his seductive influence. He ought not to be an angel of light in our estimation. It is striking that there are only two forms of universal idolatry — sun-worship and serpent-worship. Serpent-worship is found among all people throughout the heathen world, Satan has made himself under the form of the serpent an object of veneration to man. It

is the comfort of faith to see that his head is going to be crushed; all his devices are going to be brought to nothing.

GENESIS 4

Genesis 4

We have to learn that all is vanity on the natural line. Eve called her firstborn Cain (Acquisition), and said, "I have acquired a man with Jehovah". No doubt she thought that Cain was the promised seed who would bruise the serpent's head, but she had to learn that on the line of nature all was ruined. We all have to learn the same lesson: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh". If there is to be "A man with Jehovah" from amongst the children of men it must be the fruit of divine generation — spiritual birth — which brings about spiritual exercise. The necessity for the new birth was as great in Genesis 4 as in John 3, though the plain truth as to this was not declared for 4000 years. If we attach any kind of importance to the natural man, whether in ourselves or in others, we shall be bitterly disappointed. God always blows upon it. I think we may conclude that Eve had learnt her lesson by the time her second son was born, for she called him Abel (Vanity). She had learnt the vanity of her expectations in Cain; it did not take long to convince her that he was not Christ. She had to find out that he was only a naughty little boy — nothing of God in him!

Abel comes before us as one who had divine exercise. Cain had none; there was no righteousness in him; no recognition of his own state, or of what was due to God. He brought an offering of the fruit of the ground. The ground was cursed; that in itself was a solemn thing to consider, but it did not enter his mind. He was satisfied with himself and his own works, and he thought God ought to be satisfied too! He sinned first God-ward in the character of his approach, and in being angry when God did not accept his offering, and then he sinned man-ward in killing his brother, whose offering God had accepted.

Abel, on the other hand, had learned through deep exercise the truth of his position and state. He was outside Paradise, a fallen sinner under sentence of death. But he brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat. He maintained righteousness — what was due to God. He owned that death was upon him, but he took his place with Jehovah on the ground of the death of one that had not sinned. And he also brought *the fat*. His faith apprehended a personal excellence outside himself on the ground of which he could be with God. How precious to God those first bright discernments and actings of faith! It attracted God's attention. "And Jehovah looked upon Abel and on his offering".

God always gives the light for faith to act on. He had met the deep exercise that came in through the fall; He met the terrible consciousness of nakedness

by providing coats of skin. Death had come in; animals had to be killed; God thus taught Adam and Eve that they must be clothed by the result of the death of another. And Abel said, as it were, 'If that is the way God has approached us in grace, we must approach Him in the same way'. In the coats of skin God approached man. But in Abel we see the other side — man approached God.

The Lord spoke of him as 'righteous Abel', and "He obtained testimony of being righteous, God bearing testimony to his gifts", Hebrews 11: 4. There was something very excellent in his sacrifice, and in the faith that offered it. No doubt he went through much travail of soul to reach it, but his faith brought in Christ, and he approached God in the excellence of Christ. And though it might seem that his testimony was soon cut short, it was not really so, for he has been speaking for six thousand years! His voice has been heard through all succeeding ages. "Having died he yet speaks". That is God's answer to the enemy. Satan had said, I will silence that voice. But he was defeated. God has caused Abel's voice to sound through the ages, so that he is speaking still in tones as loud and clear as ever. And God will eventually bring all Satan's devices to nothing. However great the triumph of evil may appear to be outwardly, Satan's devices will all be crushed.

It is blessed to see a righteous one introduced so soon. Abel is a very interesting man, for he is the first of the line of witnesses mentioned in the roll of honour in Hebrews 11. He was not only a very precious type of Christ, but he was a righteous man as having the Spirit of Christ. The light, the sun, the tree of life, Adam, the animals killed to furnish the coats of skin, were all types of Christ, but there was more in Abel; he was a man in whom was the Spirit of the righteous One. He was a shepherd too; he gave himself to the care of sheep like Moses and David, and that is a beautiful characteristic of Christ. Jehovah Himself is the Shepherd of Israel.

It is beautiful to think of him offering the fat; the fat was what God afterwards claimed entirely for Himself. It is remarkable that nothing is said about the blood; only the fat is mentioned. It is to be noticed that we do not get *the blood* sacrificially in Genesis, though the prohibition of it being eaten in Genesis 9 reserves it, as it were, for God in view of atonement. The actual offerings in Genesis are all burnt-offerings, and so also in Job, which is contemporary with Genesis. God seemed to give the richest thoughts first to faith — the thought of the personal excellence and delightful acceptability of Christ. The blood is necessary, indeed, to cover sin, but to be acceptable to God in the excellence of Christ goes much beyond this; in the fat we have what is excellent. It must have been delightful to God to see Abel's

countenance look up with confidence as he acquired a sense of the personal excellence and blessedness of Christ, and that he could be with God on that ground.

But Cain was very angry. He is a striking picture of the Jew — the religious man after the flesh. For God to salute that blessed One from heaven as His beloved Son, and to attest who He was by a thousand miracles, and to gather to Him the faith of the godly remnant, was all gall and wormwood to the priests and scribes and Pharisees. The birthright was theirs.

Genesis 4: 7 suggests that the birthright was with Cain if he had done well. But, like Esau, he lost it. All the inheritance of promise was there for the Jews in Christ, but they lost their birthright for a mess of pottage. They preferred their own righteousness, their own religiousness and place and reputation, to Christ; and every time He brought home to their consciences that He was God's anointed and accepted One their hatred of Him deepened until it culminated in the dark deed of Calvary.

Cain was satisfied with his own works. There are myriads of that generation in the world still. He brought his best, but not what God could accept.

It is touching the way God reasons with Cain; it reminds one of the way He reasoned with the Jews. He said to them, You will not let me be as good as you are yourselves; if your ox or ass falls into a pit on the Sabbath you pull it out; and yet you will not let me heal one of my poor creatures on the Sabbath day! He says to Cain, Why are you angry? If you were right you could lift up your face with confidence like Abel. If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you are wrong there is a remedy, the sin-offering lies at the door. God says, as it were, to Cain, You ought to have taken the lead, and to have been the one to enlighten Abel. You ought to have been so in the light of the promised One that Abel's desire would have been to you to get help as to Christ, and you would have ruled over him in guiding him to blessing, Cain had the birthright, the first opportunity of inheriting the blessing that had been indicated in chapter 3; he might have partaken of blessing on the ground of mercy, but he despised it. And so it is with the Jew; he had the birthright — that is, the first claim to Christ; he ought to have been the one to receive Christ and make Him known to others. God had made blessed proposals by the prophets, and then all was presented personally in Christ. He was the verification and fulfilment of all the promises, and the birthright of the Jew was to receive Him, but for a mess of pottage they sold it.

It is astounding what bitter enmity is in the religious man. There is not the same in a wicked worldly man. Religious reputation is what man clings to more than anything, and the religious man would kill Christ rather than give it up,

and have the blessing of God on the ground of mercy. The firstborn constantly lost his birthright; Esau, Reuben, and Manasseh all lost the birthright. The Jew had it, but has lost it; he has murdered the One in whom all the promises were centred. So God might well say to the Jew, Where is Christ? What have you done with Him? It is because of what they did with Him that they are driven out as fugitives and vagabonds upon the earth today. The wrath has come upon them to the uttermost. But God will not have them destroyed. The Jew is providentially preserved, and on whoever kills him vengeance is taken. There is always sevenfold vengeance on those who ill-treat the Jews. What a picture we have here of events which have been going on for long centuries! Russia today is perhaps paying the penalty of her cruelty to the Jews.

Someone was asked to give a proof in two words of the truth of Scripture, and he said, "The Jews". The Jews, having killed the righteous One, are driven out, and yet providentially preserved. They live on, generation after generation, but they are wanderers;

they have no country or settled dwelling-place; they are always being persecuted, and yet God preserves them, and takes vengeance on their enemies. They are under God's curse; it is a most solemn thing — "The wrath has come upon them to the uttermost". They filled up the cup of their iniquity to the brim when they not only refused the blessing for themselves, but would not allow the Gentile to have it. It is a marvellous thing when a Jew is converted; it is wonderful evidence to the sovereignty of God's mercy.

God shows at the end of this chapter that He will bring the Jewish generation to own their wickedness in slaying Christ. In Lamech we see a picture of what He will bring the Jew to in the last days. Lamech says, "I have slain a man to my hurt". They will own their guilt in killing Christ, that it has been to their own hurt and ruin. In the last days, in the time of the great tribulation, the Jews will have such suffering as they never had before. God will render to them double for all their sins. He will take up every question with them — the controversy about breaking the law, and about idolatry, and about their persecution of the prophets, and, above all, their rejection and murder of Christ. And yet those who persecute them will suffer seventy-and-seven-fold vengeance. In the end they will own to one another that they have killed Christ, and that all their sufferings and misery are because they have killed Him. Their sins will come before them, and, like Joseph's brethren, they will confess and mourn over them. When they own they have killed Christ, and that they have done it to their own hurt, they will be brought into blessing. God will work in them to bring this about. The elder brother will come in after

all! The Father will come out and entreat him to come in! What we have here is a gleam of prophetic light as to what will happen in the last days.

We find all the elements of the world in Cain's family. He builds a city, and we get men increasing in wealth and inventing musical instruments and tools, and becoming artificers in brass and iron. The arts, sciences, manufactures — all going on without God.

In Seth we return to the line of the divine seed. Eve seems to have had faith that there must be another to take up the faith line in succession to Abel. It must have been an exercise with her that it should be so. As each generation of saints passes off the scene it becomes an exercise that the line of faith should be continued, and this is true in measure whenever a saint is removed from the place of testimony. It would be a serious matter for faith to disappear from the earth, and it looked like this when Abel was cut off, but Seth was brought in as 'appointed' to continue the line of faith. He comes in on the line of the woman's seed, and in the ways of God it is ever so. God will see to it that faith will be preserved. "When the Son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?" Of course He will, but it will be through the faithfulness of God. Everything that is good comes in on this line.

What marked Seth's faith was his recognising the true state of things. It is instructive to see the contrast between Seth and Cain. Cain gave his son quite a good name — Enoch — which means 'Tuition'; it is a fine name, but all his tuition was in the world, not in the school of God. Seth calls his son 'Enosh', which means "Weak, mortal man"; that is, he owns the truth of the position. "Then people began to call on the name of Jehovah". If men own they are weak and mortal they must turn to the mighty One. Salvation is connected with calling on the name of the Lord; it means that men have no confidence in themselves; they recognise that they are weak and mortal, and they turn to God. In 2 Timothy we are exhorted to follow righteousness, faith, love, peace with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart.

The name of the Lord sets forth all that He is, and faith is entitled to bring it all in on behalf of weak, mortal man. "Whence shall my help come? My help cometh from Jehovah" (Psalm 121); it does not come from within or around. In Romans 7 a man finds out his own miserable weakness — "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, good does not dwell". He has no power either, so he comes to, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?" He looks outside of himself; in principle he calls upon the name of the Lord, and deliverance comes in, so that he can say, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord".

GENESIS 5

Genesis 5

In this chapter we get the line in which divine light and testimony were found; Cain's line is not taken account of here at all. None of these men died until he had filled up his bit in the line of divine testimony. In the previous chapter we see Abel as a type of Christ, and a vessel of the Spirit of Christ, typically Christ as the Righteous One who maintained what was due to God, but brought upon Himself the enmity of man even to death. The enemy's effort from the outset was to cut off the divine line, but at the end of chapter 4 we see how that line was continued; God would not have it cut off. A seed comes in instead of Abel whom Cain slew. Seth means 'appointed'. When Christ was slain it might seem that all hope was cut off, but God appointed Him Lord and Christ in resurrection. One might say that Abel prolonged his days in Seth, and so Christ has prolonged His days in resurrection, and He has also got a seed to continue Him morally on the earth. We read in Isaiah 53: 8 - 10: "Who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living He shall see a seed, he shall prolong his days". God would see to it that the One who was cut off should have a seed to continue Him in testimony here. It is not only that Christ prolonged His days as risen before God, but He is perpetuated in a seed on earth. "A seed shall serve him, and it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation", Psalm 22: 30. Jehovah gave Him a seed, and all saints are part of that appointed seed. The generation which God has given to Christ for a seed, is to continue His name in testimony in the place where He was slain.

The fact that it is mentioned that Seth was in the image of Adam suggests that what came in on the natural side was on the line of fallen man, and this brings out that it is through the activity of God's electing mercy and love alone that a seed is found in which His testimony can be continued. The fact that Adam could only beget a son in his own likeness and image casts all on God. If God did not act in His own sovereignty there could be no seed for Himself. It emphasises the fact that God works according to His love, and His determinate purpose. The recognition of this marks God's elect; Seth calls his son Enosh, which means mortal — subject to death. He owned that according to the flesh all had come under death; then men began to call upon the Name of the Lord. There was the owning of the complete ruin of man on the natural line; but in calling on the Name of Jehovah there was a looking for everything good to come in from God.

The interest in these men, and almost all we know of their exercises, lies in the names which they gave their sons. I do not know that we can trace them all out, but the fact that this chapter is the history of the line of God's testimony for more than 1500 years gives it an importance not to be overlooked. I think an outline may be seen here in type of the divine testimony from the resurrection of Christ right on to the bringing in of the rest of God. The Spirit who led these men to give names to their sons, and who inspired Moses to place them on record, had before Him the whole scope of things which would come in consequent on Christ being slain, prefigured in the death of Abel. The chapter ends by the suggestion of the removal of the curse, and the bringing in of rest to the wide creation in connection with Noah. The typical bearing of this is clear.

In Enosh there is the recognition that man in the flesh is under death; therefore nothing of blessing depends, or could depend, on that man; the cross sets him aside forever; what is of God, and for man's blessing, comes in in Another Man — even in Christ. When we see this clearly we are ready for Cainan, which is practically the same name as Cain; it means acquisition. Eve made a mistake in naming Cain; she connected the thought of acquisition with the wrong man, just as people are doing still all over the world. The things which can be connected with man after the flesh — money, pleasure, fame, benevolent and religious good works — all that can be acquired or added to man as such to give him place or glory, or to minister to his lusts or pride, is acquisition of the wrong kind. But when we see that death is on man after the flesh, and that all true good must come in from God through and in Christ, we get on to the line of divine acquisition. The soul turns in self-judgment to the blessed God, and it begins to acquire the true riches. Paul laboured at Corinth that the meaning of the cross should be known, and that self-judgment should make room for the Spirit of God to build up in the souls of saints all that was of God in Christ. Then there is divine acquisition — the building up in the knowledge of God so that He becomes the boast and glory of the soul. "That according as it is written, He that boasts, let him boast in the Lord", 1 Corinthians 1: 31.

This is suggested in the next name — Mahalaleel — which means "God is splendour". Think of the faith that led a man to give his son a name like that in the presence of Cain's world! God was more glorious in his eyes than all the attractions of that world. All true acquisition is on this line; it is by the knowledge of God that saints are edified and grow (Colossians 1: 10); and it is in the knowledge of God that all things that pertain to life and godliness are given to us; 2 Peter 1: 3. The sense that God is splendour will produce worship; the soul makes its boast in God. It is God that is before us, not man.

If God has become splendour to me I shall surely praise. We find the Psalmist speaking of "The +God of the gladness of my joy", Psalm 43:4.

It is the spiritual elevation of this blessed knowledge of God that prepares us for the next step — Jared, which means 'Descending', This suggests to me the lowliness of the path of obedience here, of which the model and pattern is seen in the path of the Lord Jesus. Philippians 2 brings it before us in a very blessed way, and I trust a way that ever appeals to our hearts. The "life of Jesus" (2 Corinthians 4) is that life of meek and lowly obedience in which He was found here. He would descend to the lowest point in obedience, and that God might be known. He came down in all the blessedness of God to bring the knowledge of God into this world. The assembly will descend in a future day from heaven having the glory of God, to bring it all down in display. The heavenly city will be filled with the holy splendour of God, and will descend for the display of it. The great elevation which we obtain in the knowledge of God really prepares us to descend in the blessed testimony of grace to this world. The spirit and effort of the world is to get up as high as I can to make much of myself, but the divine line and the line of the Spirit of Christ is to descend in order to make much of God.

There is moral order in these things. We have to go along the line suggested by the names Seth, Enosh, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared. After learning the complete ruin of man in the flesh as under death, we get spiritual acquisitions as we find everything blessed and glorious for our hearts in the shining out of God in grace and love, and in the establishment of all His thoughts of blessing in Christ, and as this is made good to us by the Spirit we joy in God. That gives the descending spirit. One who is truly in the moral elevation of the knowledge of God can go down to any point to make God known. That is the spirit of the true evangelist. Paul said, "To all I have become all things, in order that at all events I might save some". Think of a proud man like Saul of Tarsus becoming all things to all men! He learned to descend in order to bring the knowledge of God to men.

Then in Enoch — Tuiton — we have one taught under God's discipline to walk with Him, and be a partaker of His holiness. So that he comes in as the crown and culmination of the line of heavenly testimony. We see in him the life of a heavenly man, one completely outside the course of this world; one who in company with God became His confidant and received wondrous communications of divine secrets. What marvellous things he learned! He saw the true character of the world as under judgment, and knew that the Lord was coming to execute judgment. But what a comfort and joy it must have been to his heart to know that the Lord will have holy myriads with Him! Tens

of thousands of holy ones! What a blessed sense he must have had of how much there was to be for God! Then he was taught how completely God could effect victory over death, and set it aside. We should not know it from Genesis 5, but we do know from Hebrews 11, that he had faith to be translated! God was pleased to act in this marvellous way; before *two* men had died He gave a man the faith that He could set death aside, Abel had been killed, but, so far as Scripture tells us, only Adam had died when Enoch was translated. He had faith to be translated, so one day "he was not". He had gained in his walking with God the knowledge of the blessed secret that God was able to set death completely aside, so that he could go out of this world without death touching him. The course of the heavenly man, and of the assembly properly, does not terminate in death. If the Lord tarries, saints may pass off the scene by departing to be with Christ, but the proper departure of the heavenly company is translation; it is passing out of the sphere of death without a trace of its power touching them, just as the three Hebrew children came out of Nebuchadnezzar's furnace without the smell of fire passing on them.

Think of Enoch giving God his company! I often wonder how much do we give God our company? He delights in us and values our company. It might have to be said of many of us that we only *lived*. Enoch *lived* 65 years, and then he walked with God 300 years. And in the New Testament this is interpreted as meaning that he pleased God. I think we may connect in a special way with Enoch the verse which follows this in Hebrews 11: "But without faith it is impossible to please him. For he that draws near to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who seek him out". The place of the church as divinely taught, and as being spiritually outside the power of death in heavenly life, is strikingly set forth in Enoch — a man heavenly-minded, and entirely to God's pleasure so that God translated him.

Then in Methuselah we get the thought of God's long-suffering with the world; his life was the measure of it, for he died in the year that the flood came. This gives peculiar interest to the fact that he lived longer than any other man.

Then Lamech means 'the overthrower', 'the wild man', and I think he suggests the deep exercises and sorrows of the remnant who will have to suffer under the one who will seek to overthrow all that is of God,

and to break through every divine restraint — the man of sin, the lawless one. We have the prophetic history of those times in the Revelation, and we can understand how the nature of that time of tribulation will turn the hearts of the remnant to Christ as the true Noah — the One who will bring in repose, and set aside all the effect of the curse. Noah preparing an ark for the saving of his house is a figure of Christ who will carry His people in a coming day

through the time of tribulation, and who will then set aside all the effects of the curse, and bring in repose for the wide creation.

The Spirit was conversant with all things from the beginning, and He has given us in this early chapter of Genesis a suggestive outline of what would transpire between the death of Christ and His coming again to put the wide creation on the footing of the burnt offering. We have seen a similar foreshadowing in the first chapter ending in the Sabbath — rest brought in for God: now in this chapter all leads to the bringing in of repose for man after all his toil in the scene of the curse. The true Noah will bring it about.

GENESIS 6

Genesis 6

Chapter 6 comes in to show that before repose can be brought in all the evil that is in man's heart, and in man's world, must come under judgment; the whole scene must be cleared of every lawless element of violence and corruption. Chapter 6 speaks of a state of things having come about which necessitated judgment; a state of things generated by apostasy. There is a somewhat corresponding state now, but it will be developed to its full height in a coming day. We find in this chapter a state of evil which is the product of apostasy. The sons of God left their first estate, and the result of their unholy intercourse with the daughters of men was that men with extraordinary powers came into being. Men became associated with spiritual powers greater than themselves, powers which, as Jude tells us, had not kept their own original state. The result was a terrible state of things.

It is very solemn to see the significance of what we get here. What happened before the flood was a foreshadowing of that outbreak of spiritual wickedness which will give character to the apostasy of the last days. Men will get an unnatural, or perhaps one might say a supernatural, greatness in the days of the apostasy. The beast and the Antichrist will be indeed men of renown, heroes in man's eyes. But I believe the source of their being morally will be outside man; wicked spirits who have been in the heavenlies — fallen angels — will endow them with their wonderful powers. It is terrible to think of this combination between two distinct orders of fallen beings — an order superior to man joining with man in apostasy, and giving man powers that he would never have had naturally. We know that even now there is a spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenlies; wicked spirits — real beings — who are the sources of influences opposed to God and to Christ, and against which saints are now called upon to wage a holy warfare. But in a coming day under supernatural influence men will be lifted up against God in a way the thought of which might well fill us with terror. And I think we can see the beginnings of this kind of thing even now. Men are already talking about the superman, and they are coming more and more under the power of supernatural beings.

There is a great deal of evil commerce today with the unseen world.

Superstitious religions are coming in from the east, such as theosophy, spiritualism, and so on. And, the result will be that men will appear on earth who will be "men of renown" energised by Satan; they will be heroes in man's eye, and people will give themselves up to hero worship. It will be a state of things which will necessitate the intervention of God in judgment; it cannot be

allowed to continue any more than the antediluvian state of things could be suffered to continue.

The contrast suggested by the words, "My Spirit shall not always plead with man", is very striking. If fallen spiritual beings were corrupting man there was God's blessed Spirit pleading with man. Morally, we have the same thing now — man being corrupted, the Spirit pleading, and a time limit fixed! The question is, Which influence are we allowing to act on us? Morally, the same kind of influences which will act on men in that dark coming night of apostasy and woe are acting on men now. Not quite yet to the same extent, thank God, and the Spirit is still pleading.

We are told to try the spirits; every spirit that makes anything of man in the flesh is an evil spirit. In the world those spirits are accepted which work for the elevation and improvement of man as in the flesh; they are the popular spirits. If you say that man in the flesh is utterly corrupt and cannot be improved, and that he must go in judgment, people will tell you that they never heard of such a thing! But it is a part of the pleading of the Spirit; it is the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

The wickedness of man did not come fully out until this chapter. In the previous chapters we have seen man's sin against God and his sin against his neighbour, but here we find that every imagination of his heart is only evil continually; there is never a right thought in his mind; there is no good in him. Man is all the day a grief to God; "It grieved him in his heart". The man who never has a right thought must go; it is a moral necessity that he must go, because he does nothing but grieve God. How could a man be retained who is a constant grief to God? He must go. But then almost in the same breath as God says, "I will destroy man", we are told, "Noah found favour in the eyes of Jehovah". That is another Man; that is Christ. The very paragraph that brings out God's grief in man tells of his favour resting on Man. But this looks on to the One of whom it is said, "the grace of God was upon him", Luke 2: 40.

Verse 7 is exceedingly sorrowful. God had looked down and seen that His works were very good, but now He has to look down and repent that He had made them. That is what makes Christ necessary; He must come in. If man is such a hopeless wreck that he never has a right thought, and is only a grief to God, there must be another Man. Noah is the man who finds favour — a figure of Christ. It is blessed to see that God has brought in what He can delight in, so that we cannot say absolutely now that *man* is a failure. Man in the flesh is a failure, but Man of another order has come in, and in connection with His coming into the world, the angels said, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men". Noah was a just man, perfect amongst

his generations; he walked with God. And we find he was the beginning of a new line; he had a house, he begat sons. Christ is the Head of a new generation after His own order, and He will have a generation still after the church is gone. The only way to escape judgment is by being kindred with Him; there is no other way. That should be taken to heart. The ark was not prepared save for Noah's house; he prepared an ark for the saving of his house. The righteous One was a preacher of righteousness, but no one listened to him but his own house. Those who listen to Christ become His sons, if one may apply the type in that way. That is, they are morally kindred with Him. It is an immense thing to be kindred with Christ.

Noah was a preacher of righteousness; but in 1 Peter 3 — a scripture that sometimes puzzles people — we are told that it was Christ who preached. The Spirit of Christ preached, through Noah, to spirits now in prison "*when* once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was a preparing"; that is when the preaching was going on. They were judged according to men in the flesh because they rejected the testimony of righteousness. Men either receive God's testimony and appreciate Christ, or they reject it. Everyone who appreciates and delights in Christ is kindred with Him, and it is those who go into the ark; they really compose His house. If you see and believe that the judgment of God is on every man after the flesh, but that His favour rests on Christ, and you believe on Him as the God-provided Head who through His own death has brought in righteousness and salvation for men, you are kindred with Him.

We come in this type to the truth of salvation. We have had justification in type when God clothed Adam and Eve with skins; and acceptance when Abel brought of the firstlings of the flock and of the fat thereof; then in Enoch there is a foreshadowing of eternal life; and now in connection with Noah the truth of salvation. He prepared an ark for the saving of his house. Salvation involves complete deliverance and preservation from all the evil of this world. If you think only of going to heaven you do not want salvation there, and a man who has justification and acceptance can go straight to heaven, but to be down here where there is so much evil salvation is most necessary. Noah wanted his house for another world, and not for the world that then was; that is exactly what Christ wants His house for; so salvation comes in as complete deliverance from this world, so that in heart and spirit, and walk and ways, we might be completely apart from the world of lawlessness, and that we might live to God. We have to see that the world is under judgment; we see it, as Noah did, before the judgment actually comes. It is Christ, the true Noah, who said, "Now is the judgment of this world", and the Spirit has come to convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Christ has condemned the

world (Hebrews 11: 7). Have I? If I follow and allow what is of the world I am approving it, not condemning it. If I love it I am not condemning it; I am not practically in the ark. It is in coming into line with Christ and the Spirit that we come into salvation in a practical sense. Have we definitely passed out of the world? That is what baptism means.

Many people's idea of salvation is that they are fit for heaven through the Saviour's work. But that does not give the true idea of salvation; salvation is "that we being saved out of the hand of our enemies might serve God without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life". We are saved from our enemies that we might serve God in the very place where we were slaves of sin and Satan. He has saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. God says, "The end of all flesh is come before me"; if we believe that, we want to get out of this world, and that is the meaning of baptism. Peter says: "The like figure whereunto baptism doth also now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the demand of a good conscience towards God". The man who sees that the world is under judgment wants to get out of it as soon as possible; his conscience demands a way out. It is clear that Scripture connects the thought of baptism with the ark.

Baptism means that you go out of the world that is under judgment, and that you are never to go back into it; you are buried with Christ by being baptised to His death. Those true to their baptism are in the ark and they condemn the world. Each baptised person is in the position of subscribing to the total condemnation of the world and of man in the flesh. If I am not true to my baptism, I fall under the power of some influence which is not of God, and if I am under the power of sin or any evil influence, how can I talk of being saved? It used to be said that many were fit for heaven who were not fit for earth! A justified man has righteousness, but to fit him to be on earth according to God's will he needs salvation; he needs to come into the ark.

The ark was to be pitched within and without. The word 'pitch' is the same word as 'atonement'; it indicates that those in the ark came in figure under cover of the death of Christ; that is where baptism puts us, not for heaven but for earth. We come under cover of the death of Christ, and walk here in newness of life. It is a question of being in accord with Christ and the Spirit. The Spirit brings demonstration into the souls of saints of the true condition of this world; it is under judgment. It means that we are to be in the witness box along with the Holy Spirit, who is witnessing to the true condition of the world. Everyone in the ark is convinced that the world is under judgment, and that he can only be preserved under cover of the death of Christ. When the Jews said,

“What shall we do?” (Acts 2) Peter said, “Repent and be baptised”; he, so to speak, opened the door of the ark.

When we come into the ark we get divine light; there is a window there. I was struck by seeing that the word translated ‘window’ is used twenty-four times in the Old Testament, and in every other instance but this it is translated ‘noon’ or ‘noonday’. It evidently suggests the full light of day. Such an expression shows that the language used by the Spirit is selected in view of typical teaching. It suggests that in the ark we come into the place where divine light is found. In coming into the good of salvation, in accepting baptism in its spiritual import and being true to it, we come into divine light, into the light of the covenant. “With thee will I establish my covenant” (verse 18); that is noonday light — the light of what God is as pledged in grace and love to man. Christ is to us the covenant; all God’s love and thoughts of blessing man-ward are secured and confirmed to us in Him, and as being with Him in the ark — in the separation of His death from this present evil world — we enjoy the light of it, we live in the light of it. The ark sets forth the place which Christ has prepared for the saving of His house. Thus, though, as we have said, the ark typifies how Christ will carry the remnant through the tribulation — and this we may touch on again, if God will — it has also an application to the present time. It sets forth the place where saints and their households are found owning the lordship of Christ, and are under cover of His death; the place where the world is seen as condemned, and the end of all flesh is known. But Christ as the true Noah is revered, the covenant is known and enjoyed; that is, the love of God made known in Christ who is the covenant. The people of God as brought into the consciousness of being kindred with Christ, and as knowing God, find their place under cover of the death of Christ in this world; they have gone out publicly, as it were, from it by baptism, and as they preserve accord with the truth of baptism in their ways and spirit, they know what the ark is, and are in the good of salvation. Divine light and security are found amongst the people of God, and in separation from the world.

GENESIS 7 AND 8

Genesis 7; Genesis 8

We have seen plainly how all flesh came under God's judgment, not only pronounced but actually executed, so that the world that then was perished. But one man found favour with God; there was one righteous man with whom God's covenant was, and those who were kindred with him were preserved. Those who are truly in the ark at the present time are kindred with Christ through the grace of God; they appreciate Him, and are found in company with Him and the Spirit, condemning the world, and carried through in the power of God's salvation.

Then, as remarked before, Noah and the saved family in the ark typify Christ in connection with the remnant by-and-by. The remnant will see that the end of all flesh has come before God, so that they will turn away from all the thoughts of men, and will refuse the mark of the beast, and the covenant of Antichrist. As baptised in the Name of the Lord they will own no other name, and will make Him their Sanctuary, and will be found in complete separation from the world of the ungodly. All will be judgment around, but there will be — to speak in the language of the type — an ark where every divine element will be preserved. I do not suggest that the saints will escape suffering, or even death, but every element of faith and testimony will be carried through into the new world. In principle this is the case today. All Israel's hopes and promises are preserved in the faith of the assembly, and, indeed, the blessing of all families of the earth. Every divine element of the world to come is being preserved and carried through in the faith and affections and testimony of the assembly. This is an aspect of the typical significance of the ark which is greater than its reference to individual salvation.

Everything that is of God and for God's pleasure has to be preserved and carried through to take its place in the world to come. Just as every element of natural life was preserved in the ark, so every element of piety, faith, and divine testimony has to be preserved and carried through. It suggests something more than our personal deliverance; it suggests that everything that God values is preserved alive and carried through. We have to take account of the fact that God has drawn us to Christ, and given us to appreciate Christ, not simply for our personal blessing, though that is perfectly secured, but God has connected us with Christ that we might be identified with His testimony. What is in my mind is, that "every living thing" that God values is preserved in the ark. There is in Hebrews 11 a wonderful collection of living things. My impression is that every feature of piety, faith, and divine

testimony seen in that chapter is preserved today in the assembly, and will be preserved in the remnant by-and-by, and will be carried through into the rest and blessing of the world to come. Every living element of divine testimony that God introduced into this world in connection with Abel's faith, and Enoch's, and Noah's, and Abraham's, and all the rest, will never perish. It is preserved, and will be preserved, and carried through to the world to come. What was precious to Abel's faith is in the world today, in the hearts and testimony of thousands of saints. Think of Enoch, too, who apprehended God's complete victory over death; think of that being carried through a scene of death in living testimony! All that was of God in the world was under cover of the ark, and every living thing is preserved for God today in the ark. We think of the ark as a means of salvation for us, but it is really the place where everything is preserved for God and for another world. The then world was under judgment, and God had another world before Him; all the elements that will fill that world to come are in the assembly now, and when the assembly has gone these elements will be preserved in the remnant.

It is an exercise for us that the different qualities of faith, and the elements of piety and divine light that belong to the testimony of God should be preserved alive. There are those in this world of whom Christ can say a most marvellous thing, "They are not of the world even as I am not of the world". They are His family, preserved not only from the world under judgment, but from all the elements and character of things found in that world, and this is salvation in a practical sense. It should be a real exercise with every one of us, whether we are in a practical sense in the ark, and whether these qualities of faith that God loves and preserves as His testimony are living in our souls. In Revelation 6 we read of people who "were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held". Why will they be slain? They will preserve what is of God. The saints will not escape suffering, but the testimony will be carried through. In the Revelation there are different companies of saints who cherish what is of God; we see a company of sealed bondmen of God in chapter 7; and a great multitude that no one could number who have learned to ascribe salvation to God and to the Lamb; then we find worshippers and witnesses in chapter 11; then in chapter 12 the remnant of the woman's seed keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus; then in chapter 14 we see 144,000 who have the Lamb's Name and His Father's in their foreheads; and in chapter 15 we see those who have gained the victory over the beast, and over its image, and over the number of its name. All this gives us some idea how things will be carried through. We may also read the Psalms and see how the precious qualities of faith and testimony will come out in the remnant. At the present time everything is held and carried through in the

faith and testimony of saints of the assembly. In all periods what characterises those in divine security and testimony is obedience (see Genesis 6: 22).

When God takes in hand to deal with what is evil He will do it effectually; nothing will escape. In the end of chapter 7 Noah alone remained, and what was with him in the ark; God had dealt in judgment with everything else. We ought to count it a great privilege to be in present deliverance from the world under judgment; we ought not to need to be dragged out of it as Lot was out of Sodom.

When we come to chapter 8, we see what God had in view; the world of lust and lawlessness had all perished; it had gone under judgment; and now we see the new world coming into view, the world that was going to be filled with what God had preserved in the ark. The first words are very touching "God remembered Noah"; His covenant was with him. How could God forget Christ? He was the Man of God's pleasure who had found favour with Him, the One with whom God's covenant is. The world has forgotten Christ; it has no idea that Christ and His family are going to be brought in, and that they will fill the earth. But God remembers Christ, and He is going to fill the earth with Christ and His family. The world does not want Christ to come in, it wants to enjoy things in a state that is under judgment.

It is very interesting to see that the ark rested a long time before the waters disappeared. It suggests that the saved family is brought to rest on holy ground long before the waters of judgment disappear. Ararat means 'holy ground'. That suggests to me that new and holy ground has been touched in the resurrection of Christ, and the saved family — the assembly now, and the remnant by-and-by — are brought to rest on holy ground long before the disorder and judgment of this world passes away. They reach it spiritually in their souls. Saints of the assembly are brought to rest on holy ground opened up by the resurrection of Christ. And I think the remnant will have the faith of Christ risen; that will be their resting-place; it will be holy ground for them to rest upon in the midst of the tribulation and the scene of judgment.

The next thing is that the tops of the mountains are seen. It suggests that before the conditions of kingdom blessing are secured, before the scene is yet clear for the kingdom, faith sees all greatness and eminence and authority centring in Christ. In Revelation 14 we have the 144,000 standing on Mount Zion with the Lamb; they apprehend Him in His royal glory, and stand with Him there before the kingdom is set up; they stand with Him in the faith of His glory, greatness, and power. We see Christ now in His greatness and glory as Head of all principality and power. In Scripture mountains are symbolical of great powers; we see now the tops of the mountains, the glorious eminence

of Christ, long before the waters subside. Everyone will see it by-and-by, but the saved family can see it now. Compare 1 Peter 3: 22; "He is at the right hand of God, gone into heaven, angels and authorities and powers being subjected to him"; all the greatness is seen connected with Christ. We do not yet see everything put under Him; the waters are still on the earth; but these wonderful mountain tops have appeared. We see the glory and greatness of Christ; we see Him crowned with glory and honour; and we know that very soon all will be in subjection to Him; to faith it is very real now. Many of the Psalms anticipate the kingdom before its conditions have actually come. This is like the tops of the mountains being seen.

Then after forty days Noah opens the window; he begins to observe the signs of the times. That is what the remnant will do, and it will be right for them to do so. *Our* sign is the morning star in our hearts; we know what is going to happen because the morning star has arisen in our hearts; He will soon call us out of this world to Himself. But for the remnant there will be signs of the times, and Noah observes these signs. He first sends out an unclean bird; Leviticus 11 tells us that every raven is unclean; there is a black mark against it. The raven can pursue its restless course in spite of the waters not having abated; it is like the unconverted man who can make himself quite at home in things that are not yet in divine order. So that in connection with the raven the remnant will learn that the world is still a place where the unclean can make himself content.

But Noah also sent forth a dove. We can all see that the dove would fittingly represent those who have the Spirit of God, the godly ones. Noah says, as it were, We will see if there is anything in the world yet where those who have the Spirit of Christ can rest.

But the dove finds no resting place for the sole of her foot, and has to come back to her own company! Then Noah waits another seven days, and sends her forth again, and she comes back to him with an olive leaf plucked off in her beak. What a marvellous sign of the times! One can imagine how eagerly in that future day the saints will observe the signs of approaching redemption! I think this speaks with no uncertain voice of the appearance of Israel as grafted once more into her own olive tree. Romans 11 tells us that Israel has been broken off and the Gentiles grafted in; but by-and-by Israel will be grafted in again, and "the deliverer shall come out of Zion; he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob", Romans 11: 26. Israel will become once more manifestly an object of mercy. That will be the great sign of the times, the blessed witness that the earth is emerging from the terrible waters of judgment! After that, conditions will soon appear that are in keeping with it,

so that after another seven days the dove finds conditions in which she can rest, and the ark is not wanted any more. The Deliverer is come out of Zion and has turned ungodliness from Jacob; Israel is grafted in, and God's new covenant is established. There will be conditions abroad in which those who have the Spirit of Christ can rest. Jehovah will be gathering Israel, and turning the hearts of the Gentiles to them; it will be the very verge of millennial blessing, so the cover can be taken off the ark and the saved family can come out. What a change in this poor world! Then very soon the last trace of disorder and of judgment will pass away. "The earth was dry".

Then when they come out God speaks of all the living things that had been in the ark, that they were to swarm on the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply. That is, the new earth is to be filled with what comes out of the ark. This will be a wonderful world when it is filled with what comes out of the ark in a spiritual sense. Righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit — all these features are found in the saved family, and they are going to fill the earth; every thing will become a witness to the greatness of God's salvation.

The altar is spoken of now; it is the first time such a thing is known in Scripture; for how could one build an altar on cursed ground? A clean place is needed for an altar; now that the world had all passed under judgment there was a clean place. In building his altar Noah claimed the earth for God, and put the earth on the ground of the burnt offering. It is exactly what Christ will do in a coming day; He will claim the earth for God. The curse is entirely removed, for the man who grieved God has gone in judgment; and God smells a sweet odour of rest. There is the sweet savour of another Man who has glorified God; man is now to God's delight. This is not man in the flesh improved; that is why God says: "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth". It will not be man improved in the millennium. People are trying to bring about the millennium by improving man, but it will not be that, but another Man brought in, and the sweet savour and fragrance of that One filling the heart of God with rest, and occupying every human heart with His blessedness. Then the curse will be gone, and all its effects removed, and the whole earth will come into the fragrance of the offering of Christ.

It is wonderful to see a picture like this. There is nothing more marvellous than these pictures in the early chapters of Genesis. What God has before Him is repeated again and again. Chapter 1 shows how God is going to bring in a Sabbath of rest for Himself, and chapter 8 shows how He will bring in a sweet savour of rest for the scene where the curse has been.

Where grief, dishonour, and reproach have been, He will fill the earth with the fragrance of Christ. It is the great privilege of saints now to carry on the

savour of the burnt offering all through the night until the morning, when it will be publicly on earth. The burnt offering was to burn all night; it was the business of the priests to see that it did so. This chapter is the morning typically, but in the meantime the fragrance of Christ in the hearts of saints is rising up all night to God, and filling His heart with the savour of rest. We find in Ephesians 5 that the burnt offering is to be continued in the saints: "Walk in love as Christ has loved us and given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour". Every step a saint takes in love is a continuation of the burnt offering. What will it be like when the fragrance of the burnt offering fills the world, and the love of Christ gives impulse to everything! We can understand how the sweet fragrance of Christ can be presented before God in the praises of the saints; but it is also to be presented in the walk of the saints. We may come together and praise God and thus present the fragrance of Christ, but our praises and walk should correspond. If a man's praises are full of the fragrance of Christ, his walk should be also; that is why the priest who offers the burnt offering gets the skin of the bullock. If I really present Christ to God in my praises that is the burnt offering; and the man who offers the burnt offering gets a coat to wear in which the beauty of Christ is seen. The walk of such displays the moral beauty of Christ. What a wonderful time it will be when the beauty of Christ will be on everything: "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us", Psalm 90: 17. "This is his name whereby he shall be called, Jehovah our righteousness", Jeremiah 23: 6. "And this is the name wherewith *she* shall be called: Jehovah our righteousness", Jeremiah 33: 16. That is, the saints become morally what He is; so the beauty of Christ will be on all things, even on the bells of the horses. In the millennium every one will carry some trace of the beauty of Christ under the eye of God; the fragrance of the burnt offering will spread over everything. They will not only praise God universally for Christ, but His beauty will be seen on all, and His glory will fill the earth. That is the world to come; a scene where everything is based on the death of Christ, and all is pervaded by the fragrance of His offering Himself. There will be no more curse, but God will be complacent; there will be the covenant, and an abiding order of things — "Seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease".

This is a picture of the bringing in of the conditions of the world to come after the judgment is passed. When the calamities are all passed, the glory and blessedness of Christ will come in, and fill the earth.

GENESIS 9

Genesis 9

We see in this chapter the beginning of a new age or dispensation. The world that then was had disappeared under the flood, and there was a new beginning. Before the flood there does not seem to have been any special dealing of God with men. There was a testimony; Enoch was a prophet, and Noah was a preacher; but there was no restraint upon man in the way of government; he was left very much to take his course; it was a time of unrestrained self-will.

It is very blessed to see the divine character of the new system; it began in the savour of the burnt offering. The instruction that comes out in this chapter is founded on that, and it will be characteristic of the world to come. At the end of the chapter we come back to what is historical; but we see the elements here that make up God's world — the fact that man is to live on the result of death; that he is to be preserved in the dignity of being in the image of God; and the covenant and the sign of the covenant. All these are elements that constitute the world to come; they follow on what we have been seeing in the previous chapter. Then there is also the setting up of government, and committing it to man. This will be fully realised in the world to come; man will be in his proper place then in the exercise of government, and everything will own his place. I do not think "the fear and dread of you" implies suffering necessarily; it rather gives the thought of the place man is put in. The fact that man was made in the image of God is recalled, and this determines his place as to the animal creation, and it is also the ground on which government is set up.

The animal creation is also given for food to man instead of green herbs; that shows an entirely new departure. We noticed in chapter 1 that the principle of life — the seed principle — was to characterise man's food. Now there is an entire change; man is privileged to feed on that which is the result of death. It is wonderful how death is presented to us in the early chapters of Genesis. It is first seen as the judgment of God: "In the day that thou eatest of it thou shalt certainly die". Then it appears as the power of Satan, in the words: "Thou shalt bruise his heel". Then, thirdly, it is the evidence of man's condition and frailty as under sin; "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return". Then on the line of grace death comes in as a source of clothing — righteousness — for man. And Abel comes to God in the acceptance of One whose excellence was uncovered by death. Then death — in figure — separates the saved family from the world under judgment. Then it becomes, in Noah's burnt offering, the

basis of all God's relations with man and with the earth. This will appear publicly, as we have seen, in the world to come; it is now true spiritually. Now we come to a further thought; that death is to yield food for man. Man's constitution is built up by what he feeds on, and God's thought is to have a world where every one will be formed and built up by feeding on the result of death. We get this fully developed in John 6; every one is to be nourished on death. Sin had not come in at the beginning, but after sin had come in one could not be built up in a constitution suitable to God, except by feeding on the result of death. If a world is to be set up on the ground of the burnt offering, the people to fill that world must be nourished and formed by feeding on Christ as the One who has died. He has brought the will of God and the love of God into death — the only place where it could truly become food for us. The light of this would preserve the people of God from taking up vegetarianism as a principle.

Then we may note that the image of God is to be preserved and honoured in man; it is what is proper to man, his place and dignity. Government preserves the rights of God, and the dignity of man as His creature. We ought to remember that; it would help us if we retained a deeper sense of it. In the world to come nothing will be allowed that is inconsistent with it. The reason why government is set up, and it is said, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed", is because man is in the image of God; "In the image of God made he man". These are principles that will come into evidence in the world to come; there every one will have fed on Christ as having been in death, and the image of God will be preserved in man. No deadly influence of evil will be allowed to kill the man in the image of God. We miss a great deal if we do not see that this is prophetic of the world to come, of that order of things that comes about after the judgment has passed. We have seen Noah as a figure of Christ, carrying His family through the time of tribulation into the world to come; and this chapter follows, and gives a picture of conditions that will obtain in the world to come. Of course it all has a present spiritual application, because Christianity is a spiritual anticipation of the blessedness of the world to come. We do not understand Christianity if we do not see that.

It is a striking fact here that the blood is reserved. The blood is not spoken of sacrificially in Genesis, but its being reserved leaves room for all the precious teaching as to it in Exodus and Leviticus. God develops the efficacy of the blood very much there; here it is only a hint; God says, as it were, It is for *Me*. All the offerings in Genesis are burnt offerings. God gives a hint to Cain of a sin offering, but there is no record in Genesis of a sin offering being offered; it is always the burnt offering.

Then we come to what is most blessed — the covenant. It is in connection with Noah that we first get the thought (Genesis 6); God says to him: "With thee will I establish my covenant". Christ is Himself the covenant, as we see plainly in Isaiah 42: 6 and 49: 8. The burnt offering is the ground on which God can carry out the purposes of His love and enter into covenant. How marvellous to think of God making a covenant! The covenant conveys the idea of definite and perpetual relations between God and man, the terms and conditions of which are proposed and established by God and into the blessedness of which man can enter. We see this idea of covenant all through Scripture. As to the actual provisions of this particular covenant the terms of it do not go very far; they are merely that the world should not be destroyed by flood any more. A covenant is something stable; it cannot be altered, especially if God makes it. Even man's confirmed covenant no one adds to or disannuls; Galatians 3: 15. If you make a covenant you have to stand to it even if you were very foolish in making it. And we may be sure that if God makes a covenant the thing is certain and abiding. It is perfect contrast to the idea of curse. God rejects what He curses, but if He enters into covenant He binds Himself to the persons or things in whose favour the covenant is made. In this covenant He binds Himself to all creation. And it is instructive to see the abidingness of it — 'Perpetual generations' and 'everlasting covenant' speak of this.

There is no demand in this covenant; later on, when the law was the covenant, there were demands, because that was a covenant proposed — ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator — between two parties not in accord with one another. "The law was added because of transgressions". The blessing of that covenant depended upon the fulfilment of the law by man; but the man was a transgressor, so there was no point of agreement. The new covenant is put into the hands of a Mediator who can not only propose conditions, but bring man into accord with them. God proposes terms and stands to them, and works in man to bring him into accord with them, so that the two parties are in agreement. The principle of the new covenant is thus in contrast to the law.

The bow in the cloud was the sign of God's covenant. The clouds were judgment at the time of the flood, but the character of cloud now is different. When God brings a cloud over the earth it is for the purpose of sending down showers of blessing; and that is connected with the idea of covenant. If God enters into covenant it ensures showers of blessing. Where would you get the early and latter rain from if there were no clouds? Pentecost was the early rain, and in a coming day there will be the latter rain, when Joel 2: 28 will be fulfilled. Joel speaks of the former and the latter rain. It is the latter rain when

the Spirit is poured out on all flesh, and Christ is the sign of God's covenanted blessing in connection with it all — the blessed sign of God's faithfulness. The rainbow is white light broken up into its constituent elements; it seems to suggest the display in detail of the perfection of God's faithfulness.

In the world to come there will be a perfect providential witness to the goodness and faithfulness of God, but faith will raise its eyes above all that to Christ, and see Him as the true token of the covenant,

every blessing leading the heart to apprehend more His beauty and glory. Men will bless themselves in Him. The bow is seen of men in verse 14 and seen of God in verse 16.

God is always looking at Christ. In Acts 2 it seems to me that Peter points them to the bow in the cloud; there had never been such a shower of blessing before in this world. Peter says, in effect, Look at Christ in heaven; God has made Him both Lord and Christ — He is the sign and pledge of all God's blessing and faithfulness in heaven. Psalm 110 also shows us the bow in the cloud — the One whom God has set at His right hand until His enemies be made His footstool; every covenanted promise will be established in kingly power and priestly grace. Christ at the right hand of God is the pledge of God's faithfulness to fulfil every promise. Christ is the bow in the cloud; and God is always looking at Him. There He is as sign and pledge of God's covenant! After Peter had said, You crucified your Messiah, and have cut yourselves off from every shred of blessing; when they answered, What shall we do? he could tell them that the bow was in the cloud; God's faithfulness had not broken down, and Christ risen and glorified in heaven was God's token that not a single thing had failed on His side. On their side they had forfeited all. Now, "Repent and be baptised and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit". That was indeed a shower of blessing. They would get Joel's early rain before the rest of the nation got the latter rain in another day.

In the coming day all the providential goodness of God will be seen connected with Christ; there will be no sickness, no bad harvests, everything in abundance. Men will revel in the providential goodness of God, and they will see the glory of Christ in it all; every blessing will bring Christ before them. We do not see the same outward tokens of favour in God's providential dealings now; it is the other way. Our bow in the cloud is Romans 5 and Romans 8; when everything around you is wrong, you see the bow in the cloud; you see the love of God in Christ, and the love of God is shed abroad in your heart. You see that in tribulation, and in the midst of weakness and sorrow; the bow in the cloud is there. God is faithful; in bereavement and trouble the Christian looks up and sees the sure pledge of the faithfulness of God in Christ. Now a

Christian may have sorrows and everything going against him; his wife sick, and his children delicate, his business not thriving; and yet he is happy in the sense of God's love and faithfulness in Christ. That is the proper normal blessing of the Christian.

There are clouds of sorrow, disappointment, bereavement, trial, but where the cloud is the bow is in it; the blessed witness of God's faithfulness is in every cloud. People say that every cloud has its silver lining; but J.B.S. said, "There is no silver lining without a cloud"! You could never have the bow if you had not the cloud. God brings the cloud: you may have tribulation; it is the normal surrounding of the saint; but when God brings a cloud, an exercise, a difficulty, look out for the bow. There is not a sorrow or an exercise or a difficulty, but God means you to have through it the light of the beauty and blessedness of Christ in a way you never had before. So that you may have a peculiar sense of God's faithfulness, and that nothing can separate you from the love of Christ nor from the love of God; that is the bow. We do not learn how good God is by looking at providence, but we learn how good He is by looking at Christ and seeing Him to be the token of divine faithfulness, and taking in the blessed love that was revealed in the death of Christ. In the millennium everything outwardly will bear witness to the faithfulness of God which has brought in every blessing through and in Christ; but as brought into the covenant we have the sure token of that faithfulness in the One in whom every promise is Yea and Amen, before there is any change outwardly. God delights to remember the covenant, and as man delights to remember it there is blessed accord between God and man! God as it were says, I will work in your hearts so that you shall not draw back from me, and I will not draw back from you; Jeremiah 32: 40.

It may be called a dispensational picture down to verse 17; and then begins a bit of history, which contains one of the most remarkable prophecies as to the history of the world. The whole history of man, and God's ways of grace, are summed up in a verse or two. Noah, as has often been remarked, set up in government, fails to govern himself. He plants a vineyard, and gets drunk, and dishonours himself. Then his son dishonours him, and the curse comes in. There is one family under curse and another under blessing. This is brought in to show the source of the wicked people who would be destroyed hundreds of years after by Joshua. The Revelation traces everything to its moral conclusion; but Genesis traces everything to its moral source; hence they are good books to read together.

Here we see Ham dishonours his father, and is cursed in his posterity. The children of Ham can never be like any other people in this world. "A servant of

servants shall he be". If you trace the history of nations back to their sources, and see their parentage, you may know their character by seeing how they began. Ham means 'Black', and Shem 'Renown'. God connects renown with Shem. Japheth looks down on Shem now, but that is all a mistake, for God connects renown with Shem; God's purpose was to bring Christ into the family of Shem. Then Japheth means enlargement: the grace of God has reached out, and the very fulness of God's thoughts has been brought out in connection with the Gentiles. "In thy seed all nations shall be blessed", was said to Abraham, and God is persuading or enlarging Japheth now by bringing him into the tents of Shem; there is no blessing anywhere else. Many of us have been persuaded to come into the tents of Shem; all blessing is connected with Christ. Shem is the renowned family into which God has brought Christ. He came into the tents of Shem, and you must go there to get blessing. It is beautiful to notice that when the gospel was first proclaimed, God vindicated the character of His grace by converting one out of each of these three families — the Ethiopian eunuch from Ham; Saul of Tarsus from Shem; and the centurion, Cornelius, from Japheth. God brought in one from each family to show the perfection and universality of His grace.

GENESIS 10 AND 11

Genesis 10; Genesis 11

It is evident that chapter 11 comes chronologically before chapter 10. Chapter 10 gives the general facts connected with the different families which sprang from Noah's sons; but the facts recorded in it took place after the dispersal of the nations as described in chapter 11. The distribution of the isles of the Gentiles was for "everyone after his tongue". That shows it was after the dividing of tongues that the different families were dispersed.

The moral principle that underlies chapter 10 is very important; it is that we should be able to trace things to their origin. Israel was in God's mind, and it was important that Israel should understand the source from which all nations sprang with whom they had to do. To know the source of things gives insight into their character. People say sometimes, Why go back so many years? Why not take things as they are now? But it is a divine principle that we should know the beginning of things. A river will never rise above the level of its source. If a thing begins wrong it can never become right by lapse of time. Hence if we are to see our way clearly we must know the source of movements that affect the people and testimony of God. God exposes to His people the moral source of things. Many of the nations who were afterwards great adversaries of Israel sprang from Ham who was under the curse. We find Babylon, Nineveh, Egypt, the Canaanites, and the Philistines in chapter 10: all these nations were adversaries to Israel, and the Canaanites were to be destroyed before Israel. Their source is exposed here; they all belong to the family under the curse. It is a principle in divine things that you never understand the moral character of a thing unless you know its source. God would have us investigate the origin of things: He is showing in chapter 10 the origin of all the different nations that came into connection with His people.

Earthly power is first found with the family under the curse; it begins with Nimrod; it is always the case that things develop more quickly on the evil side than on the good. Nimrod was a mighty rebel — his name means 'Rebel' — and his character before God was that of a hunter. Jehovah took account of his character; it was exactly the opposite to a shepherd. A hunter gratifies himself at the expense of his victim, but a shepherd expends himself for the good of the subjects of his care. God's ideal of a king is a shepherd. David was taken from the sheep-fold; that was the place where he learnt to be a king. Moses, too, was a shepherd, and he became a king in Jeshurun. The Lord loves a shepherd: a shepherd gathers, protects, and feeds his flock — the opposite of a hunter. Nimrod was a rebel towards God and a hunter towards men; all that

will come to a head in the last great Gentile power. We see the beginning here; it is the character in which earthly imperial power appears on the scene in Scripture. Corruption and violence are the two principles in Babylon and Nineveh. Babylon is marked by corruption and Nineveh by violence. There is vain glory that corrupts in Babylon; it was the scene of man's glory — the most corrupting influence you could think of: and Assyria was the violent enemy of God's people. These things are deeply interesting and important: great principles are set before us in a few simple words; Scripture can say so much in a word or two; these words contain the moral history of the world and of man's actings.

Assyria was always antagonistic to God's people, and always will be until God says, "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands", Isaiah 19: 25. God will take up Assyria and make him a vessel of blessing. Both Egypt and Assyria descended from Ham, but even the cursed family comes into blessing through Christ: it is a great triumph of grace. When Assyria and Egypt are blessed it will be in connection with God taking up His inheritance in Israel.

In verse 21 we get the contrast in Shem, "And to Shem — to him also were sons born; he is the father of all the sons of Eber". It is striking that Eber should be singled out; Eber means 'passage': it suggests the pilgrim race, a people passing through. In Ham's race we see a people building cities and founding empires; we see rebellion towards God and violence towards man. But the pilgrim race are not building cities, they are passing through. All saints are called to be 'sons of Eber'. We might read chapter 10 and think it a dry list of names! But there is the whole moral history of the world there; in Nimrod the character and glory of man's world, and in the sons of Eber the fruit of divine grace in a pilgrim race who are passing through. It is a fine thing to be a son of Eber! It is much better than being a Nimrod, a man who would like to have all the glory of the world at his feet; and who would exercise the violence of a hunter to get it. All this will be headed up in the great Nimrod of the last days, the great rebellious head of imperial Gentile power, who will be marked by rebellion God-ward, and by violence man-ward. But we find 'the sons of Eber' right on to the end in the Revelation; a people passing through, who are not earth-dwellers. In Genesis 11 there are earth-dwellers who find a plain and settle there; but the sons of Eber do not want to build a Babel. It should be a question with every one of us, whether our affections are connected with the Babel world, or with a tent and altar? The people of God always were a pilgrim people, and always will be: they never settle down here from Abraham's day right on until now.

We have the Shepherd-king in Micah 5; it is worth looking at. We get the introduction of the Shepherd-king, and the destiny of Nimrod. The mighty Shepherd comes in; "Out of thee shall he come forth unto me who is to be Ruler in Israel". Then in verse 4, "He shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of Jehovah, in the majesty of the name of Jehovah his God". The shepherd character and the majesty of the name of Jehovah his God go together! How wonderful! Then in verse 5, "And this man shall be Peace"; the verse goes on about the Assyrian; and then verse 6, "They shall waste the land of Asshur with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof; and he shall deliver us from the Assyrian". This speaks of the complete overthrow of Nimrod, the shutting out in judgment of the hunter-king: he has to go out, and the Man with the David character — Christ — has to come in.

Chapter 11 gives the sad history of the building of Babel; I think it comes in as a climax of evil. And there is a suggestion in this whole history of the way in which failure works, and what it develops into; for the history of failure is much the same in all ages; it always works along the same lines in principle. Noah began well; he claimed the earth for God and put it on the ground of the burnt offering; but before long, instead of holding the earth for God, he held it for self-gratification, and in result he exposed himself to dishonour. It is just like the church's failure: instead of keeping in the pilgrim place and holding things for God, she began to use things here for self-gratification. The Nazarite spirit went out of the church, and that exposed the testimony to dishonour and reproach. Giving up the Nazarite spirit opens the door for every kind of failure to come in.

Ham represents people who are in the place of divine light without being rightly affected by it; his skin had been darkened by the sun. If people are not transformed by divine light they are darkened by it. "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness". If people have divine light and are not transformed by it, they can take pleasure in seeing the failure of the people of God: that was Ham's state. We ought to beware of the Ham spirit: it comes from giving up the Nazarite spirit: "All seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ". If we use things here for self-gratification, the next step downward is to find pleasure in noting the failure of the people of God.

Then Ham is the father of Canaan, which means 'Trader'. Men darkened in the light use Christianity for their own ends and advantage; they make a trade of it. Christendom is full of Hams and Canaans; those who take pleasure in seeing the failure of the people of God, and who make a trade of Christianity. If we get on the line of planting a vineyard, we do not know how it may end;

it becomes an opportunity for self-gratification. Then if a Christian fails, worldly people put their heads together and take pleasure in seeing it; that is the spirit of the flesh, and it comes under the curse: in the end such people only use Christianity for their own advantage.

It is defiling to be occupied with evil; if we have to take it up even in the way of its necessary judgment, we have to wash our flesh in water, and be unclean until the evening. If a brother has sinned, and I have to take it up, I have to wash my flesh in water. There is a certain gratification for the flesh in dwelling on evil; it is the Ham spirit: we ought to get a moral lesson out of these things; they are very solemn. These things may be viewed in connection with chapter 11; they seem to show the way things work until in the end people turn their backs on everything that is of God.

In the beginning of chapter 11 we read, "The whole earth had one language ... and it came to pass as they journeyed from the east". The east is where the sun rises; it represents what God is going to bring in at the dayspring, when the Sun of righteousness arises. These people turned their backs on that; it is a figure of what has happened in Christendom; and it results in the building of Babel. It is a striking fact in the history of the world that the stream of human progress and civilisation flows from east to west. Each of the four great empires moved west-wards; and now people go to America, and when there go to the western States. The tide of human life goes that way: it is suggestive of the fact that man always pursues what is going down. But the people of God turn to the east, to what is rising: Israel pitched after the brazen serpent "toward the sun-rising". The Sun of righteousness is about to arise with healing in His wings, and the sons of Eber — the pilgrim race — look towards the east; they love His appearing. All that is of God is below the horizon now, but it is coming up when the sun rises. Those who go west will only see the sun set; they are following the light of this world; and it is going to sink out of sight forever. But the Christian has his eye on the sun-rising, on all that is coming in resplendent with glory and divine beauty.

We read in verse 2, "They found a plain in the land of Shinar, and dwelt there". I think we see at Pentecost the church on holy ground; but she was on the mount. It is blessed to see saints on holy ground, but sad to see people turn their backs to the sun-rising, and come down to the level of the plain to be earth-dwellers. When they get there they say, Now we must make bricks, and build ourselves a city and a tower, and make ourselves a name. That is the way Babylon began to be built in Christendom. The sun-rising was behind people's backs — the coming of Christ forgotten — and the professors of Christianity became earth-dwellers. Babylon is not built of stone or rock; there

is not a bit of Christ in it; it is all brick — the product of man's handiwork. The builders have rejected the Stone, and take no account of 'living stones', but they are very busy making bricks. Bricks are a kind of imitation of stone made of earthy material, figurative of the natural man being put through a process of formation so that he may become part of a great structure which will secure man a name — that will give renown to man. Thank God, His building is going on too, but we are surrounded by Babylon, a structure which is the result of man's brick making; it is earthy material, shaped and hardened to serve the purpose of stone; but no amount of shaping will ever make the natural man suitable for God's building. The natural man may be shaped to make him suitable for Babel, but there is nothing there for God: there is no divine material in her. I trust we can see how necessary it is for us to keep clear of Babel. God's building is composed of living stones, morally kindred with Christ, who is the Rock. But Babel is a great religious structure without a single bit of Christ in it. We ought to consider the beginning of it, and all its characteristics; we should weigh every detail; God has looked at it and marked it for judgment: He has written confusion on it.

When Israel failed and God gave the government to the Gentiles, He tried Babylon once more. He gave absolute imperial power to Nebuchadnezzar, but it resulted in Nebuchadnezzar taking all the praise and glory to himself, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?" The result of God giving the kingdom to Nebuchadnezzar was that he took all the glory to himself. That is man in his best estate, the head of gold. In the Revelation we see Babylon in its worst and most corrupt form, glorified by the light of Christianity, and it is said, "How much has she glorified *herself*". She uses the light of Christianity for her own glory. It is like Belshazzar using the gold and silver vessels in his idolatrous feast. Man takes the highest and holiest things and makes them contributory to his own glory. How simple minded infidels must be, to talk of Scripture not being inspired! The history of Babylon alone, as presented in Scripture, is sufficient to prove divine inspiration. Who but God could have given us such a history of the world of man's glory, from its conception in Genesis 11 right through 4000 years to its final and permanent overthrow in Revelation 18? God means it should be a fallen system with each one of His own now.

The inspiration of Genesis has been much questioned, yet no book has greater evidence of the divine Hand. The things which people think are only details are pregnant with moral instruction. Doubts and difficulties are sown in the minds of the young at school, but much that infidels say is simply ignorance. Indeed, there is no ignorance so profound as that of the modern intelligent

world when it assumes to judge Scripture, for it leaves God out, and there is utter blindness to everything that is morally important. Nothing has a place in Scripture that is not for moral instruction.

“Lest we be scattered”. We see here the first development of the principle of confederacy. Man realises his weakness as a unit, but instead of looking to God he looks to find strength in combination with his fellow men. It will all head up in the great confederacy of the last days.

Babel would have been a wonderful place if God had allowed the plan to succeed; the thought of a city and a name was a great ideal; they meant to secure a centre which would be a glory and a name for themselves. That ideal will come as nearly as possible to fruition in a coming day, but it will never be suffered to become what man desires. God will stain the pride of all human glory. If all men had kept together in one mind, with one object in view, and if God had not taken means to weaken man, there is no telling what he might have achieved. God says, “Now will they be hindered in nothing that they meditate doing”, therefore He weakened men by confounding their language. It is what God has done all through the history of the world: the great combinations of men have always been weakened by their language being confounded in a moral sense:

they have failed to understand one another. So man has never realised the coveted objects of his ambition; all great combinations of men from Babel until now have sooner or later been broken up by people speaking different languages morally.

The Babel of the last days is the corrupter of Christianity; what a terrible power Babylon would have been in modern times if God had not allowed it to be weakened by dissension and the rising up of sects. But God allowed the Greek schism, and afterwards the countless sects of Protestantism, to spring up and weaken things. We see at the present moment that in spite of the League of Nations hardly two nations agree about anything. It is the way God takes providentially to weaken the great confederacies of men; they would be overwhelming if He did not weaken them by confounding their language; that is, they do not agree among themselves, so that unity is broken up. God is always working providentially to hinder man from achieving the glory which his heart and mind are set on, and this is largely brought about by internal dissensions. Everything in man’s world will result in exactly the opposite to what it was intended to bring about; that is, in the ultimate working out of things. So what was intended to have been a masterpiece of organization and centralisation simply becomes Babel — confusion. It may seem that the will

and power of a Nimrod may set up something like order there, but it remains Babel, and will to the end.

I think the ideal man proposed at Babel will come as near to fruition as possible in a coming day, but it will not really come to pass because of the elements of dissension. We read in Revelation 17 that the ten kings hate the woman and eat her flesh and burn her with fire. God allows these dissensions so as to weaken man's power. There is no need to be unduly alarmed by great combinations of men; I believe that, especially while the assembly is here, God will hold them in check. There may be persecution; I daresay there will be; but God will weaken the combinations of men by internal dissension. And this will turn out to the advantage and protection of the true 'sons of Eber'.

God not only breaks up man's unity, but He has introduced a wondrous unity of His own into this world. It has often been pointed out how Pentecost reverses Babel. God in grace speaks to every man in his own language that all may come into divine unity in the Spirit. What a contrast there is to Babel at the beginning of the Acts — a people who understand each other perfectly. "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common". That was God's answer to Babel. It was so wonderful that people were afraid to join them. It was a unity with a wall of fire round about it.

We find, too, from Joshua 24: 2, that another element came in at the time of Babel which had not been known before; that is, idolatry. I think idolatry is an essential feature of Babylon. If man seeks his own glory he opens the door for Satan to put himself in God's place. How terrible that man should reverence and look up to that which is really Satanic. That is the character of the world, man assuming imperial power — really usurping what belongs to Christ — and idolatry. Such being the case, the blessing and testimony of God are found with a called-out people. The assembly is a called-out company. In the next chapter Abram comes before us as called out by Jehovah.

GENESIS 12

Genesis 12

Abram is the typical son of Eber; the call of God made him a stranger and sojourner on earth. He did not attempt to build a city, but he waited for one. "He waited for the city which has foundations, of which God is the artificer and constructor", Hebrews 11: 10. He had in view a city which would be filled with the glory of God, a perfect and divine contrast to Babel. It is very blessed to see the character in which God appeared to him: Stephen tells us it was "the God of glory". It was that which threw the Babel world into the shade for Abram, and broke the chain of idolatry. There is no man in whom we ought to be more interested than in Abram, because he is our father, "the father of all them that believe".

The God of glory appeared to him when he was in Mesopotamia, and said, "Go out of thy land, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, to the land that I will show thee". The call of God is a wonderful thing. A mighty and powerful voice from the unseen world reaches the heart, and it awakes to the consciousness that it has to do with God, who is securing its attention, and calling it from earth apart to have to do with a world where divine glory dwells. It is evident that such a call demands movement. Souls often receive the forgiveness of sins and stop in Mesopotamia; they do not answer to the divine call. Indeed, in Abram's case he did not at once answer to the call; it would appear that it was his father who made the first move. Abram did not move, though the God of glory had appeared, and had spoken, to him; it was Terah who moved, and took Abram with him.

God sometimes uses providential circumstances to lead us in the right direction, yet they very often become eventually a hindrance. Providential circumstances and natural relationships never carry us into what is heavenly; Terah did not go beyond Haran, and Abram was detained there until he died. He left country and kindred, but he did not leave his father's house until God brought death in. How often has God by some form of discipline to bring death in on the things that detain us, that He may free us to answer His call!

It may be noted that Abram was not called to leave *bad* things. The world was indeed a bad world; it was marked by imperialism in Nimrod — that is, usurpation of what is due to Christ — and by idolatry and the human glory of Babel. But Jehovah did not mention these things; He called Abram to go out from his land, his kindred, and his father's house — things here in their best form — "to the land that I will show thee".

The call of God is to the enjoyment of the proper portion of faith entirely outside seen and natural things. Are we prepared to leave in spirit the sphere of sight, that we may inherit a portion outside the whole system of seen and tangible things that would naturally attract and hold a man? God is calling His saints away from the visible and the material,

that His glory, and His land and city, may be in their view. Dr. Hawker, of Plymouth, was asked if he were going to see the Great Exhibition, and he answered, "I have seen the King in His beauty, and beheld the land that is very far off". All the best that the world could produce was there, but a man who had seen something infinitely more glorious was not attracted by it. "The God of glory" had appeared to Abram; in the New Testament He is spoken of as "the Father of glory". It suggests that He has given being to a whole system, or world, of glory, and in grace He is calling men to see it by faith, and to live in it, though yet unseen.

Stephen began his address in Acts 7 by speaking of the God of glory, and at the end he saw a Man in the glory. He was stoned to death, but Saul came in to continue his testimony, and he began with the light of glory and of Man in the glory. It was a light that surpassed the brightest light in nature; it was "a light above the brightness of the sun". Ecclesiastes exposes the vanity of what is "under the sun", but in Canticles we touch what is spiritually above the sun in One who is "the chiefest among ten thousand" and "altogether lovely".

The land that Jehovah proposed to show Abram was figurative of a heavenly inheritance. And now what is heavenly has come fully into view, for Jesus is glorified in heaven. Stephen saw what has been called "the new metropolis", something far greater than Jerusalem. And Paul saw the heavenly light and heard the heavenly voice that the Son of God might be revealed in him, and that he might preach the Son of God — a risen, ascended, heavenly Man — as glad tidings to the Gentiles. The acceptance, place,

and relationship of the Son of God, as glorified in heaven, are now being announced as glad tidings universally. God's thought for men is nothing less than that they should have heavenly blessing in His Son, and be brought into sonship of a heavenly order. This is the land which He would show us; it is the full height and blessedness of the gospel. The Son of God in heaven is announced to men as glad tidings. It is not only that they may be forgiven and justified through the grace of a Saviour God, but He would bring them into the place and relationship set forth in His Son as the glorified Man in heaven, and send out the Spirit of His Son into their hearts, that there might be the cry of 'Abba Father' in free and glad response to such amazing love.

Faith's portion is in that 'land', and as we live in the blessedness of it we are truly 'great'. The Babel builders said, "Let us make ourselves a name", but Jehovah said to the called-out man, "I will make of thee a great nation, and bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing". God proposes to make us great by bringing us into the greatness and preciousness of Christ. How could there be anything greater than to have the knowledge and possession of the Son of God in heaven, and to know that His place and relationship are ours eternally, through the infinite grace and love of the blessed God? Mary was conscious of divine greatness conferred upon her when she said, "From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed". Her greatness lay in the fact that God had chosen her to be the favoured vessel for the bringing in of Christ. God makes us great by bringing in Christ, and giving Him a place in our hearts, and giving us to know how we are blessed in Him. Every one of the spiritual seed of Abraham can truly say; "Thy condescending gentleness hath made me great", Psalm 18: 35.

A principle on which all men can be blessed was found in Abram. "The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations on the principle of faith, announced beforehand the glad tidings to Abraham: In thee all the nations shall be blessed", Galatians 3: 8. Faith as a distinct principle of blessing was introduced in Abram, and it is a principle that holds good for every one, for all nations. Faith is the light of God and of unseen things brought through divine grace into the soul of man. In chapter 22: 18 blessing is in Abraham's seed; that is, in Christ; but in chapter 12: 2, 3 the blessing is in Abram; that is, it is looked at as brought in on the principle of faith. At Babel the nations were scattered in judgment, but faith is a principle on which all nations can be gathered for blessing. "So that they who are on the principle of faith are blessed with believing Abraham", Galatians 3: 9.

Then the beginning of verse 3 is important. "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee". Men are tested by their attitude to that which is of God. We can see that perfectly in relation to the Lord Himself; He was the great test, and those who blessed Him were blessed. In principle it applies to the saints also, for if they are blessed of God in having faith they become a test to others. We see this in Matthew 25, "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it to me". The righteous had blessed His brethren and therefore they got blessing. Indeed, everything that is of God becomes a test to all who come in contact with it. It is important to take note of this. If God brings what is of Himself near to men, in principle they either bless or curse it. If God brings in light as to the truth it tests in the same way; it becomes a test of condition of soul. If God brings in a ministry that is of Himself, those who speak well of it, who bless it, get the

blessing of it; but those who speak evil of it disclose their state in so doing, and under God's holy government they may even lose what they have previously had. We can see this plainly in those who have refused and spoken evil of light which has been given in these last days for the church. The same principle applies to the gospel. A wonderful message comes, and people either bless or curse. One person says, It is just what my poor soul needs, and another refuses or despises it.

When Abram came into the land and reached Shechem, Jehovah appeared to him. He got what we might speak of in New Testament language as a manifestation. The Lord said, "He that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me; but he that loves me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him", John 14: 21. There should be more exercise and desire amongst saints in regard to manifestations; one cannot but feel that they are not enjoyed, or perhaps even looked for, by many. I think that every manifestation would give the soul some apprehension of the Lord it had not had before, and I do not suppose that anything could give the same kind of personal knowledge of Christ as a manifestation of Himself. It is probably one of the greatest causes of spiritual weakness in the present day that there is so little personal knowledge of Christ amongst those who have believed on Him.

It is a great encouragement to see that the effect of Jehovah's first appearing to Abram was that, though delayed by natural influences for a time, he answered to the divine call, and really left country, kindred, and father's house, and entered into the land of Canaan. That is, he entered into the character of blessing which God proposed to bestow upon him. The first appearing left such an impression on him that it finally overcame all the influences of Mesopotamia.

Then, when he entered and passed through the land, he found "the Canaanite was then in the land". There was a hostile people occupying the territory of promise, figurative of those influences of evil (which really emanate from spiritual powers of wickedness in the heavenlies, Ephesians 6: 12) by which Satan would seek to hinder God's called ones from coming into spiritual possession of that which is in His purpose of love for them. In presence of this new difficulty he got another manifestation. "Jehovah appeared to Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land". He had moved in response to the first manifestation, and therefore he got another to encourage him in the face of another form of the enemy's power.

In this connection we may remark that it is of the deepest interest to consider the seven instances in which Paul got manifestations of a peculiar and blessed

character (Acts 9: 3; chapter 18: 9; chapter 22: 18; chapter 23: 11; 1 Corinthians 11: 23, 2 Corinthians 12: 9; 2 Timothy 4: 17). Each one of those manifestations had its own distinctiveness, and left its own peculiar impression on the beloved and honoured servant. And each (with the unique exception of 1 Corinthians 11: 23) had its special bearing on the circumstances and exercises in which the apostle was found at the time. In his case the appearances and communications were in relation to his apostolic service. But the Lord says to each one of us, You will be known as a lover by having My commandments and keeping them; and if you love Me you will want Me, and if you want Me I will manifest Myself to you. The Lord does not hide Himself from the heart that loves Him; it would not be like Him to do so.

Abram "built an altar to Jehovah who had appeared to him". His approach and communion took character from the divine favour which he had experienced. Our altar must be according to the measure of our knowledge of God. Now the revelation of God in His Son is complete and immeasurable, but we have to take account of our capacity to appreciate it. No one can approach beyond his measure, but we should learn to think even of our side according to the measure of divine grace; that is, the Spirit given, priesthood, and sonship. So that, according to the truth, our altar is very great, and of a high and holy character.

It is very blessed to build an altar; it suggests taking a priestly place with God, and ministering to His pleasure. It has often been pointed out that all the offerings in Genesis are burnt offerings. Amongst believers, speaking generally, the Levite has been more thought of than the priest. That is, the thought of serving and ministering to man is greater in minds generally than the thought of priestly service Godward. It is said of Aaron, "that he may serve me as priest", Exodus 28: 1, 4. The moment we think of taking a priestly place with God it raises the question of suitability, which is indicated in the priestly garments. Priestly service cannot be taken up without priestly state.

In Abram's case the tent and the altar went together. If I am not a pilgrim outside, I cannot be a priest inside. Every believer is entitled to be a priest as being kindred with Christ; all Aaron's sons had title to the priesthood, but they had to be invested with the priestly garments and to be consecrated before they could exercise priesthood. 1 Peter 1, 1 Peter 2 shows the spiritual elements which are required to constitute a holy priesthood. It is interesting to note that there was a priesthood in Israel before anything official was set up. In Exodus 19: 22, priests are spoken of who were such morally. Aaron had not then been called; there had been no word spoken of the consecration of priests; but we read, "and the priests also, who come near to Jehovah, shall

hallow themselves". That gives us the essential idea of priesthood; it is to draw near to God. Christ suffered for sins "that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3: 18); that is, that He might set us in a priestly place. In building an altar Abraham took up a priestly place with God.

Then we find that Abram "called on the name of Jehovah". This seems to be suggestive of that spirit of dependence in which one is cast upon God for everything, and particularly for all that is connected with His service and testimony. "Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name: they called unto Jehovah, and he answered them", Psalm 99: 6. Prayer is the expression of weakness and dependence on man's side, but also of confidence in God. So that we get here three things which are very characteristic of those identified with God's testimony, and it should be an exercise with us to be preserved in pilgrim, priestly, and prayerful character.

It is striking that immediately after Abram takes a priestly place with God Bethel is mentioned for the first time — the thought of the house of God is introduced. The time had not yet come for the bringing out in detail of what Bethel meant; we see that more in Jacob's history; but it was already the place where faith dwelt and worshipped.

We ought to think more of serving God in a priestly way. We often come together with hardly a further thought than to get comfort, or to be edified or refreshed, but the principal thing is the service of God. In relation to this it is essential to preserve the pilgrim character outside. If we do not walk in the pilgrim character individually there will not be much of a priestly character when we come together. The 'tent' suggests also a household thought. I often think when young Christians are married that it is the pitching of another tent, and one's exercise is that it should be a 'goodly' tent. "How goodly are thy tents, Jacob, and thy tabernacles, Israel!" God connects His testimony very much with households; and it is a poor household where there is not a morning and evening sacrifice. Job took a priestly place on behalf of his household, and put everything on the ground of the burnt offering.

It is a great thing not to leave the neighbourhood of Bethel; Abram's history warns us of the danger of leaving it. "Abram moved onward, going on still toward the south". Satan will seek to hinder any movement at all as long as he can, but when he can no longer do that he seeks to allure the saint to go too far. Souls sometimes begin with earnest desire after spiritual good, but not learning to judge themselves, they go beyond what is spiritual and get occupied with themselves and not with Christ. This is the way to get into famine, and eventually to Egypt!

Satan first tried to detain Abram from entering the land, and then when he was there he moved him to go on further to the south, and then to Egypt. But in leaving Bethel Abram departed from the place of blessing, and it is at that point the thought of famine is introduced. There could be no famine in the house of God; there is always bread there; the prodigal knew that even the hired servants in that house had "bread enough and to spare". God said in another day that if His people had hearkened to Him and walked in His ways He would have fed them with the finest of the wheat, and satisfied them with honey out of the rock; Psalm 81. If you find a shortage of spiritual food you may be sure that you have been moving in the wrong direction. There is hardly any better test of where you are than the food test.

The shortage of food is a very serious matter, because it leads to souls going down to Egypt; it is hungry people who go there. If you are nourished by spiritual food you do not want the world's food, but if you do not get the former you will soon crave the latter. If you are conscious of a shortage let it wake you up as to where you are moving, and get back to the neighbourhood of Bethel. Every step in the wrong direction is not only lost time, but it leads to all true testimony being given up.

I think the Lord has been using the circumstances and difficulties of the last few years to get His saints more into the pilgrim and priestly spirit. Many trying exercises have had to be faced and accepted, and the divine intent in these things has been the formation and strengthening of that three-fold cord of which we have spoken — the pilgrim, priestly, and prayerful spirit. Probably things will not get better, but rather worse, and the Lord will continue to use them in this way. This spirit will either be developed or there will be a going down to Egypt.

The effect of going in that direction is that we become afraid to be true to our spiritual relationships. As soon as Abram got near Egypt he began to be afraid; the very shadow of Egypt before he got there made him afraid to be true to the relationship in which he and Sarai stood. He thought only of himself; it is like "all seek their own things". His proper place surely was to protect Sarai, but he was prepared to sacrifice Sarai to protect himself! Abram represents the responsible side, and in Sarai we see a type of the relationship in which the church stands to Christ. Abram ought to have had the most jealous care that she should remain true to her relationship and the confession of it. But instead of that he was full of himself — "They will slay *me*, and save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister, that it may be well with *me* on thy account, and *my* soul may live because of thee". Here is a man seeking his own things; that is the effect of the shadow of Egypt. You will find that if you

come down to the level of the world — if you get on to terms with the men of the world — you become very shy of confessing your true relationship to Christ. The result of this denial of relationship was that Sarai got into Pharaoh's house. What a contrast to God's house! "The princes of Pharaoh saw her and praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house". The way to get admiration from the world is to deny your relationship to Christ; they will praise you if you are untrue to Christ. Paul was jealous over the Corinthians with godly jealousy, and said, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ". That is the spirit Abram should have been in — longing that Sarai should in no way compromise her true relationship. "He treated Abram well". This is just what happened to the church publicly and historically when she was unfaithful to Christ. People say, You must mix with the world, and then you will do them good. No, you do no good, you bring plagues on them! "Jehovah plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues". I believe that many troubles come upon the world through the unfaithfulness of God's people. When Christians are unfaithful God has to plague the world to get His people out of it, to free them from their link with it. Unfaithfulness can never be a blessing to anybody, and we do not really get esteem from the world by going down to it. It ended in Abram and Sarai being, as it were, thrust out of Egypt. It often happens when God's people get into the world, that something comes in to drive them out.

GENESIS 13

Genesis 13

In the beginning of this chapter we see Abram fully recovered. He returned to the point of departure, "the place where his tent had been at the beginning", and "to the place of the altar that he had made there at the first", and then "Abram called on the name of Jehovah". He came back, in figure, to full privilege and blessing. God is the God of recovery; He never gives up His thought for us; and we need to have hearts established with grace. When believers get away from the path and joy of faith, they are often tempted to give up all as hopeless, but through the infinite and altogether unmerited favour of God there is a way back, through self-judgment, to all that has been enjoyed before. Even where there is no outward departure the heart often gets away from the true enjoyment of spiritual blessings. But this need not continue.

The Lord said to Peter, "I have prayed for thee". When we are right He intercedes for us that we may have all needed grace and support in the path of God's will. But if we get into a wrong place or condition His intercession may be answered by the discipline of God. We may come under dealings which are humbling to us, and which perhaps involve suffering for others, like Jehovah's dealings with Pharaoh and his house. God is saying by it, I must have you back to your tent and altar, and to the spirit of dependence. Full restoration is always God's thought. However far a saint may have wandered, God never departs from His thought; and He is always working to bring the saint back to it. Sometimes there is a little reviving without restoration to the point departed from, but we should be exercised to come back to the full height of our calling and privilege.

Lot was the companion of the man of faith, but he does not seem to have had any personal energy of faith for himself. He went with Abram from Mesopotamia to Canaan, and from Canaan to Egypt, and then back to Canaan. There are a good many Lots who hang upon others, but this is not enough, for some day a test will come. When Lot was tested he was found to be a man of sight; he was converted, but he was not a man of faith. And having been in Egypt had a serious effect upon him, for when he saw the plain of the Jordan, where Sodom was, it appealed to him as being "like the land of Egypt"!

It is much easier to lead people down to Egypt than to take the love of it out of their hearts when it has once come there. This was a solemn thing in Abram's history. Many a believer who has gone down to Egypt, and got recovered afterwards himself, has been the means of leading another there

who never got recovered. Lot never got true spiritual recovery; he never really had the pilgrim spirit or the priestly character, though God's mercy cared for him. If it had not been for the New Testament we should not have known that he was a converted man. It is sad to get the influence of Egypt into the heart. The children of the saints, brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, have the great privilege of never having the taste for Egyptian things developed; and then they have never to suffer from reminiscences of Egypt. The Israelites, having been in Egypt, could remember what they had there; they said, "We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt for nothing; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic", Numbers 11: 5. If you have once tasted the things of Egypt you never forget, and when your soul declines spiritually there is ever the tendency to turn back to them. Another side to Abram's act was that he got Hagar from Egypt, and she became a cause of difficulty later on. You never know what will be the fruit of any step of departure: you may have to reap the fruit all your life; and what is, in one sense, sadder still, others may have to reap the fruit also.

Then we find the difficulty about the flocks and herds, and strife between the herdsmen. The abundance of possessions only became a source of trouble, and strife came in. It is mentioned that "the Canaanite and the Perizzite were dwelling then in the land", as though to mark the seriousness of strife in the presence of such lookers-on. There are enemies looking on, and ready to note what happens among the people of God; it is a poor testimony if there is seen to be strife between the servants. "A bondman of the Lord ought not to contend, but be gentle towards all; apt to teach; forbearing; in meekness setting right those who oppose", 2 Timothy 2: 24. Contention is generally connected with something that pertains to us, or that we think pertains to us, in this world. If I want a place for myself it is very likely to lead to strife. But Abram was entirely apart from the spirit of strife. "Let there be no contention ... for we are brethren". He met the spirit of strife by the spirit of surrender; there was no insistence on any rights for himself; if Lot would go to the left he would take the right, or if Lot preferred the right he would take the left. He did not grasp at anything here; he would leave all with God; a beautiful example. It was said even of Christ, "He shall not strive or cry out, nor shall any one hear his voice in the streets". He was the chosen Servant, the beloved One of God, in whom His soul found its delight. He would leave everything in the hands of God, and not strive for any place, but go on with His service. I think we can see something of the Spirit of Christ in Abram.

All this became a test to Lot; he "lifted up his eyes and beheld all the plain of Jordan that it was thoroughly watered ... as the garden of Jehovah, like the land of Egypt". It was all naturally beautiful and very attractive. The "garden of

Jehovah" suggests to me that there was everything desirable providentially: he could not wish for a better place. There are times when Satan puts before us something like that to get us out of the path of faith, and people think it is divinely ordered, and such a providence. They say, I was exercised and this opened up; it is just what I wanted! The question is, Did we look at it with Lot's eyes or with Abram's? There was everything in the plain of the Jordan attractive for a man with cattle. We may be tested by circumstances that look like the perfection of God's ordering, yet it may be just our own choice. There is nothing more deadly than the choice of the creature; Lot chose for himself. It is a contrast to what the Psalmist says, "He hath chosen our inheritance for us". Let things be God's choice! We need faith for that. If I look at things with the eye of sight I look at them as they appear to me, but faith looks at things as they are under the eye of God. When a thing looks as if providentially ordered, be careful about it! There never was a more remarkable providence than that which put Moses in Pharaoh's palace; and yet when he came to faith's maturity, he turned his back on the providence of God which put him there, and cast in his lot with the people of God.

We find Lot's estimate rather mixed between the garden of the Lord and Egypt: he seemed to class both together; and he entirely failed to take account of moral conditions; so the Spirit of God adds, "And the people of Sodom were wicked, and great sinners before Jehovah", verse 13. That is what the place was under God's eye. It looked as though nothing could be better ordered for Lot and his cattle, but the moral conditions were very serious before God. If Lot had considered that, he would not have chosen such a place: there was no calling on the Name of the Lord there. The moral state of the place ought to have been a sufficient warning from God to prevent Lot from moving in that direction. I do not believe that the Lord suffers His people to enter on a disastrous course without warning; there is always a danger signal, but it may be disregarded with ruinous consequences.

Lot had no brethren in Sodom, a marked contrast to Abram, who dwelt in Hebron. Hebron means 'company'; it is a fine place. You do not get the company of the saints in Sodom. Are you seeking company? An honoured servant of the Lord used to tell us that company was better than property. Lot was on the line of property, but it is better to dwell in Hebron and have company; there is no company like that of the saints. Lot was unhappy, and vexed his righteous soul every day. How many of the people of God are in circumstances where they are vexed every day!

Then "Jehovah said to Abram ... 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 will I give to thee, and to thy seed for ever". Abram had something to look at as well as Lot, but it was a different kind of vision! He got a wonderful enlargement;

God told him to look northward, southward, eastward, westward. It is like Ephesians 3: 18. The man who surrendered here got in figure a heavenly portion. I have no doubt we should have a clearer vision of the heavenly inheritance if we were more marked by surrender here. In the last century those who came out for the Lord were men who had made surrender; they were men of position and parts who could have made their mark in the world; but in proportion as they surrendered they got great spiritual expansion. It is a great thing to surrender: there is something you might have in this world, and you give it up because it is not on the line of the Spirit. Then you see all God's purpose in Christ. What an expansion! "The breadth and length and depth and height".

The names of these places at the end of the chapter are full of suggestion. Mamre means 'vigour' and Hebron means 'company'. They suggest spiritual vigour, and a circle where fellowship can be enjoyed. We ought to see to it that we are found spiritually in what answers to this.

GENESIS 14

Genesis 14

This chapter shows the man of faith as the one who can overcome the world. That is one feature in which Abram is a marked contrast to Lot. I am not aware that there is a single instance in the history of Lot where he appears in the character of an overcomer. He was a true saint, and the Spirit of God has spoken of him in the New Testament as 'just Lot', but he never overcame; he was always being overcome by one influence after another. Egypt got a place in his heart, and then "the well-watered plain" because it was like Egypt, and then Sodom, and then Zoar. He always had some influence in his heart which was not of God. He never showed his true colours as a saint; his name means 'concealed' or 'dark-coloured'. If you do not show your colours you are sure to drift into association with the world, and when you do that you lose your happiness and all power to be an overcomer. It is very solemn to be a Lot. There are many concealed saints who do not come out in their true colours. A man like Lot becomes a source of weakness and trouble. Moab and Ammon were children of Lot: he became the unconscious parent of two nations, who, though kindred with the people of God, were always hostile to them. That is the kind of fruit a man like Lot produces.

In view of overcoming much depends on where we live. We have already seen where Abram dwelt; here the Spirit tells us where Lot dwelt. He adds this striking comment on the circumstances which He had recorded (verse 12), "For he dwelt in Sodom"; and in the next verse He tells us again where Abram dwelt, as if to mark the contrast. If people dwell in Sodom they get involved in Sodom's troubles. Sodom was a lawless place; it says in verse 4, 'they rebelled'. There is always the element of lawlessness in the world, and in the government of God it always leads to trouble. Lot was powerless, and fell into complete captivity. He had no personal power, and he had no allies or confederates; he was simply carried off. The features we have seen to characterise Abram enable a saint to overcome. But if we are not habitually going on with them, when a crisis comes we are not equal to it. We might wish to make a stand sometimes,

but if we have not been walking in the divine path we have no divine power. Abram was an overcomer: he overcame the world in its hostile form and in its patronising form. But there was a brother who by reason of his associations was helpless in the presence of the world; he could not stand. If we are not going on as pilgrims and priests we are helpless in a crisis. No doubt Lot would have liked to have made a stand when the crisis came, but it was too late: he

had not been following the pilgrim and priestly path, so was not fit for the militant path. If not a pilgrim and priest you cannot be a soldier.

There was nothing in his house that he could bring out to meet the difficulty. But Abram had a good army — trained, too — all able men for conflict. It is very instructive to see this moral result of dwelling in the right place. Hebron means 'company', and is suggestive of fellowship; Mamre is 'firmness' or 'vigour'; Eshcol is 'cluster of grapes'; and Aner means 'waterfall'. These names seem to speak of spiritual vigour, and the joy and freshness resulting from being in the good of the presence of the Spirit and of the fellowship. The result is strength for conflict, for the saint has to be both a son of peace and a man of war. All these things become strengthening 'allies'; Lot in Sodom had no allies, but with such confederates there is no lack of military power to overcome.

Abram had no sympathy with the king of Sodom; it was not a question of taking sides, but of rescuing a brother who had fallen under the power of the world: it is a great thing to have power to do this. There is such a thing as delivering one's brother: Abram did not fight to preserve his own liberty, but to rescue Lot. It is good to have power to rescue a brother who falls into captivity to the world. This power will only be found with those who are on the line of Abram, not with those who dwell in Sodom. The Abram of the New Testament is the apostle Paul: he speaks to the Colossians of the great conflict he had for them. He saw them in danger of falling under the power of the rudiments of the world, and he brings all his forces to deliver them: he does this at Colosse and in Galatia; he had great conflict to deliver the saints from the world; for he saw the saints being drawn into bondage, and he came in for their deliverance. Many a saint has been delivered from elements of the world, which had overcome him, by the spiritual energy of another. We might covet to be thus deliverers of our brethren.

After the victory Abram was tested by the world in another way. He first got the victory over it in its hostile character, and then over it as tempting with honour and gifts. The offers of the king of Sodom are perhaps frequently more deadly than open hostility. We all have to fear the seductive proposals of the world, and the moment of victory is a moment of peculiar danger. When a spiritual victory has been gained the enemy often comes in with something seductive, some honour, some gift. We need to stay in "the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's valley". In the king's valley the King of Salem always meets you before the king of Sodom, and what you get from Him fortifies you to meet the king of Sodom. The king's valley is the low place, for the king of

Sodom comes out to make something of us, and to confer favours, and it is good when he finds us in that valley. It is there where we get priestly support.

There is One who calls us to Himself in the king's valley, and says, "I am meek and lowly in heart". The end of Matthew 11 is the king's valley, and those who are there are safe from the king of Sodom. "My heart is not haughty nor my eyes lofty" (Psalm 131); that is the king's valley, the spirit of lowliness, and the consciousness that all has been done by divine support. "Not unto us but unto thy name give glory"; that is the spirit of the king's valley, and there the King of Salem always meets us before the king of Sodom, and His refreshment and blessing make us superior to all that the king of Sodom has to offer.

Melchisedec bringing forth the bread and wine is very suggestive. It is a most remarkable Scripture: it is the first presentation to us of the royalty and priesthood of Christ, and therefore is of the deepest interest. Melchisedec is one of the most remarkable persons in the Old Testament: we see in him a new character of royalty. We have had Nimrod, the rebel king, and we read in this chapter of nine kings; but not one of them was a king of righteousness or a king of peace: this introduces a new character of royalty which the world had never seen before, and which will predominate in the world by-and-by. God means to have the world dominated by a king of this character.

The bread and wine suggest to me what we sing sometimes

"Thou dost make us taste the blessing,
Soon to fill a world of bliss". (394:5)

It is the divine refreshment of the blessing that is going to fill the universe. The blessing that will fill the world of bliss is that the will of God is fully established by the One who said, "Lo, I come to do thy will"; so that the love of God can be displayed and enjoyed. The loaf in the Lord's Supper speaks of the will of God established, and the cup speaks of the love of God made known and enjoyed: we have got it in the king's valley now. Christ brings in the will of God and the love of God; He *will* bring both in publicly, but saints have the refreshment of both privately in the king's valley — a low place in this world, but where Melchisedec is known, and the blessing that is to fill a world of bliss is tasted. If you get a taste of that, the king of Sodom has not much to attract you; you do not want even a shoe latchet from him.

There is nothing more wonderful than the Lord's Supper, and nothing the devil has more deadly hostility to: he has made it sacramental to many, and just remembrance of what Christ has done to others; he has sought to cloud all the depths and sweetness and beauty of it, as that by which the Lord rallies

His own and brings Himself and His love and the love of God livingly before their affections. If our eyes were opened to see what the Supper is in the thought of the Lord it would bring us all together.

It was not only that Abram was blessed, but blessing went up to God; it came down from God and rose again to its source. The king of righteousness and peace brought forth bread and wine; but he was also priest, and as such he blessed Abram, and blessed the most high God. Most High God is a millennial title; all that is connected with it will be publicly known under new covenant conditions in the world to come. If you get the blessing of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth, you are set up in independence of the king of Sodom. And then God is blessed as the One who has given victory. Blessing comes down upon man, and goes up to God.

The king's valley is only mentioned twice in Scripture; here, and in connection with Absalom; Absalom set up a pillar there; that is very striking (2 Samuel 18: 18). Absalom was a rebel, and he set up in this very place a monument to himself. It shows that the devil would seek to displace all that properly belongs to the king's valley — all the moral beauty and perfection of Christ — by man's beauty. Absalom was a beautiful man, but his beauty was used to steal away hearts from the true king.

Scripture makes us feel that we have to do with God in it, for these things could not have been put together except by the Spirit of God. The meaning of every name is pregnant with divine instruction, and the Spirit of God reasons on it, and tells us that Melchisedec means King of righteousness, and that King of Salem means King of peace (Hebrews 7: 2). Melchisedec as a type brings out the peculiar and unique greatness of Christ; He is priest in His own title as Son of God. In the Aaronic priesthood, every link in the chain depended on the one who went before; but here was one who stood alone in personal dignity in his own title. The Aaronic priesthood was instituted long after. But in connection with Aaron there is a thought which is not seen in connection with Melchisedec. Aaron had sons, Melchisedec was alone; he was a type of a unique glory of priesthood that belongs to Christ alone; but in Aaron there is added a very precious thought; he has brethren, "For both he that sanctifies and those sanctified are all of one".

It is a blessed thing to have a true sense of the greatness of the Son of God. We overcome the world because we are made independent of it. In John 2 the Lord comes in when everything has failed, and turns the water into wine. He becomes the minister of divine joy to man. He can eclipse the best thing in nature and throw it into the shade by that which He brings in. Melchisedec's bread and wine were far better than anything that Sodom could offer. And at

the end of John 2 we see Him as a priest ministering to God by securing the holiness of His house. "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up". He cleanses the temple; He maintains everything according to the holiness of God. He ministers to man and to God. That Person loves every one of us with a present, personal love, and we are bound up with Him in everlasting ties. He is the Person in whom we are more interested than in anyone else; He is near to us, and if we only keep in the king's valley He will meet us and minister divine refreshment to us.

In Luke He goes up into heaven as a priest blessing His people. Everything is secured in Him for man and for God. Luke is the priestly Gospel: the key to its character hangs at the door, as it does generally in the books of the Bible. The first words are, "There was a certain priest". In Luke the blessing is brought in in priestly grace for man, and in that way everything is secured for God. Luke begins with an empty temple and a dumb priest — a man silent to God, not able to speak His praise; but it ends with a company filled with such praise as makes the courts of the temple ring.

"He gave him the tenth of all". There is in that the recognition of what is due to God in connection with what comes into our hand providentially here.

And there is a spiritual thought in it also, that the victories of faith minister to what is priestly. If we were in the good of what is set before us in these verses the things of Sodom would not appeal to us. Abram declined them all "from a thread even to a sandal-thong". There you see an overcomer of the world: he, as it were, says, You cannot add the smallest thing to my wealth or happiness. He had registered a solemn vow that he would not have anything from the world; and God was delighted to come to him and say, "Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield, thy exceeding great reward". That is to say, I will be your reward; you have refused the world, but you shall have *Me*.

This is a most instructive and exercising chapter as showing what enables us to overcome the world.

GENESIS 15

Genesis 15

We have already seen how the man of faith, whose strength is in prayer, preserves his pilgrim and priestly character in separation from the world, and dwells in Hebron — that is, he gets the support of fellowship — and is victorious over the world, while Lot falls under its power. Then the overcomer gets the blessing of the priest: he meets Melchisedec — a wonderful type of the royalty and priesthood of Christ — and in the good of the blessing “soon to fill a world of bliss” he refuses to take anything from the king of Sodom, “from a thread even to a sandal-thong”. That is the blessed superiority of faith. And if Abram would not have anything from the world he got great compensation, for he got Jehovah as his shield and exceeding great reward.

It was not a question of what God would give him, but of what God Himself would be to him. John 4 comes to one's mind when one thinks of God Himself as the portion of faith. The Lord proposes there that *the giving God* should be known, and when we consider the character of His giving we see that in giving His Son and His Spirit He is really giving Himself. His gifts are not such as can be enjoyed at a distance from the Giver, for it is Himself, as known in the Son and by the Spirit, who becomes the portion and joy of the believer. It is not as if He gave something away from Himself. So that the knowledge of God is the most priceless and blessed gain. Peter tells us that everything is given in the knowledge of God; HE is the great promise of everything; 2 Peter 1.

A shield is a defence against hostile powers, but the reward is what God is Himself to the one who knows Him. We need the shield, we could not enjoy the reward without it in presence of the power of evil. But behind the shield we enjoy God Himself. To know Himself we must know His nature, and His nature is holy love. His attributes all guard His nature, but His nature is Himself. If God's almighty love is near, how can His people lack anything that is good for them?

I think the sense of what God was to him encouraged Abram to take up the exercise as to a true seed, so that the inheritance should not be alienated. “I go childless” is really “I depart childless”. There must be a true seed of faith to inherit the promises. The seed here is not Christ personally as in chapter 22: 17, 18, but a seed innumerable as the stars of heaven — the heavenly seed of faith. So that we see Abram here in his character of ‘great father’, head of the family of faith. Galatians 3 tells us that all who are on the principle of faith are sons of Abram, and here we see his exercises as the ‘great father’. It is very important, because the promises — as to their fruition in power and

blessedness — could not take effect if there were no seed to inherit them. Whatever the promises were, their power and blessing would be alienated if there were not a right seed to inherit them. This gives a peculiar character to the exercises of Abram, and to the events and instruction of this chapter. Later on he becomes Abraham — “father of a multitude” — which suggests the further thought of the wide scope of blessing brought in through faith. But here the thought is of a true seed to inherit. I think we may say that Paul left a true seed in Timothy, a true child in faith, and the line was to continue.

It is stars here, and dust of the earth in chapter 13. In chapter 13 I suppose what is in view is the seed that will inherit on earth in the world to come; but the stars are typical of the heavenly seed. There is to be not only a seed as the dust of the earth, but a heavenly seed innumerable as the stars. There is to be a true seed to inherit the promises; Jehovah pledges Himself that there shall be a seed preserved right through to the inheritance. If God did not do this there would be no security that the line of faith would be preserved. Peter addresses those who had received like precious faith with the apostles, “Through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ”. It is a matter of righteousness with God to preserve that holy seed; He will preserve a seed of faith right through to the inheritance. It is being preserved in the heavenly seed now, but the same principle of faith that brings saints now into heavenly blessing will bring them into earthly blessing in another day. Abram is the ‘great father’ of the earthly seed for earthly blessing, and of the heavenly seed for heavenly blessing.

Then it is most important to see that as soon as the seed of faith comes into view we have the principle clearly set forth on which they have righteousness. They could not come into the divine inheritance except as having righteousness, and we get here the great principle on which it is reckoned to them. “He believed Jehovah; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness”. There is no more important principle in Scripture than that. It may seem a foolish principle to men, but it is God’s principle. Men scoff at the idea of getting righteousness in such a way, but it is nevertheless the way all the seed come into righteousness. A man believes God, and God counts it to him as righteousness. Such a one has taken his right place before God as a guilty sinner, and he has given God His true place as a Justifier. He is really in right relations now with God, but it is not through any works of his own, but by faith. His soul, in all the reality of its condition and need, has come into contact with what God is in the blessedness of perfect grace that justifies the ungodly on the ground of redemption. He has to do with God; he believes God, who delivered Jesus for our offences, and raised Him again for our justification. His faith is reckoned to him as righteousness.

The difficulty with many is that they have never learned their unrighteousness in God's presence, and they are labouring to establish their own righteousness, but this is God's way to bring in righteousness for men. Abram simply had the bare word of God, only five words, "So shall thy seed be". We have much more; God tells us of the wondrous work of the cross, and the wondrous Person who did that work, and how He raised Him from the dead. We might well believe God! The gospel comes to each soul who hears it as a direct word from God. All the seed of faith are justified and have righteousness on this principle, not of works but of faith. The first thing God did to Adam and Eve as fallen sinners was, in figure, to put righteousness on them; He clothed them with skins. A people having the righteousness of faith alone could inherit; we have righteousness in view of having the Spirit. It is very interesting to see that as soon as the seed of faith is spoken of, the principle on which they have righteousness reckoned to them is plainly stated.

Then Abram raises another question, "How shall I know?" It becomes an exercise as to how God will bring all to pass. And God opens up the way in which the inheritance will be brought in and possessed, both as to the ground on which all is accomplished in the death of Christ, and as to the necessary discipline through which the heirs have to pass in order that they may come into conformity with that death.

Verse 12 indicates the deep exercise needed on man's part. Except for the death of Christ I should be shut out from all blessing and be under the wrath of God. This must bring about deep exercise in any soul that takes it in. There is not a saint who has not gone through *some* exercise, and the object of it is to bring us into conformity to the death of Christ, so that we might be morally suited to the inheritance. God will bring us in *mind* into accord with the death of Christ before He has done with us: some may reach it only on their death-bed. God as a smoking furnace and a flame of fire — the covenant-making God — passes through the divided sacrifices, as much as to say, This is My way. Abram says, How? God answers, as it were, This way, through the death of Christ; and all the seed must come into accord with My way. Verses 9 and 10 evidently give what is figurative of the death of Christ. Everything is brought to pass through that death. God will establish His covenant, and fulfil all His promises, and bring in faith's inheritance, through that precious death. It is not through any goodness or works on the part of Abram or the seed, but it is not brought to pass without deep exercise on their part. For it is needful that God should discipline His people and pass them through the furnace to bring them into accord with that which is the foundation of their blessing — the death of Christ. Hebrews 12 is in keeping with this chapter; the last verse of it may be a direct allusion to what we have here; God is spoken of as a

consuming fire. The death of Christ is viewed here typically as the way by which God will make good His covenant and fulfil His promises, and bring the heirs into the inheritance. But if it is through death alone that God can do this, faith has to go through deep exercise so as to realise the necessity for it. So a horror, a great darkness, fell upon Abram, and he was made to realise the deep exercise through which alone the inheritance could be possessed.

The birds of prey coming down would suggest that the devil is always trying to take away the import of the death of Christ; he is always trying to rob us of it in some aspect or other. Faith drives him away; you must not allow your soul to be robbed of the import of the death of Christ. In these days — dreadful days — people may be found in so-called Christian pulpits, instead of pouring contempt on all their pride, as the old hymn says, pouring contempt on the death of Christ by taking away all its true meaning and value. These are birds of prey, and the man of faith must be always alive to this and drive them away.

God tells Abram all that the seed will have to go through. They would have to suffer bondage for 400 years. None of us would know what liberty was if we had not learned what it was to be in bondage. Bondage to sin, the world, and Satan is set forth in the exercises of the people in Egypt, and all the seed have to learn what that means in some way, that they may appreciate and know the value of God's salvation and deliverance. They have also to learn how the world and the flesh are opposed to all that is of God, and what difficulties have to be faced on this line. And there are also the trials and sorrows which belong to a groaning creation. But God uses all this as a refining process for the seed of faith. Scripture contains much reference to the refining process that God puts His people through. He says in Isaiah 48: 10, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction". God is seen here as a smoking furnace — the Refiner of His people — and He refines according to the holiness seen in the death of Christ. What He judged in the cross, He must refine from His people in the crucible, so that nothing may be left that is unsuitable to the inheritance. Hebrews 12 shows the necessity for discipline that the sons may be partakers of God's holiness. If God could only bring the heirs into possession through the death of Christ there must be conformity to that death in the seed. And this is the secret of all God's exercising ways with His people.

Then the "flame of fire" suggests that God guides His people though He tests them. He never fails to guide His people and to direct their way. "To the upright there ariseth light in the darkness". God deals with us as sons, and He lets us know what His object is in His ways with us. We go through them in the light of His known love, and His love's purpose. A man takes pains with his

son because he would like him to be fitted to take up the inheritance which may come to him; he orders all his education with that in view. So God deals with His people in view of the inheritance.

Malachi 3: 3, 4, is very beautiful. "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he will purify the children of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver; and they shall offer unto Jehovah an oblation in righteousness. Then shall the oblation of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto Jehovah, as in the days of old, and as in former years". We see there the proper seed. In Zechariah 13: 9, God says, "I will bring the third part into the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried. They shall call on my name and I will answer them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, Jehovah is my God". The seed has become morally suitable for the inheritance, and it is the result of refining in the furnace.

At the end of the chapter Abram gets great expansion in his view of the inheritance. God had said to him before, "All the land that thou seest will I give to thee, and to thy seed for ever". But Abram had not seen the greatness of it. Here in verse 18 it is the land "from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates". The discipline that brings about suitability to the inheritance secures great expansion in the view of it. I daresay you have known people who have been in the furnace and felt the heat of it, who have been able to say afterwards, I would not have been without it on any account. They have got something out of it that corresponds with the end of this chapter; they have got a wider view of the inheritance.

Then discipline also produces "the peaceable fruit of righteousness"; it results in a people being brought into righteousness practically, so that they are morally suitable to the inheritance; they are partakers, too, of God's holiness.

Philippians 3 shows us a man who had been in the furnace and been refined. He rejoices in Christ Jesus and has no confidence in the flesh. He has before him "The prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus". That is the expanse of the inheritance.

GENESIS 16

Genesis 16

If Abram had taken in the lessons of chapter 15 he would have been preserved from the course he took in this chapter. The instruction he had in chapter 15 was that God was the source of everything — “I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward”. God had shown him, in figure, that the true seed would be a heavenly seed; He had called his attention to the stars, and said, “So shall thy seed be”. That ought to have set aside in Abram’s mind any thought that there could be a seed according to the flesh to inherit the promises. God had also shown him, in figure, that He would secure the inheritance and bring the seed into it on the ground of the death of Christ; that also sets man aside. Now Abram was tested as to how far the light had been made good in his soul.

The importance of having a right kind of mother is emphasised by this chapter. The previous chapter shows the exercise of the “great father” as to the true seed. But in this chapter the exercise is as to the right kind of mother. The apostle applies it to us in the Epistle to the Galatians. He shows that Hagar is a figure of the legal system, she is a bondwoman: the heirs — the true seed — must be freeborn. Hagar means ‘flight’. She typifies an order of things that has to disappear; it does not bring in what is for the pleasure of God. “Cast out the bondwoman”. “He takes away the first that he may establish the second”. Christ has taken away all the system of which Hagar is a type.

We see in this chapter a distinct movement to bring in the seed on a wrong line, under a wrong kind of mother. And we may see also a fruit of Abram’s defection in chapter 12: he had an Egyptian maidservant in his household. If that which is of the world once gets in it is not easy to get rid of it, and there is danger that we may fall back upon it, in presence of difficulties, as a help to bring about what we desire. In God’s mind the seed were to be freeborn; they could not be children of a bond-maid. They must be conceived, and brought forth, and brought up under the influence of a proper mother, and that is heavenly grace. The true seed must be in the perfect liberty of grace: no Egyptian, no bond-maid, could bring up sons in the liberty of heavenly grace.

“Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which is now, for she is in bondage with her children”, Galatians 4: 25. What is of the world, what is legal, and what genders to bondage all go together. The world in Galatians is the world in its religious aspect, not in the profane or wicked aspect, but a world marked by religiousness and legality: all that results in bondage. The turning aside of the Galatians is exactly what is seen in divine

figure in Genesis 16. It is an attempt to provide heirs for the favour and blessing of God in a worldly and legal way. It is an attempt to bring things about according to the flesh; it is the line of Hagar, not grace or faith. The will of God is to have a seed in the liberty of heavenly grace, the true children of Jerusalem above. We ought all to be exercised about the need of a good mother. A bond woman could never have a free son; Jerusalem that now is, is in bondage with her children.

The principle of which Hagar is a type is the idea that something can be brought about in connection with man in the flesh that is according to God's pleasure. It is the thought that the flesh, educated and put in shape, can eventually inherit the promises. It is striking that Abram should move on this line, it teaches us what a true believer may do. It shows how soon the idea gets a footing of trying to reach things in the flesh. They were true believers in Galatia; they had the Spirit; yet they were taking up law and circumcision to make a fair show in the flesh. Look at the children of Israel! All their experiences in Egypt, and in their early days in the wilderness, were to teach them that grace was the only spring of blessing. At the Red Sea, and in the early part of the journey in the wilderness, all God's ways with them were in grace. He showed them plainly that grace was the line of blessing, and yet how ready they were to turn from that line and take up responsibility *in the flesh*. The pride of man lightly esteems grace. The legal system gives room for that pride, and it is illustrated in Hagar. The mother is the system under which one is brought up. True believers may easily come under the influence of the wrong mother. Bringing in what is of the flesh makes something of me, but it all turns to bondage in the end. Anything that I can connect with myself, and glory in according to the flesh, is a bit of Ishmael.

Sarai was a free-woman, and all that was on the line of promise must be free-born. The seed must be in the liberty of heavenly grace. The legal system could never conceive, or bear, or bring up a seed to inherit the promises. So that this chapter gives us a figure of the coming in of the law, and of putting things on the ground of what man in the flesh could be for God. It is an exposure of the impossibility of the seed coming in on the line of the flesh. Chapter 15 ought to have shown Abram that all must come in from God's side, and that righteousness must be on the principle of faith, and on the ground of death, which really sets aside all that man in the flesh is. But this is a hard lesson for man to learn.

When we come under the influence of Jerusalem above we make much of God, we magnify His grace, and we do not think of ourselves save as subjects of grace. Could you improve the Lord Jesus Christ, the glorified Man in

heaven? Could you add anything to Him? God wants you to be nourished in the sense that all that shines in that glorified Man in heaven makes known His grace which is for you. He is the measure of the true grace of God, and as you take it in you are in liberty, you get free from bondage. The whole system of heavenly grace is filled out of Christ, the Son of God. Hagar answers to Jerusalem *below*: she is in bondage and her children. You cannot move about among the people of God without finding that there is a great deal of bondage with many. They are not free in the spirit of worship.

It has been said that all great men have had remarkable mothers, and that they have owed their greatness to the character of their mothers. This is true divinely; if I am under legal influence I become legal and get under bondage, and lead others into bondage, too. A legal person would like to make every one legal. No doubt the Galatians were talking of being wonderful people, but it did not come about; the line they were on only led to biting and devouring one another. Hagar can only bring forth what the angel describes as "a wild ass of a man".

The influences of the heavenly Jerusalem are made good in our souls now as we come under the power and teaching of grace. All that is effective comes to us through the gospel, but we have to give our hearts up to the influence of it by the Spirit. The influences of grace are brought to bear upon us by new-covenant ministry, the ministry of all that is the outcome of the love of God. The unfolding of what God is for us; His love concentrated at Calvary, and now diffused in millions of hearts here by the Spirit; so that there is a response to Him in free affections, and in the spirit of sonship. That is the influence of Jerusalem above. Then we can "by love serve one another".

How beautiful that is! Saints are served because there is a powerful spring of love within that must express itself in service.

Paul said to the Galatians, "My children, of whom I again travail in birth, until Christ shall have been formed in you". He travailed once at their conversion, and now *again* that Christ might be formed in them: that is the true spirit of the mother. What this chapter is taken up with is the importance of a right mother. It is as Christ is ministered that we come into the good of it. Genesis 16: 12 shows the spirit of the Galatians biting and devouring one another. The flesh is "a wild ass of a man"; that is, unsubdued. Ishmael and all his descendants represent the seed according to the flesh. There is pride connected with the flesh and the legal system; Hagar despised Sarah (verse 4); the pride of the flesh despises all the influence of grace.

Hagar personally is dealt with in divine goodness and grace. Those who come into connection with what is of God come under the goodness of God, even

though not converted. Hagar is driven out; Sarai would not have her. Paul is much like that in writing to the Galatians; he will not tolerate Hagar; the spirit of grace cannot tolerate what is legal, and what gives place to man in the flesh. But though she is driven out she becomes the subject of divine care; there is a spring in the wilderness even for her. The way Ishmael and Hagar are cared for is a wonderful setting forth of grace. It is like the elder brother who would not come in; he had the same proud spirit as Ishmael; yet the father went out and entreated him. It has been said, that there was more grace shown to the elder brother than to the prodigal!

We see here wonderful grace going out to Hagar and Ishmael, though the true character of the seed according to flesh is plainly spoken of. Ishmael means 'God hears'; that is the key of blessing put into Hagar's hand. It is very touching that the angel said, "Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands". She had the opportunity to submit. The great trouble with the Jew was that he would not submit to the righteousness of God. Ishmael had his name, 'God hears'. God would listen to the cry of need and affliction from any man. In this way the gospel was presented to Hagar. So in all the wanderings of Israel after the flesh they might have known that God would hear the cry of need. Their character came out here, "A wild ass of a man", unsubdued. Israel was never broken; it was unbroken flesh with their hand against every man, and every man's hand against them. Paul said, "They please not God and are contrary to all men". So every man's hand is against the Jew: religious pride always calls out the enmity of others. Yet even the seed after the flesh with all their pride are still subjects of mercy. As having come into connection with Abram — the depository of promise — they are of interest to God. In Romans 11 we read they are beloved for their fathers' sakes. God was interested in Hagar because of her connection with Abram. So God is interested still in the Jew in spite of his enmity against the gospel; he is beloved for the father's sakes. I think we see in all this part of the chapter a figure of the seed according to the flesh, preserved by God, but unbroken, and in pride against every man — "contrary to all men" — and in result having all against him. And yet carrying all the time, as it were, the key of blessing, if at any time they should feel the need of it. 'God hears' — a wonderful key of blessing! God makes Himself known to Hagar in grace: she called the name of Jehovah "Thou art the God who reveals himself". It comes to this, that God is, and ever has been, what He is, whatever man may be. However unsubdued and obdurate man may be, God is the source of blessing: He can only be what He is. This well has been near to the seed after the flesh in all their wanderings. Every ray of light that God gave of Himself in the Old Testament was just a gleam of grace. This is a beautiful unfolding of grace. God unfolds Himself in

the Old Testament; all through He was always the God whose great object was to reveal Himself.

Beer-lahai-roi is the "Well of the Living who was seen". There is much more in that than in the A.V. "Thou God seest me". It is not that God sees me, though that word has reached many consciences, but it should read, "Thou art the God who reveals himself". It is not that God sees me, though that is, of course, true, but that I may see Him. If God reveals Himself it must be in grace; He is the God of all grace and always was; and what God is, is always the line of blessing for man. How full even the law is of Christ! There are innumerable gleams of light there as to God and Christ. Even the covenant that came from Mount Sinai contained many precious hints of grace, and much that faith might have laid hold of as showing the blessed character of God. All these hints in the Old Testament were a well of blessing for rebellious and unsubdued man. If it says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God", it shows His nature, what He delights in. What a revelation to my heart of what God is! God is love, He wants me to love Him; He would not ask His creature to love Him if He were not love Himself. So that the law contains the gospel!

"Here also have I seen" (verse 13). This looks on prophetically to the time when all Israel will be saved, and will come under the quickening power of God; the dry bones shall live. They will see God in all His love: the unsubdued heart of stone that made them like Ishmael — a wild ass of a man — will become a heart of flesh: they will come under a new mother. Israel will come eventually under the influence of grace. The elder brother will come in; the father will go out and entreat him. He has given the heavenly part to the prodigal, but the earthly part is left; that will be given to the elder brother.

God always provides a well. There has always been enough in the dispensation of God to make God known. In the law which man uses to shut God out, and to establish his own righteousness, there is enough to save him. Every Sunday Christendom says words that might be life and blessing to them: the well is near them. People going to church and chapel say continually words that might bring blessing; the key is in their hands if they will only use it. It shows the wonderful character of God in grace.

Abram was off the line in this chapter. It was departure from the line on which God was going to bring in the seed; He was going to bring it in from His own side and in His own way on the line of promise. Abram had to learn that what was of the flesh would not do, and that everything connected with the flesh must be set aside, and then God fulfilled all His promises in Christ — Isaac was brought in.

GENESIS 17

Genesis 17

If a seed of faith is to inherit the promises it must come in by God's power. The law and the flesh profit nothing. This chapter begins, "I am Almighty God" — He *can* and *must* do everything. No movements or workings of nature are of any avail; everything that is for God must be effected by His almighty power. Now if we walk before Him in the sense of this we shall be perfect. We shall come into the good of His covenant, and obtain spiritual promotion, and we shall be prepared to accept circumcision; we shall have no confidence in the flesh.

The religious world is full of the Hagar and Ishmael principle, that something can be secured on the line of flesh and law, but all that has to be set aside. God can and must do everything if there is to be a true seed to inherit His promises. The old hymn says:

"The gracious work must all be Thine,
Begun and ended in Thy power".

That is the lesson of this chapter; the whole work of divine grace must be of God. When we walk before God in the sense of that, we are perfect. We have no thought then of expecting anything from nature, or flesh, or law; everything must be of God. In chapter 24 Abraham says, "The God before whom I have walked". But Jacob had to say, "The God before whom my fathers walked"; and, "The God who fed me"! Abraham and Isaac walked before God, but Jacob could only say, He fed me and cared for me. Jacob was imperfect because he was always making schemes, and working out plans to accomplish a divine end, but at last, he learned the whole work must be of God. God would pass all our souls to the region of perfection; God must begin and finish. When we learn that God is Almighty God, that He can and must do everything from first to last, then we can afford to let the flesh be cut off with every expectation from it. In walking before God all the conditions of perfection are present. God says, as it were, Walk before Me in the sense of what My power can and will do, and you will be all right.

There are at least ten "I wills" in this chapter which may be contrasted with the ten "Thou shalt's" of the law. It is very beautiful to see how God engaged Himself to the one who believed Him; "I will set my covenant between me and thee"; He established a definite bond between Himself and Abraham in view of the great result which He would bring about. And in connection with that God gave him a new name; that is, new divine honour. It is a spiritual elevation

when God gives a new name; it is like the king giving a title or a peerage. God has a right to ennoble any one; so He takes up Abram and gives him an enlargement of honour. *Abram* — great or high father — sets forth what he was personally as head of the family of faith: but *Abraham* brings into view the greatness of the family; it means “father of a multitude”, and he was to be not only father of a multitude of individuals but of a multitude of nations. God would multiply the seed of faith; He unfolds here the wide and vast result of the principle of faith and promise. The effect on Abraham was that he fell on his face; that attitude was characteristic of this chapter; he fell on his face twice: here and in connection with Sarah (verse 17).

What a joy it must have been to Abraham to contemplate such a great result for God! A multitude of nations and kings all begotten by the faith principle — so as to be suitable to inherit the promises of God! There is nothing so fruitful as the faith principle “exceedingly fruitful” (verse 6); it is the only principle that brings forth anything for God, because it counts only upon His power. We think sometimes of results for God in a limited way; we get narrowed up; but this is a very enlarging chapter. Abraham was to be father of a multitude of nations; nations and kings were to come out of him. It looks on to the time when nations and kings will be characterised by faith, and will be able to take up the promises and inherit them for the glory of God. In the meantime we are amongst the seed of Abraham: all saints in the church period are children of Abraham; and it is all brought about by God’s almighty power. God engaged Himself not only to produce the seed but never to fail them. “I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant to be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee” (verse 7). That is God saying, as it were, I will never fail the seed of faith, I will always be a God to them.

God has committed Himself, He has entered into covenant. A covenant supposes two parties. On God’s side He commits Himself to man and says, ‘I will’: He signs His name to it, as it were, so that we can say with holy reverence, God cannot withdraw from what He has committed Himself to. Then what comes out here is that Abraham and his seed after him had to keep God’s covenant by circumcising every male. On their side they had to keep the covenant;

otherwise the blessing of it would be invalidated so far as they were concerned. “The uncircumcised male ... shall be cut off from his peoples: he hath broken my covenant”. If God has committed Himself to us in grace and power, on our side the covenant of circumcision must be kept. It is a figure of the setting aside of the flesh. And this is imperative. If God undertakes to

bless His people, and to be everything to them, in view of bringing to pass all His own thoughts of blessing, He will not tolerate any confidence in the flesh on their part, nor any allowance of the activity of the flesh. His people must keep His covenant, and hold themselves for Him, by circumcision. This is spiritually as true for us as for Abraham.

It is necessary to look at several Scriptures to see the spiritual import of circumcision. First look at Romans 2: 28 — “He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither that circumcision which is outward in flesh: but he is a Jew who is so inwardly; and circumcision, of the heart, in spirit, not in letter; whose praise is not of men but of God”. This shows that true circumcision is an inward thing: it is something that takes place in the heart and spirit. Then in Romans 4: 11 we get another step — “And he received the sign of circumcision as seal of the righteousness of faith which he had being in uncircumcision”. It is looked at here as a seal; Abraham got the righteousness of faith in chapter 15 and the seal of it in chapter 17. I think this suggests the gift of the Spirit as the power by which the flesh can be set aside. The Spirit is the seal of the righteousness by faith, and I think circumcision suggests the Spirit coming in as divine power for the practical setting aside of the flesh. The Spirit brings in the power of God — the power of Him who said to Abraham, “I am Almighty God”. How wonderful that the Spirit should be given to us as the seal of the righteousness of faith, in order that we might have power to set aside the flesh. There is no witness that God has a people here unless the flesh is set aside; and hence circumcision is imperative; the soul that refuses it is cut off; he has broken the covenant. God is not going on with the flesh and He will not have His people go on with it. The Spirit is given so that we might not go on with the flesh, but that it might be set aside practically.

Genesis 16 is like Romans 7: it is an attempt to get a divine seed on the line of law and flesh. But the way the seed comes in is by faith and resurrection power, and the Spirit is given to us as a seal of the righteousness of faith — answering in that way to circumcision — so that there might be the practical setting aside of the flesh; and if it is not set aside there is no true witness that we are in covenant relationship with God. That is our side of the covenant as seen here. “God said to Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant, thou and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep ... that every male among you be circumcised” (verse 9). “And the uncircumcised, who hath not been circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his peoples; he hath broken my covenant” (verse 14). This shows how important our side is: God will not break the covenant, but we have to see to it that we keep the covenant by recognising the presence of the Spirit, and walking by the Spirit in the practical refusal of the flesh. The Spirit has come in

as power: how important it is to walk in the sense of that! That is why God says, "Walk before me and be thou perfect". God means us to realise that power has come in by the Spirit so that we may refuse the flesh and all its workings, and thus be manifested here as His people. As having the Spirit, our capability is equal to our responsibility.

Now turn to Colossians 2: 9, "For in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and authority, in whom also ye have been circumcised with circumcision not done by hand, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of the Christ". Circumcision as alluded to in Romans would be in relation to the Spirit: in Colossians it is in relation to Christ. When I see that the fulness of the Godhead is in Christ, and that I am filled full in Christ, I do not need the addition of a single bit of anything that flesh could contribute, and I can let it go. I doubt whether any of us really accept circumcision until we see it is a great privilege and gain to do so. We are filled full in Christ, and all the fulness of the Godhead is in that blessed Man risen and glorified; we do not need a single thing outside Christ. When we see this we are prepared to accept what was done when Christ died, when He was cut off; that was circumcision — the cutting off of flesh absolutely in Christ's death. It is the body of the flesh in its totality, and not sins (verse 9). I suppose we have all noticed that 'sins' ought not to be there; it is "the body of the flesh"; you are prepared to let the whole thing go because you are filled up in Christ.

Then Philippians 3 sums up the meaning of circumcision, "We are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in flesh" (verse 3). If any one could have trusted in flesh Paul could, but he says in effect, I have cut it all off, I do not want a bit of it. It is helpful to compare Genesis 17 with Philippians 3 to see how circumcision comes in in view of the inheritance. Here is a man with his eye on the inheritance, he has the prize of God's calling on high before him, and in view of getting possession of inheritance in a risen and glorified Christ, he accepts the cutting off of every hope and glory in connection with flesh. Then the solemn end of the chapter shows the uncircumcised cut off from the people of God. "Many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose God is the belly, and their glory is their shame, who mind earthly things". They are the uncircumcised, of whom God said that they should be cut off from His people as having broken His covenant.

Then Sarai — 'Jah is prince' — becomes Sarah 'Princess'. She is ennobled, too. She is a figure of Israel as the vessel of promise, but viewed as dead

according to the flesh. Israel is a barren woman who could not naturally bring forth anything for God, but when she learns that princely power is with God which can act in sovereignty in spite of her state, she becomes the 'princess' to give birth to the seed of promise. This is a lesson which in principle we have to learn. When we learn that flesh and nature are powerless and dead, but that princely power is with God, then we can be honoured of God, and can bring forth Christ morally and in testimony here.

Abraham intercedes for Ishmael, but God dwells on Isaac — 'Laughter'. Faith can laugh when God acts purely from Himself, and in His own power. Abraham could not laugh over Ishmael, because what was of the flesh came in there, but the one who could laugh over Isaac could pray, in the sense of grace, for Ishmael. Ishmael speaks of Israel according to the flesh. God would bless him in hearing prayer — a finger-post to blessing for Israel if they had taken note of it — but Isaac was the one with whom His covenant would be established, the One brought in in resurrection power, as Romans 4 would suggest. God's goodness was there for Ishmael. He ever cared for stubborn and rebellious Israel — a nation truly like Ishmael, "a wild ass of a man". But whenever a cry of need came, even from perverse and rebellious Israel, God heard it. Ishmael's history would have been most instructive for Israel if they had taken heed to it. God was saying to them by it, If you only cry to Me you will get blessing. But they were too proud to take the place of need, and therefore they missed the blessing. They claimed the privileges of the covenant without realising what was involved in the sign of the covenant. Therefore they did not keep the covenant; they always had confidence in the flesh; they were never truly circumcised. God had to tell them that they were uncircumcised in heart and ears. And that is why they are now fallen and cut off. Their history is a solemn warning to all who take up divine things in a fleshly way.

GENESIS 18 AND 19

Genesis 18; Genesis 19

The very important instruction of chapter 17 is preparatory to what we get here, which is privilege of the most exalted character. When God is known as the One who effects everything for His own pleasure, and faith has learned to laugh by seeing the true Isaac as the Seed of promise, then circumcision can be accepted and known in a practical way, and this brings in conditions where divine visitations can be known. We do not know whether Abraham had any reason to expect a divine visitation, but he was ready for it when it came.

John 14: 18 prepares *us* to expect such visitations. What jealous care should be exercised as to being in suitable condition! One could not think of a higher privilege than to receive a visit from divine Persons.

In chapter 17 Abraham learned that God was going to effect everything from His own side and by His own power, and that He was not going to depend on the flesh for anything; and the man of faith laughed. That is the kind of laughter we need to take up if we are to enjoy such privilege as this chapter presents. It is holy laughter (Isaac means 'Laughter'); we see God has taken in hand to carry out all His pleasure in the power of resurrection; that leaves man and all his powers completely out; and the man of faith laughs. It is a blessed thing to fall on one's face before God and laugh because we see that Christ has come in in the power of resurrection, and that every divine thought and promise is substantiated in Him. Isaac came in entirely apart from nature and flesh: so far as Abraham and Sarah were concerned all was death.

I think we may see in chapter 18 certain things which are suggestive of privileges which now pertain to the assembly. There was a divine visitation, and then ministry to the Lord; then faith was greatly confirmed as we see in verses 10 and 14; then there were confidential communications, and finally intercession. A wonderful group of privileges which are now to be realised in the assembly. It is blessed to be in a state to receive divine visitations; and such visitations are the privilege of the assembly, as we see very distinctly in John 14. "I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you" John 14: 18; "He that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me; but he that loves me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him" (verse 21). "If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him" (verse 23). These verses speak clearly of a divine visitation, a divine manifestation, and then there is something even greater, an abiding of divine Persons with a faithful lover. The three things are clearly distinguishable. We

do not get the latter in Genesis 18; we could not possibly get it; it is in one sense the greatest privilege of all. John 14: 18 is the privilege of the assembly: the Lord comes to those who miss Him; and that is why the Supper prepares the way for a visitation from the Lord, because if we take it rightly, it shows we miss Him. If we came together to eat the Supper according to its true character, the Lord would be able to say, There are hearts there who miss Me. And the fact that they missed Him would attract Him to them.

Then the manifestation in John 14: 21 is individual (like that to Mary in John 20); it is "*He* that has my commandments". It is the individual lover who has His commandments and keeps them, to whom the Lord gives a new apprehension of Himself: I understand that to be a manifestation — an apprehension of Christ which the soul has not had before. Then John 14: 23 is granted in connection with keeping His *word*. That is, it is not simply having *His commandments* and keeping them (as verse 21), but keeping that which expresses *Himself*. It is the most intimate exercise and activity of affection towards the Lord personally. It is bridal affection, and might be put along with Philippians 3: 8. Hence it secures a peculiar and unique divine companionship, that which is more than a visitation; an *abiding* of the Father and the Son with the one whose heart is set on Christ Himself. A heart that cherishes Him becomes very attractive to the Father and the Son.

That is the way divine visitations are spoken of in the New Testament. We see in Abraham's case that there was a suitable response; Abraham ministered to the Lord. That is like Acts 13, "They ministered to the Lord", and like John 12, "They made him a supper".

It is rather striking that this is the first occasion in connection with which we get feet-washing mentioned in Scripture: it has often been said that the first time a thing is mentioned in Scripture we get the key to its meaning. It is clearly refreshment here. "Let now a little water be fetched, that ye may wash your feet, and rest yourselves". It is connected with refreshment: we shall spoil John 13 if we lose sight of that. It spoils it to make the thought of removing defilement too prominent. If you look at feet-washing all through Scripture, it is always connected with refreshment and the service of love. Abigail said, "Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord". She placed herself at David's disposal for the service of his servants. A woman washed the Lord's feet; and who can doubt that she ministered blessed refreshment to the heart of that Holy One? It is wonderful to think that we can minister to the refreshment of divine Persons.

There is a difference between the spiritual significance of washing the Lord's feet and anointing Him. Washing His feet means that He is so precious to me

that I delight to minister to Him. But the anointing means that He is precious to God, and God's Anointed has become our Anointed; we have come into communion with God's thoughts of that Blessed One. The anointing goes further than the feet-washing, and the house is filled with the fragrance.

We ought to take account of the wonderful privilege we are called to. The Supper is really provided for affection: the Lord gathered around Him not only those He loved but those who loved Him. He put them in the place of a household who had lost their parent. We may gather from Jeremiah 16: 7 that it was a practice with the Jews to break bread in memory of parents who had gone, and the Lord took up this ancient custom when He instituted the Supper. Do we miss Him? Do we like to let Him know that we miss Him? The Supper should be a testimony to all that we miss Him, and if we eat it with right affections, we should have His presence; He would come to us. In this world we are orphans because we have lost Him. If that is true and we feel it, He says, "I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you". How it would appeal to an affectionate family if a loved parent who had gone could come back! The Lord says, If you miss me, I will not leave you in the place of orphans, I will come to you. For visitation we need a sense that we are orphans, and the breaking of bread sets forth that; for it means that the One we love has died; He is not here.

Next we find Abraham's faith confirmed (Genesis 18: 10, 14). "Is any matter too wonderful for Jehovah?" It seems to suggest a blessed confirmation of faith. In the assembly love is cherished and gratified, but faith is also confirmed. Everything that faith has gained is continually confirmed; everything in a sense becomes more real. Peter speaks of the prophetic word being 'made surer'; certainly not more sure in itself, but more sure in the heart of the believer. In the section from verses 9 - 15 the promise is repeated, and, as it were, confirmed, and we see the unbelief of Sarah. There is often a great deal of practical unbelief with us. But God would have everything connected with the seed — whether viewed as Christ personally, or as the heavenly seed or the earthly — confirmed in our souls.

Then, further, from verse 17 there are confidential communications. How wonderful for God to be on confidential terms with men! He speaks of "Abraham, my friend" (Isaiah 41: 8); God would not hide from Abraham what He was going to do. Judgment was coming on Sodom, and before it came Jehovah took Abraham into His confidence about it. That is another privilege of the assembly: we know what is coming; we know Christ is Heir of the world, and that He will inherit all things, and that before He can do so judgment will come upon the world of the ungodly; we are in the secret of it

all. The effect of these communications was that Abraham became an intercessor: and that is another privilege which the assembly takes up. The assembly is here to intercede for a world under judgment.

Abraham interceded on the ground first that there might be fifty righteous, and then he came down to ten. We go further than that: we come down to *One*. Abraham did not go far enough! We know *one* righteous Man for whom the city can be spared! We can intercede in the full knowledge of the blessed fact that one righteous Man has glorified God about the whole question of sin, and in bearing its judgment, so that God's attitude to all men is one of perfect grace. Later on in regard to Jerusalem (Jeremiah 5) God said, "Seek ... if ye can find a man, if there be any that doeth justice, that seeketh fidelity; and I will pardon it". But one righteous Man has been found in Jerusalem and in this world, and He has so glorified God that God's attitude to the world is now one of perfect grace: and in the knowledge of that we intercede for all men. In Abraham's case it was 'peradventure'. In the Old Testament, however precious the typical instruction may be, we are always reminded that some better thing was reserved for us.

While there is to be prayer and intercession for all men there is also to be thanksgiving. We cannot think of divine grace to men without thanksgiving: we give thanks because of God's attitude to men; we give thanks on their behalf, though they do not give thanks for themselves. God is a Saviour God for every man, and I ought to give thanks for that every day: it brings before my heart the immensity of His grace. The blessedness of true prayer is that you can never leave off without giving thanks: that is one great evidence that you have truly prayed. A beloved servant of the Lord used to say that making your requests known means that you have the sense you have had an audience. It is like getting an audience with a great man; you would go away and say, He listened to me, he knows all about it. It is not only that I have asked, but God has heard; and then I give thanks. It does not say in Philippians 4 that you get the petitions, but that the peace of God garrisons your heart; and that is often greater and better than getting what you ask for. It is possible to pray about something you feel you want badly, and after you have prayed to feel, I don't mind whether I have it or not: if not it is because He loves me and has something better for me! A Christian in the sense of grace knows that if he does not get what he asks for, it is not good for him.

Now let us look briefly at the contrast in the next chapter. Lot sits in the gate of Sodom in contrast to the tent door; he gets a place of honour in the world, but he gets no divine visitation there. Two *angels* come to him, speaking of providential care; he gets the care of divine Providence, but no visitation. It is

to be noticed that he had unleavened bread, which suggests that he was personally apart from the corruption around him. He had a righteous soul. He did his best to honour the divine Providence represented in the angels, when the men of Sodom would have dishonoured it, but he had no power to maintain what was divine. Providence protected and delivered him, but his testimony was of no use; it was to them that of a mocker or jester. How like many a worldly believer today!

They made him a magistrate; that is the meaning of sitting in the gate; he got a certain show of honour in the world, but no real honour, and he had no power for testimony. What is very sad, too, is that he dreaded the place of faith's security. He was told to flee to the mountain, but he could not live without a city; he says, "This city is near to flee to, and it is small: I pray thee, let me escape thither — is it not small?" His taste was vitiated; he must have something of the world; he pleads for a city, just a little one! How solemn for a saint to get into such a state as that! The down grade is terrible, and it is a marked contrast to chapter 18. Then Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt; her heart was in Sodom and she shared in Sodom's judgment. She stands to this day in Scripture as a warning monument — a warning to professors who have never known the separating power of the call of God.

Finally Lot went up to the mountain, but it was through fear, not through faith; and instead of being like Abraham, the father of a multitude of the seed of faith, he became the father of Moab and Ammon, who were always snares and scourges to the family of faith.

In chapter 18 we have seen faith's privilege; divine visitation; ministration to the Lord; faith confirmed; the man of faith taken into divine confidence; and interceding for the world. We see, too, the moral character of Abraham; he was on a line suited to God's blessing, and would command his children on the same line. God says, "I know him that he will command his children and his household after him". Abraham had not only faith, but moral suitability to inherit the promises; and he would see that his children went on the same line. Now God says, as it were, You have looked at that; now look at Lot! It is a solemn contrast all through, and is full of divine instruction.

Then Lot's wife abides as a solemn warning; the Lord calls on us to "remember Lot's wife". She did not die to be buried and forgotten. She was a woman who had been close to the people of God, and shared outwardly with them, and yet had no inward part with them; her heart was in the world. She stands in Scripture as a pillar of salt — a warning to everybody to beware of looking back. It is in Luke 17, when the Lord is speaking of judgment coming on the world, that He says, "Remember Lot's wife". We have to remember that

this world is under judgment, and to look forward to that scene of glory that is coming. God forbid that we should look back on the world or anything that it has got!

GENESIS 20 AND 21

Genesis 20; Genesis 21

We have seen in chapters 18 and 19 the contrast between the privilege of faith enjoyed by the truly circumcised, and the loss suffered by unbelief even when found in a righteous person, but one with whom circumcision has no place; that is, one who walks practically after the flesh. Lot was providentially cared for in the faithfulness of God, but he did not enjoy privilege.

In chapters 20 and 21 we have another contrast. We see the believer walking in such a way that he comes even under the reproof of the world (chapter 20);

then we see him walking in such a way that the world has to own that God is with him in all that he does; chapter 21: 22.

In chapter 20 the same weakness and failure that appeared in Abram in chapter 12 comes out again. That is, he denies his true relationship with Sarah; but this time the failure comes out in a worse form. This is generally the case when any working of unbelief is not really judged. It keeps on appearing, and each time it is worse than before. In chapter 12 it was in connection with giving up the heavenly position — leaving Bethel and going down to Egypt. But in chapter 20 it was after the promise of chapters 17 and 18 that Sarah would be the mother of a son with whom God's covenant should be, and who should inherit the promises.

The special testimony in chapter 12 was the inheritance; in chapter 20 it was the heir; and in each case the effort of the enemy was against the special testimony of the moment. If Abraham had been in the practical faith of the promise he would have realised that the maintenance of the true relationship was of the utmost importance; it was *the* essential thing in relation to God's testimony at the moment. Unbelief, weakness, or fear always lead to the giving up of the best thing at the moment. "The top shoot goes first".

It is a solemn warning, that one so privileged — one who had enjoyed such nearness to God — should so depart from faith as to his public testimony. Perhaps many of us can understand it as we review our own history! Have we not known what it was to use language, and walk in steps, that were not those of faith, even after having tasted the joy of spiritual things? People would not always have gathered from *our* walk and ways that we were in the dignity and blessedness of our calling and privilege. It is sad to see how soon the thoughts of nature can come in, and practically set aside the thoughts of faith.

We see Abraham here on the ground of mere nature, thinking of himself; "they will kill me"; but the root of it all comes out in verse 13, "God caused me to wander from my father's house". What a low and natural view of the call of the God of glory! The call, the inheritance, the privilege of a heavenly man, all lost sight of for the moment. "God caused me to wander from my father's house!" Was this the thought of faith?

How often we find language that does not rise above the level of the natural man on the lips of true believers! In the storm the disciples very quickly said, "We perish". In the wilderness they said, "Whence should we have so many loaves as to satisfy so great a crowd?" When the Lord warned them against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, they said it was "because we have taken no bread". When He told them He had meat to eat which they knew not of, they said, "Has anyone brought him anything to eat?" Peter did seem to rise to the thoughts of faith when he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"; flesh and blood had not revealed it to him. And yet almost immediately, when the Lord spoke of His death, he said, "This shall in no wise be unto thee". It just shows how quickly the thoughts of faith can be departed from; and when they are, there is sure to be a denial of the relationships in which we stand spiritually.

God withheld Abimelech from sinning, and preserved Abraham and Sarah, and even put honour on Abraham. God always loves to honour His people. But the man of faith had to be rebuked by the world. It is well to remember that the world very often knows how saints ought to behave. We may think, as Abraham did, that people do not fear God, but they often have very true thoughts of what is becoming in saints:

Sarah was the vessel of promise for the bringing in of Isaac — typically Christ — and the enemy was behind all the weakness and fear of Abraham, and the actions of Abimelech, working to defeat that. If saints are compromised with the world, and deny their true relation to Christ, there will be no bringing Him in in testimony. The Galatians were taking ground which involved the denial of their divine relationships. Their place in grace with God, and their true relation to Christ, were set aside by the bringing in of law, circumcision, etc. The result was there was no bringing in of Christ; it was a cultivation and glorification of the flesh. But that denies and defeats all that God is working for.

What a rebuke Abimelech gives to Sarah! He gives money to buy her a veil! (verse 16). Sarah ought to have been veiled as Abraham's wife, and if she had been, Abimelech would never have seen her. The assembly ought to have been always veiled — to have kept herself exclusively for Christ. The idea of taking the veil is right if taken up spiritually. Many things found in Christendom

are the material and fleshly imitation of something spiritual and divine. The church ought to be veiled; when Rebecca saw Isaac, she veiled herself; in figure she said, I am now to be exclusively for Christ, and for no other eye.

Abimelech says, "I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver; let that be to thee a covering of the eyes". It was a serious reproof. You may depend upon it, that the world knows that saints ought to be true to Christ, and to be entirely for Him. By coming down to the world's level we only lose its respect. At the present day the church has almost entirely lost the respect of the world through unfaithfulness to Christ; she has disowned her proper relationship, and instead of being found here as a covered woman she makes a display of herself before the world.

In chapter 21 Isaac comes in, and the result of giving him his rightful place and Ishmael being cast out is that Abraham appears before the world as having God with him. The 'great feast' which Abraham made signifies that blessed day in soul history when Christ is recognised as the only One to have place. It has been called the 'coronation day'. It sets forth in figure Christ's day — the day when He is supreme and unrivalled, and no other is in view. What does man after the flesh think of that? He mocks. You never know what the flesh is in yourself until you purpose to give place and honour only to Christ. Then you find how the flesh rebels against being set aside.

It was giving Isaac his place that brought out the character of Ishmael; there is nothing to show that his true character had come out before. It is the bringing in of Christ that exposes all that man is after the flesh, and awakens his enmity. God's thought is to bring in Christ. Sarah may be regarded as a figure of the assembly as the vessel of the Spirit for the bringing in of Christ. It is God's intention to make everything of Christ; not to cultivate or make anything of man after the flesh, but to bring in another Man, and flesh rebels against this.

The religious world is busy cultivating Ishmael, and it mocks at the thought of another Man altogether. But the word is, "Cast out this handmaid and her son; for the son of this handmaid shall not inherit with my son — with Isaac". If a man realises that he is a guilty and lost sinner he will feel his need and cry to God, and will receive blessing from a Saviour God. As marked by dire need and dependence there is grace for man, but as he goes along that road he parts company morally with all that he is according to the flesh.

It becomes a question which man is to have place, as it was with the Galatians. The epistle to the Galatians is very much founded on this chapter. In Galatia they had turned aside to cultivate the wrong man — Ishmael. Therefore Paul says, "My children of whom I again travail in birth until Christ

shall have been formed in you". God's purpose was to bring in Christ in the saints; that is what God is working for today; and no other man is to have any place. The assembly is the vessel of the Spirit in view of that; if Christ does not get place in my heart and life, I am a complete failure from the divine point of view, though I may be regarded by men as a nice Christian man.

Abraham made a feast on the day Isaac was weaned; I suppose that is the day the Lord referred to when He said, "Abraham saw my day and was glad". Christ's day is the contrast to man's day; it is the day when He is supreme and unrivalled, and no other man has any place. Abraham saw in Isaac the one who was heir of the promises, the one who was to have the covenant and the inheritance; and Abraham's faith accorded him the place that was due, and made him a great feast. We are all glad to think of Christ's day coming in publicly. There is a day coming when He will have absolute supremacy. We say Amen to it as viewed in the future, but what about the present? How far has He come in to be the only One honoured and exhibited in me? Nothing is to appear or to have any place but Christ; He is to be magnified and exalted in the saints so that His day comes in advance with them.

The great feast is something positive; it is that Isaac comes in and is honoured, and when he gets his right place Ishmael has to go out. Many believers have never come to this 'great feast'; they have not really seen every thought of God substantiated in Christ, and that no other man is entitled to have any place; that is the line which the Spirit always maintains. Man after the flesh must be cast out, and then we have to see to it that he does not come in again in some subtle way. Some one said that if you turn him out at the front door he will come in at the back! So that it is a continual exercise to keep him out. I am sure we need to consider this very much, for it is truth that men will not have. You may talk of improving man, lifting him up from degradation, educating him, and making him moral and religious, and men will listen to you. But if you insist that man after the flesh must go, and that Christ only is to have place — another Man of an entirely new order for God's pleasure — you will find that Ishmael is still a mocker! And the flesh in you does not like it either, which brings the matter nearer home!

The object of many is to make a good and religious man of Ishmael. How many are ready to say that there is an element of good in man in the flesh that has only to be appealed to, and cultivated or developed. But that is all training Ishmael, and it will not do for God; the bond-woman and her son must go out.

Ishmael may be blessed, as we see in verses 17 - 20, but it is through finding out his deep need and being brought to the point of death. When man is

brought to that point morally there is hope for him; but that is, in truth, the end of *him*. Ishmael can be blessed in his extremity, when he is brought down to death, but that is not by his having qualities that commend him to God. It is pure mercy. The door of blessing is indeed open to all, but man reaches it by the cry of need in his extremity. This is a picture of God's dealings with Israel; He will allow them to wander in the wilderness until they have learned their deep lesson. Then they will be blessed on the ground of sovereign mercy, just as the Gentile is blessed today.

"The thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son". I think we see the mind of the Spirit in Sarah; she was figuratively the vessel of the Spirit for the bringing in of Christ. But in Abraham we see the exercise which faith has to go through in learning to accept this great and salutary lesson. We may see this exercise in Romans 9: 1 - 9. How Paul yearned over his kinsmen according to the flesh! The two exercises go together. There is the mind of the Spirit as to the absolute rejection of man after the flesh; that man is not the subject of promise or purpose, nor can he inherit anything as such. But along with this there is the yearning of grace over those who have had a connection, according to flesh,

with the root of promise. See Romans 10: 1 - 4. But it has to be accepted that it is the children of the promise that are reckoned as seed. Man in the flesh has to be reduced to the point of death before blessing comes in, and that is morally the end of that man. Then there is a well of water for him; in type the Spirit of another Man. It looks on to the time when the heart of stone will be taken away from Israel, and a heart of flesh given, and they will learn to say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord".

The failure of Abraham and Sarah recorded in chapter 20 was brought about by their allowing selfish fears to become greater in their hearts than the promise of God. If the promise of Isaac had been in its true power before their hearts they could not have denied their relationship. Losing sight of Christ is the root of all failure. Denying their relationship led to their both coming under the rebuke of Abimelech. But we see the principle and power of recovery in chapter 21; the son of promise comes in and Abraham and Sarah become possessed of him. The day arrives when Isaac gets his place and reigns supreme; there is no place for any other; Ishmael has to go out. The result is that Abraham is seen in moral superiority in the very place where his weakness had been apparent. Even Abimelech has to own that God is with him (verse 12). This is the result of Christ getting His place. Then we find that Abimelech's servants had violently taken away a well of water which Abraham had dug. Might there not be a moral connection between Abraham's failure

recorded in the previous chapter and the taking away of the well? When the church denied her true relationship with Christ, and was found in the king's house — exalted in the world — those acting under the world power soon took away her spiritual refreshments. What was formal and official was set up in place of the free action of the Spirit amongst the saints. When Christ was lost sight of as the glorious Man — the living Head — in heaven, the Spirit lost His place; a religious order came in which set Him aside, Christendom has not given Christ His place, and has set aside the Spirit. So that much that had been secured by the spiritual labours of the apostles and the exercises of the saints was taken away. And I think there can be little doubt that this was the result, in the government of God, of the church being unfaithful to her true relationship.

It is to be noted that the hostility of the Philistines both in Abraham's time and in Isaac's was in relation to wells. The Philistines represent those who are professedly on divine ground, but without faith, and their course is always such as to deprive saints of spiritual refreshing. The bringing in of the clerical principle was a taking away of the well of water because it set aside the saints' privilege to come together to profit by the distinctions of gifts operated by "the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each in particular as he pleases", 1 Corinthians 12: 11. The weakness of the reformation was that in none of the so-called reformed churches did they really give place to the Spirit.

If we wish to have unhindered enjoyment of the well we must see to it that we honour Christ alone, and do not give Ishmael any place. Then God can act for us and preserve to us spiritual refreshing. It is as the lordship and headship of Christ have been owned in these last days that the liberty of saints to come together as such, and to edify one another, has been in measure restored. Then where there is a measure of recovery the enemy often seeks to put orthodoxy and correct terms in place of the present activity of the Spirit. This may be very valuable so far as it goes, but if things are not in our souls in living freshness by the Spirit they are not of much real good to us.

The seven ewe lambs seem to suggest a spirit of grace towards those who have been hostile. The presence of God with Abraham, and the grace displayed by him, result in Abraham's title to the well being established. Probably Beersheba looks on to the time when it will be owned by all that God is with His people, and they will be found in peaceful enjoyment of "the well of the oath". But in the meantime we have to establish our title to the enjoyment of what is of the Spirit by being in moral accord with it. The king and the chief captain represent men who have an official title, but the man of faith has to establish a moral title to what he enjoys. The way we exalt Christ, and are

able to refuse the flesh a place, proves that God is with us. And the spirit of grace towards those who may not have been favourable to us is powerful evidence of a moral title to enjoy in peace any refreshing of the spirit that has been gained through the Lord's grace, and through the exercise and diligence of faith. The Lord speaks to Philadelphia of "an opened door, which no one can shut". He thus pledges Himself to secure freedom to enjoy spiritual refreshing for those who keep His word and do not deny His name. Such have established their title to the well, if we may so apply the type, and He will see that they are not hindered from the enjoyment of it by the Philistines. And very soon even the adversaries will have to acknowledge them as in the place of honour, and to know that they are loved by Christ.

GENESIS 22

Genesis 22

In chapter 22 we see Abraham called upon to offer up his son Isaac as a burnt offering. The Heir could only take up the inheritance, or become possessed of the bride, as having died and risen. And we see a character of faith in Abraham that was prepared to give up even Isaac in view of receiving him again in resurrection (Hebrews 11: 17 - 19). All the promises centred in the One of whom Isaac was a figure, and God's covenant was with Him. Faith was indeed made to laugh by the perception of all that was blessed in Him as the Son of promise. And His coming in necessitated that man after the flesh should go out; the promises and blessing of God involved the complete setting aside of that man. Isaac had to be circumcised, which I take to be a figure of the cutting off of the flesh in the death of Christ; what the epistle to the Colossians speaks of as "the circumcision of the Christ".

But there was much more in the death of Christ than that. He was "a burnt offering" in which there was the sweet savour of perfect affections devoted to God in death. This chapter gives us great expansion in our view of the burnt offering. We have seen its *excellence* typically in Abel's offering; its *cleanness* — its *moral purity* — in Noah's offering;

but what we get here is a most lovely and touching picture of the *affections* which were involved in it. It is a father and a son now, and it is the loved object of that father's heart that is to be offered. Think of what Isaac was to Abraham! His son, his only one, his loved one! It goes beyond the mere type, for Abraham was called to enter, we might say, in sympathetic affections into something of what was before the heart of the blessed God. It is therefore a most touching scene. Who can tell what it was to God to give up His beloved Son to death? That death was indeed the full manifestation of the love of God. And, on the other hand, it was only in death that the full measure of the Son's obedience and devotedness could be expressed. Think of what He was to the Father, the One who could say concerning His death, "That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father has commanded me, thus I do", John 14: 31! Think of what the saints were to Him and to the Father for whom He thus offered Himself! He cherished them in His heart according to all the Father's thoughts in regard to them, and according to His own love, and He devoted Himself to them that all these precious thoughts might come into effect. And the Father cherished those affections which answered so perfectly to Him; they became surpassingly fragrant in that offering of Himself which provided a divine and holy basis on which all the purposes of eternal love

could be brought to fruition. Saints often dwell on what He took away, but what He brought in is infinitely greater. He has brought in the will of God — the divine pleasure — in all its full extent, and He has brought in the love of God. And He has also fully disclosed in the offering of Himself the affections of sonship in manhood, and the fruit of that offering will be that 'many sons' will respond to God eternally in the affections proper to sonship. It is all this side of things which comes before us so blessedly in the Lord's Supper.

The beloved Son being given to be a sweet savour to God in the place of death involves the bringing to light and the establishment of all that is in the heart of God. God brought out before highly-favoured men what that blessed One was to Him; they beheld His glory as of an only begotten with a Father. He was placed in view of men in that way that they might enter in measure into what it was to God to give Him up to death. Then the Son, in all the fragrance of the Son's affections and obedience, devoted Himself to death that He might furnish the basis for the accomplishment of all the purposes of divine love. That is why the chapter ends by introducing Rebecca, and when Rebecca comes into view Sarah passes off the scene. Sarah represents Israel as having given birth to Christ on the line of promise, but Rebecca comes in a type of the assembly as brought to Christ risen and glorified in heaven. It is a risen and heavenly Christ who gets the bride.

"The wood for the burnt-offering" laid on Isaac surely speaks of the body prepared for that blessed One. It was essential to His offering up that He should "come in flesh". It was by man that sin and death had entered into the world, it was man who had disobeyed and dishonoured God and been a cause of grief to Him; and it must be Man who should go in obedience and devotedness of love even to death, to glorify God there in the fullest way, and to bring in perfect delight for Him, a sweet fragrance which will abide eternally.

It was as coming in flesh that He could be tested by the holy fire, and found to be perfect in every way for the glory of God. No sin was in that holy humanity; He was "that holy Thing" begotten in the virgin by the Holy Spirit coming upon her, and the power of the Highest overshadowing her. So that in the Son of God we see a Man totally different morally from any other man, the Holy One of God, the righteous One, One who could be tested by all that God is — and that even as in the place, sacrificially, of sin and death — and found altogether perfect. How faith delights to recognise the unique and undefilable character of His humanity, and of that holy flesh in which He came to be offered up for the glory of God! And in recognising it the heart of the believer is filled with adoration. But while thus turned adoringly to Him, and to the Father who sent

Him, with what holy abhorrence does the heart turn from the profane and blasphemous thoughts of those who are bold enough, while taking the Christian name, to throw doubt upon His virgin birth, and thus upon His deity and the sinless character of His humanity. The incarnation — the coming here in flesh of the Son of God — is the foundation and pillar of everything in the moral universe.

Then "he took the fire in his hand". Fire speaks of what God is — "our God is a consuming fire" — as applied in the most searching and testing way to that which is presented before Him. There is a hint of it in "the flame of the flashing sword" which, after the fall, guarded the way to the tree of life; Genesis 3: 24. But the first direct allusion to fire is in the fact that Noah "offered up burnt offerings on the altar", Genesis 8: 20. It is very blessed that it should be brought in first in such a connection, for it is an intimation that One would be found to whom the most searching divine test could be applied without the discovery of anything but perfection, or the bringing out of anything but 'sweet odour' God-ward. And it is in this connection that the fire appears in the chapter we are now considering.

When sin appears before God to be dealt with according to the holiness of His nature, the fire necessarily takes the character of wrath, and it is thus seen when He rained fire out of heaven for the destruction of the guilty cities of the plain; Genesis 19: 24. It is also seen in this character, sacrificially and to secure blessing in righteousness for man the guilty sinner, in the typical burning without the camp of the bodies of those beasts whose blood was brought into the sanctuary for sin. Christ, the Holy One of God who knew no sin, was made sin for us. He was made sacrificially what we were actually and personally, and as in the place of sin He was forsaken by God, and had to drink the cup of God's wrath. He came there in grace, and the fire — all that God was in holiness against sin — spent its force upon Him in a way which we can never fully know. In contemplation of it we can only adore. He endured the wrath, and, for all who believe on His Name, He has exhausted it.

But in connection with the burnt offering, what appears in the type is that the fire brings out all the perfection of the Victim in acceptable fragrance. Under the most intense searching and testing — even as in the place of sin and death, and as forsaken of God and drinking the cup, suffering all that was due to sin according to the righteous judgment and holiness of God — nothing but absolute perfection was found in Him. Perfection which under the action of the fire came out in a sweet savour which was delightful to God. Different words are used in the Hebrew for the burning of the sin offering outside the camp, and for the burning of the burnt offering. The latter really means "to burn as

incense". There was the total consumption of what was obnoxious to God as brought sacrificially before Him in the sin offering; but at the same time as the burnt offering the infinite perfections of the One who offered Himself to God were brought out under the testing of the holy fire.

Thus, as contemplating the cup which His Father gave Him — and from which He could not but shrink, knowing what it involved — He says, "Not my will, but thine be done"; "The cup which the Father has given me, shall I not drink it?" (Luke 22: 42; John 18: 11). As the forsaken One He justified God in forsaking Him, "Thou art holy, thou that dwellest amid the praises of Israel", Psalm 22: 3. There was perfect obedience and devotedness to God's glory in a Man, even as in the place of sin and death, and as bearing the full judgment of sin. He was tested by the fire of all that God was in holiness as against sin; nothing but perfection was found in Him. God was glorified in that blessed Man, His beloved Son. It is all this precious side of things which comes before us in the burnt-offering aspect of the sufferings and death of Christ. The intense searching and testing of the fire applied to Christ, the beloved Son, only disclosed all His inward perfections and devotedness, and brought the fragrance of it out in sweet savour and blessedness.

He came down from heaven to do the will of God, and to replace by the sacrifice of Himself all the shadows of "sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin ... offered according to the law" (Hebrews 10: 8), in which God took no pleasure. We can well understand the typical significance of those touching words, twice repeated, "*they went both of them together*". The Father had sent the Son to accomplish His will, and the Son had come to do it, and they moved on together in that blessed path which is so clearly and fully presented to us in the Gospel of John. "My food is that I should do the will of him that has sent me, and that I should finish his work", John 4: 34. "My Father worketh hitherto and I work", John 5: 17. "The Son can do nothing of himself save whatever he sees the Father doing: for whatever things *he* does, these things also the Son does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all things which he himself does", John 5: 19, 20. "I am not alone, but I and the Father who has sent me", John 8: 16. "He that has sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, because I do always the things that are pleasing to him", John 8: 29. "I am not alone, for the Father is with me", John 16: 32. Indeed the whole Gospel may be read in the light of these words, "They went both of them together".

"I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you". There had been no suggestion previously in connection with any victim that it would be the subject of the action of resurrection power. This new feature is added in

this type. Isaac would 'come again'! It could not be otherwise for Abraham's faith, considering who Isaac was, and the promises which were divinely bound up with him. And how certain it is of the true Isaac that "the pains of death" must be loosed, "inasmuch as it was not possible that he should be held by its power", Acts 2: 24. The power of resurrection was inherent in Him; He *was* "the resurrection and the life".

The ram was "caught in the thicket by its horns". As the Lamb the Son of God was marked by unblemished and spotless perfection, and meekness in suffering; but the ram speaks of maturity and energy, and its horns are the symbol of strength. It has been truly said that Christ was held by the strength of His love to all the precious work that was needful for the glory of God and the gratification of the Father's heart, so that 'many sons' might be brought in. On the ground of His being offered up for a burnt offering every thought and purpose of the blessed God can be brought into effect. Nothing will be wanting to fill the heart of God with perfect satisfaction.

"The God whom we have known,
Well known in Jesus' love;
Rests in the blessing of His own,
Before Himself above". (72:1)

Christ is the First-born among many brethren, who will be conformed to His image for the satisfaction of the love of God, and He gets the bride as the satisfaction of His own heart. Such are the wonderful results of His delivering "himself up for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour", Ephesians 5: 2.

GENESIS 24

Genesis 24

This is a chapter of profound interest because it is a divine picture of what is going on at the present moment — the wondrous fruit of the Father's thoughts and purposes. The true Isaac has been offered up, and now the blessed work of securing a bride for Him is going on. In chapter 23 we have the death of Sarah, the vessel of promise; and now what comes to light is the purpose of the Father, and an object for the love of the Son — the bride. Sarah's death typifies the passing, for the time, of Israel and the promises in relation to the earth, in order that heavenly blessings and relationships may come in. The Son, in figure, has gone through death and taken up a heavenly position, and He gets the bride.

Promises seem to stand chiefly in relation to that which has come in contrary to God. Every manifestation of the power of evil in this world was met by promise. But there was something prior to that, and greater than that; there was what God had treasured in His heart before there was any movement of sin; His eternal purposes of love. There were purposes formed when God had nothing to consider but His own love. Promises came in in answer to the manifestations of the power of evil. Eternal life is the crown of promise, the consummation and summing up of all that God brings in on that line; the blessed answer to sin, death, and Satan's power; the complete triumph of God in relation to all these things. I think it would also be true to say that promise is chiefly connected with the earth, but purpose brings heaven and heavenly relationships into view. Isaac is typically the heavenly Christ; the One who went into death to lay a basis for the effectuation of all the purposes of the Father; the particular aspect of the purpose seen here is that He gets a bride.

What we have typically in this chapter is something the hearts of all saints should be conversant with. I think we might say that we ought to understand it by reason of our own exercises, and what the Spirit of God is doing with us.

We cannot read this chapter quite in a gospel sense, for the evangelist goes out to proclaim the grace of God to such as are utterly unsuitable, but in this chapter the servant goes out to find a bride suited to be united to Isaac. The evangelist's business is to speak well of his God, and to tell every poor sinner whose ear he can get of God's attitude of grace in Christ. He sees men in their deep need and sin, and brings the grace of God in Christ to them. There is the ministry of the gospel and the ministry of the assembly. The ministry of the gospel tells me what there is for me, and the ministry of the assembly tells me what there is for Christ. It is the latter we have come to in this chapter.

The bride must, in the first place, be suitable in origin; those of Canaanitish origin were not suitable for Isaac. We have all read Romans 3; when the evangelist stands up to preach he often tells his hearers that that chapter is their photograph as in God's sight, and he presents the grace of God to them, and shows how it can meet them in every part of their deep need and ruin. You do not look for moral beauty in the sinner; you try to bring before him that he has none, but that he may have Christ as his righteousness and beauty. You could not think of persons as described in Romans 3 being a bride for Christ. But that side of things is not brought before us at all in Rebecca as a type; she is not seen as needing anything to be removed or cleansed from her. She is seen as kindred with Isaac to begin with. If a man can say, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man", he is morally of quite a different order from the man described in Romans 3; he is morally kindred to Christ. In Matthew the Lord owns as His kindred "whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in the heavens"; in Mark it is, "whosoever shall do the will of God"; in Luke it is, "those who hear the word of God and do it". This makes it very plain who are kindred to Him. Such are the product of divine generation and workmanship. When the Lord was here He became very attractive to certain people; He found that which was responsive to Himself.

I believe that John's gospel has the bride very much in view. John had seen the bride in vision as she will be in the future; and at the beginning of his gospel he tells us that John the baptist recognised that the Son of God was the Bridegroom, and that He alone was entitled to have the bride. We may well suppose that John's gospel has in view the formation of bridal character and affection. The line on which the bride comes in is a divine work in souls; through the grace and working of God what is suitable for Christ is produced. The servant goes out to find a suitable bride for Isaac; he does not find an unsuitable one and make her suitable. She was suitable because she was, in figure, of divine generation. That is the true secret of all response to Christ; no one would appreciate Christ at all if there was not some thing in their hearts that was kindred with Christ. A man who delights in the law of God after the inward man, and who gets spiritual freedom by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus making him free from the law of sin and death, and who has the Spirit of Christ, is kindred with Christ.

We cannot make the bride individual, though individuals partake of the divine nature. Every one of the individuals that make up the bride is appreciative of Christ and responsive to Him, so that the Spirit can invest them with divine ornaments. When the Lord was here on earth He attracted to Himself just as a magnet attracts what is kindred to itself. Wherever there was a divine work in

the souls of men they were attracted, and when responded to He delighted to put wonderful ornaments on them.

The servant found Rebecca by the spirit of grace which came out in the way of excess. She not only answered his request for a drink, but she went beyond what he asked, and drew water for his camels also. It was a peculiar touch of grace, which marked her as the one appointed for Isaac, and as suitable to be adorned with the ring and bracelets. As the fruit of divine working or sowing, persons are found who have moral features suited to Christ. There would be no treasure and no pearl if there had not been the sowing and ground prepared by the Father to receive the seed and give it productiveness. There is thus produced and brought to light a generation suitable to be adorned with spiritual ornaments. It has been said that the Lord did much for the disciples which was afterwards the work of the Spirit. And I think we may look at the Lord's ministry to His disciples as a putting on the ring and the bracelets. He brought forth entirely new conceptions of the divine pleasure; a new kind of moral beauty that was perfect in Himself, and would become theirs as they appreciated Him. He thus invested them with one precious ornament after another. He was really investing them with what He was Himself, so that they might set Him forth. He became their excellency and ornament (Isaiah 4: 2); the hidden man of their hearts was adorned with the characteristics and moral features of Christ (see 1 Peter 3: 4), as set forth in His word, which was really expressive of Himself. It is precious to keep that word, for as we keep it we are adorned; what Christ is becomes excellency and ornament to us.

In the course of our reading of this book we have had various aspects of the mission of the Spirit brought before us. We have seen Him, in figure, given as power to set aside the flesh. Another type of the Spirit is the well, the Spirit as the source of divine refreshment. Now in this chapter we see in the servant a new aspect of the Spirit, a beautiful type; He is sent to find and bring the bride. The thought of the bride originates with the Father, and the mission of the Spirit is to bring her to Christ.

Eve was a type of the assembly before sin came in, and we must put Eve and Rebecca together. Eve gives us the bride purely from the side of the divine sovereignty and work which formed her; there was no type of exercise on her part. God took a rib and builded a woman, and brought her to the man; it was all God's doing. But in Rebecca we see intelligent exercise and the moral features of the bride, and in the servant the Spirit is set forth as the One who puts these exercises of affection in movement. Rebecca has to take the journey, too, to Isaac; so that we get here the history of the bride on the line of intelligent exercise and movement. In Ephesians 1 we get the purpose of

God; and in chapter 2 we get the work of God, which involves the formation of new and quickened affections.

Rebecca was brought to a tent; that is, it is a figure of Christ's present compensation, not what the church will be to Him in heaven or eternity. Its application is to the present time. It is a character of things brought about now in the affections of saints that is illustrated in this chapter. It is a spiritual movement that brings saints in their affections to where Christ is so that they may be a comfort to Him. It is blessed to think that Christ may have present compensation, and that He may find it in us. He has lost His mother — Israel — the vessel of promise; she is dead, but He has compensation. Indeed, nothing that was represented in Sarah is lost; it is perpetuated and cherished in the assembly. Then the church is the witness to Him of His Father's love, for she is the object His Father's love has secured to Him. The tent is a present idea. The Lord has that which is present compensation to Him. The thought of it ought to awaken profound interest in our hearts. We may have said, "Christ for me", but the question is, do we desire to be for Christ? That would be compensation for Him.

Rebecca, when the servant first saw her, was marked by grace; it was that which the servant looked for, and by which he found her; if she were of Isaac's kindred she must be recognised as such by being in the grace of it. When the Lord was on earth there were those whom He could recognise as His kindred.

It has been said that the Lord recognised in those around Him something of the proper features and beauty of the church. He saw that in His brethren which He could love, not only in a sovereign way but in a complacent way. He saw a company who did the will of God, and heard the word of God; they were like Himself; and He could say, These are my mother and my brethren. They were kindred to Him, and the grace of it came out. Thomas said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him"; and Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast words of life eternal".

Rebecca established her genealogy; "I am the daughter of Bethuel" (verse 24). It has to be done morally now, so that what is of the Spirit of Christ may be seen; nothing else will do. Those who love what is of God, and are attracted to it whenever they come in contact with it, are material for the bride.

There is not always much room for the Spirit! The servant was entertained; there was room and provender for him, and his proposals were accepted: that is very important. I wonder if we have all accepted the proposal? I suppose the acceptance of the proposal is when the soul comes to this, No one has any title to me but Christ, and I delight to be for Him. "Forget also thine own

people, and thy father's house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty", Psalm 45: 10, 11. There was willingness to go; Rebecca said, "I will go": that is a very important word. The servant was exercised about the willingness of the woman (verse 5). There is a remarkable word in Psalm 110: 3, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power"; that is, when the sceptre of His might has been sent out of Zion. That is the way souls are made willing. It is by the powerful influence of Christ brought to bear upon the heart by the Spirit. When the Spirit is entertained the result is that souls decide for Christ. I do not mean sinners deciding for the Saviour, but saints deciding for Christ in the sense that He is entitled to possess them wholly, and in free affection they give themselves to Him.

If we accept the proposal, it becomes the occasion of special enrichment to us. When the proposal was accepted, and Rebecca was given up to the servant, there was no longer any reserve on his part; he brought out all the wealth with which he had been entrusted for the bride. He brought forth "silver articles, and gold articles, and clothing, and he gave them to Rebecca". I think this suggests a further endowment; the Spirit making the saints conscious of being set in the value of redemption, and in deliverance as its fruit, so that the love of God and the infinite thoughts of blessing to which that love has given birth can be enjoyed in perfect freedom. The Spirit can now open up all His treasures — all that is connected with Christ as in death and resurrection, and as glorified. 'Silver articles' would speak of what stands in connection with the death of Christ as showing His title to possess us through redemption. We know the price His love has paid that He might have us for Himself. We are set in the wealth and blessedness which is the answer to that precious death. But 'gold' articles seem to suggest what is necessitated by what God is, so that He may be revealed and known, and the saints filled into His fullness. In John 14 - John 16 we see the Spirit as enriching the saints with all that is connected with Christ as having gone to the Father.

Then the 'clothing' is very important. It is a wonderful thing to see how the Spirit can clothe saints so that they become descriptive of Christ. We not only see this in Scripture, but we can see it in real life in the saints. Did you never see something in a brother or sister which made you wish you were like him or her? When the Spirit is free, the wealth and blessedness of Christ can be put upon the soul that loves Him. The question is: What kind of ornaments do we want to display? We see a marked contrast in Isaiah 3 and 4. All the ornaments that women wear are spoken of in chapter 3 and they are all going to be blighted, and instead of them will be the utmost wretchedness. Then chapter 4 speaks of Christ as the One who shall be for beauty and glory, and

for ornament for those who have escaped. Their movements then would show Him off; it is Christ that is to be displayed.

There may be a suggestion, too, in these jewels of the gifts which Christ has given to the assembly to adorn her through ministry with all that is of God and of Himself. The gifts are a token of His love and deep interest in her, and every gift is really an expression of Himself, and in so far as we get the good of it we are adorned with what is of Himself. The bestowal of gifts is a precious activity of the love of Christ, for the gifts are the evidence of His triumph, and the proof that He is alive. They come from the ascended Christ, and are for the increase of spiritual wealth so that we may grow up to a perfect correspondence with Him, and so be formed in the true character of the bride.

If we do not come to the Lord's Supper in something of the affections of the bride we shall not eat it aright. And that raises the question of the veil, for I suppose the veiled — or covered — woman comes in in 1 Corinthians 11 as a kind of figure of the assembly in suited conditions for the eating of the Supper. She is for Him; she is His glory; she does not want anyone else to see her. As soon as Rebecca saw Isaac she covered herself; she was now to be exclusively for him. When we come to the Supper we are in the presence of the greatest thing in the universe — the love of Christ. We used to dwell on His dying to put away sins; then that He died to make an end of all that was offensive to God; but a big step further is to see that He came into death to let out all that was in the heart of the blessed God, and all that was in His own heart; it is not merely what is removed, but what is brought in. The Son has come in holy and perfect affections into the place of death, and has brought in His own love and the love of God, and as we drink into that there is bridal formation. It is good to think of the sin offering, for it is most holy; Scripture puts great emphasis on the holiness of the sin offering; it is spoken of in the same words as the holiest of all. It is most holy, but it is connected with the removal of sin. But the love which is brought in is far greater than the sin which was put away; it is infinitely precious, and it forms the bride, for as we drink into it we are formed in bridal affections.

He says, "This is my body which is for you". He gave Himself in love for the assembly; all the fragrance and perfection of His Person and love came out in death. "In that death all love was centred". That is what we come to in eating the Supper, and the apprehension of it would make a Rebecca of the saints. His death is wondrous also because it is the expression of His love to the Father. "That the world may know that I love the Father". The thoughts of the Father can now come into effect; for He died "that also he should gather

together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad". The saints can now be brought into unity, which is a distinctive feature of the church.

The Spirit has come, sent by the Father, in order to carry out a wonderful mission; that the assembly should be secured as present compensation for Christ. "Isaac was comforted after his mother's death". Think of what the Lord suffered as having lost Israel, and all the promises connected with Israel! But He gets the church to make up for it. I suppose we have all heard this many times, but how are we affected by it? And to what extent are our hearts put in motion so as to get the gain of it?

It is most blessed to see, at the end, the Spirit and the bride in concert; Revelation 22: 17. I met a man lately who said, "It is all going to end in Laodicea". I said, "It seems to me it is all going to end in the Spirit and the bride saying Come!" Of course both statements are true, but the latter is the end which all divine working has in view. We see the assembly in Philadelphia representing, in a way, everything that will be caught up, while Laodicea represents everything that will be left behind. The true characteristics of the bride are seen in Philadelphia; that assembly may be taken as representative of the bride; and she is seen at the end in concert with the Spirit. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come". It is like Rebecca moving along in concert with the servant,

and in the good of all he has brought. Invested with every precious token of the Father's wealth and of the love of the Son! A wonderful endowment! The love of Christ comes especially before us in the Supper. There may be varieties in conditions of soul, but when we come together to eat the Supper the love of Christ, and the thoughts of His love, come into view for us all.

GENESIS 25

Genesis 25

In the beginning of this chapter we read that "Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac" (verse 5); and after the death of Abraham, "God blessed his son Isaac" (verse 11). This suggests that all promise and blessing is substantiated in Christ, the risen One. The typical significance of the death of Abraham is that promises give place to the One in whom they are all made good. We have something more than promise now. We have every promise of God substantiated; the yea and amen of every promise is in Jesus Christ, the Son of God; positive blessing is in Him, and there is a full revelation of God. Isaac dwells at Beer-lahai-roi — the well of the living One who reveals Himself. The great spring of all blessing is the revelation of God; He is the living One who reveals Himself. "Thou God seest me" is a solemn truth, but it is a much greater thing for me to see God as revealed in Christ, and that is the thought here. It is not that He sees me, but that I may see Him as revealed in perfect grace. Isaac came from this well when Rebecca met him, and he dwelt there; it was the south country; there is plenty of sunshine there!

The next thing is that Ishmael dies in the presence of all his brethren. No doubt Ishmael and his brethren set forth Israel after the flesh; there are twelve princes spoken of here. There is a day coming when all the legal and servile elements of Israel's relation to God will pass out: that is typified by the death of Ishmael. We are in the time when the energy of faith casts Ishmael out of the house, because the spirit of sonship alone can have place there; Christ only can have place there. We are privileged to see now that man in the flesh and under law must pass out; no thought of divine blessing can be introduced on that line. But the time is coming when Israel will have to see Ishmael die; they will have to learn that blessing must come in on new covenant terms, and in connection with Isaac, and the well of the living One who reveals Himself. Ishmael is a figure of man as in the flesh and under law, but in connection with Isaac we have the covenant and the well; the springing up of all God can be for man on new covenant terms, and of what man can be for God as blessed in Christ. What a moment it will be in Israel's history when they discover that as in the flesh and under law they are under death, and that they can only cry out in deep need. As soon as they do so God will open their eyes and they will see the well. They will see all divine blessing secured for them in Christ, and through the revelation of God in grace. They will "change their man", and as God says, "They shall all know me".

It is the same thing in principle with ourselves; we have to go the same way. Perhaps most of us have been very much on the line of Hagar and Ishmael, and not of Isaac. But we have had to find out that we could not get a bit of blessing on that line. So that many Scriptures that apply to Israel and their self-righteous state are useful for us. Ishmael is a type of man in the flesh, but what God provides for man in grace is "a well of water" — typically the Spirit of another Man. It is very wonderful that even Israel, after all their pride and self-righteousness, will be brought to see where blessing is; that it is all in Christ on the line of promise, to be received and enjoyed on the principle of faith: and then they will come into the blessedness and life-giving power of the well.

From chapter 25: 19 we begin a new history — that of Isaac — and a new chapter of exercises in connection with the promises of God. And Jacob comes into view as a type of God's ways with His earthly people, and all the discipline through which they will eventually learn their lessons, and be brought to God's house. All of it most instructive, too, in its application to ourselves, for we all go, in measure, through similar exercises.

At every step we see God shutting up faith to Himself. Rebecca, like Sarah, is barren until Jehovah intervenes. And then, when He *has* intervened, this becomes the occasion of another exercise. She has to learn that there are two children, representing two distinct kinds of people; a people according to the priority and strength of nature, and a people according to the choice of divine sovereignty. And Rebecca has to learn to let every natural thought go, and to see things purely in the light of God's sovereignty.

It is interesting to put together the exercises of the three principal women of Genesis: Eve, Sarah, and Rebecca. Eve had exercises and lessons to learn in connection with Cain and Abel; Sarah had to learn in connection with Ishmael and Isaac; and Rebecca in connection with Esau and Jacob. In a certain way the lessons all correspond, but there is a different element in each. The importance of it is that we have to go through Eve's, Sarah's, and Rebecca's exercises, and my impression is that they come in that order.

I would suggest that in connection with Cain and Abel the lesson to be learnt is that a divine seed is "not of blood"; and in connection with Ishmael and Isaac we are taught that it is not "of the will of the flesh"; and in connection with Esau and Jacob we learn it is not "of the will of man". The divine generation is spoken of in John 1 in this way, "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor the will of man". And these three lessons were worked out typically in connection with these three women. Perhaps we might say that Eve's exercise corresponded with Romans 3, Sarah's exercise with

Romans 7, and Rebecca's with Romans 9. "Not of blood" suggests that a divine seed does not come in on the line of natural descent. Eve thought, when Cain was born, that she had got Christ; but she had to learn that sinful parents could only beget sinful children, and that on the line of natural generation there is nothing for God. That is the first lesson we have to face. We have to find out that, as born into this world, we are all wrong. Eve learned her lesson before Abel was born, for she called him 'vanity'. She had called Cain 'acquisition'; she said, "I have got a man"! But we all have to learn that as born into this world we are marked by vanity.

When that is, in some measure, discovered, the next thought often is to improve oneself, to do something to put things right; to cultivate and repress the flesh. That is Ishmael, the will of the flesh; man setting up to correct himself and put things right, and using the law to establish his own righteousness. It was Sarah's exercise to learn that all that was of the flesh must be cast out as of no divine value. We have to learn that a divine seed can only be secured on the line of promise and on the principle of faith, and that all blessing is in Christ. Isaac must be crowned and Ishmael cast out. Sarah had to learn that neither flesh, nor anything that flesh could take up, such as the law, could help in relation to the fulfilment of divine promise, or the introduction of a divine seed.

Then Rebecca had to learn that it was in every way a question of divine sovereignty. The will of man has no place whatever. The will of man would prefer Esau to Jacob. It has often been said that Esau was the better and nobler man of the two. But Rebecca had to learn that God is sovereign, and to allow His sovereignty to guide her affections. God made known to her that the elder should serve the younger, and this was purely on the principle of sovereignty, for Romans 9 tells us that the children had not done good or evil when this was revealed to her. God said, as it were, I am going to have My way. Nothing excludes man like divine sovereignty, which purposes and acts just because God purposes and wills to act and to appoint, and for no other reason whatever. Rebecca's affections were formed in the light of what was made known to her; she loved Jacob. She looked at things from the standpoint of divine sovereignty, for Jacob was a supplanter; he was not at all an attractive character naturally.

Men would say, Why did God choose such a man? But God says, My purpose according to election shall stand, not of works but of him that calls; I am not influenced by the natural character and qualities of men. Do you think we are the kind of people men would have chosen to be ennobled, elevated, and put in the highest place in the universe? The Esau man takes priority in the world,

and there are often qualities in him that you can admire, but God is not influenced by that. His sovereignty shuts the will of man out completely, and until things are seen to rest on the basis of divine sovereignty there will never be a true spirit of worship. Worship is based on the recognition of sovereignty, we bow before the all-wise God who acts on motives in Himself without any influence from outside. In Romans 9 and Romans 11 we get sovereignty, and the result is Paul bows his head and heart in worship, "O depth of riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and untraceable his ways! ... For of him, and through him, and for him are all things: to him be glory for ever. Amen". In Ephesians we are on ground where everything is of God, whether that which was wrought in Christ or that which is wrought in the saints as of Christ and in Christ. It is the fruit of God taking His own course in sovereignty, and in grace, mercy, and love.

Jacob valued the blessing with all his faults; we can see divine traits coming out in him. Esau manifested himself; he was a man of the field, a hunter: he was marked by self-gratification on natural lines.

But Jacob was a homely man, dwelling in tents; he was marked by simple affections and the pilgrim character. He was the true divine seed, and in result marked by qualities that God could approve. What men esteem highly God does not approve. God loves a man with simple affections, content with a pilgrim life. We have to look at saints from God's point of view, to lose sight of Esau and all his qualities that appeal to nature, and look for qualities that appeal to God. It is easy to get unduly occupied with the crotchets and blemishes you may see in a saint, but the question is, Is he walking in separation to God? Does he love the Lord and love His people? If you find a brother trying, turn him round and look at the other side; there is always another side to a saint. Do not get over occupied with the blemishes, but look at the qualities that God can approve.

Certain things may be true like spots in the sun; people look through their telescopes to find the spots; and it is possible to look at the saints like that! If you look out for excellencies in the saints you will find them, even in a Jacob! There was much that was of the flesh in Jacob, and that needed a life of discipline to subdue and get rid of; but in the end God will be justified in saying, "Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated".

When Esau was tested he proved to be a profane person; a little bit of present gratification was more to him than all the promises of God; a dish of food more than all divine blessing! The New Testament calls him a profane person; he despised and sold his birthright. If we are with God we do not admire such a character. The great question is, Does a man appreciate what is of God?

That is the great mark of saints. It is not that they are better than other people in a human way, but even those of them who tax our patience value the things of God at least in some measure. God deals, and will deal, with all the contrary elements in them by discipline; so that they may end by worshipping. Jacob's last day was his best.

Esau represents Israel who, having given up their hope, are under the power of present things; they are outside the sphere of holiness: profane is in contrast to what is holy. God passes His saints through discipline that they may be partakers of His holiness. Esau in contrast to this was marked by profanity; he was outside the place of holiness. We are in our measure learning to say after God, "Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated". Rebecca loved Jacob, but there was an element of weakness in Isaac's character: he "loved Esau because venison was to his taste". That is a solemn warning for us: we have to be careful about people who minister to our natural tastes. If we allow ourselves to be attracted by people because they minister to what we like naturally, we lose spiritually. I have certain tastes naturally, they are all still there in my flesh just as before I was converted; there may be those who are able to gratify my natural tastes, but if I come under their influence I am sure to be let down. Isaac's weakness came out in that he allowed himself to fall under the influence of Esau, because he put venison in his mouth: it is a very solemn thing to consider.

Rebecca formed a correct judgment because she formed it in the light of divine revelation. There were two elements opposed to each other that she had to take account of, and she turned to God; she inquired of Jehovah, What does it mean? He told her, "The elder shall serve the younger", and she walked in the light of that, and gained by the exercise. Isaac had not this exercise, and he gave Esau a place he ought not to have had. It seems to me that this lay at the root of his weakness in denying his relationship with Rebecca, and his not being able to stand in a place of dignity and supremacy with the Philistines; he lost the wells. His power was lost by allowing his taste for natural things to connect his affections with the wrong man.

GENESIS 26

Genesis 26

This chapter shows the exercises of saints, blessed of God, in relation to the Philistines. We find Isaac dwelling in Gerar: he is amongst the Philistines. In the early part of the previous chapter he was dwelling at the well Beer-lahai-roi — the well of the living One who reveals Himself; that speaks of the saint in his relation with God; enjoying the refreshment in spiritual life and vigour that comes from being in the good of the revelation of God. Isaac dwelt in the south country by that wondrous well: it is in figure the normal place of the saint. But this chapter is taken up with his relations to the Philistines. We find him warned of God not to go to Egypt; and encouraged by divine promises. It seems to me that Jehovah would have encouraged him to hold things confidently even in the presence of the Philistines; but it is just at this point that he failed. He had not confidence to hold his ground. He denied his relationship with Rebecca, a kind of thing Abraham had done twice before, which shows the importance of taking heed to it as a warning. Eventually he was brought back to his true place, so that the Philistines had to acknowledge that God was with him. It is an instructive chapter for us.

The Philistines typify persons who occupy Christian position without having the exercises and experiences of faith. They represent people nominally on Christian ground, who have never participated in the exercises of faith. They have never been subjects of the divine call, the God of glory has never appeared to them, and they have no tent or altar; they have no real link with the testimony of God. This chapter shows the exercise the saint passes through in relation to that class of people. It is only too manifest that there are many outwardly on Christian ground without ever having participated in the divine calling, and having none of the privileges or exercises of faith. Those in the path of faith have to take up exercises in relation to them; we are affected by the character of things around.

The Scripture says, "From these turn away", 2 Timothy 3: 5, and Isaac had to come to that at the end of the chapter; all his exercises were to teach him to do so; then he arrived at his true position and enjoyed it. Have we arrived at our true position in relation to the Christian profession around, so that we can really enjoy with God the portion He intends us to enjoy? We are all liable to surrender what is of God. Isaac was not in type a worldly man, he did not go down to Egypt. Many are like that now, but they suffer from the injurious effect of the presence of the Philistines; and surrender much that they should maintain, and lose practically many sources of divine refreshment.

There is a divine antidote at the beginning of the chapter. Jehovah appeared to Isaac and encouraged him: "Sojourn in this land; and I will be with thee and bless thee". Jehovah was encouraging him to hold confidently to every divine thought even in the presence of the Philistines. God recognised him in the position where he was, and said, "I will be with thee". This should have encouraged him not to surrender. If Isaac had been in the faith of this appearing of Jehovah, and His "I will be with thee", he would not have had any fear of the Philistines. In the end of the chapter he was brought to that, and the chapter is interesting as showing how the elements of weakness in a saint are eliminated. Isaac was brought into his true position so that even the Philistines had to own that Jehovah was with him. The chapter educates us as to how we are brought into the good of the testimony.

The denial of relationship answers somewhat to being ashamed of the testimony. Isaac was ashamed through a selfish fear. The moment I begin to think of myself and how things will affect me, I am on the line of those who seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ. It was said of Onesiphorus, "He was not ashamed of my chain". Isaac conjured up these fears; there was no real ground for them. We create a lot of fears for ourselves when there is no need. David said that Jehovah saved him out of all his troubles; but he said even more than that: he said Jehovah "delivered me from all my fears"! The fears are generally greater than the troubles!

(Psalm 34: 4, 6). Fears often rob us of the privilege of proving that God is with us.

In the end of the chapter the Philistines say, "We saw certainly that Jehovah is with thee". It is good to act towards professing Christians with this thought in our minds, that some day they may have to own, "We saw certainly that God was with thee". They did not see it when Isaac denied his relationship with Rebecca.

The weakness that denies true relationship also exposes saints to the loss of wells; that is, the sources of spiritual refreshment are practically lost. If we are not true to the testimony we are great losers: it is not only loss of testimony to the Lord, but loss to us of the wells. But the chapter leads to the saint occupying the heavenly position: Isaac comes to Beer-sheba, the southern limit of the land, where he is typically on divine territory. He enjoys the character of the place and answers to it: he has his altar, and tent; and he has a well, which answers to the blessedness saints may find in the good of the Spirit. This chapter is instructive as to the line of exercise by which we reach this. We have to learn how to escape from the influence of the Philistines.

What was lacking in Isaac was what the New Testament calls virtue. Peter says, "Have in your faith virtue", that is, moral courage, so that you are able to stand your ground in face of influences that would divert. Isaac was not in a dignified position, and no one is in a dignified position if he has not courage. Many saints — perhaps one might say all — would like to be faithful, would like to follow the Lord; they have desires after Him; but many lack courage spiritually, and are ashamed of the testimony of the Lord. They dread to be despised, dread the cross, are ashamed of the apostle's chain. Paul was a chained prisoner, not fit to be at large! Do we believe that is the place of the testimony? The world has taken up a Christian position, but it has not changed; that is exactly the Philistines. If one takes up the cross one is prepared for reproach, prepared to be regarded as one who is not fit to live. You remember that they said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth"; that fellow was the vessel of divine testimony.

The Philistines represent unconverted people who are in the place of Christian profession, but who have never been affected by divine teaching. These people become sources of moral influence, and true Christians fall under their influence, become ashamed of the testimony, and lose the sources of spiritual refreshment. The Philistine's object is always to take away the wells. In chapter 21 they took a well violently away. I think that might answer to the refusal, on the part of the public profession, to allow the saints of God to come together as such. For many centuries saints were not allowed to meet together as such; they had either to fall in with the established religious order, or be persecuted and often martyred. The great source of spiritual refreshment was taken away.

The digging of the wells in Abraham's time corresponds with the way faith and love laboured in the church's early days in order that there might be springs of divine refreshment; the apostles and many others laboured. But the stopping of the wells came very early in the history of the church. Earthly things were brought in that checked the flow of the Spirit,

so that the gain of His presence was to a large extent hindered from being available as refreshing for saints. Judaism was an earthly system; it was instituted by God, but it was all earthly. Then when the church was set up, it became Satan's object to bring those earthly elements into Christianity, and so stop the wells. "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth". If saints get their minds on things on the earth it is Philistine influence; it is always working, and we are all exposed to it. Ask yourself, Am I getting the full good of the presence of the Spirit? We all admit that the Spirit is here as a

source of divine refreshment; but the question is, Am I getting the good of His presence? If not, earth has got into the well: a Philistine element has come in.

Books are a snare to many. I believe books do more harm than anything else. People can read them in secret, and no one know anything about it. If you knew what many believers read you would say they were thoroughly in the world. There are many who would not go to a theatre or entertainment, or even to a church, and yet they read books that belong to that order of things; and the wells get completely choked so far as they are concerned.

After the matter of Rebecca was settled we see pictures of divine revival. God had said He would bless Isaac, and He did. Faith ever counts upon God being as good as His word. Isaac sowed in that land and reaped a hundred-fold (verse 12), and the blessing became manifest. There was revival in God's grace, a manifested blessing from God with His people, and it provoked the envy of the Philistines. If there is any spiritual prosperity — any movement in the direction of the supply of food for the people of God, any divine fruitfulness — the Philistines' envy soon appears, and there is an attempt to stop the wells. The Philistines will always seek to take away or stop any well of spiritual refreshment that may be dug by the energy of faith. The giving of the hundred-fold was revival on God's part; there had been a lack of energy after Abraham's death, but the blessing of verse 12 gave a little energy to re-open the stopped wells. The digging again of wells is revival on the part of the saints; it is the result of awakened exercise, and of food becoming available. It is not enough that Christians should receive the New Testament doctrine of the presence of the Spirit, or that they should read it in books and subscribe to the fact of it; it is necessary to dig the wells. We all believe the Spirit is here, but what about getting rid of the earthly elements that hinder the flow and availability of the Spirit?

What answers now to digging the wells is that souls wake up to the fact that the Spirit is here, and to the discovery that they are not in the good of His presence. This starts profound exercise, and the discernment of earthly elements that obstruct, and there arises desire and purpose to get rid of them. There is exercise, prayer, and renunciation of things not in keeping with the Spirit; so that the well may flow. The result is that the soul is found in spiritual freshness. But I do not suppose many believers would say that they were as much in spiritual freshness as they would like to be! Digging speaks of exercise and diligence of soul; and there is also a recognition of what has been done in the past. Isaac recognised that Abraham had dug the wells; we have to take account of sources of spiritual refreshment that have been opened by the spiritual energy and labour of men of faith. It is a real exercise

not to lose the gain of any well that has been opened up. Then it is possible to pay some attention to ministry, and yet get no good from it. Ministry tells us what there is to be had; it is like a sign post; but you have to go every step of the way on your feet. There must be spiritual movement and exercise. We do not get to a place by looking at the sign post.

Abraham represents the exercises of faith at the beginning, and Isaac at the end. We ought to be exercised to have the good of all that has been secured by the Lord's grace and the labours of spiritual men. Men laboured at the Reformation to open up wells that had been stopped, and many more precious and refreshing wells have been opened since; and it is for us to be exercised to get the good of all this spiritual labour.

Isaac had to learn that as long as he stopped in Gerar every well was a source of contention. If you go in for spiritual refreshment, and have not moved away from Gerar, every well becomes an occasion of strife. When Isaac moved away he got what answers to the New Testament 'opened door', that is *room* (verse 22). If Christians want spiritual refreshment and help, and freedom to enjoy it, they must withdraw themselves from the confusion of the religious world. As long as they are at Gerar every well only becomes a source of contention; there are no suitable conditions there for the enjoyment in peace of spiritual good! Many have proved that; they want spiritual help, and every bit they get becomes a cause of strife, and they have to retreat from point to point until they realise that they must clear out altogether. Then they reach a spot where there is room for the Spirit of God. In the mercy of God there is a place where there is liberty for the Spirit: it is very largely what saints have been finding these last 90 years. A place of separation from the religious world where the refreshment of the Spirit can be enjoyed. Then Isaac comes to Beer-sheba and Jehovah appears to him, and he secures the well of the oath. He has his tent and altar, and well; in figure the full enjoyment of his true place in relation to God.

It is a great thing to find oneself at Rehoboth. It is what is suggested in 2 Timothy; what is opened up is the path of separation; we are to depart from iniquity even if found among those called by the Christian name; and we are to follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. That is what answers to Rehoboth, which means 'Broadways'; it is a path of faith where there is room for the Spirit; it is spiritually a large place; there is nothing narrow or sectarian about it; but it is a narrow path outwardly. The result of being found there is that faith soon goes up to Beer-sheba. The effect of Isaac getting into a right position and enjoying what was proper to it, was recognition even by the Philistines; they had to say, "We saw

certainly that Jehovah is with thee". We ought to look for that, the recognition that God is with His saints. In ultimate result the Gentiles will have to own that God is with His people Israel; but all these things are anticipated in the church. If Christians walk in love, and enjoy the privileges that God has called them into, the world will have to recognise that God is with them. Eventually the Lord will bring about in power that everyone will recognise those He approves; "I will make them to come and worship before thy feet and to know that I have loved thee", Revelation 3.

It has been said that every dispensation ends morally as it began. The assembly began very brightly, and my impression is it will end brightly: the end will be the Spirit and bride saying, Come. On the side of mere profession everything ends in Laodicea, which is spued out of Christ's mouth; but on the side of divine working everything will end in the Spirit and bride saying, Come. All the features of love, devotedness, obedience — everything that marked the assembly at the beginning and made her beautiful — will come out in the end. God is working in thousands of hearts to bring this about.

In this chapter there is a picture of revival; Isaac at the end has a tent and an altar; he enjoys approach to God and he has a well, in type the refreshment of the Spirit. It is a beautiful picture of what God can do in reviving the saints.

The contrast is seen in Esau; he despised the birthright and his affections were connected with two Canaanitish women. Isaac's position at the end of this chapter may be looked at as suggesting Philadelphian revival, but in Esau we see rather a picture of Laodicea. We should covet to be on the line of Philadelphia; not setting up to be it, but seeking it with our whole heart.

GENESIS 27 AND 28

Genesis 27; Genesis 28

Chapter 27 is rather a sorrowful one, because it exhibits to us the low state into which men of true faith can sink. The lack of perception in Isaac, and the deception of Jacob, suggested and furthered by Rebecca, and the want of intelligence in Isaac even when pronouncing a true divine blessing, are all sorrowful and humbling. The chapter shows Isaac out of communion and deceived; it shows Rebecca and Jacob, though anxious to get Isaac's blessing for the latter, doing deceitful things to get it. If these things came out in such as Isaac and Jacob, and have been put on record, we may be sure they represent conditions into which the people of God may come in other days. They are written for our admonition. The only thing that really stands in the chapter is the blessing of Jacob; that could not be reversed.

Isaac seems to set before us a true saint, but one who had not learned to judge and refuse his natural tastes. We are told in a previous chapter that "venison was to his taste": his natural tastes brought him under the influence of the wrong man, for he loved Esau, the one who ministered to them; so he entirely failed to be in line with the distinctive truth of the moment. The distinctive truth of the moment was God's sovereignty, according to which the elder was to serve the younger. Rebecca, with all her faults, had learned through exercise that God must be sovereign, and that the younger was to be served by the elder; so she loved Jacob. But Isaac's affections were on natural lines and influenced by natural tastes; so he loved the wrong man: he was under the influence of Esau. It is a warning for us.

Blessing would have come to Jacob apart from his deception, because it was secured by God's sovereign purpose, and did not need any engineering or planning or deception on the part of Rebecca and Jacob to secure it. Jacob himself had to learn in the end to cross his hands. The lesson that is especially connected with Jacob is sovereignty, and he learnt it at the end. He put his left hand on Manasseh, and Joseph says, That is wrong. Oh no, he says, I know what I am doing. He had learned divine sovereignty, and that made him a worshipper; he is the only man in Hebrews 11 that is spoken of as a worshipper.

It is a sad thing when a saint's eyes get dim. One might say that morally Isaac's lack of perception was traceable to the gratification of his natural tastes. A man who has never learned to deny his natural tastes is sure to be influenced by what he likes, and thus diverted from the mind of God. So that

what we see in Isaac in this chapter is a serious warning: even when he pronounced the blessing it was unintelligently done.

Moses was the contrast to this: he had learned to refuse all that must have been naturally attractive to him — a great place in Egypt as son of Pharaoh's daughter. He had learned sovereignty; for he had learned that a company of despised brickmakers were the people of God — the object of His sovereign choice — and he chose to suffer affliction with them. He refused his natural tastes, and followed his spiritual tastes, and therefore he had spiritual perception; when he came to the end of his course *his* eyes were not dim; and in Deuteronomy 33 he blessed the people intelligently. And even Jacob in Genesis 49 saw clearly what was before his sons at the end of days; he could speak of all the crookedness and perversity which would come out in their history, and also of the blessing which would come in by Jehovah's salvation. But Isaac blessed unintelligently, for he was deceived.

When Isaac said, "He shall be blessed", he was conscious that the blessing could not be withdrawn. That is the one bright spot in chapter 27, the one thing that stands — "He shall be blessed"; that is, blessing according to election cannot be reversed. If we had the faith of that we should not need to be scheming. Rebecca and Jacob were two schemers; they were a curious mixture. They had true faith in divine blessing, and a true desire to get it, but a great practical lack of confidence in God. It may be that they realised Isaac's weakness, and that he would favour Esau, and they could not trust God to bring about His purpose in His own way. What they sought was good, and, in a way, God allowed their plans to succeed; but for all that, the way they took to get it only landed them in exercise and sorrow, and discipline of a lifelong character. It is a very rare thing that human planning has not some element of deception in it, and in the government of God this always brings discipline. If we recognise divine sovereignty we must also recognise divine wisdom. He is not only "wonderful in counsel" but also "excellent in working". It is better to trust Him to bring things about in His own excellent way. If we are in the way of His will we do not need to scheme to make sure that things will not fail.

In this connection it is of interest to note that Jacob represents the earthly people, and it is in relation to earthly things that saints are apt to scheme and plan in order to bring about what seems to be good. But this never adds to the good, or makes it more certain or secure. It hinders the heart from knowing and receiving it as purely of God, and from having in rest and peace the assurance that He has had His way, and that we have not brought it about ourselves. Any element of deception is sure to bear sorrowful fruit. Both

Rebecca and Jacob suffered bitterly for many a long year, and, so far as we know, Rebecca never again saw the son she loved.

We get Isaac and Jacob blessing in this way, but none of Jacob's sons did. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were great heads of blessing in a way that none of the other patriarchs were: the blessing was covenanted with them. Jacob's sons were not vessels of promise like these three. "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob ... this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations", Exodus 3: 15. What God is — His name and His memorial — came out in relation to these three men.

It is interesting to see that Esau is coupled with Jacob in Hebrews 11: 20. It shows that from the divine side there was blessing even for Esau; but Esau did not appreciate the birthright. That is why he drops out of the blessing in the end. We might say that he wanted the blessing without the Blesser. Esau is called a profane person; he did not value the promises which would have formed a spiritual link between God and his soul. He wanted blessing in connection with the earth, but did not value the birthright, which would have connected him with the olive tree of promise, and secured him a part in Christ and in all that Christ would bring in. He did not want that; he wanted earthly blessing, and that alone. "The blessing of Abraham" was not to his taste; and in the end we get a prophetic touch, that he would come out as a lawless man. It is said, "When thou rovest about thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck" (verse 40). He would be found lawless. He was profane at the start, and would be lawless at the finish. So he drops out of blessing when all the nations of the earth are blessed. He will be cut off for ever. See Obadiah 10, 18; Malachi 1: 4. A life of piety would preserve us from scheming and deception. Do we bring God into everything? If we do, we do not need to be planning and contriving in a fleshly way. Paul's planning in 1 Corinthians 9 was very different. There it is the grace that would go down to the lowest point to bring the knowledge of God to the sinner. It is not planning and contriving to gain some object for himself; it was divine planning, the sober calculation of love for the good of others. It is as if you could imagine Rebecca and Jacob planning to bring about the blessing of Esau!

In chapter 28 we get the commencement of Jacob's life of discipline. It opens with Isaac calling Jacob and blessing him; he might have rebuked him. It is remarkable that, at the outset of the life of discipline that Jacob was about to suffer for more than twenty years in consequence of his deception, God does not refer to it. It is in keeping with what God had said before he was born. Nothing had altered the divine purpose; "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance".

Jacob was really a fugitive, fleeing from the wrath of his brother. There is still a thought typically of the bride being of the bridegroom's kindred, but what is chiefly in view is Jacob's experience away from the land of promise. It is a picture of the Jews today, fugitive from their land, looked at as the elect of God for earthly blessing, but suffering governmentally the consequences of their natural character. They are a by-word for selfishness and deception all the world over; but God has His eye upon them and they will eventually be brought back. What makes this chapter so interesting is to see how God came in at the very outset of Jacob's life of wandering and discipline to make known to him that he was the subject of the care and interest of heaven, and of angelic protection, and that Jehovah's purpose stood fast in faithfulness and grace. Indeed He does not say one word as to Jacob's past, or any of his crookedness. Sovereignty comes out as clearly in this as it did in what was said before he was born. He had not done any evil then, but now that his character had come to light, it did not change God's purpose. "I am Jehovah, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed". If we look at Jacob today, what a history of departure and wickedness we see! But they are beloved for the fathers' sakes, and the fathers were beloved because Jehovah chose to love them sovereignly!

And if we look at saints today in what may be called their Jacob character, how much comes to light in them that is not in accord with a heavenly calling! Much that is not at all in keeping with God's house! Jacob felt he was not in accord with the house of God. But God addresses His people from His own standpoint of a purpose and grace that was given them in Christ Jesus before the ages of time. We had done nothing then, good or bad, so that if we had a place in His purpose it must have been wholly in sovereign love. And nothing that may transpire afterwards will or can change it. To Jacob the land was given, a numerous seed ensured to inherit it, and divine faithfulness pledged to keep him in all places, and to bring him into the land of promise. "I will not leave thee until *I have done* what I have spoken to thee of".

How this gives us to know the grace and faithfulness of the God we have to do with, and to know what is the true source and security of all our blessing! Its character, too, as being entirely planned and purposed by God: it can never be diminished or curtailed. It never comes down to the thought or measure of the believer. *He* must come to *it* in all its fulness and preciousness. It will yet be said of Jacob, "What hath God wrought!"

It may be said, Why should all this be presented to a man whose course had been so unworthy of God, and who was apparently so completely out of accord with it? Well, if grace will not humble and subdue a man, what will? It

is as God is known, and gets a place in man's heart, that restless flesh is subdued. See how God deals with Corinthian carnality, and with Galatian legality! Does He not in each case open up His own purpose and grace, and tell the misguided saints of their portion in it? Man's way would be to correct this, that, and the other — to deal with the manifestations of spiritual defect and departure. But God's way is to bring Himself, and all His grace in Christ, and His unfailing faithfulness, into the faith and affections of His poor saints, and thus restore them from the deepest inwards of their being. He would have things healed from the bottom, no mere surface work. If God in known grace and faithfulness fills the heart there is the most blessed security against every intrusion of the world and the flesh. Can we not recognise that such a way of dealing is worthy of God, and indeed the only true way of preservation or recovery.

With Jacob it was as it often is. There was no happy response to the vision of grace. He recognised, indeed, that "this place" was "none other but the house of God", but he was not at home there. "He was afraid". A man who has been on the line of fleshly scheming and natural activity feels all out of place in the holy atmosphere of God's house. It took more than twenty years of discipline to prepare him to come back to that house intelligently and in moral suitability. But it is often God's way to give a soul at the very outset a divine impression of where He means to bring it. There is something impressed on the heart which remains there, and which can be appealed to, and worked upon (see chapter 31: 13). He says, "I am the God of Bethel, etc". God had not forgotten it and Jacob had not, and God could work on the impression that had been made on Jacob's soul! It was the spot God had in His mind for Jacob, and He gave Jacob to know it. God had made Himself known there in grace and faithfulness, and that is the character of the house.

Jacob says, "This stone shall be God's house". It is a principle that what God gives us to rest on becomes our testimony. The pillow becomes a pillar; it was God's grace and faithfulness that He put under Jacob's head as a resting place! What you rest on becomes your testimony.

The ladder indicates connection between heaven and earth. Instead of heaven being a long way off it is very near. God assured Jacob that He was the object of the interest and care of heaven. You can say to any poor believer who is as crooked as Jacob,

"You are an object of care to heaven; and angels are looking after you! Ministering spirits are sent forth to care for you, you do not need to be afraid of anything". The house is God's place here, and heaven is not a long way off;

the natural man thinks it is, but Jacob learnt that it was near and that its gate is here on earth.

There is a millennial thought in connection with it. It suggests the coming day when angels will ascend and descend on the Son of man; John 1: 51. Then "the heavens shall hear the earth". Heaven will be near. That will be in the millennium, but if we know what it is to be in the house of God, it is not merely near, but we are in its gate. Angels ascend and descend; their place of service is here below; they are here where saints need them. The prophet said, "Open the young man's eyes", and then he saw that the mountain was full of chariots. They ascend to report what they have been doing, and then they come back to this world. It is not that they come down and go up, but they are down here in service, and go up to report about it. In the millennium the blessedness of heaven will find an answer in the blessedness of earth: it will be God's will done on earth as in heaven. Earth and heaven will be very near to each other. The same character of things will be on earth as in heaven.

The communications of grace led to a definite point being reached in Jacob's spiritual history; the setting up of the pillar represents that. He was not up to the grace presented to him; he did not feel at home in it; but it made an impression on his soul: he recognised that the grace in which God had spoken to him ought to be preserved in testimony here in the power of the Holy Spirit. I daresay some of us have known what it was to set up a pillar. We have recognised that certain things have come into our souls as light from God, and that true testimony was connected with them. If you once recognise a thing as being of God, and that you ought to be true to it, you will never be right or happy until you return to it. When Jacob returned to Bethel he added a drink offering. He was then in accord with the place, and in divine joy, so that there was something for God. Jacob was away from Bethel for over twenty years: "Thus I was twenty years in thy house" (chapter 31: 38 - 41). It was a history of disappointment and dissatisfaction; and he was never happy until he came back to the point where he set up a pillar.

The Lord appealed to Israel, "I remember thee and the love of thy espousals". He spoke to them then as He spoke to Jacob here; He never forgot it, and He will bring them back to it. He brought Jacob back, and He will bring us all back to the point where we have set up a pillar; every saint is bound to come back to the best point he has reached in his soul's history with God; the faithfulness of God is bound up in it.

Jacob's vow — poor as it was — indicated that he had a sense there should be a place and portion for God; that this must be the end God had in view; and his vow committed him to the furtherance of it. So God never forgot it. The

idea of a vow is that there should be something for God, something dedicated to Him.

GENESIS 29 TO 35

Genesis 29 - Genesis 35

This chapter gives us the end to which Jacob was all along being led. The chapters from 29 give his history and experiences in Padan-Aram. No doubt that history is a type of the position of Israel as away from the land of their inheritance, and without an altar; suffering the consequences of their own conduct, reaping the fruit of their natural character and of their unbelief. It is a sorrowful and humiliating history on Jacob's side, yet we see Jehovah's faithfulness, and grace, and providential care on the other side. God does not leave him, but deals with him, and exercises him, and speaks to him, and protects him again and again, until after twenty years he is ready to come to the place of blessing — Bethel.

Though typical of Israel, all this has an application to the saints now, because the same conditions of unbelief and weakness are often found in the people of God, and involve similar exercises and discipline. It is blessed, too, to know that the God of Jacob is our God, and He never departs from His own grace and faithfulness. But it is solemn to think of a saint being so long without an altar; Jacob had no altar all the time he was in Padan-Aram, and he was in idolatrous associations. What corresponds to the altar now is the opportunity to take up priestly relations with God. The saint is privileged to take up priestly relations with God in regard to himself, to his household, to God's interests in the gospel, and to everything else connected with God's testimony. It is his privilege to be in priestly access to God as to it all. With many saints this is not known because of their condition and associations. The associations of Padan-Aram were idolatrous; priestly nearness to God could not be known there. Laban had graven images in his house, and Rachel stole them, and thus they came into Jacob's household; so he was in idolatrous associations. 1 Corinthians 10 warns us that we cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.

Jacob is viewed from the outset as representing the elect of God, and I think faith had appeared in him before this, for he desired God's blessing. There was an exercise of faith that caused him to differ essentially from Esau. He was typically the elect of God, and his heart was set on the blessing; doubtless with a great mixture of human infirmity, expediency, and unbelief; but there was an element of faith that desired to be in the line of the birthright and blessing. Esau, on the other hand, had no interest in the birthright; he was profane and afterwards lawless, and in the end we see Edom destroyed for ever. Jacob's history was very different: it began in God's election, and he

pursued the line of faith — though with a mixture of many motives and things incongruous with faith — and in the end finished his course as a worshipper. It is important to see that God was pledged to Jacob from the outset. The truth of election comes out here; it is a marked feature in connection with Jacob's history.

From Jacob's experiences in Padan-Aram we may learn in type that the Gentile — represented by Leah — must come in and be fruitful before Rachel, though the latter, like Israel, was the first loved. And in the names of Leah's sons there may be a hint of the kind of fruit which is now being brought forth among the Gentiles. That is, those marked by sonship (Reuben — See! a son); a personal and confiding intercourse with God in the consciousness that He hears (Simeon — Hearing); unity in the one Spirit and by the knitting together in love (Levi — United); praise (Judah); abundant compensation for anything that may have been given up (Issachar — There is hire); and, finally, the dwelling of divine Persons (Zebulun — Dwelling).

Then Joseph is born of Rachel — the one who would be such a striking and well-known type of Christ as the beloved of the Father, but rejected by his brethren, and exalted among the Gentiles.

Then in chapter 31: 3 Jehovah says to Jacob, "Return unto the land of thy fathers", and in verse 13, "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, where thou vowedst a vow to me. Now arise, depart out of this land, and return to the land of thy kindred". Jacob could never get away from the impression made upon him at Bethel. God made the impression and could appeal to it. It is often so with saints; God makes distinct impressions on which He can work, and to which He can appeal. Sometimes it is long years with us before we come to the good of a divine impression made on our souls. Israel at the Red Sea sang as if in the land; they had such an impression as to it; "All the inhabitants of Canaan melted away"; they were in view of being planted in the mountain of God's inheritance, but they did not reach the realisation of it for forty years.

In chapter 32: 1 we find Jacob, after twenty years of vexation and disappointment, on his way back, and the angels of God met him. That is, he got a special indication of God's care. God always confirms and encourages the faith of one who is moving in the right direction. Jacob called the place Mahanaim — Two Camps — but he failed to realise the encouragement God meant it to be to him. For if the 'two camps' of angels had been in his mind he would not have thought of 'two camps' as in verse 7. When one is in a wrong state of soul, even divine encouragements do not counteract one's fears. We find Jacob crying to God for deliverance, and pleading the promise, but full of

fear, and full of schemes, too. The angels were divine encouragement; it was as much as to say, You do not need to be afraid of anything; go straight on to Bethel. What are Esau and four hundred men compared with two camps of angels?

Jacob had to learn that all his scheming and planning were of no avail; he had to come to the end of every expedient. He had to learn to wait *only* on God, and to have no other confidence. God had a controversy with Jacob, and was bent on teaching him the true secret of divine strength. In the end Jacob was left alone, and God wrestled with him. Hosea 12 is very interesting as showing how God applied the teaching of this to Israel in a later day. They looked to this and that for help just as Jacob did. God says to them, You have made a covenant with Assyria, and carried oil into Egypt; you have tried all kinds of devices to be independent of Me. But remember how Jacob got blessing; he had to come to the end of all his scheming, and to prevail by weeping and supplication.

Jacob was brought face to face with God and learned his own utter weakness, but he learned, too, that weakness and dependence put one in the place of power with God. But then he must carry the consciousness of weakness all his life; he halted on his thigh; he was a cripple to the end of his days.

But Peniel was not the place where God's interests centred, and therefore he got no revelation of God's name. Indeed, his associations were such as to render this impossible; idolatry was in his house. And this probably accounts for his stopping at Succoth, and building a house and buying a field. There was a shrinking from the holy demands which Bethel would make. Shalem (Safe) did not raise the question of all the secret things as Bethel would. It is true that Jacob had an altar there, which he had not in Padan-Aram, but it was not a very high altar. He called it El-Elohe-Israel — God, the God of Israel. How many have such an altar as that! They think of God in relation to themselves; but His thought is to be known in relation to His house — El-Bethel — the God of the house of God.. It is God's purpose to make Himself known to us in relation to His own circle of things, and to give us a place and portion there.

When we stop short of what God has before Him, He often has to let us get into trouble to stir up our nests. Chapter 34 is the stirring up of Jacob's nest at Shalem. He was made to stink among the inhabitants of the land; that is a strong expression. It took such a discipline as that to prepare him for the call of chapter 35: 1 to "Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there, and make there an altar unto the God that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother".

The fact was that though Jacob had come face to face with God at Peniel, and had learned how to prevail with God for blessing, yet his associations had not been purified; his household was not clear of idolatrous associations: it was the knowledge of this that kept him away from Bethel. When we have been in Padan-Aram we pick up things that are not at all suited to Bethel. That is the secret why many do not reach Bethel; they are conscious that if they had to do with God in His own house many things would have to go; and they are not prepared to let them go. The Corinthians were in idolatrous associations, and this, with other things, hindered their growth; they were only babes, and precious things could not be ministered to them.

At Peniel, at the time of his wrestling with God, Jacob got a new name — a title. But he did not move in suitability to his title until he had been in Bethel. After that we read for the first time "*Israel* journeyed"; he moved in the dignity of his place with God; this is only acquired at Bethel. I do not think it is possible for us to move with God apart from the sense of what His house is. God can be with us as He was with Jacob, who was the subject of God's discipline, care, and protection all the time. God had said, "I will never leave thee"; but it is one thing for God to be with me in His grace and faithfulness, and another for me to be with God in holiness. The moment the question of Bethel was raised in Jacob's soul he was a different man. Shechem is a fine place! They put away the earrings and strange gods there — everything connected with idolatry — "Jacob hid them under the oak that is by Shechem". Shechem is the place where Joshua said, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord". It is the place of uncompromising decision. Joshua was a man at Shechem; he took his course definitely, and declared the line that he purposed to pursue. When Jacob got to Shechem the images and other things went down at the foot of the tree. The tree seems to be a suggestion of the cross. If we leave our idols at the foot of the cross we are then in light marching order; many Christians have so much baggage, so many teraphim about them that they cannot move!

When Jacob got to Bethel and anointed the pillar and offered a drink offering, it is said, "Then *Israel* journeyed". He moved in the dignity of his new name. From Bethel it was not far to Ephrath (Bethlehem), where Christ comes in. There Rachel dies, a figure of the passing of Israel, but Benjamin comes in — the son of his father's right hand — a type of Christ as the One by whom God's power will set up the kingdom after Israel has utterly failed.

Having reached Bethel Jacob journeys in the light of the house of God; he makes a new departure, and moves in the dignity of one who belongs to the house of God. We see in 1 Timothy that the saints are to move in the dignity

of the house of God; the men marked by prayer, and the women by modesty of apparel. A man in prayer is a man in true dignity with God. There is nothing in which man appears in such dignity as when he prays. Fancy a creature set in such a place that he can speak to God freely, even in giving thanks for food! "Every creature of God is good and to be received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the word of God and freely addressing him". How wonderful to be here in the dignity of one who can freely address God. He has spoken to me in His grace and love, and put me on such confidential terms with Himself that I can freely address Him! I take that as the true dignity of a man: it would be a great dignity if we could freely address the king at any time, but how much more God! It is the dignity of a priest; holy dignity; it belongs to one in the beauty of holiness. Jacob called upon his household to put away the strange gods, and cleanse themselves and change their garments; they were to come out in the beauty of holiness; nothing else would do for the house of God. Purity and holiness are proper to God's house.

Jacob does not say now, "How dreadful is this place". He has a drink offering here that speaks of joy; he set up his pillar and he was in keeping with it. In chapter 28 he had learned something of the character of God, but he was not in keeping with it; therefore there was no drink offering; he was not happy, and there was no pleasure really for God.

Reconciliation is that there is nothing to disturb divine complacency. If I were really in the good of reconciliation, there would be nothing seen in me but Christ. That is the proper kind of clothing to wear in God's house. If saints walked according to I Timothy only Christ would be seen in them; then God would be complacent, and there would be a pillar. The assembly of the living God is the pillar, the testimony in this world to the true character of God. Think of saints who have got clear of every idolatrous influence, and have laid aside all that ministers to their vanity and pride, coming out in new garments — the moral features of Christ! What a testimony it would be! That is the thought of Bethel. Then there is something for God, a drink offering, the witness that Jacob was happy to be there.

There is much in Jacob's history that is very humbling, but how much of faithfulness and unparalleled grace on God's side! God protects him, directs him, and in the end brings him to His house in suitability to Himself.

The revelation of God's name not being given in chapter 32: 29, but given in chapter 35: 11, would seem to show that the revelation of God's name can only be where there are moral conditions suited to that name. Jacob, with idolatrous associations, could not have committed to him God's name. Jacob

got a new name at Peniel, but God did not reveal His name there. Afterwards, at Bethel, God revealed His name; "God said to him, I am God Almighty".

GENESIS 37 TO 39

Genesis 37 - Genesis 39

We come now to a deeply interesting type, or rather a series of types, in the history of Joseph. As we have seen already, Joseph was born of Rachel in Padan-Aram while Jacob was away from his place and his country (chapter 30: 22 - 25). This seems to speak of the fact that Christ came in at a time when Israel was not really in the possession or enjoyment of the land of their inheritance. They had lost the kingdom, and, although they were under God's providential care, they were not in possession of the inheritance. The fact that a remnant of two tribes was in Palestine was owing providentially to the action of a Gentile monarch, and they were there as a subject people to the Roman empire. The very circumstance which providentially brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem that Christ might be born there was the proof that an alien power ruled in the land of Israel.

It was under such circumstances that Christ came in, and in the subsequent history of Joseph we have a striking series of types which speak of Him as loved and honoured by the Father, but found serving amongst His Jewish brethren, and hated and killed by them, and subsequently exalted amongst the Gentiles. It is there where, after repentance, they find Him to be their salvation, and are nourished by Him in the best portion He can give. This is where the Jews have to find Him today; and they do not get Canaan now, but Goshen. That is, if blessed of God at all they get blessing in the kingdom as it is known today, they get church blessing. They participate in that greater good which is known now amongst the Gentiles. So that there is added blessing (Joseph — he will add) now, though the earthly kingdom and inheritance are not restored to them. Then, of course, Joseph being made known to his brethren looks on typically to a yet future day when God's distinctive dealings with the Jews will be resumed.

Benjamin is Christ viewed from a rather different standpoint. He is born at the royal city in the land of promise, and thus comes in with all the rights of the kingdom. But He is the Son of His mother's sorrow, and I think this has in view the cutting off of all the hopes of Israel in His death. He was cut off and had nothing, and in His cutting off every hope that Israel cherished was forfeited according to the flesh. The fulfilment of promise was presented in Him to Israel, only to be met by the definite refusal expressed by His rejection and crucifixion. The godly remnant had to go through the profound sorrow of this — a sorrow set forth by the exercise of His mother Mary, "A sword shall pierce

through thine own soul also". The disciples had to go through this travail of soul, as we see in John 16: 20 - 22.

But if He is the Son of His mother's sorrow, He is the Son of His Father's right hand. He is the Man of God's right hand, made strong for Himself, who will yet deliver Israel from the wild boar of the wood (Psalm 80), and set up the kingdom in due time. But His power is not acting at the present time in any public way for Israel; she has died, as seen typically in Rachel, and Benjamin is hidden, as it were, for the time, at God's right hand.

Joseph at the age of seventeen years is found feeding the flock with his brethren, and doing service with them (chapter 37: 2). But he could have no fellowship with their evil discourse, and he brought to his father an evil report of them. The true Joseph was ever here in the spirit and activity of service, and Joseph, like other types of Christ, was found feeding the flock, serving in shepherd care. Moses was a shepherd before he was king in Jeshurun, and David was taken from the sheep-folds "to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance". It shows that the One who can care for the flock is the One competent to rule; He rules in the spirit of shepherd care, as having established His title by the service of love.

But the evil course of those around Him was ever a grief to His spirit; He was wholly apart from it morally. We see this very plainly in the Psalms personal to Christ, and also in those which give prophetically the utterance of the Spirit of Christ in the remnant; we hear Him speaking to Jehovah with deep sorrow of what He found in the conduct, ways, words, and spirit of those around Him. He could only bring to His Father an evil report of them. The evil report referred to Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. It is to be noted that it was the four brothers who were children of the bondmaids. It seems to be suggestive of the state in which the people were found, both morally and politically, when the Lord came to them. They were in bondage, and there were no movements of spiritual liberty amongst them.

Joseph was the peculiar object of his father's love, and his brethren knew it; there was evidence of it in the "vest of many colours". God clothed Jesus publicly with the witness of His delight in Him. At His baptism He said, "This is my beloved Son"; and again, on the Mount of Transfiguration, "This is my beloved Son in whom I have found my delight: hear him". And all through how many-coloured was the witness given that He was the Object of the Father's love! See John 10: 32; chapter 14: 11, etc. I think that what Peter refers to in Acts 2 very much answers to the "vest of many colours". "Jesus the Nazaraean, a man borne witness to by God to you by works of power and wonders and signs, which God wrought by him in your midst, as yourselves

know". There was a public witness that He was approved of God. With what variety of witness did God clothe Him in all His service and ministry here! The "many good works" which He did were His public attestation.

But all this only brought out their enmity, as in the case of Joseph. The more God approved Him the more they hated Him. It is a sad spectacle even in the type, but it is terrible to see it as a true picture of the treatment accorded to the Son of God. He had to say, "They have both seen and hated both me and my Father".

Then "Joseph dreamed a dream, and told it to his brethren, and they hated him yet the more". The dream was a divine revelation that they would all have to own the greatness of Joseph. He was really the chief of the family. If Christ comes in He must have the first place in everything. The more God's purpose as to this came out in testimony the more the envy and hostility of the Jews came into evidence. So the final point was reached when He said, "From henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven", Matthew 26: 64.

What comes out in Joseph's history is that wherever he was allowed to be supreme there was prosperity. Jehovah was with him, and whenever he was allowed to have his place everything prospered. He is a type of Christ as Lord, and of lordship in blessing which widens out far beyond Israel, and in the exercise of which He is the Saviour of the world. It is an important principle that the measure in which we give place to the Lord is the measure in which we prosper. He is the supreme One, and if we give Him His place we are sure not to be found in any evil way. Under Joseph's hand everything prospered, whether in Potiphar's house or in the administration of Egypt, and the secret of prosperity was revealed to Joseph's brethren, and to his father and mother, in these dreams. Everything must bow down to Joseph!

We are brought into the kingdom of the Son of His love; in that aspect the authority would be that of love; in His kingdom love must predominate. Such a thought of a king seems to come very close to headship, and indeed the King is also the Head. The king of England is not only the ruler of this realm, but he is the head of the whole system of society. So that his moral character and conduct, and his way of doing things, have an influence, more or less, over all society. It is considered good form to follow the lead that he gives, so that a good king has immense influence on the line of headship as well as on that of rule. The rule and authority of God, as made known in the way of perfect grace to men, are set forth in the Lord, but Christ as Head takes the first place on our side that He may give impulse to everything for the pleasure of God.

Joseph's brethren had to prove in the end that his dreams came true; they were actually brought to bow down to him, and as those who were indebted to him even for life. But before that their enmity came out in dreadful ways. Sent by his father to see to their welfare, when his brethren saw him from afar they conspired against him to put him to death. They would, if possible, rob him of the place which God had decreed that he should have. God took care to secure, by means of Reuben and Judah, that he should not be killed. God held everything in His hand, just as He did in the case of His beloved Son, though in the wisdom of His way in the latter case they were permitted to carry out their purpose to put Him to death. There seemed to be certain right sentiments in Reuben, certain workings of conscience or affection; his purpose was to bring Joseph to his father again. So he was a figure of those who, like Joseph of Arimathea, did not consent to the counsel and deed of them. Or those who, like Nicodemus, attempted to speak a word in favour of the Lord. There were some among the Jews in whom a measure of divine exercise was found; they were not all minded to have the Lord slain. Everything moved on according to the divine plan. Reuben meant to have taken the boy out of the pit, and brought him to his father again. But that was not in the divine plan. He was to go to Egypt and be highly exalted there, so as to be a type of Christ in greatness amongst the Gentiles. The rejection of Christ by His brethren and His death — casting Joseph into the pit is His death in figure — only led in the wisdom and power of God to a wider sphere of greatness and glory for Him. He is exalted with a view to universal blessing.

In Potiphar's house everything prospered under Joseph's hand, and Jehovah was seen to be with him. Then he was allowed to be tested, but the test only proved his faithfulness, and that God was before him. His faithfulness and purity brought him under the hatred of the world which could not seduce him from the path of integrity. Then, as cast into prison, he was put in circumstances which tested him as to his personal confidence in what God had told him. "They afflicted his feet with fetters; his soul came into irons; until the time came when what he said came about: the word of Jehovah tried him", Psalm 105: 18, 19. He had the trial of seeing everything contrary to what he had said come upon him. He had said certain things prophetically, understanding them to be the word of the Lord, and what he had said now put him to the test. He had spoken, in a figurative way, of his greatness and exaltation. The pit and the prison did not look much like the way to that. "The word of Jehovah tried him". It exercised him as to whether he could hold to it in faith when everything was utterly contrary.

Being tried by the word of the Lord suggests being tested by the difficulties of the testimony, not merely personal circumstances. Are we prepared to hold

our ground even under adverse conditions? Sometimes people take up a position in accord with the word of the Lord, and as soon as any serious difficulty arises they give it up. Such persons prove themselves to have very little value in relation to the testimony of our Lord.

The Lord had the sorrow and testing of the contradiction of sinners continually, and had even to say that He had laboured in vain, and spent His strength for nought and in vain; He had to see the cities wherein most of His mighty works had been done unmoved thereby. But "At that time, Jesus answering said, I praise thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes. Yea, Father, for thus has it been well pleasing in thy sight". Under the testing there was nothing found in Him but perfect confidence in the way and sovereignty of His Father.

We are told in Acts 7 that God was with Joseph. Jehovah was with him all the time, even in the most uncongenial circumstances. We need to challenge our hearts as to whether that is sufficient for us. When Joseph was tried he answered to the test, but very often when we are tried a great deal comes to light that will not stand. How often the word of the Lord tries us, and lays bare unworthy and selfish motives, for that word will search out and expose everything that is not Christ. We must not expect to take up any position for God, and not be tested in it. But we shall have the Lord with us if we are simple. The Lord is the sufficiency of His people, and the experience of this qualifies a man to go on. We see it in Paul in 2 Timothy when the testimony was in prison. We might say that Paul was tested by all that he had ministered, and he answered to the test by the Lord's support in the most adverse circumstances. The Lord will be with a faithful saint when his soul comes into irons, but that does not mean that the trial is not felt.

Joseph was sustained in the prison. The word of the Lord tested but it also supported him, and prosperity was given even there. Paul in prison represents the true position of the testimony in this world. We do not expect enlargement in circumstances here, but limitation, suffering, and difficulties; it is the prison time. But Paul in prison was nevertheless the vessel of the administration of all that is blessed. The ministry of the gospel and the ministry of the assembly came out fully in Paul when personally and in circumstances he was very straitened. He was greatly enlarged morally, for he never wrote such epistles as when he was in prison.

Joseph had thirteen years of severe testing; he was seventeen when it began, and he was thirty when he stood before Pharaoh. But the Lord had been with him all through, and the man who has found the Lord with him in the worst

conditions can act for the Lord in the best conditions. What we have learned in weakness and suffering will be useful to us in the reigning time. To tell a butler's dream might seem to be a small thing, but the same wisdom of God which could interpret a butler's dream could interpret Pharaoh's dream, and act in universal administration. We are now learning in small circumstances the principles by which the whole universe will be administered. The spiritual problems which we have to face and solve now involve the acquisition of wisdom which will qualify saints to have the administration of the kingdom entrusted to them.

It has often been said that in Joseph we see Christ typically as the wisdom of God and the power of God.

GENESIS 40 TO 45

Genesis 40 - Genesis 45

Chapter 45 brings us to the point where Joseph makes himself known to his brethren. We have seen that Joseph was a type of Christ as beloved of the Father, clothed with the witness of the Father's delight in Him, and marked out as the One destined to be supreme, but hated and rejected — in figure killed — by his brethren. The more the Lord was marked out as honoured by the Father the more distinctly the rejection of the people manifested itself. But all was overruled to bring to light the perfection of Christ, and the whole counsel of God.

In the exaltation of the true Joseph and the blessing of the Gentile world, the Lord gets a wider place. We see in Isaiah 49 how Israel is not gathered, but that opens a way for the Lord to have a wider sphere and glory, so that He is God's salvation to the ends of the earth. Joseph went down to Egypt and was tested there; but Jehovah was with him, so that all who gave him his place benefited, and everything prospered in his hand. We get this in Isaiah 53; Christ rejected by Israel, but Jehovah's pleasure prospering in His hand. It was a great cheer to the heart of the Lord in John 12 to hear the Greeks saying, "We would see Jesus". It opened up to His vision that wide world of blessing which He was going to fill with fruit for God.

Joseph was tested before the fulfilment of what he said; tested by the seductive influences of the world, and then by the prison. But found equally perfect in both, like the Lord in the temptation at the beginning of His history, and then by all the exercises of the garden at the end. Testing comes before exaltation. Joseph was tested in lowly circumstances before he administered in glory, and the moral perfection and beauty that qualified him to rule were fully manifested in him. The One who is to rule has been tested. His competency and moral suitability were tested and approved before He was exalted. Faith is always tested by beguilings on one hand and buffetings on the other. We are not so much tested in public as in secret as to what motives really rule us. Joseph was found in the most humiliating position in prison, but Jehovah was with him and he prospered there. It seems to be part of God's way to develop things in secret which will afterwards come into public view, like David first fighting with a lion and a bear before meeting Goliath. The man with whom the wisdom of God was in obscurity was quite ready to come out in public at the suited time for him to do so.

The first Psalm presents the Man who prospered in lowly circumstances, and the second gives His exaltation. The first Psalm gives His moral suitability, and

in the second He is the King — Jehovah's Anointed — He is a Man suitable to God in every way. Joseph proved himself suitable; the devil could not deflect him from the path of piety by seduction on the one hand, or the afflictions of the prison on the other. He felt the testing keenly; "The word of Jehovah tried him", but he answered to the test. He never gave up what had been revealed to him when the sheaves bowed down to him; that was the word of Jehovah, and he never gave it up. The Lord never gave up His true place before God; before Pilate He witnessed a good confession. There is no failure recorded in Joseph; of all the types in Scripture of the Lord, Joseph occupies a peculiar place in that way.

Then the capability of Joseph came out in prison, just as distinctly as it came out afterwards in the administration of the kingdom. He could interpret dreams in the prison before he did so in the palace. The varied aspects of the wisdom of God in Joseph are very interesting. When he was in prison the wisdom of God came out in connection with obscure circumstances, but all the wisdom that would administrate in the kingdom was there. The circumstances were limited and obscure, but the wisdom was the same. The assembly is in circumstances of limitation and weakness here, but it is the same vessel of administration as it will be by-and-by. So Paul connects the administration of little matters with the administration of the kingdom (1 Corinthians 6: 2, 3). Then there was wonderful wisdom in Joseph in dealing with his brethren; he could not only administrate good for the world at large, but he had divine wisdom to produce exercise in the souls of his brethren.

We see Joseph's wisdom coming out in giving Pharaoh advice: "Now let Pharaoh look himself out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt". And in Joseph's elevation we see a picture of the Lord in His present place of exaltation; He is universal Lord. Joseph gets a wonderful title; Zaphnath-paaneah means "Saviour of the world". Or one interpretation of it is "Prince of the power of the life of the world", a very beautiful and suggestive title. The Lord is now in exaltation and is the Saviour of the world. What a contrast to Ephesians 2 where Satan is the prince of the power of the air! The Lord is the Prince of the power of the life of the world; nothing less is in view than the world; the fullest possible provision is made for the world to come into salvation and life. Every blessing of God is administered through Him. And there is infinite fulness in it; there is provision for everybody. "Seven years of plenty" — full supply for the world famine — "Corn as the sand of the sea".

In this type Pharaoh represents God. You cannot run one type into another; you have to see where a type begins and ends. Here Pharaoh is a type of God who has exalted the true Joseph in view of salvation, and life, and plenty

being brought in for the whole world; the whole world has come into God's view for blessing.

Chapter 45 looks on to the time when Joseph's brethren (Israel) will be brought to recognise Him, and it shows how the remnant of Israel are brought to recognise Christ now. What is in view in the closing chapters of Genesis is Israel blessed, not in Canaan, but in Goshen; they are blessed in a place outside their own promises. The kingdom of God and its blessings are now found amongst the Gentiles; and the remnant of Israel participate in that, and in church privilege and blessing. Joseph exalted is a type of Christ's present place as Administrator of world-wide blessing, and Israel, if blessed at all, must be blessed under that administration. Then we see that Joseph gets Asenath, a Gentile bride; and Manasseh — made to forget his toil and his father's house; and Ephraim — double-fruitfulness. The Lord has now got what enables Him to forget that Israel despised and rejected him; the assembly is so much to Him that He has no sense of loss. It is like Rebecca being a comfort to Isaac after his mother's death. The remnant of Israel was brought into blessing connected with the place which Christ has as exalted to the right hand of God; Goshen speaks of that.

The remnant of Israel are all in the assembly now; there are many of them throughout the world at this moment, for God has taken pains to preserve a remnant. God has kept alive the remnant of Israel in assembly blessing; He has always had a remnant and they are in the assembly now. And all the blessings and promises that belong to Israel are being treasured in the assembly now as nourished in Goshen. Joseph was the one by whom God preserved the life of Israel; and then there is also seen in this type the wide scope of the gospel; Christ is "The Prince of the power of the life of the world". He is the Administrator of world-wide blessing.

Then we see the wisdom of God in Joseph in bringing about exercises in his brethren. From chapter 42 to chapter 47 we get a lovely and detailed unfolding of how his father's house became dependent on him, and had to learn by their need to appreciate his greatness. When his greatness was presented to them in testimony they resented it; they would not have it that their sheaves were to do obeisance. But in their need they found there was corn in Egypt, and they went down, having learned through their necessities to appreciate Joseph's greatness, though he was yet unknown to them.

Although coming to him, they needed exercise to know him, and that was what was in his mind to bring about; he dealt with them in wisdom to bring them into exercise as to the past; he spoke roughly to them. There was divine wisdom in that. The Lord is always bent on dealing with the true state of our

souls, so that He may uncover the root of things, and bring us in uprightness to know His heart. The Lord always intends to get our souls near Him, not just to make us comfortable. We would often like Him to speak gently to us even when there are many unsettled questions, but that would result in our settling down at a distance without knowing His heart. He says, as it were, Nothing will satisfy Me but to have you near Me, and that you should know My heart; and in order that this may be truly brought about I must bring to light all that has been in your heart; so I will send you one trouble after another. He “spoke roughly to them”.

They had to be deeply exercised about their sin and guilt. The exercise as to their own state had to be gone through. We are all glad to be on the line of blessing, to get corn from Joseph; but none of us naturally like to face exercise as to our moral state. But this is a great necessity if we are to know the Lord. He cannot give the knowledge of Himself to a heart not morally right.

Joseph made all to depend on Benjamin coming. Israel will have to learn the value of Christ as the One by whom alone they can find acceptance, and be saved alive. They will be brought to own their guilt concerning the true Joseph (chapter 42: 21), and to see their guilt brought home in the person of Benjamin. This is a deep exercise; “We are verily guilty”; they will begin to feel how badly they have treated Christ. But it is deeper later on, when the silver cup is found in Benjamin’s sack.

This exercise has to be gone through by every Jew who is converted, and in principle by every one of us. Their guilt was brought home to them in the person of one who had no part in it at all. The Jews will learn to see it in the guilt-bearing of their Messiah — the One who never sinned. The guilt came upon the true Benjamin, as taken by Him in grace; and the Jews will learn their guilt by learning how Christ bore it sacrificially on the cross. We never learn the depths of sin except by learning how Christ took it up and bore its judgment in infinite grace. God has found out my guilt in the death of Christ in a way that humbles me to the dust. Benjamin had no part in the guilt; so the One who knew no sin, and in whom was no sin, was made sin for us. The cup was found in His sack. Judah then takes responsibility upon himself, and identifies himself with Benjamin as the guilt-bearer. What a day it will be for Judah when he does this, when he uses the language of Isaiah 53: 4 - 6! Judah’s intercession is typical of the sorrowful exercises of the remnant when the spirit of grace and supplication is poured out on them. When Judah mourned, and pleaded to be allowed to be in Benjamin’s place, the work of exercise that Joseph desired to bring about was complete. He could then make himself known to his brethren.

The two tribes who are recovered will take up the exercise on behalf of the nation of Israel. Judah will go through the tribulation in the coming day, and will go through deep inward exercise also, and then the true Joseph will make Himself known to them, and will comfort their hearts by showing them that God has been behind it all. What Joseph said to his brethren is like what Peter said, "I wot that through ignorance ye did it". In Hosea 11 we find God saying that He would not give up Ephraim, and the reason is, "For I am God and not man". What Joseph's brethren did was meant by them for evil, but God meant it for good; and God is God, and will have His way in spite of man.

Then Jacob was sent for; he and his sons had to give up the land for the time, and go down to Egypt. Joseph was "Lord of all Egypt", and could speak of "all my glory in Egypt", and of "the good of all the land of Egypt". It is not Israel's promised blessings in the land of Canaan, but something quite apart and distinct in a peculiar moment which intervenes before they get the former. It is blessing in Goshen, which I take to be suggestive of Israel having part along with Gentiles blessed of God through the exaltation of Christ. They have to give up the land for the time that they may have all where Joseph lives.

"Joseph is still alive"; "Joseph my son is yet alive" (chapter 45: 26, 28).

Everything is secured in Christ risen. In that connection we get Beersheba and "the God of his father Isaac" (chapter 46: 2). The oath and promise of God are secured in Christ risen. Israel has had to leave the land for the time, but the possession of it is a certainty for faith.

The apprehension of Christ as risen prepared the remnant to move to new ground — to give up the earthly promises for the time, and to move into church position and blessing. Jacob saw the waggons; they were a suggestion of the necessity for movement into a new position; such a movement as we see at the end of the Gospels and the beginning of the Acts. Israel got a word from God, "Fear not to go down to Egypt".

Then in chapter 46 we get the names of the sons of Israel who came into Egypt; a remnant according to the election of grace. Seventy is a complete number — 7×10 ; it speaks of the whole company of God's elect in Israel preserved and nourished in assembly blessing instead of in Canaan, their own promised portion. And there they were shepherds. The apostles became shepherds in Goshen, tending the flock of God in church position and blessing.

GENESIS 48

Genesis 48

It is interesting to see a saint finish well, and one chief interest about Jacob is that he finished well. We see him in chapters 47 - 49 in a more spiritual character than ever before. We ought to expect to see progress and maturity in the saints. We see in Jacob the peaceable fruit of righteousness coming out as the result of God's chastening and dealings. Jacob had in many ways a crooked and sad history, but he was always being disciplined. The fruit of his planning and deceit came back to him and became discipline. And so it does to every one of us; our snare inevitably becomes our scourge. I suppose there is hardly a saint who has not proved that in some measure; every departure and defection becomes a source of painful discipline.

If there is a bowing to God under discipline, God turns it to blessing. That is most encouraging; we see in Jacob that he really bowed. We see it in David too; a bowing to the discipline which his own behaviour had brought upon him. And David finished well, too. He finished as laying himself out for the house of God, expending himself and his accumulated treasure for it. There must be a letting go of the element that has been a snare. The Father's object in discipline is that we might be partakers of His holiness; that is the end in view. It is wonderful to think of being as separate from the thing that has hindered us as God is. It is beautiful to see Jacob and David coming out at the end better than they ever did before. God looks for that. We ought to be exercised to come out a spiritual people at the end. We see Jacob here in the place of dignity and true greatness before men, and a worshipper before God, and in the intelligence of God's mind about everything: he can tell all that will happen to God's people right on to the end.

When Isaac blessed Jacob he did not know what he was doing, but Jacob was intelligent; he knew what he was about. He was in the full intelligence of God's mind as to Ephraim and Manasseh. It is good to see this as a product of God's work and discipline. In the New Testament it has been a special object of the Lord to show us how His chief servants finished; He allowed both Peter, Paul, and John to write letters at the very end of their course. Peter says, "The putting off of my tabernacle is speedily to take place" (2 Peter 1: 14), but he is full of power;

he has before him the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: the vision on the holy mount was as bright and distinct in his soul as when it took place. Paul says that he was already being poured out, and the time of his release was come (2 Timothy 4: 6). 2 Timothy is like his last will and testament, but he is full of the

vigour and courage of life. John tarries until he is about one hundred years old, and then he writes his Gospel, full of "him that is from the beginning". It is beautiful to see that they did not decline. In the three apostles there was no dimming of spiritual vision, and no weakening of spiritual power. I feel exercised because I see on the natural side a tendency to decline; but we ought to be exercised to finish well. We read in Luke 12 of servants who are *found* watching. How will the Lord *find* me? I may have run well at some former part of my history, but how will the Lord find me?

In one sense there is greater danger as we go on. If not going on in the power of the Spirit we shall be more and more identified with the flesh, and with what we are naturally; but if walking in the Spirit we shall become more spiritual. Jacob finished as a spiritual man, and I should like to. Jonathan began beautifully; he stripped himself for David; but where did he finish? In the company of Saul, not David, and he fell on Mount Gilboa! It is not a question of being anything great outwardly, but of going on inwardly with the Spirit of God, and accepting the lessons of God's discipline. Jacob had to learn a great many lessons, and we are all like him in many ways; but he accepted the lessons, and came out in the end as a spiritual man.

In chapter 47: 7 Joseph brought Jacob his father and set him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh; and again in verse 10 Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh. Think of the dignity of that! Here was the mightiest monarch on the face of the earth, and Jacob, in spite of all his history, blessed him! "Without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better", Hebrews 7: 7. Jacob was in conscious superiority to this great monarch. It is the position of every saint indwelt by the Spirit, and the subject of God's discipline; he may well be conscious he is greater and better than the highest person in this world. It reminds one of Paul before Agrippa; he stood in chains before the king in all his pomp, and all the splendour of the court, and he said, "I would to God that all who have heard me this day should become such as I am, except these bonds". He was conscious of a portion in his soul of such divine wealth and blessedness, that he could not do other than take the place of divine superiority.

It is more remarkable that Jacob should bless Pharaoh at a time when he was dependent on Egypt for food. Outwardly he was a poor old man; and as to his own history he had to say, "Few and evil have been my days"; and yet he blessed Pharaoh! I do not know whether it could be said that at the end Jacob rose higher than Abraham and Isaac, but I think, as far as what is recorded, he came out in more distinct testimony at the finish. In the end of chapter 47 'Israel worshipped'; and we are told in Hebrews 11 that he "worshipped on the

top of his staff". All his interests were in Canaan. He wanted no burial or memorial in Egypt. His faith claimed, as it were, the promised inheritance, and he would be buried in the sepulchre of his fathers. And in the consciousness of God's faithfulness to His purpose he worshipped. He so embraced in faith all the promises and the inheritance that there was nothing left but to worship.

We can see in this God's triumph; His end was reached at last. My impression is that God's discipline does not reach its full fruition with any of us until the end: it is needful right on to the end. There is something yet to disappear, something yet to acquire and learn. It is very blessed when you can see a saint at the end matured as the product of God's work and discipline. Jacob worshipped in the light of the inheritance. Everything but Jehovah and the inheritance and the way the heirs would be preserved and disciplined for it, was displaced. If everything is displaced from our affections and thoughts but that which God has given us we should be worshippers. God's discipline with every one of us deals with the actual weakness and sources of failure in us. Each of us has the discipline that deals with us most effectually.

Now we come to chapter 48. We see the sovereignty of God very prominently in connection with Jacob; it was a special feature in his history. And in sovereignty Joseph got the birthright: he had two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, and in them he got a double portion. It was all in sovereignty; God disposing of things according to His own will. Reuben had forfeited the birthright, and Joseph got it. We are told that plainly afterwards; 1 Chronicles 5.

I think the death of Rachel is mentioned to show that Jacob had to part with what was naturally an object to him. Rachel was the one he had set his heart on. Losing, her was perhaps the most severe discipline that he had. Whatever has become an object to us naturally has to go. No doubt Rachel is a type of Israel; and all hopes and expectations connected with Israel after the flesh have to die, that all blessing may come in at Bethlehem in connection with Christ. Rachel died at Bethlehem; she had to go out, and Christ came in. All hopes and expectations have to be centred in Christ. We get instruction in that when king Saul was sent to Rachel's sepulchre. The first point of his education in view of the kingdom was to go there; he had to see the end of all things in connection with nature; his great ancestress was buried there; he had to go to the grave of everything naturally attractive, and which one's hopes might centre in according to the flesh. If he had gone there morally he would have been a different man. The Scripture would have been fulfilled, "Thou shalt be changed into another man".

We all have to learn that what is of God and of true value is connected with Christ. Israel gave birth to Christ, but blessing is in her Seed, not in herself. Rachel brought forth a wonderful seed; she was the mother of Joseph and Benjamin: the mother died, but every true hope and blessing was revived and perpetuated in the seed — in Christ. I think in having Joseph and his children Jacob got compensation for the loss of Rachel: he came into view of Christ typically. The mention of Bethlehem here is a beautiful touch of the Spirit. It is at the spot where every natural object of affection fails that God brings in what will satisfy hearts for ever. Bethlehem is "The house of bread". Every natural object of affection will fail, but at the very spot where Rachel dies Christ comes in. What a house of bread Bethlehem is! If we get Christ before us, and feed on Him, we shall get what satisfies and abides. He supersedes everything. There is nothing more interesting in the Gospel of John than to see how He superseded everything. John 6 brings in the living bread. That is the true Bethlehem, the house of bread.

Jacob understood the sovereignty of God in blessing; Joseph did not; he put his sons in the right order naturally: Manasseh, so that Jacob's right hand should be on his head — the proper order naturally but not spiritually. In God's sovereignty Ephraim was to take the lead. The great lesson in Jacob's history is, "Not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy". God is not bound in any way. He can put Simeon out (as in Deuteronomy 33) and take Ephraim and Manasseh in; and He will, if He pleases, give Ephraim the younger the chief blessing. He takes His own sovereign way. If the Jew had learnt that, he would not have disputed God's right to bless the Gentile. The very fact that any of us take an interest in these things is just the fruit of God's sovereignty. No one gets to his right place with God until he submits to God's sovereignty.

The birthright was connected with Joseph, and royalty with Judah, according to sovereignty. Both speak of Christ, He is both Joseph and Judah; He has the birthright and He is King. 1 Chronicles 5: 1 - 3 is an important Scripture. It shows how God has been pleased to give the birthright in Israel to Joseph, but royalty to Judah. Judah is the royal tribe; we see that in Genesis 49: 10. Naturally Joseph would have been one tribe, but through God's election he got a double portion; so he is represented by two tribes, and will be in the world to come (Ezekiel 48: 4, 5). He has the distinction of the birthright; he has the pre-eminent place amongst the tribes; he has a double portion in the inheritance, though he has not the royalty. The possession of the inheritance is one thing, and royalty is another; they are two different thoughts. The genealogy is not reckoned according to the birthright. In connection with the genealogy royalty is in view; "of him (Judah) is the prince", and "The sceptre

will not depart from Judah". In the millennium there will be a prince of the house of Judah on the throne.

What God determines He carries out: it is all on the line of sovereignty. If He determines that Joseph shall have the birthright, he will have it; and if God determines that Judah shall have royalty, he will have it; and so Shiloh comes in, the Prince of Peace and the Lion of the tribe of Judah. The great point here is the sovereignty of God in disposing of everything; whether in connection with the inheritance, giving a double portion to Joseph; or, in connection with royalty, giving it to Judah. Nothing can ever alter this disposition of things. Jacob was in the light of it all as a spiritual man who was before God. In the next chapter he reviews the whole history of his sons, and tells them what will befall them at the end of days. That chapter is indeed the history of man and of God's grace towards man, and of the way man behaves in connection with it. Then it shows the ultimate bringing in of all blessing by Jehovah's salvation in Christ, and by men being in the good of it by the Spirit.

GENESIS 49 TO 50

Genesis 49; Genesis 50

In this remarkable prophetic utterance we get a comprehensive view of what has come out, and what will yet come out, in the history of the sons of Jacob. And their history is really that of man, whether looked at as he is naturally, or as regards the different features that come out in him after the intervention of God in Christ. For we get that intervention prophetically in this chapter, particularly in connection with Judah and Joseph, and in Benjamin we see a type of the power in which Christ will finally deal with all His enemies. Moses's blessing in Deuteronomy 32 is more on the line of purpose; but here it is lessons learned experimentally in the history of the people. It is more on the moral line in connection with God's ways.

It might be helpful at the outset to see that the chapter is divided into four parts, and that there are three tribes in each part. In Reuben, Simeon and Levi we get the natural condition of man; it came out in the sons of Jacob, but it is really the natural condition of man. In Zebulun, Issachar and Dan we see the influences that lead to departure even after God has brought in blessing. Then in Gad, Asher and Naphtali we see the power and effect of God's salvation as waited for and known by faith when man's state is truly discerned, and also when it is seen how man falls under perverting influences even after Christ is brought in. The remaining three tribes — that is, Judah, Joseph, and Benjamin — speak of Christ in different ways. The chapter is thus divided very distinctly into four parts, and it contains a great deal of important instruction.

We get first the natural state of man; corruption in Reuben, and violence in Simeon and Levi. 'Unstable' is really 'impetuous'; man is carried away by the power of his desires and lusts; he is unrestrained by the will of God. And when anything crosses his will or pride he becomes violent. In the case of Simeon and Levi there was ground for indignation; but they acted in the pride and violence of nature, and not at all in God's fear. Such a course brings judgment on nations as well as individuals, as we may see in Amos 1 and 2. This utterance is called a 'blessing' in chapter 49: 28, and to have man's true state exposed, and the influences which divert him from God, is in the nature of blessing, because it prepares the way for blessing. Repentance is a blessing, though it may be said to be a negative one. The fact is that divine light was shed by Jacob's utterances on their whole history if they would only have taken heed to it.

Judah comes in as God's intervention in victorious power on man's behalf. He is introduced as the subject of praise; a marked contrast to the three previous

tribes; they had to be denounced, but Judah comes in as the subject of praise. What marks him is victorious power over all His enemies, and the place of praise and pre-eminence with his brethren. We cannot but see in this the One who is the Lion of the tribe of Judah — victorious, spoiling principalities and authorities, and found in unchallenged supremacy. David is the type of Christ in this character, securing praise and pre-eminence by His victories; having slain His ten thousands. Every power that would have challenged God's right to bless His people has been met by the true David and overthrown. Now His hand is on the neck of His enemies, and kingly power is vested in Him that can bring in the fulness of millennial blessing. Every power adverse to man's blessing has been dealt with by the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Now the sceptre is in His hand; He is made Lord and Christ; He is crowned with glory and honour. Shiloh is the Prince of peace — the true Solomon — and He becomes the gathering centre of obedient peoples.

The law-giver is brought in because it is most important to come under obedience. Speaking of Shiloh the New Translation reads, "To him will be the obedience of peoples". Every one must own His authority; we see lordship in Judah founded on the fact that He has obtained complete victory. God has intervened in power so that blessing may be available for men. The Lord gets His place with us when we see how wonderfully and mightily He has acted on our behalf.

Verses 11 and 12 look on to the introduction of millennial blessing. There will be abundance of wine then; it is a contrast to John 2, where the wine was deficient. Here there is no deficiency; there is great abundance; it suggests fulness of divine joy. Judah is Christ in victory, and in kingly power to dispense blessing and to bring in fulness of joy. Though the millennium has not yet come, fulness of blessing and joy is available. In the Psalms that anticipate the millennium there are many expressions of joy and praise. But the joy of the kingdom is open to us now in a spiritual way; fulness of joy has been brought in. John says, "These things write we to you that your joy may be full". The thought of this raises an exercise as to why all the people of God are not in it. If God has intervened in such a marvellous way by the true Judah for the blessing of men, and for the introduction of divine joy, why are not all those who own Judah in it? The next three tribes supply the answer. It is because we let what is of the world come in.

Zebulun gets into touch with the world in connection with commerce, for Sidon is a figure of the world of commerce. Most of us have to do with commerce in some way, but let us beware lest our hearts become a haven for ships. Getting unduly occupied with matters connected with business and money-making has

often proved to be a step towards spiritual decline; it has often resulted in saints getting into moral contact with the world. I suppose many are thus hindered; what people call 'getting on' very often really means 'going back'. One has heard of people giving up spiritual privileges for the sake of a little money. It is a serious exercise for every one of us. Are we just here to be in the path of God's will, or are we seeking some advantage of a worldly nature for ourselves? Is there a touching Sidon somewhere?

The question is, what is the heart set for? The true exercise of every saint is to be here for the will of God; not to do well, as men speak, in this world. If one is here for the will of God one would allow one's path to be shaped by that will. It is said of David that "he ministered to the will of God in his generation". That is the true business and dignity of a saint. If it is the will of God that one should increase in this world's goods it is all right; God is pleased to so order it that some of His saints should have the means to minister to their needy brethren. The question is, Do we harbour the world in our hearts because of the gain we can get out of it? If a saint gets on to that line he is practically on the same line as the world, so his border goes down to Sidon very quickly. But when God's salvation comes in it sets His people free from all that.

Then the next downward step is seen in Issachar. "Issachar is a bony ass, crouching down between two hurdles. And he saw the rest that it was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and he bowed his shoulder to bear, and was a tributary servant". Issachar is an ass in a very different position from the ass in verse 11. Instead of being in blessing and joy and well nourished, he is bony and in bondage. And what has brought him into that condition? The desire to have an easy time, and to get along comfortably with the world. But in order to do so he has to sacrifice his liberty as a servant of God, and he comes into bondage to the world. If you try to please God and man you only get into bondage; you will find yourself between two hurdles. You cannot secure selfish ease and retain spiritual liberty; many a believer is penned in by the desire to get on comfortably with people, and falls under complete bondage as a servant; he is afraid to speak to people about Christ. "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ", says Paul.

When God's salvation comes in for us we have liberty. "Naphtali is a hind let loose". If you find yourself in bondage, and get to God about it, you will break through in the power of His salvation and be free. I suppose we all know how easy it is to fall under bondage; but we ought to seek to keep ourselves free to speak of Christ. The longer we go on with people on their line the more difficult it is to open our mouths for Christ.

One downward step leads to another. There is first in Zebulun the desire for worldly gain; then, in Issachar, the desire to have a restful and comfortable time here; and then Dan becomes a serpent on the way. That he "will judge his people" is, I suppose, the place he ought to have; and he will eventually get a place in the land. He is the first to get his allotted portion in Ezekiel 48, but that is after Jehovah's salvation has come in for him. Before that he has a sad history; Dan was the first tribe to definitely set up idolatry. They stole Micah's graven image, and all the paraphernalia connected with idolatry, and took Moses's grandson and made him their priest. They took, as a tribe, the lead in apostasy. The course of decline, if pursued, leads to one becoming adverse to what is of God. It leads in the direction of apostasy. It is very solemn to start on a line of departure, for we do not know where we may get to. Many who were once breaking bread are now in the world, and seem to have thrown off every divine restraint, and one trembles to think what the end may be. It is well to take warning at the first symptoms of decline, and turn to God for His salvation; thank God, that salvation is available for every one of us! May we ever have consciences sensitive to the first indications of decline and departure, and souls quick to turn to God for His salvation!

When Dan is seen as an adversary and an apostate Jacob says, "I wait for thy salvation, O Jehovah". He realises the hopelessness of everything on the line of what man is in himself, and that if there is to be a result for God it must be by the coming in of God's salvation. Verse 18 is the turning point of the chapter. Down to that point there is nothing seen on man's side but failure, whether it be the state of the natural man, or the various features of departure which mark the people of God when they fall under the influence of the world. If anything is preserved or restored it must be in the power of God's salvation. The result of Jehovah's salvation being waited for is that there is power to overcome, and satisfaction, and liberty, as seen in Gad, Asher, and Naphtali.

Zebulun and Issachar had been overcome, and the enemy had made a strong assault upon Gad — "Troops will rush upon him" — but what marks him is that he overcomes at the last. Jehovah's salvation makes him an overcomer. How many saints in Scripture have had this experience! Jacob, David, Peter, Mark are examples of men who exposed their own weakness under the assaults of the enemy, but who got God's salvation, and ended as overcomers. Each of them ended well. One would like to finish as an overcomer, for such get a good portion. That comes out in Asher and Naphtali. "Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he will give royal dainties. Naphtali is a hind let loose; he giveth goodly words". The overcomer is in satisfaction and liberty, and he can minister to others. All this is in marked contrast to the leanness and bondage

which characterise Issachar the 'bony ass'. Asher is happy, and is well nourished on good food, and has good things to spare for others; he yields 'royal dainties'. It is a mark of God's house that those who are there "have bread enough *and to spare*". Then Naphtali is in perfect liberty, there is nothing to restrain his movements, and he, too, can minister to others. This shows that the one who overcomes in the power of God's salvation is not only benefited himself, but he becomes a source of blessing to others.

These things are of special interest if we think of them as necessary to set the heart free for an expanded view of Christ. It seems to me that the result of these things is great enlargement in the apprehension and appreciation of Christ; that is, such an apprehension of Him as we see typically in Joseph. Joseph sets forth Christ in a very enlarged and extended character of blessing. He is "a fruitful bough by a well" whose branches shoot over the wall, and illimitable blessings are on His head. Souls in the good of God's salvation get delivered from all the elements that hinder the apprehension of Christ. It is a great thing to be so practically free from the influences of the world, and the principles that work in the flesh, that we can expand in the knowledge of Christ. A man whose border touches Sidon, or is "between two hurdles", cannot expand.

It has been noticed that in the last four assemblies in Revelation 2 and 3 the words "he that hath an ear" come after the promise to the overcomer, implying that only the overcomer would have an ear. A ministry of Christ requires a spiritual state to appreciate and receive it. We see this in the first and second epistles to the Corinthians. Paul's heart was full of the illimitable blessings in Christ, but he had been straitened by the carnal state of the Corinthians. But in the second epistle he could say, "Our mouth is opened to you, our heart is expanded ... let your heart also expand itself", 2 Corinthians 6: 11 - 13. Self-judgment having come in, there was room now for expansion.

The blessing of Joseph shows the great expansion that has come in through Christ taking His place of Nazariteship at the right hand of God. When here He was under limitations, but now He has gone out of them all. His fruit goes far beyond the bounds of Israel. He is the Source of fruit for God amongst the Gentiles in the power of the Spirit whilst hated and rejected and separated from His brethren. Every blessing is upon His head. It is thus we know Him in heaven now, and His branches run over the wall in blessing to the Gentile.

In verses 25 and 26 we see blessing that goes beyond all limits, and surpasses all that had gone before. "The blessings of my ancestors" refers to the promises to Abraham and Isaac. They are all Yea and Amen in Christ, but blessings have come to light in Him now as the risen and ascended heavenly

One which did not come into the view of those promises at all. That saints should be heavenly ones, and in sonship of a heavenly order, and have all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ, did not indeed come out in Old Testament promises at all. All this is, as it were, heaped upon the head of Christ as the One separated from Israel. He has got peculiar enlargement as glorified at the right hand of God. And the assembly participates in all that He is and has in that heavenly position. It is in reference to His position there that He says, "I sanctify myself for them, that they also may be sanctified by truth", John 17: 19.

The blessings stretch out to "the bounds of the everlasting hills", It suggests an unlimited expansion of blessing connected with Christ as risen and glorified — the One separated from His brethren. He has been here, and has been hated; "the archers have provoked him, and shot at, and hated him". But the fact that He has been refused here has freed Him from every limitation; He has gone to the right hand of God, and His branches run over the wall. The expansion of blessing is so great that it requires the Gentiles to take it in. The Jews were not really enough to fill God's house; the Gentiles must come in, or there would be empty places.

In John 4 we see the branches running over the wall to the Samaritans, and the woman and others partook of His fruit, and, we may say, became His fruit. For the 'fruitful bough' not only yielded fruit for men but for God. He speaks in John 4 of the Father seeking worshippers; there was to be something very precious for the Father, and outside limitations. 'This mountain' and 'Jerusalem' were limited spheres, but what the Lord spoke of was outside limitations; it was worship 'in spirit and in truth'. 'In spirit' is according to what God is essentially — He is a spirit; and 'in truth' is according to the revelation of Himself in His Son. When we come to that we are outside limitations. We are in presence of God revealed in infinite love, and there we can only be worshippers. That 'fruitful bough' has brought forth fruit delightful to the Father's heart. Man in the flesh has disappeared sacrificially in the lifting up of the Son of man, and men in the Spirit become worshippers as set in the light of God revealed in His beloved Son.

John 4 of course anticipates the Spirit's day, and I have thought that we see the branches running over the wall in Colossians, and indeed in Paul's ministry altogether, for his ministry had in view fruit for God among the Gentiles, He speaks of the mystery as "Christ in you — Gentiles — the hope of glory"; and of the blessed features of Christ coming out in Gentile saints; it is the branches running over the wall, and being fruitful there.

To be in the good of these things we have to accept His rejection. The Scripture before us leads us to see that the One who was delightful to the Father was hated by men, and has no place in man's world. He brought forth in His own Person every kind of acceptable fruit for the Father, but "the archers ... shot at, and hated him". But He was strengthened and succoured by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob. The strength of perfect dependence was His — the hands of the mighty One laid upon Him. The figure used is of a person holding a bow, but the hands of another are put upon his to strengthen them; just as a strong man might put his hands on the hands of a little child and so strengthen them that they might do what was only possible for the man's strength to do. When Christ was here we may say with all reverence there was a blessed Man in this world on whom God could put His hands. Isaiah 49: 8 shows us the wonderful place that Christ was in as Man here. His strength was in dependence; He cried to God, and God answered Him in a time of acceptance. He says, "In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee". Then it is very wonderful to see in 2 Corinthians 6: 2 that the saints are put in the same place, to be heard, strengthened, and helped even as Christ was. It is their privilege also to be strengthened by the hands of the mighty One of Jacob. The saints have His place in the world; "Ye are not of the world ... therefore the world hateth you"; but they have also His place of strength in being heard and helped by God.

The "stone of Israel" is spoken of in a beautiful parenthesis to show that the mighty One of Jacob is the Source of everything. He provides the Shepherd to care for His people, who is also the "stone of Israel" on whom everything will rest in the kingdom. The thoughts of stability and ornament are connected with a stone. Stability marks the stone laid in Zion for a foundation (Isaiah 28), and Zechariah speaks of a stone with seven eyes upon it — possibly referring to the seven-fold qualification for government seen in Isaiah 11: 2. He is the Head of the corner as well as the foundation (Psalm 118: 22). But He has been first rejected by the builders.

A vast expanse of blessing is suggested here (verse 25). "With blessings of heaven from above, with blessings of the deep that lieth under. With blessings of the breast and of the womb. The blessings of thy father surpass the blessings of my ancestors, unto the bounds of the everlasting hills; they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separated from his brethren". Everything is seen gathered up on Joseph's head. It is said of Christ in resurrection — the One who has "length of days for ever and ever" — "For thou hast made him to be blessings for ever; thou hast filled him with joy by thy countenance" (Psalm 21: 4 - 6). God has blessed Him

for ever (Psalm 45: 2). He is enlarged in heaven; He was straitened here until the cross, having to say, "How am I straitened until it be accomplished". But He is now beyond death, and all the fulness of blessing that was in the heart of God for man is on His head. And as the heavenly One He has a vast company of heavenly ones, participating with Him in all the blessing that rests upon Him in glory at the right hand of God.

Benjamin is spoken of as a ravening wolf (verse 27), because he is a figure of Christ as coming in power to destroy all His enemies, and the enemies of His people Israel. If He has been rejected, it is inevitable that His enemies must be dealt with. Joseph gives us a thought of the wonderful character of blessing that is connected with Him as separated from His brethren; that is, while He is at the right hand of God, and the Spirit is given to His co-sufferers and co-heirs. But Benjamin is Christ coming in to destroy his enemies. He tears in pieces, devours the prey, and divides the booty. I have connected it with Psalm 80. We find Jehovah addressed there as the "Shepherd of Israel, thou that ledest Joseph like a flock". Then in verse 8 Israel is spoken of as a vine brought out of Egypt and planted by Him. But in verse 13 the boar out of the forest wastes that vine, and the beast of the field devours it. Then there is a call in verse 14, "O God of hosts, return, we beseech thee; look down from the heavens, and behold, and visit this vine". That is the state of things in connection with which Benjamin comes in. God's vine, His pleasant plant — Israel — has been devoured and destroyed by the boar out of the wood and the beast of the field. Then in verse 17 we get Benjamin, "Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou hast made strong for thyself". That is Benjamin, the Son of His Father's right hand: He will come in to destroy the boar of the forest and the beast of the field, and to restore the fruitfulness of the vine and Jehovah's pleasure in it. Christ will destroy everything that is opposed to the blessing of God's people, in order that He may have pleasure in His vine. God is going to clear the scene by judgment so that there may be nothing to interfere with full blessing, and Benjamin represents the power of Christ to do it.

The time for that has not yet come, so we pray for men — even wicked men and persecutors — to be converted and blessed. But a day is coming when 'sudden destruction' will come on the adversaries, and the saints will be in accord with what God does in that day, even as they are in accord with what He is doing today. They will say, "Amen, Hallelujah", when Babylon is thrown down, for God will then be acting in destructive judgment. His arrows will be sharp in the heart of the king's enemies. If we may use the figure, His arrows are being discharged in grace today. They carry conviction, but are tipped with healing balm. They are piercing the joints of the armour of many, bringing

down self-importance and leading men to look to Him for blessing, which He never fails to grant. But by-and-by the arrows will have another character; they will be discharged on His enemies who will fall under Him in destruction. It must be so; divine power must intervene; a world of rebellion and lawlessness cannot be perpetuated. God's claims are set at defiance, and His Name covered with blasphemies all the day long. He could not allow it to continue; there will come a time when divine power must assert itself, However great God's patience and long-suffering, He is never indifferent to evil. He bears long, but there is always a limit. Methuselah lived very long as a witness to the long-suffering of God; but when the limit was reached God intervened in judgment by the flood. The lawlessness of man will come to a head in the beast and the Antichrist, and then the destructive power of which Benjamin is a figure will come in.

Now for a moment we may touch on the last chapter. The coming in of Christ in the Benjamin character which we have spoken of clears the way for the fulfilment of all God's promises in reference to the land of promise; so the book closes with the faith of Jacob and Joseph in regard to Canaan. Jacob would be buried there with his fathers, and Joseph would have his bones carried there. This indicates the faith of these two men as to the fulfilment of all God's promises in regard to the land. After Benjamin comes in, and the adversaries are all dealt with, there will be deliverance in Zion, and all the promises in relation to Israel's possession of Canaan will be fulfilled.

Neither Jacob nor Joseph would be buried in Egypt. They both had a place and sustenance in Egypt by the ordering of God for the time being, but Egypt was not the land of Jehovah's promise. I suppose that Joseph, at any rate, might have had a big pyramid for his sepulchre, and to commemorate his name and deeds in Egypt. But he said, in effect, Egypt has come in, and had a place in the ways of God with Israel, but it is not the goal of those ways: the promises concern Canaan, and will not be fulfilled until Israel is there, and my affections and interests are there. Neither Jacob nor Joseph saw the fulfilment of the promise; none of the patriarchs did. From a natural point of view it seems the most unlikely thing possible that Canaan would ever be theirs. But they died in faith; they were not disappointed; they did not think that God had failed them, or His people. And no doubt they had some apprehension of Christ as the One by whom everything would come to pass.

At the present moment the promises which Jacob and Joseph cherished do not live in the faith and affections of Israel, save as there is a remnant of Israel "according to the election of grace" in the assembly. But what they cherished is held in faith by saints of the assembly; not indeed as our portion, which is a

heavenly one, but it is held as the sure portion of Israel. We are as certain that God will fulfil the promises in regard to Israel and Canaan as if we had seen them accomplished. Joseph left an extraordinary testimony to his faith; his bones were to be carried up; so they embalmed him, and put him in a coffin in Egypt. It was a remarkable testimony to Israel during their time of bondage in Egypt that the promises would be fulfilled.

What a sad exhibition of unbelief we get in Joseph's brethren at the end! They had lived seventeen years on his bounty, and he had given them the best of everything, and yet when Jacob died it became manifest that they did not know his heart at all! Well might Joseph weep when they spoke thus to him! They did not really know him, nor believe in his love. How often it is like this with believers now! Living on the bounty of Christ for years, and yet not knowing the thoughts of His heart in such a way as to have perfect confidence in Him!