

GENESIS, THE BIBLE, AND CHRIST
(First Message on Genesis)

Intro: We begin this morning the expositional study of the book of Genesis. By expositional I mean that I am aiming at a verse by verse explanation of this book of the Bible.

I do this for at least three reasons:

- 1) First, I believe that the Lord is leading me to do this at this time.
- 2) Second, the book of Genesis is a part of the Word of God, and in order to be true to my calling I must teach it if I am to declare all of the counsel of God. See Paul's statement in Acts 20:27.
- 3) Third -- at this particular time because:
 - a) It is the foundational book of all of the Bible.
 - b) Some of you have never studied it. Some of you have never even read it.
 - c) Your spiritual life is sadly deficient if you do not know this book.
 - d) And -- as Peter said in his second Epistle about the truth in that book, it can also be said of Genesis that we can never know it as we need to know it -- and so we must come back to it continually to have its truths re-impressed upon our hearts!

The purpose of the book of Genesis is not stated in so many words anywhere in the book, and so we must learn that purpose by our own reading and meditation.

Therefore -- PLEASE READ GENESIS AS MUCH AS YOU CAN DURING THE MONTHS AHEAD. READ IT THROUGH AT ONE SITTING AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE. READ IT ALOUD. READ IT WITH OTHERS. READ IT AND READ IT AND READ IT UNTIL THE TRUTH OF THE BOOK BEGINS, UNDER THE DIRECTION AND BLESSING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, TO GET INTO YOUR HEART. THE MORE YOU READ IT, THE GREATER WILL BE YOUR BLESSING.

This morning I want us to take the time to get briefly acquainted with Genesis. And the first thing that we should remember is that it is . . .

I. The First Book of THE BIBLE.

Every once in a while we need to declare what we believe about the Bible -- that it is the Word of God, and that it is the only book in the world that has the right to make this claim.

Genesis is the first of 66 books which we can rightfully say are one book.

Although written over a period of some 1600 years, there is

a unity to this book which would lead one to believe that it had all been written by the same person -- not 35 or more writers.

This unity can only be accounted for by the facts mentioned in such passages as 2 Tim. 3:16, 17 and 2 Pet. 1:20, 21. It is good to know this, to be told this, but it is even more wonderful to be impressed with this fact by your own reading of the entire Bible.

The Bible is absolutely trustworthy in all of its parts,
 the very Word of God Himself,
 therefore ageless and changeless, and it is an
 infallible book with the stamp of divine
 authority on every part of it,
 a progressive revelation,
 a complete revelation,
 a book which we cannot neglect except to our
 eternal loss,
 and a Book which, because it is what it is, cannot be understood without the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, you and I should never read Genesis or any other part of the Word of God without specifically calling upon the Holy Spirit in prayer to teach us this Word which God has given to us.

But now, what about . . .

II. GENESIS.

I mentioned a moment ago that the account that we have in the Scriptures is progressive.

It is a book which displays the purpose of God -- from Genesis to Revelation. It is not a book which tells us all that man would like to know, but a book which tells us the things which God wants us to know.

Everywhere in the Bible you will see the Lord employing what we might call the principle of selection, i.e., from out of all that could be written about any event, any person, any truth, the Lord has carefully chosen that which fits into His purpose -- and this is what we have in Scripture, nothing more, nothing less, nothing else!

FOR ALL OF THIS GENESIS IS THE FOUNDATIONAL BOOK.

It was written by Moses to give us the basic facts upon which the rest of the Word of God rests.

To state it another way -- if we did not have Genesis, we would not be able to understand the rest of the Bible!

As an example of the truths which have their roots in Genesis we can mention:

- 1) God -- in Genesis, the Almighty God! The Creator!
- 2) Creation, especially man.
- 3) Marriage.
- 4) Sin.
- 5) Judgment.
- 6) Salvation.
- 7) Separation.
- 8) Security.
- 9) Israel.
- 10) Prophecy.

And many, many more!

The roots of the teachings of Scripture are here. Therefore, it is not to be a matter of surprise if you are struggling with the Bible because you have never taken the time to get familiar with the book of Genesis.

I have asked you to read it.

What will reading Genesis teach you?

One thing that you should notice is that there are basically two divisions:

- 1) Chapters 1-11.
- 2) Chapters 12-50. — *4 men in one family.*

In fact, with a little study you would see that the first 11 chapters are definitely introductory, fragmentary, covering as much time in those 11 chapters as is covered by the remainder of the Old Testament!

The first 11 chapters are definitely preparatory, very important, but actually getting us ready for the man and the subject matter which comes into prominence in Genesis 12.

Abraham is clearly the outstanding person, historically, in the book of Genesis.

But what else will reading Genesis teach you?

You will begin to see a spiritual emphasis to the book, an emphasis which enables us to see the early history of man from God's point-of-view.

Genesis is the oldest and the only truly reliable history of the world and of man. But the unique thing about it is that it is the Word of God and so it is written as God has ordained, not even as Moses would have written it if he had not been directed by the Holy Spirit.

Thus, we see this -- to simplify it:

- 1) In chapters 1, 2 everything as God sees it is good, and even "very good" (Gen. 1:31).
- 2) In chapter 3 things go bad, and from 3 to 11 we see how things go increasingly bad.
- 3) Then, in chapter 12 we begin to see in greater detail what God is doing to make things good in His sight again.

*On the beginning had
was the serpent
Now the
word*

The Biblical word for being good and right in God's sight is the word, righteous. Therefore, we soon realize that the main theme of Genesis and of the whole Bible is to show us how man, created in the likeness of God, yet becoming a sinner as a result of his own disobedience, can be brought to the place where God can look upon him with divine approval.

As we see the unfolding of this great truth of salvation in the

book of Genesis, there is one Person who becomes pre-eminently important -- and it is not Abraham (although he is the outstanding character in the book), not is it Isaac, his son, nor is it Jacob, Abraham's grandson, nor is it Joseph, Abraham's great grandson.

It is . . .

III. CHRIST.

This might seem to be preposterous to you as it did to a university professor I was talking to years ago who said that anyone who has read the Bible knows that you do not read about Christ until you get to the New Testament!

Let me prove from the Word of God that he was wrong!

Please turn to Matthew, chapter 1 -- the genesis (as indicated by the word, "generations") of the New Testament.

Why are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob mentioned here?

Obviously because they are the human ancestors of the Lord Jesus Christ. See Matt. 1:16, 17.

In other words, when God selected and elected Abraham, it was for the purpose of choosing the family and the nation through whom the Saviour would be born.

And one important thing to know about this is that Abraham realized what God was doing. Read John 8:56, where we have these words of our Lord Jesus Christ,

"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad."

Or, remembering that Moses wrote Genesis, take the words of our Lord in John 5:46, spoken to the unbelieving Jews of His day,

"For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me."

Or, I would remind you that twice after our Lord's resurrection, in speaking with His disciples, Luke tells us that

" . . . beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."

AND SO WE CAN SAY NOT ONLY THAT WE WILL SEE CHRIST AND LEARN OF CHRIST IN GENESIS, BUT THAT HE IS THE KEY TO THE BOOK -- THE ONE THROUGH WHOM THE GREAT TRUTHS OF THAT BOOK ARE OPENED TO THE BELIEVING HEART.

He is the Creator in chapters 1, 2.

He is the seed of the woman spoken of in Gen. 3:15.

His death is typified when the Lord God took the coats of skins and clothed Adam and Eve before He put them out of the Garden of Eden.

His priesthood is in view when we read of Melchizedek in Genesis 14.

It is the Lord Jesus Himself who appeared to Hagar and to Abraham and to Jacob.

It is obvious that God was thinking of His own Son when He asked Abraham to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice.

And, why, should we ask, do we step out of the specific family line at the end of Genesis when Joseph comes into prominence. He was not of the tribe of Judah! It is because he is the greatest single type of the Lord Jesus Christ that we have in all of the Old Testament.

For these and many, many more reasons which we shall see in the book of Genesis itself, we say without any hesitation, Christ is the theme and the key to this first of all the Biblical books!

Concl: And so this is what we have to look forward to --
GENESIS, the foundation of the BIBLE, with CHRIST as its main theme.

This is a book that will lead you to Christ if you do not already know Him.

It is a book which will feed your soul and strengthen your faith if you do know Him.

Let us all be praying that we may see Him more clearly than ever before as we go through this book, and let us pray that our hearts will be open to the many wonderful truths recorded here which will help us in our daily lives to live for God's glory and for the glory of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Pray.)

THE GENESIS OF GOD'S WORD
Gen. 1:1-2:3

Intro: Genesis, as its name implies, is the book of beginnings in the Bible -- but not the book of endings. Everything begins in this book, but nothing is completed here.

Because it is the book of beginnings, it is the foundational book of the whole Bible. If we did not have Genesis, we could not understand the other 65 books. Therefore, it is imperative that we know this book of Genesis.

To know it we must read it -- over and over.

And we must pray as we read it -- for only the Lord Himself can give us understanding of what He has given us.

But to assist you -- from reading we can see that the first 11 chapters are introductory, preparatory. In the last 39 chapters we get to the heart of the book -- the story of 4 men in one family: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

Or there is another division that we can make.

In chapters 1, 2 we have the story of creation -- or, to use a word which Moses has used over and over, GENERATION. In chapters 3-11 we see man's original sin with its effect upon man himself and upon the early history of the world. We can speak of it as DEGENERATION. When we get to chapter 12 where the story slows down (because in the first 11 chapters Moses covers as much time as in the remainder of the Old Testament), things begin to move upward as we see what God has planned to meet man's need. And so we can speak of Genesis 12-50 as that which speaks of REGENERATION.

This will all become more evident to you as you read and re-read the book.

But now we come to chapter 1 (actually to 1:1-2:3).

What is its place in Genesis and in the Bible?

It is not only the genesis (the beginning, the foundation) of Genesis, but it is the genesis of all of the Word of God. It deals with the subject of CREATION -- a subject which comes up literally hundreds of times throughout the Word of God. The importance of this chapter cannot be overstated. This is the gateway to Scripture. A good start here will find us well on our way toward understanding all that God has given us in His Word. A bad start, or no start at all (which would mean that we would simply ignore it), will leave us forever weakened and deficient, unable to understand the rest of Scripture as we should.

Therefore, let me say just a word about . . .

I. OUR ATTITUDE.

How should we approach the study of Genesis -- and especially of Genesis 1?

Let me say three things:

- A. First, let us remember that this is the Word of God -- a divine revelation.

No one, not Moses (the writer), nor even Adam, was there until the 6th day of creation. And so we are utterly dependent upon God for whatever He wants to tell us about creation.

Let us remember this.

- B. Second, we must approach the Bible in an attitude of humility and faith -- grateful to God for what He has made known to us, and anxious to receive every bit of light which He will give us so that we can understand what He has written.

But one other word is necessary.

- C. We must not come in the spirit of controversy, or with a sceptical attitude.

We do not stand in judgment upon God and His Word; HIS WORD IS TO HAVE FULL, ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY OVER US. We want to examine the record as thoroughly as possible, and come back to it many, many times. But it must always be with an open heart, remembering that it is the Word of God, eager to learn what God has revealed and what God is willing to teach us.

Now we are ready to note . . .

II. THE CONTENT of this passage.

What is in it? What does it say? This always comes before, What does it mean?

Some general observations:

- A. It tells us of 6 days in which God made this universe.

I personally believe that these were 24 hour days. See Ex. 20:8-11. God does not need a long time to do what He does. The long periods have come about as a result of

our desire to try to harmonize what man thinks about the world with what God has revealed in His Word.

- B. Verse 1 is the title of the whole chapter (which is a characteristic of the book -- to use titles).

And so it is not my personal belief that we have a gap of time between verses 1 and 2 -- that verse 1 speaks of original creation and that from verse 2 on we have a re-creation. I do not hold to this.

This is the original account of all that God did "in the beginning." To teach otherwise raises all kinds of doctrinal problems which are not even hinted at in the Scriptures.

So this means that according to the Word of God the world is not nearly as old as men try to make us think that it is. Men try to explain the origin of things without having to admit that there is a God -- and so this is the reason man has gone to such ridiculous extremes.

An outstanding scientist, who is a Christian, has said that "the Bible will not support a date for the creation of man earlier than about 10,000 B.C." (Morris, Henry, The Genesis Record, p. 45). And then he goes on to show that it probably was much less than that -- not too far away from the 4,004 B.C. suggested by Ussher.

Do you know that the Jews believed that the earth was created about 3,760 B.C.? That the writers of the LXX taught it was in 5,270 B.C.? That Josephus held that the world was created about 5,555 B.C.? That Luther believed that creation took place in 3,961 B.C.? And that Bishop Lightfoot believed it was about 3,960 B.C.?

And did you know that there is a definite swing back to these more recent dates among leading scientific men today?

Let us make sure that we start with and stay with the Word of God -- not with the declaration of "profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called" (1 Tim. 6:20).

Genesis 1:1² tell what God did; Genesis 1:3-31 tell us the order; Genesis 2:1-3 indicate that it was finished.

III. THE PURPOSE OF THIS PASSAGE.

Our curiosity causes us to look for many things which we do

find here. What we need to ask is this: What was God's purpose in giving us this passage? What does He want us to get out of it?

Obviously we can say . . .

- A. He wanted us to know:
 1. Where the world came from.
 2. Where we came from.
 3. The order of creation.
 4. How long it took.

But perhaps one of the main reasons we have so much trouble with this passage is because we miss the main reason.

A reading of the Bible (starting with Gen. 1) confirms the fact that the Bible is not only a revelation from God, but that it is a revelation of God.

It would take a very superficial reader not to realize that the main purpose of Genesis 1:1-2:3 is to give us our first lesson in knowing God.

It does not contain all that there is to know about God, but this is where we must start. Creation itself was designed to reveal the glory of God. Cf. Psa. 19.

And so we point to this great purpose of Genesis 1:

B. GOD WANTS US TO KNOW WHO HE IS.

He is mentioned 34 times in these 34 verses: "GOD." Do not miss the glory and wonder of this!

But what are we to know about Him? *Plurality - "Us... our" in v. 26*

1. That He is without a genesis, a beginning.
2. That He is infinitely powerful. ELOHIM

He made all of this out of nothing. And He finished what He started out to do -- a great truth which runs throughout Scripture.

3. That His Word is powerful, effective, authoritative. No less than 10 times we read, "And God said . . ."
4. That He is infinitely wise. There is orderliness in

all that He does, purpose, progress.

He even anticipates the ridiculous teaching of the evolutionists by saying 10 times, "after his kind," or its equivalent!

5. That He is good, and that He blesses.

There are 7 times in which it is mentioned that things were "good" in God's sight -- and this is how things evidently are to be judged all through human history, by whether or not they are "good" to God.

6. That He separated man from all of the rest of His creation when He made man, male and female, in His own likeness and image.

We must never lose sight of this as we go through the Scriptures. It indicates God's ultimate purpose for man.

But what should be the practical effect of this chapter upon us?

IV. THE PRACTICAL RESULTS.

Obviously there is nothing for us to do -- apart from the general words addressed to man in Gen. 1:26, 28-30.

So, we can say that the first practical result is that:

- A. God wants us to know what is here.
- B. God wants us to believe what is here.
- C. God wants us to know and believe Him because of what is here.
- D. God wants us to be humbled by what is here.
- E. God wants us to worship Him because of what is here.

Concl: The first revelation of God in Scripture is made in terms of His creative work -- work which God designed for His glory.

Tragically man has turned this into an attempt to glorify himself instead of glorifying God. (Close with Psalm 8.)

ADAM AND EVE
Gen. 2:4-25

Intro: What is the relationship between chapter 1 and chapter 2?
This has probably bothered every person who has ever read the book of Genesis.

The answer is quite simple. We need to remember three things:

- 1) That Gen. 1 begins with a title.
- 2) Gen. 1:2-31 describes how God did what is stated in the title -- and so we have the 6 days of creation followed by the first Sabbath in Gen. 2:1-3.
- 3) In Gen. 2:4-25 Moses is going back to describe more in detail the one event which is the most important out of all of those six days of creation. It is the creation of the man and the woman. Note that Gen. 1:27b says, "male and female created he them."

As you read through Genesis you will note this plan in other sections. It is characteristic of the way Moses writes this book.

There is another thing of special interest in our text.

For the first of 10 times we have the word, "generations." See Gen. 2:4. The other 9 times are:

- 5:1;
- 6:9;
- 10:1;
- 11:10;
- 11:27;
- 25:12;
- 25:19;
- 36:1;
- 37:2.

This is the way Moses has divided the book.

Thus, from Gen. 2:4 to 4:26 we have the first major division of the book, and it is entitled, "the generations of the heavens and the earth."

It should be kept in mind that these are all titles, like Gen. 1:1 -- and they have to do with what follows, not with what has preceded.

The Hebrew word that is used here for "generations" (דורות) is from the Hebrew verb, יָלַד, which means to beget, or to bear a child. So it speaks of offspring, the family, i.e., that which resulted from that which is named in the title. And so each is a beginning, and this is what one writer was referring to when he wrote, "'Genesis is full of geneses'" (Green in Griffith-Thomas, p. 18).

In addition to the "generations" we have here, the other 9 are:

- of Adam,
- of Noah,
- of the sons of Noah,
- of Shem,
- of Terah,
- of Ishmael,
- of Isaac,
- of Esau,
- of Jacob.

Be sure to notice these as you read through the book.

Now we come to our passage -- Gen. 2:4-25. What is the first thing that we note in reading it?

I. THE ADDITION TO THE NAME OF "GOD."

In chapter 1 down through 2:3 we have just the name, "God," 34 times. In chapter 2, from v. 4 to the end, we have "Lord God" 11 times. "God" by itself does not occur once in this part of chapter 2.

Why?

The critics says that it was written by two different people.

What sources Moses may have used in writing Genesis, we do not know. But the first two chapters in particular had to be made known by divine revelation or what they contain could never have been know.

The best answer for the addition to God's Name is the same that we would use any other place in the Bible: It has to do with the message of the particular passage.

Therefore, remembering what we saw in chapter 1 (that the Bible is not only a revelation from God, but a revelation OF God), we see that God is telling us something additional about Himself!

What is it?

All through Genesis 1 to 2:3 it was the Hebrew, Elohim. Now with 2:4 we have Jehovah Elohim.

Elohim, we saw, is a word which places emphasis on God's power. It suggests that God is more than one, and yet one. Genesis 1 teaches us that He was in existence at the time of creation, and before creation, and that it was "God," Elohim, who created all things.

What does Jehovah mean?

Note several things:

- 1) Although "God" uses many names in the Word of God, this is characteristically His Name. Note: Isa. 42:8,
"I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images."
- 2) It was considered so holy by the Jews that they would not pronounce it. They would say, Adonai. We do not know what the right pronunciation was. Some say Yahweh. I am going to stay with Jehovah, or Lord.
- 3) While obviously known at this time, and used in Genesis, it does not become prominent until the time of the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage. See Ex. 6:3. Also Ex. 3:13, 14.
- 4) It is formed from the Hebrew verb, to be. Thus, it suggests His eternal nature and His unchanging character. Thus, putting Lord God together we see that God has always been what He was at creation, and He will always be the same.
- 5) Some grammarians feel that along with being, the name Jehovah is meant to convey the idea of becoming -- not that God changes, but that He becomes under all circumstances that which His people need!

The chapter itself is concerned with "the Lord God" in His relationship to the man and the woman, Adam and Eve.

In order, after the title in v. 4, we have:

- 1) The need for a man (vv. 5, 6).
- 2) The forming of the man (v. 7).
- 3) The home and work which God provided for man (vv. 8-15).
- 4) The commandment which God gave to man (vv. 16, 17).
- 5) The helper God provided for man (vv. 18-25) -- which in words is the longest section in the chapter. τ

II. THE DETAILS OF THE PASSAGE (Gen. 2:4-25).

A. The title (Gen. 2:4).

B. The need for a man (Gen. 2:5, 6).

Obviously the Lord man the earth so that it was dependent upon the work of man "to till the ground."

C. The forming of the man (Gen. 2:7).

This complements the account in Gen. 1:26, 27.

D. The home and work which God provided for man (Gen. 2:8-15).

It is impossible to say where the Garden of Eden was.

The flood changed the topography and the geography of the earth. Two of the rivers are now unidentifiable: Pison and Gihon.

"Bdellium" -- mentioned again in Num. 11:7, describing the color of the manna. It was a gum derived from a tree, very fragrant, and used in making perfumes.

Adam's work: "to dress it and to keep it" -- referring to the Garden of Eden. Note the suggestion that it should be protected, guarded, as though there were enemies around who were intent on intruding.

E. The commandment which God gave to man (Gen. 2:16, 17).

There was just one, single prohibition. The penalty (and the first time it is mentioned): death. Cf. 3:19.

F. The helper God provided for man (Gen. 2:18-25).

She was not "an help meet," as we say, but as the text in vv. 18 and 20 indicates, a helper who would be suitable for him, his counterpart.

Eve (first named in 3:20) was to help Adam in the responsibilities which God had placed upon him --

- 1) To till the ground.
- 2) To have dominion over the living creatures.
- 3) To dress the Garden of Eden.
- 4) To keep the Garden of Eden. Cf. 3:24.
- 5) To obey God.
- 6) To have children.

This is what makes the failure of Eve in ch. 3 so tragic. She failed to do the one thing that was more important than anything else: obedience to God! How important for wives today to see that this is a major part of their responsibility -- to encourage their husbands to walk with the Lord.

Concl: What can we say about man -- made in the likeness of God and yet made of the dust of the earth?

Obviously these are both his glory and his humiliation.

What does it mean, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness"? Obviously too much for us to understand fully, but we can get some of the ideas. It means:

- 1) That he was distinct from all other creatures.
- 2) That he was made to live, and not die.
- 3) That he was made with some of the characteristics of God -- in addition to life, wisdom, strength, will, love, without

sin (not righteous, but innocent), emotion, etc.
4) That he had authority.

But the Hebrew words suggest not complete likeness, but a shadow of what God intended that he should eventually be. Note the limitations suggested by 2:17 and 3:22.

Note the advantages: a sinless, innocent character,
a perfect environment,
every possible provision,
enough instruction to be kept like he was,
an omnipotent and faithful God.

And yet how drastically the picture changes in Gen. 3!

Has it all been ruined? You would think so, to look at the world today. But cf. Rom. 8:28, 29.

Do you love God? You cannot unless you have come to Him through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, as your Saviour. HE, and only HE, is the remedy for man's sin, and the One through whom the original purposes of God in creation will ultimately be fulfilled.

MAN'S FIRST SIN
Genesis 3

Intro: The first 11 chapters of Genesis have been under constant attack by unregenerate men, and often have been held with suspicion even by some believers.

There are probably two major reasons for this:

- 1) Because of what it teaches us about God as the Creator.
- 2) Because of what it teaches us about Satan and sin.

Without Genesis 3 we would not be able to understand the true nature of man's need today (or in any day) -- that man is a sinner and under the judgment of God!

And so this is a very important chapter doctrinally:

- 1) Without it we could not understand such NT teaching as Rom. 5:12, "Wherefore as by one man sin entered . . ."
- 2) This gives us the reason for death.
- 3) Genesis 3 is also very important because of what it teaches us about the Devil, Satan. Jumping over to the last book of the Bible (Rev. 12:9) we find that the Devil is the same: "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, who deceiveth the whole world . . ."

Significantly we have a period of peace at the beginning of the Bible, and peace is restored at the end when the Devil is cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10). So this gives us 2 chapters at the beginning of Genesis when things are right, and 2 chapters at the end of the Revelation -- but all is chaotic in between!

And so let us consider man's first sin.

I. WHERE DID IT COME FROM? Cf. Gen. 3:1-6a.

Note first that . . .

- A. Man was not the first sinner. At this point sin is already in the universe -- committed among angels before it was committed by men.

Note also . . .

- B. God did not create man a sinner. That is clear from Gen. 1, 2. Man was not created righteous, but innocent.

Thirdly . . .

- C. One who is called here, "the serpent," is the one who tempted the woman to sin.

We have many other things that are taught us about Satan

in the Bible, but nothing here needs to be changed. His methods are still the same today. His purpose is still the same. So this chapter is basic to an understanding of Satan and his work. He is "subtil" -- crafty and deceptive!

Now let us look briefly at . . .

D. The temptation.

The reason for Satan's temptation of the woman is because of his hatred for God, for the Word of God, and for the purposes of God with respect to all of creation -- but especially as it concerns man, the greatest of all of God's creatures on the earth.

Note this is what is said:

1. He questions the Word of God (and in so doing questions the goodness of God). See v. 1.
2. He denies the Word of God. See v. 4. It is important to see that this does not come first.
3. He interprets the Word of God. See v. 5.

Satan refers to "God" in what he says; every other reference to God in the chapter is like chapter 2 -- "the Lord God."

And again there is an attack on the goodness of God -- suggesting that God does not want man to be like he is. And this has even been clouded over by the KJV, giving us "gods" instead of GOD!

But this would not be complete without noticing the mistakes which Eve made.

E. Eve's mistakes. Short of actually eating the fruit, there were two:

1. Her dialogue with Satan.

We need to learn that, when God speaks, that settles it!

2. Her contemplation of that which God had forbidden. See v. 6a. How full of meaning are those words, "And when the woman saw"!

And what she saw gives us the only three approaches that Satan ever uses. See our Lord's temptation in Matt. 4:11 and John's teaching in 1 John 2:15-17.

Most of the time sin begins with what we see!

But let us turn now to our second question:

II. WHAT WAS IT? See Gen. 3:6b.

Her sin was an act of disobedience against the revealed will of God. She was deceived as to the consequences, but not about the fact itself.

Satan always seeks to make sin look as attractive as possible

But notice another thing: "and (she) gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." Sins never travel alone. Sinners like to involve others with them.

And this latter part is the significant thing according to Rom. 5:12 and 1 Cor. 15:22a, "For as in Adam all die."

Finally, to our third question:

III. WHAT WERE THE RESULTS?

Be sure to pay special attention to these.

- A. They knew that they had done wrong. Man always seeks to kill this, but it is there.
- B. They sought to correct the problem. This is the first attempt at salvation by works.

Even our clothes should be a reminder to us of our shame. And the farther people get away from God, the more they get back to nakedness and shame.

- C. They hid themselves from God (or sought to do so). This is evidence of their spiritual death. No longer did they delight in God's fellowship. They were afraid. Sin had brought some things that they had not counted on.
- D. They all fell under the judgment of God. See vv. 8-19.

Note that they could not hide themselves from God. God sought them and found them.

- 1. Both Adam and Eve sought to pass the blame on to others -- but this did not satisfy God. Everyone is responsible for his own sin, regardless of how it may have taken place!
- 2. God pronounced three judgments. See them in vv. 14-

19 -- the serpent first,
then the woman,
finally, the man.

And this introduces the dreadful fact of physical death -- and all that leads up to it!

And, finally, our fourth question:

IV. IS THERE ANY HOPE?

*Ch. 4 and on teach us
that man became a
sinner by nature -
powerless to reject
evil, or to do good.*

There is light, even in this darkest of all chapters. There are at least three rays -- all manifesting the grace of God.

- A. The promise of a redeemer. Cf. v. 15.
- B. The provision of clothing. Cf. v. 21. And this sets the pattern throughout Scripture for the truth of salvation: It is provided solely by God, and it is God alone without conferring at all with man who determines what this shall be.
- C. The posting of the cherubim (angels). Cf. vv. 22-24. Even here we see the grace of God -- keeping man away from the tree of life so that he would not eat its fruit and live forever in his sin.

Concl: Really -- the whole story of Scripture is right here. We do not have the details, but we have the basic facts.

Do you know what your basic problem is? It is SIN.

Do you know where the answer is? It is not in anything that you can do for yourself; it is in what God can do and has done to meet the needs of men.

Do you see why it is that the Devil hates the Word of God? Because it is the Word of God. Here you have ultimate and absolute truth.

How you need this chapter and the truth it brings to us, I do not know. But will you open your heart to the Lord and ask Him to bless the truth of this chapter to you as He sees your need. This is not allegory; this is history -- true history! You can only turn away from it to the greatest possible damage to your own soul.

CAIN AND ABEL
Genesis 4

Intro: In Genesis 1, 2 we have the creation of a sinless world. In Genesis 3 we have the first sin of man. In Genesis 4 we begin to see the progressive degeneration of the human race because of sin -- first, in the family.

The main purpose of Genesis 3-11 seems to be spreading influence of sin which began with "one man" and gradually affected everything on the earth.

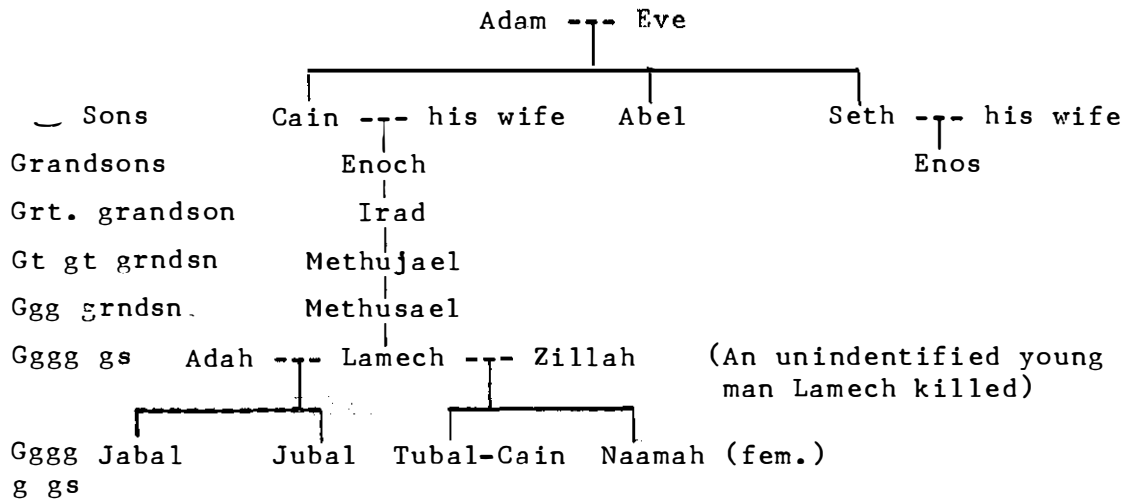
If Adam and Eve could have seen how their sin would have affected their children, one wonders how this might have influenced their actions.

The chapter has four divisions:

- I. Cain and Abel (4:1-8).
 - A. Their births (vv. 1, 2a).
 - B. Their occupations (v. 2b).
 - C. Their offerings (vv. 3-7).
 - D. The murder of Abel by Cain (v. 8).
- II. Cain and the Lord (4:9-15).
 - A. God's inquiry (vv. 9, 10).
 - B. God's judgment of Cain (vv. 11, 12).
 - C. Cain's complaint (vv. 13, 14).
 - D. God's mercy upon Cain (v. 15).
- III. Cain's descendants (4:16-24).
 - A. His home -- in Nod (v. 16).
 - B. His son, Enoch (v. 17).
 - C. The following four generations: Irad, Mehujael, Methusael, and Lamech.
 - D. The account regarding Lamech (vv. 19-24).
 1. His wives (v. 19).
 2. His children and their occupations (vv. 21, 22).
 3. His confession (v. 23).
 4. His hope (v. 24).
- IV. Cain and Abel's brother, Seth (4:25, 26).
 - A. Seth's birth (v. 25).
 - B. Seth's son: Enos (v. 26).

When we go on to Genesis 5 we have the genealogy of Adam through Seth; Genesis 4 gives his genealogy through Cain. And so we come to a characteristic of the book: the least important of two sons is discussed first. But -- there is always a purpose in even the one who is not related to that godly line of people which ultimately leads to the Lord Jesus Christ.

To visualize the genealogy of Adam through Cain, we have:



What is the Lord seeking to teach us from this chapter?

No one can answer that question fully, but parts of the answer seem very, very clear.

I. THE EFFECT OF ADAM'S SIN UPON HIS SONS.

They were given no tests like Adam and Eve were given. Instead, they were born in sin, born as sinners. No one had to teach Cain to get angry with Abel and finally murder him; that was all in his heart. His father gave him that kind of a nature. See Gen. 5:1-3 and note the change from the likeness of God to the likeness of Adam.

Sin tore the first family apart, and it has been ruining families from that day until this. We do not become sinners the first time we sin; we are born sinners. Cf. Rom. 5:12.

What we call a "blessed event" (the birth of a baby), can be a most tragic event except for the grace of God. Every parent ought to be acquainted with Genesis 4!

II. THE OCCASION FOR CAIN'S SIN. See vv. 3-5.

It had to do with the worship of God -- just as Adam and Eve's sin came about in their desire to be like God.

Here we learn:

- 1) The importance of worshipping God. Man has a natural desire to worship.
- 2) The importance of the worshipper. See vv. 4b, 5a. What was the difference between Cain and Abel. Two

NT passages give us the answer.

Cain and Abel are both mentioned 3 times in the NT. (One having to do with Cain in Matthew is repeated in Luke, thus making really 4 times for him.) Two of these verses give us our answer:

- 1) Heb. 11:4, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent (a more complete) sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh."

Note Abel did not become righteous by offering the complete sacrifice; he was righteous before he offered, righteous by faith, and this is why he offered as he did.

Note the second verse:

- 2) 1 John 3:12, "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous."

And this also leads us to see:

- 3) The importance of the sacrifice. An unregenerate person will think that he can worship God in the way that he wants to. It is foolish to him to come by means of a blood sacrifice. But Genesis 4 teaches us that we come to God in His way or we do not come at all. Cf. John 14:6.

III. WHAT THE LORD DID TO PREVENT CAIN'S SIN.

Those who want to blame God for man's sin need to read Genesis 3 and 4 over and over again.

Let me mention three things here:

- A. Obviously the Lord had told both Cain and Abel what he required.

Rom. 10:17 says, "So then, faith cometh . . ." God holds men responsible for what He has revealed. And that is one reason why no person on the face of this earth has an excuse for not knowing the right way. God has spoken!

- B. The Lord came to Cain; Cain did not seek out the Lord. See v. 6.

- C. The Lord gave Cain added truth to turn his heart away from the sin he was about to commit. See v. 7 -- a most important verse for us to understand if we are to know what the Lord wants us to know about sin.

IV. THE SIN (Gen. 4:8).

Other vv. on
Abel:
Mt. 23:35;
Lk 11:51
Heb. 12:24

On Cain:
Heb. 11:4
Jude 11.

V. THE AFTERMATH OF CAIN'S SIN.

- A. There was a divine inquiry (Gen. 4:9, 10).

Are you one who thinks that the Lord does not deal with the sinner and his sin -- even now? But this is nothing compared with that which is coming! Gen. 4 will be a sober awakening for some.

- B. There was divine judgment (Gen. 4:11, 12).

The rest of Cain's life was to be affected by his sin.

- C. The reaction of Cain (Gen. 4:13, 14).

Cain was not repentant for his sin. He did not hate his sin -- just the consequences of it.

- D. Five generations later.

Have you ever wondered why we have this genealogy of Cain's sons and grandsons down to his great great great grandson? Down to Lamech (who by comparing this chapter with Gen. 5 may have been a contemporary of Enoch!

Talk about the effect of the sins of parents down to the third and fourth generations!!!! Five generations later Cain had a great great great grandson who took another man's life because his great great great grandfather had done it -- and so he did the same!

ONE THING THAT STANDS OUT LOUD AND CLEAR FROM THIS CHAPTER IS THAT EVERY FATHER WHO IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE WELFARE OF HIS CHILDREN FOR GENERATIONS TO COME CAN DO NOTHING BETTER FOR THEM THAN TO MAKE SURE THAT HE HIMSELF WALKS WITH THE LORD EVERY DAY.

Cain was never saved, and there is nothing to indicate that Lamech ever was either! Oh, how we need to think about this!!!

But I cannot leave you on this low note. Notice also the evidence of . . .

VI. THE SOVEREIGN GRACE OF GOD.

- A. To Cain. See v. 15. He spared his life -- sovereignly and graciously.

The Bible is full of evidence of God's grace to sinners who never responded to His grace. All men are without excuse -- and this is especially so of Cain.

B. To Adam and Eve. See vv. 25, 26.

Seth could not take Abel's place. No child can take another child's place in the hearts of the parents.

Illus: Linda Banks' baby. Also Mrs. Mitton's son.

No -- in that sense, no one could take Abel's place.

Well, you say, what does verse 25 mean? What did Eve mean when she said this?

Note that it was Eve who said this. And then remember Gen. 3:15 and what the Lord said about "the woman . . . and her seed"! Abel was of the godly line. Cain, the ungodly one, had killed him! What would become of the promise? What would happen now with respect to salvation? What about the One who would be the Saviour of men? Can Satan or men nullify the promise and the purpose of God? NEVER!

Seth was given to Adam and Eve to take the place of Abel in the godly line that would lead ultimately to the coming of the One who would be uniquely the seed of the woman, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST!

Cannot you and I trust a God like this?

Concl: Which way are you going -- Abel's, or Cain's?

Abel went God's way. Cain went his own way. Jude talks about "the way of Cain" -- the way that Solomon spoke of in Prov. 16:25, "There is a way . . ."

Gen. 4 is here to warn us, but also to give us hope. May the Lord Himself grant you the grace to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour right now!

THE GENERATIONS OF ADAM
Genesis 5

Intro: It is absolutely essential that we keep in mind the purpose of God in giving us what we have in the first 11 chapters of Genesis -- especially at this point, chapters 3-11.

It is not to give us history -- it is too brief for that.

It is to show us the progressive, ever-increasing and expanding effect of sin upon the human race. And the Lord covers 2,000 years in just 11 chapters to show us that!

In chapter 3 we have some of the immediate effects of sin upon Adam and Eve.

In chapter 4 we see the effects of sin upon their sons.

In chapter 5 -- the effect upon their family for 10 generations.

In chapters 6-9 -- the universal effect of sin.

In chapters 10, 11 -- sin as organized rebellion against the purposes of God.

This morning we want to look at Genesis 5.

Note first of all . . .

I. THE MONOTONOUS CHARACTER OF THE CHAPTER.

Genealogies are not usually very interesting to the reader, but this is especially bad because it follows the same pattern all the way through. And over and over again -- 8 times -- "and he died"!

What an ominous effect it produces upon our hearts! This is what most people spend their lives trying to forget -- that they are going to die. Cf. Heb. 9:27.

And what is this but overwhelming evidence of the truth of the words of God in Gen. 2:17, and that the serpent was nothing but an absolute liar when he said, "Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. 3:4)!

See also Rom. 5:12 and 6:23.

Generation after generation it is the same.

And it is still the description of human history -- al-

ways ending in death. We do not like it, but there it is. The tenor of Genesis 5: HOPELESSNESS!

But there is another characteristic of this chapter that is hard to miss.

II. THE GODLESS CHARACTER OF THE CHAPTER.

It is not totally without any reference to God -- but almost!

After the many times He is mentioned in Genesis 1, 2, 3, and 4 -- what a change here!

In some respects this is agruing from silence, but our deductions are supported by Genesis 6:5, 6, 11, 12 -- and also by Enoch's preaching (as we shall see in a few minutes).

Sin was the order of the day. Cain (Gen. 4:16) was not the only one who chose to live without God. Godless men were multiplying on the earth!

The Lord is mentioned here in connection with Adam,
Enoch,
Lamech,
 and that is all -- just 8 times, and **two** of them are pronouns (vv. 1, 2).

Could the story of your life be written like most of these were?

Nevertheless, we do have hope given to us in this chapter -- at least . . .

III. FOUR RAYS OF HOPE.

The first is:

I. Seth.

It does not have anything to do with what he said or did, but it concerns what his mother, Eve, said about him.

This should make you feel better about Eve.

Read Gen. 4:25, 26. Note that it is Eve who named Seth, and Eve who spoke about her seed.

Most of you will readily recognize that Seth could never take Abel's place in the hearts of Adam and

Eve. One child cannot replace another.

What did it mean? Why is Eve the one reported on here? Why does she say "seed"?

It is because of Gen. 3:15 -- the words of the Lord to the serpent, the promise of a Redeemer! He was to have come through Abel; now He will come through Seth. Perhaps Eve thought that the "seed" was Seth!

But regardless -- what we need to see is that right at the beginning of this divine record of human history we see that the sin of man will not be able to nullify God's purpose in giving a Redeemer for sinful men!

Thus we have the sovereign grace of God overruling Cain who killed Abel.

The second ray of hope is:

B. Enoch.

He is remember in Scripture for three things:

1. His walk -- Gen. 5:22, 25.

How significant that this is placed first of all that is said about Enoch. Everything else depends on this. It speaks of living with God, personal fellowship with God. See 1 John 1:6, 7.

And it was so remarkable, so unusual, even in Enoch's day -- that "God took him" -- an OT type of the Church translated before the judgment of the Great Tribulation which is typified by the flood.

This is to show us what God wants -- and Enoch is the only one of all the men mentioned in this chapter who did not die. He and Elijah are unique in heaven.

2. His faith. See Heb. 11:5, 6:

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that com-

eth to God must believe that he is, and that he is a reward^{er} of them that diligently seek him."

This means:

- a. He believed in God -- "that he is."

Evidently a great many in his day were inclined to deny the very existence of God.

- b. He believed the Word of God -- His promises -- "that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

3. His preaching -- Jude 14, 15:

"And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

We would not know that Enoch had been a prophet if Jude had not told us.

His message:

- a. The coming of the Lord -- the second coming!
b. God's judgment upon the ungodly -- mentioned 4x.

What a delight Enoch was to God!

The third ray of hope is:

- C. Lamech. See Gen. 5:28, 29.

How different he was from the Lamech of Gen. 4!

He, too, prophesied. He looked for the removal of all the curse that sin had brought. He could only know this by divine revelation.

But it did not come through Noah! In fact, the whole earth was cursed in Noah's day by the flood! Perhaps Lamech thought Noah would deliver them. Was

his hope an empty one?

This brings us to our fourth ray of hope:

D. Whose genealogy is this -- really?

Adam's? Yes. Enoch's? Yes. Lamech's? Yes.
Noah's? Yes -- because we are obviously being prepared for the next step in this sacred record of human history.

But is there nothing greater here than a brief record of the history from Adam to Noah -- covering about 1500 years?

Yes, there is!

Turn to Luke 3:36b-38. (Read this first, and then point out that this is the genealogy of the LORD JESUS CHRIST!)

Concl: Who was the "seed" Eve was looking for?

Who was the one Enoch was proclaiming?

Who was the fulfillment of Lamech's hope?

CHRIST WAS -- IN ALL THREE INSTANCES!!!

Let's approach it another way:

Who wrote Genesis? Moses did.

What other books did he write? Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

Now listen to John 5:45-47 where the Lord was speaking to a mob of Jews who wanted to kill Him. What did He say?

"Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words."

What does this mean to us in connection with Genesis 5?

It means that there is only One (and there has never been any other) Who is God's answer for man's sin. They looked for His coming in OT times. Moses wrote of Him! We look back now at His finished work.

So it was not Seth,
nor Noah,
but Jesus Christ, the son of Mary, who was the promised
Seed of the woman.

The angel of the Lord said this to Joseph about the vir-
gin Mary:

"Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto
thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived
in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring
forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS:
for he shall save his people from their sins"
(Matt. 1:20b, 21).

Do you know Him as your Saviour?

This is the message of Genesis 5 -- to show us some of
the fruits of sin so that we will learn of our need of
a Saviour.

Is He your Saviour?

"THE DAYS OF NOAH"
Genesis 6

Intro: The Lord Jesus Christ used these words, "the days of Noah;" and they are recorded in Matt. 24:37,

"But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

Thus, as we trace the increasing spread and the growing defilement of sin, our Lord makes it very clear that that which characterized Noah's day would be found up to the very time that the Lord Jesus returns to reign upon the earth.

Genesis 6 gives us all that we need to know about the character of that day. And, as with Genesis 5, there is a dark, dark side, but there is also a bright side.

Let us look at the dark side.

I. THE DARK SIDE.

It was a time of great wickedness (v. 5).

It was a time when man was showing that he was totally depraved (v. 5).

It was a time of corruption (vv. 11, 12).

It was a time when "the earth was filled with violence" (v. 11).

It was a time of impending judgment (v. 7 and v. 13).

It was a time when things were being evaluated, not on the basis of what man wanted to do, but as it appeared in the eyes of God. Note the first words of vv. 5, and 12.

The evils hearts of men filled the earth with corruption and violence.

And the only hint we have as to the main cause of the Lord's concern is what is found in vv. 1-4.

There are two principle interpretations of this passage, AND IN BOTH OF THEM WE CAN SEE THE ONE THING THAT WAS PROBABLY INVOLVED IN ANY CASE -- AND THAT WAS AN ATTACK ON THE WOMEN OF THE EARTH, "the daughters of men."

- 1) The first is that this was an intermarriage of the two main lines proceeding from Adam:
 - a) The godly line of Seth.

b) The ungodly line of Cain.

In this interpretation, "the sons of God" would be Seth's line; "the daughters of men" would be Cain's line.

The emphasis in v. 2 would certainly place the main responsibility for the sin upon the godly line.

2) The second main interpretation is that this was intermarriage between angels and men.

In Job 1:6 and 2:1 and 38:6 it seems that angels are called, "the sons of God," not because they were righteous, but because they were created by God.

This might help to explain passages like 2 Pet. 2:4, 5 and Jude 6. The latter reads:

"And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."

We know that angels do not marry according to Matt. 22:30, but we do know that there are times when they have appeared as men. Cf. Gen. 18:2 and Heb. 13:2.

This would be one way of explaining the "giants in the earth in those days" (Gen. 6:4a).

Whichever it was, the Lord was very, very displeased.

But there is another thought here brought out by our Lord's use of this **time** in history -- the passage which we have in Matt. 24:36-39. It was a time when there was no concern for the warnings that had been given -- "and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away." And then the Lord added these words: "SO SHALL ALSO THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN BE."

Application: Our generation may not be guilty of the same sin, but the character is the same -- all doing according to the heart's desire, totally disregarding God and His Word.

But there is another side -- and we always see this.

II. THE BRIGHT SIDE.

In the darkest hours, there is hope for us when we look at the Lord and look at what the Word has to say about Him.

- A. It was a day in which the Holy Spirit was working. See v. 3.

We do not know for sure, but the 120 years may be the time left before The Flood. Noah, according to 2 Pet. 2:5 was "a preacher of righteousness."

How we need to marvel at the patience, the long-suffering, of the Lord! And all of the time He wait, the Spirit of God strives. The initiative always comes from God. How amazing! But it will not always be so!

- B. It was a day of grace. See v. 8.

The spiritual history of Noah (and of every other child of God) begins with "grace." He was not saved because he deserved to be saved; he was only a sinner saved by grace!

Cf. Eph. 2:8, 9.

We cannot understand the ways of God, but we know that it is all the result of what He has done. We would never turn to Him apart from His striving after us.

- C. It was a day of righteous living and of fellowship with God. See v. 9.

If our study of these early chapters of Genesis does nothing else, may it forever take away our excuse that the days are too bad for us to walk with God.

What a testimony is given to Noah here. He was a righteous^{man} in his life. He was all that God intended that he should be -- "perfect," complete. And thus he "walked with God."

Finally . . .

- D. It was a day of faith and obedience. See vv. 14-22.

In Hebrews 11:7 we read,

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

Just think! It had never rained before -- and yet "Noah . . . prepared an ark"!

Why did he do it? See v. 22. Just because God told him to do it.

And what was the result of his life and his preaching?

Just this: 7 people went with him into the ark --
-- his wife,
-- Shem and his wife,
-- Ham and his wife,
-- Japheth and his wife.

He would never be famous as a soul winner for that! Who would want to read his book on evangelism, or attend his seminar?

But notice: All of this was of such great and tremendous importance to the Lord that it stands written in the Word of God.

Concl: Do you know that the world is just the same today -- in God's sight?

It has not changed, nor will it be changed until the Lord makes the new earth.

What about your family?

How did Noah get his family in the ark? By being a man who was righteous and perfect in God's sight -- and who walked with God in wonderful, daily fellowship. Seven times it is recorded that God (or the Lord) spoke to Noah:

Gen. 6:13; 7:1; 8:15; 9:1, 8, 12, 17.

There is no more important passage, nothing more encouraging for families in all of the Bible, than this that is recorded about Noah. May the Lord enable us with much more light to be able to be and do as Noah lived.

NOAH AND THE FLOOD
Genesis 7, 8

Intro: All through the Scriptures the one thing that is referred to time and time again as being responsible for the downfall of men, nations, and even angels, is PRIDE!

It has brought disaster to the people of God as well as to those who are not the people of God.

- 2 -- It was pride that caused Babylon to feel that she would never be defeated.
- 3 -- It was pride that brought about the denial of our Lord by Peter.
- 1 -- It was pride that ruined the reign of King Uzziah, as the Word tells us, " . . . he was marvellously helped, till he was strong. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction" (2 Chr. 26:15b, 16a).
- 4 -- It was pride that Paul was condemning when he warns young servants of the Lord that "being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil" (1 Tim. 3:6b).

It is easy to see evidences of human pride, man glorying in himself and his attainments, every day that we live. It is very much alive in all of our hearts.

But one thing is sure: The man or the woman or the young person or the child that is full of himself and proud of himself has not spent the time that he needs to spend in reading the Word of God. The Bible leaves no room for man to glory in what he is or what he can do.

Do you want God's evaluation of man? Here it is in Gen. 6:5 as clearly as anything could be stated. (Read.)

Many try to water down this truth by saying that man has a strong inclination to evil, but that he is also capable of much good. But John Calvin once wrote:

"But when the celestial Judge thunders from heaven, that his thoughts (i.e., man's thoughts) themselves are evil, what avails it to soften down that which, nevertheless, remains unalterable? Let men therefore acknowledge, that inasmuch as they are born of Adam, they are depraved creatures, and therefore can conceive only sinful thoughts, until they become the new workmanship of Christ, and are formed by his Spirit to a new life. And it is not to be doubted, that the Lord declares the very mind of man to be depraved, and altogether infected with sin; so that all the thoughts which proceed thence are

evil. If such be the defect in the fountain itself, it follows, that all man's affections are evil, and his works are covered with the same pollution, since of necessity they must savour of their original. For God does not merely say that men sometimes think evil; but the language is unlimited, comprising the tree with its fruits . . . the very affections of nature, which in themselves are laudable, are yet vitiated by original sin . . . men are born evil . . . as soon as they are of an age to begin to form thoughts, they have radical corruption of mind . . . We must, therefore, acquiesce in the judgment of God, which pronounces man to be so enslaved by sin that he can bring forth nothing sound and sincere" (Genesis, Vol. I, pp. 284, 285).

Isaiah certainly agrees with Calvin:

"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" (Isa. 6:4).

And Paul was certainly in agreement with David when he quotes David's words from Psa. 14 in Rom. 3:10, 12,

"There is none righteous, no, not one . . . there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

— Even many Christians find it impossible to accept fully the declarations of Scripture with regard to the nature of man. But it is the same right through the Bible -- from Genesis to Revelation! C.F. GAL. 6:3.

If you do not believe this, then you cannot possibly understand the Flood!

It is in confirmation of this fact that the first significant statement that is made about Noah is this:

"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen. 6:8).

Noah was not different for any other reason than that he had been changed by the grace of God. It is only by the grace of God that any man can be different. No man has ever been able to change his own heart.

Let us, then, look, first of all, at NOAH in connection with The Flood.

I. NOAH.

There are three specific commandments which God gave to Noah in connection with the Flood:

- 1) Gen. 6:14.
- 2) Gen. 7:1.
- 3) Gen. 8:16.

And related to these we can say that there were four ways in which Noah's life was characterized by faith -- remembering that faith comes to us by the Word of God and in no other way:

- 1) He WALKED by faith.
- 2) He WORKED by faith.
- 3) He WAITED and WATCHED by faith.
- 4) He WORSHIPPED by faith.

A. He walked by faith. Cf. Gen. 6:9b.

This characterized his life before he knew that there was going to be a Flood, during the Flood, and after the Flood.

The fact that he "walked with God" means that he was concerned primarily with one thing: pleasing God, doing the will of God, living according to the Word of God.

7x - "AND GOD SAID
UNTO NOAH" OR
ITS EQUIV.: 6:13,
7:1, 8:15, 9:1, 8, 12, 17.

And we can really say that he did it in a most ungodly day with ^{only} the help that he got from the Lord -- which was all that he needed!

What an encouragement he ought to be to us!

B. He worked by faith.

It probably took him over 100 years to build the ark -- but we do not know for sure.

Think of the logging he had to do! Think of the ridicule that he experienced! And then he had to take the time to gather sufficient food! There was no past experience of any such thing, and yet Noah believed his very survival depended upon it -- and it really did!

This work is remembered in the NT -- Heb. 11:7, "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

And a part of that work was getting his family and the animals (and birds) into the ark -- an impossible task apart from what the Lord did. Note the order in both going in and going out of the ark: Gen. 7:7-9; 8:18, 19. The men went in first, and out first, led by Noah. (Apply.)

C. He waited and watched by faith.

How old was Noah when the Flood began? See Gen. 7:6. How old was he when the Flood was over so that he could leave the Ark? See Gen. 8:13, 14. The total: just a little over 1 year!

How would you like to live in an ark shut up with 7 other people and all of these creatures for a whole year? It was just as much of a miracle that Noah survived in the ark as it was that he survived out of the flood waters!!!!

AND DURING ALL OF THIS TIME THERE IS NOT ANY EVIDENCE THAT THE LORD SPOKE A WORD TO NOAH.

We might call this a time in Noah's life when he was learning the patience of faith.

How could he do it -- so that we might be helped when we pass through those times when the Lord is silent toward us? Here are some of the answers:

- 1) He walked with God and so he knew he was where the Lord wanted him to be. See Gen. 7:5, 9.
- 2) The nature of the command to enter the Ark: "Come."

Where was the Lord? By a word the Lord was teaching Noah the truth of John 10:4; Joshua 1:5; Heb. 13:5; Isa. 41:10 and many others.

- 3) Noah's security in the ark. Do you think that he wondered if the Ark would hold together, or if it would hold out the water?

Note how the Lord took care of that! "And the Lord shut him in" (Gen. 7:16b). He and all who were in the Ark was absolutely safe after that! Thus, the Lord gets the glory, not Noah!

How often we are able to realize that everything depends upon the Lord. If it depended upon us, all would fail. Cf. John 15:5.

- 4) While there was no word from God, we have this assurance in Gen. 8:1 which Noah realized as the Flood waters began to go down.

Just how much he was able to enter into this, we do not know. But it is there for us: "And the Lord remembered Noah." He never forgets us even though it may seem that He does. Cf. Isa. 49:15, 16,

"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me."

What wonderful lessons from Noah's time in the Ark!

D. He worshipped by faith. Cf. Gen. 8:20-22.

He begins anew by giving himself completely to the Lord -- and the Lord was very, very pleased!

Now just one word about The Flood.

II. THE FLOOD.

How extensive was it?

See Gen. 7:18-24. We can come to no other conclusion than that it was universal. Only 8 people were on the earth after the Flood was over!

III. THE RESULTS.

Let me mention three in closing:

A. That the Lord will always have a people.

B. That divine judgments are just as bad as the Lord says they will be.

Men do not believe this, and so they try to explain away the universal character of the Flood.

C. That the heart of man is no going to be changed by this kind of a judgment.

See Gen. 8:21 -- the last part of the verse gives us the reason for God's promise not to destroy the earth any more.

This is not the answer to man's need.

Concl: What, then, is the answer? It is CHRIST, the seed of the woman.

Repopulate the earth with any family and you will soon have a corrupted earth because the hearts of men will always be the same until their hearts are changed and cleansed through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Parents, do you know this about yourselves? And do you know this about your children? If you see this as your need, then you are going to be seeking another kind of a solution. The problem is one you cannot solve. Only God can, and He does it through Christ. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:17.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH NOAH
Genesis 9:1-17

Intro: The Bible teaches us, that in one of the darkest days of human history, there was a man named Noah who "found grace in the eyes of the Lord." As a result,

- 1 - He walked by faith.
- 2 - He worked by faith.
- 3 - He waited and watched by faith.
- 4 - He worshipped by faith.

This last point brings us to the end of Genesis 8 -- and really the last three verses of chapter 8 belong to chapter 9 (as we shall see).

The flood is over as we come to chapter 9. Noah has just completed his worship of the Lord. Now what?

I would like to take just the first 17 verses of chapter 9 this morning where we have three things:

- 1 - A new beginning (vv. 1-7) -- with new conditions.
- 2 - A covenant (vv. 8-11) -- although 8:21, 22 are related to this covenant.
- 3 - A token, or sign, of the covenant (vv. 12-17).

In looking at this introductory section of Genesis (chs. 1-11), we must remember that from ch. 3 on especially the revelation which God has given to us always has salvation in view.

And so let us look, first of all, at . . .

I. THE NEW BEGINNING (Gen. 9:1-7).

The first was in Gen. 1, 2. This is similar in some respects, but it is also different.

- A. It begins with the blessing of God (v. 1).
- B. Noah is given the same responsibility as Adam (vv. 1, 7). The repetition shows the importance of these words.
- C. Man is still above other created beings, but there is a difference: now it is with "fear." Cf. v. 2).
- D. A change in man's diet (vv. 3, 4).
- E. The beginning of human government (vv. 5, 6).

And it all is completed with what the Lord says about man's responsibility (as noted under B. above).

II. THE COVENANT (Gen. 9:8-11) -- the first of Scripture.

We have already seen rays of light having to do with our salvation; now we are going to see more.

A. It was given in grace. See Gen. 8:21.

It was completely undeserved.

B. It was sovereignly given by God (vv. 8, 9).

Man did not seek it, and probably did not realize that such promises were even possible. It originated in the heart of God (see the wording about God's "heart" in 8:21).

C. It was dependent upon God alone -- not on man in any way. It was unconditional.

Look at the "I"s and "I will"s and "I do," etc.

Spurgeon once said (Vol. 9, p. 364),

"He who knows the difference between 'thou shalt' and 'I will' is a good theologian."

D. It was to be the same for all succeeding generations. See vv. 9b, 11b, 12b, etc.

The Gospel is the same in all generations -- both OT and NT!

E. Closely related to the one just mentioned, it was an eternal covenant (v. 16).

Cf. John 10:27, 28.

The passage could easily end with v. 11. It is enough for God to speak, and that should be enough for us. But the Lord has always been concerned about our assurance, about our knowing beyond any doubt that He would do as He has promised to do. At a later date Abraham was going to say, "Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" (Gen. 15:8), speaking of God's promise that He would have the land of Canaan. And God gave him the assuring evidence.

And so it was with Noah.

And it is the same with us today!

III. THE TOKEN (OR SIGN) OF THE COVENANT (Gen. 9:12-17).

The rainbow was the sign. It is not mentioned many times in the Bible, but it is mentioned enough for us to be able to say that it is typical of the glory of God. And, since the

glory of God has been revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ, we can take the rainbow as a type of Christ.

Two passages as proof:

- 1 - Ezek. 1:28, "As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.²
- 2 - Rev. 4:3, "And he (speaking of God) that sat (i.e., upon the throne) was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald."

And so this is to teach us that just as the rainbow is God's guarantee to us ^{that He will not again destroy the earth with a flood, so ~~His~~ ^{Christ is} guarantee to us that His judgment upon our sins is past!}

But let us note some of the other details and see how they relate to the Lord Jesus Christ.

A. First, it was given by God -- as was the covenant itself.

Man did not ask for salvation; it was given to men through Christ. Cf. John 3:16.

B. Note where God placed it. It was to be a heavenly sign, indicating that man's hopes for salvation are not on the earth, not among men, but from God -- in the heavens.

C. Its glory, its beauty. No artist can really duplicate the beauty of a rainbow!

Nor is there anyone who can compare with the Lord Jesus Christ in His loveliness. As Samuel Rutherford used to say, "Oh, the loveliness, the loveliness of Christ!" He is "altogether lovely."

D. And then we see the condescending grace of God in the fact that the rainbow is there as a reminder for God.

The Lord Jesus Christ is a constant reminder to God that judgment is past. That forgiveness has been provided. Although He could never forget what His Son has done, yet the Lord Jesus is the eternal reminder to God that grace has been promised. How could we go beyond that?

But there is one other thing that we need to see.

The Lord has not promised that there would not be clouds in

our lives, or rain, or floods, or what we would call, disasters.

In fact, our passage this morning teaches us that . . .

- E. The rainbow can only be seen when three things are present:
1. Rain.
 2. Clouds.
 3. Sun.

And it is really when you and I are under the clouds and rain of life, when we go through the waters (Isa. 43:1, 2), and through the fire like the friends of Daniel in Dan. 3:25, that we see the Lord Jesus Christ, there to be with us, and to help us, and to display His glory as we could never see it in any other way.

Concl: The revelation of the OT is concluded with the promise of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as "the Sun of righteousness," and so you have the idea of a rainbow coming out of the clouds and storms **WHEN HE RETURNS.**

When your clouds come, remember it is so God can show you His Rainbow, the Lord Jesus, and so your heart can find comfort and hope in Him!

THE SONS OF NOAH
Genesis 9, 10, 11

Intro: The purposes of Genesis 1-11 -- introductory. In chs. 1, 2 -- creation; in chs. 3-11 -- degeneration, depravity. All gives us the foundation for chs. 12 ff. where we see God's work of regeneration.

By the time we have gotten to ch. 9 the earth has experienced the greatest judgment that has ever been seen up to the present day! Everybody on the earth with the exception of 8 people have been destroyed by a world-wide flood! Cf. 1 Pet. 3:20.

The last part of chapter 8 and the beginning of chapter 9 hold out real hope:

- 1) First, with Noah worshipping the Lord.
- 2) Second, with God's promise that He would never again destroy the earth with a flood -- and the rainbow was given as a confirmation of God's covenant.

The last part of chapter 9, however, is a different story, and things keep going down through the 9th verse of chapter 11 -- and then we see a ray of hope again as the scene is prepared for the story of Abraham.

It is not my purpose this morning to deal with this rather lengthy section in detail (time would not permit), but to pick of the main points of the account so that we can complete the picture which God has given us -- to show the need for man's regeneration.

Let me point out four divisions:

- 1) The depravity of man (Gen. 9:18-29).
 - 2) The division of men into nations -- according to the three sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Gen. 10:1-32).
 - 3) The doom of Babel -- which stands as evidence of God's sovereignty over the evil designs of men (Gen. 11:1-9).
 - 4) The development of God's purpose through Abram (Gen. 11:10-32). Note that this is the second genealogy of Shem. Cf. Gen. 10:21-31. The difference follows Eber. See Gen. 10:25, 26a and 11:16.
- Cf. vv. 5, 20, 31, 32 (esp.)

These four sections could be identified by certain names -- although we must keep in mind that everyone mentioned in these three chapters (except Noah) were descendants of the sons of Noah. The names are:

- 1) Noah and Ham (although Shem and Japheth are involved, too).
- 2) Nimrod. Cf. Gen. 10:8-10.
- 3) Babel -- although Babel is first mentioned in 10:10.
- 4) Abram.

Let us look at the first division at the end of chapter 9:

I. NOAH AND HAM (Gen. 9:18-29).

Here we have the practical evidence of what the Lord said in Gen. 8:21.

The new beginning had not changed the hearts of those who had survived the flood.

How Noah's drunkenness came about, we do not know. The emphasis given to this would indicate that this is the only time that it happened.

But this led to indecency -- and Noah's indecency set things up for Ham's sin.

Ham sought to involve his brothers also.

Thus we see how one sin leads to another and how one sinner seeks to involve others -- like Eve did in the Garden of Eden.

When Noah realizes what Ham had been doing (and the extent of his sin we do not know), he spoke by divine revelation concerning the future of his sons.

Noah's prophecy:

- 1) Note that the curse was mainly upon Canaan -- not on all of Ham's descendants.
See the evidence here of God's decretive will.
- 2) Regarding Shem and Japheth, note the emphasis on God -- that the blessing of God upon them comes from the heart of God and God is the One who is to be praised and recognized for His work.

Thus, we have a mixture of the human and the divine -- but pointing very strongly to the tragic and continuing effect of sin.

II. NIMROD -- from chapter 10, clearly the important character. See vv. 8-10.

He was a Hamite and a Cushite -- but not a Canaanite.

Three times the word "mighty" is used of him. See vv. 8, 9.

This expression may point to something good in Nimrod, having to do with the eating of meat. But this led to the establishing of his own empire (which is described more fully in ch. 11). He himself evidently became highly honored and ultimately worshipped by men until he had replaced the Lord in their affections. This very probably was the first instance of what Paul says in Rom. 1:25 where men "worshipped

and served the creature more than the Creator . . ."

Thus Nimrod is an example of a different kind of corruption from that of Ham. His problem was PRIDE -- starting out well, but unable to handle the blessing and prominence which he received.

How often men are like this!

But what, specifically, was his sin? This takes us to our third point:

III. BABEL. See Gen. 11:1-9.

Note the godlessness that is apparent in vv. 2-4. There is no mention of the Lord, or of His will. It is all where they wanted to go, what they wanted to do, and why: "lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth."

This was a direct violation of the will of God, showing the whole plan to be in rebellion against God!

The "tower" was an idolatrous monument, probably to the greatness of Nimrod. It was anything but an attempt to get to heaven.

Note what the Lord did -- the 5x He is mentioned in vv. 5-9.

See especially v. 6b.

Romans 1 (the latter part) is a commentary on these days and the rapid way in which this new generation sought to get rid of the Lord.

But what the Lord did here stands in the Word of God as a solemn warning (along with all of the other judgments of Scripture) that every plan which man makes contrary to the will of God is destined to failure from the beginning!

What is God's answer to man's need? Not Nimrod, but Christ.

That is the reason the chapter closes with our first introduction to:

IV. ABRAHAM, or Abram.

How does the NT begin? "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1).

By the time we get to the end of chapter 11 in Genesis, we have been given enough to make us realize (if our hearts are

open to the Lord at all) that the only hope for man if he is ever to be able to be pleasing and acceptable to God rests in two things:

- 1) He has to be changed inside of his own heart.
- 2) God is the only One who can possibly bring about that change.

Concl: This is the message of the Word of God -- the evidences of man's need, and how God alone can meet that need.

Have we not seen how corrupt, how weak, how depraved man is? He is no different today. Note Rom. 3:23 and 6:23a;

Isa. 53:6;
 John 3:16;
 2 Cor. 5:17.

Are you concerned about your need -- your need before God?

Are you trying to do something about it, or have you learned that only God can change you, and that He has made full provision for your salvation in the death and resurrection of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

May God grant you saving faith that you may become a new creature in Christ!

ABRAHAM, THE FRIEND OF GOD
Genesis 12:1-9

Intro: The Spirit of God seems to have given certain people in Scripture unique designations to emphasize what they became under the special way in which the Lord led and blessed in their lives. Thus, over and over again Moses is called, "Moses, the servant of the Lord." His work was as the Lawgiver, and he did as much as anyone else in the Word to teach the absolute necessity of complete obedience to God. And so he had to exemplify his life and ministry -- and so he became in a special way, "the servant of the Lord."

There is a certain expression that is used for Abraham. It only appears three times in all of the Bible (twice in the OT; once in the NT), but it is such an unusual expression that it does point out that special thing which the Lord did in the life of Abraham. He is called, "the friend of God."

- 1) It was a great encouragement to Jehoshaphat as he prayed for for his people when they were in great danger:
"Art not thou our God, who did drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?" (2 Chr. 20:7).
- 2) Isaiah used it to comfort the people of God in his day:
"But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend" (Isa. 41:8).
- 3) James gives it to us as he teaches the great truth of justification by faith:
"And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God" (Jas. 2:23).

Let me take that as our theme this morning to show two things:

- 1) How God's friendship with Abraham was established, and what it meant -- the first thing;
- 2) How the experience of Abraham is a picture of what our experience as the people of God should be.

In Genesis 12:1, note first . . .

I. THE THEOPHANY.

This word is formed from two Greek words: θεός, which means GOD, and φαίνεσθαι, which means to appear. Thus, a theophany is an appearance of God.

This is the first time this appears in Genesis although we do have references to the fellowship that the Lord had with Adam in the Garden of Eden and with Enoch who walked with God -- and the same for Noah. But with none of them is it specifically said that the Lord appeared to them.

See it again in Gen. 12:7.

Note how Stephen refers to this in Acts 7:2,

"And he (Stephen) said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran."

This is used only elsewhere in Psa. 29:3,

"The voice of the Lord is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth . . ."

But see also Psa. 24:7-10, "the King of glory."

This anticipates both the Millennium and the Eternal State -- thus in the beginning we have an indication of the end.

Who is the God who "appeared" to Abraham? See John 1:18. It can be no one else but the Lord Jesus Christ! Our Lord Himself teaches us that Moses wrote of Him. See John 5:46.

This makes our Lord's reference to His friends in John 15:13-15 especially important:

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

But what does Genesis 12 teach us about the friendship between the Lord and Abraham?

II. It was A FRIENDSHIP ESTABLISHED BY GOD, not by Abraham.

Abraham would not have that right. He was the object of divine election. God is the one who chose Abraham to be His friend. In Isa. 51:2b the Lord says about Abraham, "I called him." In the prayer of the Levites in Neh. 9:7 we have, "Thou art the Lord God, who didst choose Abram."

In Isa. 41:8, mentioned earlier, the Lord refers to "Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend."

And it is immediately after the friendship verses of John 15 that we have, "ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," in v. 16.

Because it was sovereignly established by God and because God made a particular choice of Abram, when we consider the difference between the Lord and Abraham, we have to recognize another fact that is plainly taught in Scripture . . .

III. It was A FRIENDSHIP ESTABLISHED BY AND ON DIVINE GRACE.

Note the contrast (the greatest possible) between Gen. 11 and Gen. 12!

See Isa. 51:1, 2a,

"Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him."

Pink's comment in Gleanings in Genesis, pp. 139, 140:

"The lesson to be learned here is a deeply important one. The connection between Genesis eleven and twelve is highly significant. The Lord God determined to have a people of His own by the calling of grace, but it was not until all the claims of the natural man had been repudiated by his own wickedness that Divine clemency was free to flow forth. In other words, it was not until the utter depravity of man had been fully demonstrated by the antediluvians, and again at Babel, that God dealt with Abram in sovereign grace. That it was grace and grace alone, sovereign grace, which called Abram is seen in his natural state when God first appeared to him. There was nothing whatever in the object of His choice which commended him to God. There was nothing whatever in Abram which merited God's esteem. The cause of election must always be traced to God's will. Election itself is 'of grace' (Rom. 11:5), therefore it depends in no wise upon any worthiness in the object -- either actual or foreseen. If it did, it would not be 'of grace.'"

This is confirmed by Joshua 24:2,

"And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods."
In other words, they were idolaters!

Next we see that it was . . .

IV. A FRIENDSHIP WHICH LED TO REVELATION.

Note what the Lord said to Abram in Gen. 12:1-3 -- amazing words, far beyond anything that Abram could have imagined!

This is always a part of friendship. See John 15:15.

V. A FRIENDSHIP WHICH CALLED FOR SEPARATION: "Get thee out . . ."

Cf. Jas. 4:4.

Also Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 6:17, 18.

VI. A FRIENDSHIP WHICH REQUIRES FAITH.

Look at the promises -- personal, national, and international!

What can you do with a promise? You either believe it, or you do not believe it!

What did Abram do? See Heb. 11:8.

Remember what our Lord said in John 15:14, "Ye are my friends IF . . ."

VII. A FRIENDSHIP WHICH INCLUDED GUIDANCE.

See Gen. 12:7. This was the second appearance.

Cf. also Psa. 32:8 and Isa. 58:11.

All of these are a part of our salvation, too.

But now look at one that we hear so little about these days:

VIII. The Lord was A FRIEND TO BE WORSHIPPED.

He always is the Lord; we are always the chosen ones, only sinners saved by grace. The worship can only go from us to Him.

We have it twice here: vv. 7b and 8b. Note the reference also in Gen. 13:3, 4.

Noah worshipped. See Gen. 8:20.

Remember Thomas in John 20:28.

Concl: Thus, the Lord has given us the pattern. The principles are the same for us, although the circumstances may differ.

How much of this do you understand?

How much of this is characteristic of your life -- the knowledge, the faith, the separation, the guidance, the worship?

A FAMINE AND A FAILURE
Genesis 12:10-20

Intro: Two things are very apparent about God's dealings with those of us who are His children:

- 1) He never chooses us on the basis of what we are.
- 2) He never promises us that our lives as His children are going to be trouble-free.

And it is in putting these two facts together that we begin to see a principle of great importance in God's ways with us: It is through the trials that God is working in our lives to make us what He wants us to be.

Add to these another apparent fact from the life of Abraham. Although he was far from what the Lord wanted him to be, still there is no outward reason for many of our testings when they do come. At the time of the test Abram was where the Lord wanted him to be, and he was doing what the Lord wanted him to do.

Note . . .

I. THE MAN, ABRAM.

From vv. 1-9 we see that he was:

- A. Chosen by God (vv. 1-3).
- B. Obedient, faithful (v. 7).
- C. Devoted to the Lord (vv. 7b, 8b) -- he built an altar and called on the name of the Lord.

So you would think from all of this that things would go well with him and his family.

But suddenly we have . . .

II. AN UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENT (Gen. 12:10a).

Surely this is not what the Lord would do to one who leaves his home, going to a strange land, and one particularly who worships the Lord in this heathen place.

We very naturally are, therefore, incline to ask ourselves, "Why would this happen to Abram?"

There are several answers that are apparent, or become apparent:

- 1) Abram needed to be trained in the ways of the Lord.
- 2) Abram needed to have his faith strengthened.
- 3) Abram needed to learn to rely upon the wisdom and power of the Lord.

- 4) Abram needed to learn that he was living in a land that was under divine judgment. This could very well have been the main reason for the famine (to judge the Canaanites) -- and Abram was caught in it. This frequently happens to the children of God. But cf. Rom. 8: 28, 32.

This situation called for a decision on Abram's part. The lives of his family, his flocks, his herds, were endangered.

He could do two things:

- 1) Stay where he was, and trust the Lord.
- 2) Do what seemed wisest and best to him.

III. THE ACTION HE TOOK. Read v. 10.

He took matters into his own hands.

There is no mention of any prayer for guidance. There is no mention of any change in the guidance that the Lord had already given to him -- no further word from the Lord.

Until the Lord gives further guidance, it is always safe to assume that we are where He wants us to be.

IV. THE CONSEQUENCES.

They are stated immediately: "and Abram went down" -- "down" geographically, and "down" spiritually!

A. Fear.

Note a very interesting confession which Abraham makes in Gen. 20:12, 13. He had anticipated trouble, and had decided what he would do (and what Sarah should do) -- hiding behind a half-truth!

This is not the way to handle our fears.

B. The chastity of Sarai. Abram was so concerned about himself that he was willing to put Sarai in danger for his own welfare

C. His needs were met. And so it was not all bad. In fact, Abram was ahead on two of these three points. This latter point had been the reason for his going to Egypt -- and it had been achieved. No one missed a meal. No one died -- neither man, woman, child, nor any of his many flocks and herds!

But regardless of the two good things, the bad far outweighed the good when we take into consideration that Sarai was a

vital part of God's plan, just as Abram was! She, too, had been chosen of God. See Gen. 18:9, 10.

And so it not surprising that the next thing that we see is . . .

V. DIVINE INTERVENTION. Cf. Gen. 12:17.

How gracious the Lord is! He could have let things go on. Or, he could have forgotten about Abram, and chosen someone else. But He did neither! Instead, he stepped in and intervened!

Many, many of the things you see the Lord doing in Scripture are to prevent or to correct something that His people have done or are about to do in their own stupidity and unbelief.

Here was a man who was called to be a blessing to those who were good to him, but instead he was a curse!

What the Lord did (the only time He is mentioned from 12:8 to 13:4) we do not know, but Pharaoh knew that it was a divine judgment, and he knew WHY!

VI. THE OUTCOME. Two things:

- A. We see a heathen king acting more like a man of God than Abram does.
- B. Abram is forced to go back to Canaan where he belonged -- back to the altar.

A child of God out of the will of God is an unwanted person!

Concl: What can we learn from Abram's failure?

Several things:

- 1) Expect trials and testings. It is God's way. No child of God is worth anything without them. As Packer says (Knowing God, p. 87) -- take them as from God.
- 2) Never anticipate trouble. It always increases our unbelief and causes us to do things that never should be done.
- 3) Always remember the Lord. He knows where we are. He knows what is going on. He even designs our testings -- and controls them, and uses them. Look at Him. Look to Him. F. B. Meyer once wrote that those who "come into positions of extreme difficulty" should "not look at God through difficulties . . . , but let them look at difficulties through God." (This is in Abraham, p. 38.)
See Gen. 15:1; 17:1 for this emphasis.
- 4) Never take a step without clear guidance from the Lord. "Wait" (Psa. 27:14) -- the hardest thing we ever do.

There is an unwritten chapter here -- and there are many in Scripture (and in our lives too): What God would have done to provide food for Abram, his family, and his livestock! How many unwritten chapters will there be in your life?

Christian, in Pilgrim's Progress, is said to have thought "that it is easier going out of the way when we are in, than going in when we are out" (p. 252).

Are you in a place where you are facing unexpected problems? Are you confused, anxious, perhaps even resentful against the Lord, saying, "Why should this happen to me?"

Andrew Murray gives us some wise suggestions which Abram should have followed:

"In the time of questioning say:

"First: He brought me here; it is by His will I am in this strait place; in that I will rest.

"Next: He will keep me here in His love, and give me grace in this trial to behave as His child.

"Then: He will make the trial a blessing, teaching me the lessons He intends me to learn, and working in me the grace He means to bestow.

"Last: In His good time He can bring me out again -- how and when He knows.

"Say: I am here . . .
 1. By God's appointment.
 2. In His keeping.
 3. Under His training.
 4. For His time."

-- In Edman's Just Why?, p. 3.

Will you learn from Abram's failure? Will I?

ABRAM AND LOT
Genesis 13

Intro: The story of Abram gives us a wonderful example of what you have in the Lord's dealings with all of His children -- two things:

- 1) The outworking of His great redemptive purpose. This goes far beyond any one of us, and yet it includes all of us. We have been "called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).
- 2) His work in us, making us what He wants us to be. He always starts with nothing, and then finished product is a masterpiece. See this in Rom. 8:29.

So in Abram we see God both making a man and using a man.

And the man that God makes and uses has to be a man of faith -- not just imparted to him, but implanted in him, becoming a very part of the man himself!

And this calls for both knowledge and the testing of that knowledge -- always! And so we have it in the life of Abraham. His faith is tested by the Lord when he was asked to leave Ur of the Chaldees without anything to go on but the promise of God.

And immediately when he gets into the land he faces a test. We considered it last week: "And there was a famine in the land" (12:10).

And Abram failed -- failed miserably, and failed dangerously. He ran the risk of losing his wife forever, and possibly of losing his own life!

BUT -- as chapter 13 begins we have nothing but . . .

I. THE SOVEREIGN GOODNESS OF THE LORD (Gen. 13:1-4).

Abram is safe. Sarai is safe. Lot is safe. Abram is extremely wealthy. And he comes back to "the place of the altar," and fellowship is restored: "and there Abram called on the name of the Lord."

Talk about an example of Eph. 3:20, 21 -- here it is! God is watching over His foolish servant, and displaying His sovereign power over the mighty Egyptians! He will never let an Abram, or a Pharaoh, or a famine, or anything else stand in the way of the fulfillment of His purposes. And He takes all of the involved circumstances and works them together so that even those who have done the wrong thing come out on top! What an amazing God we have -- because He is still the same way.

However, they no sooner get back into the land than they run into . . .

II. ANOTHER TEST (Gen. 13:5-7).

The language is even similar to that which described the first test: "And there was a strife . . ." (13:7).

The first test had been with circumstances; the second, with people. Testings are not always of the same kind.

And note one particular thing that was true of both of these tests. They took place "in the land," i.e., when Abram was exactly where the Lord wanted him to be!

This means two things at least:

- 1) Testings do not necessarily mean that we are in the wrong place. They may mean that, but not necessarily.
- 2) You can expect that being in the will of God will bring tests -- tests that you would not have had otherwise.

Abram and Lot were both so wealthy and had so many flocks and herds that it was not possible for them to stay in the same place. Note that expression at the beginning of 13:6, "And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together."

Now this is very interesting in view of:

- 1) Abram's call -- "out of thy country, and from thy kindred and from thy father's house" (12:1) -- the first part of his call.
- 2) Note who went, and who took who according to 11:31! Is this not a sign of Abram's weakness?
- 3) And then note how even after Terah died, Lot is always "with" Abram. See 12:4, 5; 13:1, 5.

There is no question about what is happening. Lot has to go!

And from Lot's life afterward is it not even possible that it was really Lot who took Abram down to Egypt?

How can this be settled?

It is very interesting to see how testings are used to bring about the very conditions that the Lord wanted in the beginning. Note . . .

III. THE SOLUTION (Gen. 13:8-13).

Note who initiated it -- Abram.

Note what his suggestion was. It is twofold:

- 1) That there should not be trouble between them.
- 2) That Lot make the first choice -- but notice that that choice was to be of some place in the "land." See v. 9.

Abram did not want Lot to leave the land -- and we need to keep this in mind.

← It is very instructive, and it will serve to warn us to see how Lot went about making his choice. It basically was:

- 1) A selfish choice. Lot was only concerned about Lot.
- 2) A choice based upon what he could see!
 Lot was "just" according to 2 Pet. 2:7, but he was a man who walked by sight. There is no mention of any prayer he offered.
- 3) A choice that failed to take into consideration that there were things about "the cities of the plain" which he did not know, i.e., "before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah."

Cf. 1 John 2:15-17. Do you know the rest of the story of Lot's life -- about his daughters, about his wife? See 13:13.

It was necessary that they separate, but it was necessary for Lot to make the decision which he made! What a tragedy -- involving so many lives!

We are not through with Lot, but we leave him in this chapter at the end of v. 13.

— Now let us look at . . .

IV. THE OUTCOME FOR ABRAM (Gen. 13:14-18).

And it was "after that Lot was separated from him." There are some things which the Lord holds back until the conditions in our lives are according to His will.

Notice the emphasis that we have had on "the land." What does it represent for us? What is our "land"?

This was the place that all of the promises were centered. It was the place of blessing. It was God's will for Abram. Does it not represent the Word?

Let me take the three commandments having to do with the "land" and show how they relate to us today and to the life of faith which the Lord wants us to live:

- 1) "Get thee out of thy country . . . unto a land that I will shew thee" (12:1).
- 2) "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art . . ." (13:14).
- 3) "Arise, walk through the land . . ." (13:17).

And then we need to note the promises connected with these

commands:

- 1) It is all to be given to Abram. See 12:7; 13:15, 17.
He did not earn it by going. And he certainly did not deserve it. It all was a gift from God!
- 2) It was a place of blessing. Cf. 12:2m.
- 3) It was a place where saints would be made. Cf. 12:2a; 13:16a.
- 4) It was a place from which blessing would go to the ends of the earth. Cf. 12:3b.

And what happened to Abram as he began to "walk"? He walked right to "Hebron," which means to be joined together -- the Lord and Abram -- because in the Word you find the Lord and with the Lord there is fellowship with the two things that are characteristic of Abram's life:

- 1) His tent. } See 13:18.
- 2) His altar. }

Concl: Can the Lord be trusted? Would you rather have your own way like Lot, or leave the choice to the Lord like Abram did? Who was the winner?

And will you get into the Word,
and look through the Word in all directions and from start to finish,
and then walk through it -- expecting great things from the Lord?

This is the way to blessing because it is the way to fellowship with the Lord.

THE MOST HIGH GOD
Genesis 14

Intro: One thing that we have been learning from the life of Abram is that the life of the child of God is going to be a life a testing. This is the way that the Lord has of strengthening our faith. Untried faith is always weak faith.

And anyone who reads the Scriptures knows that the Bible has a great deal to say about suffering.

In fact, among believers today we are hearing more about fellowship and discipleship than we are hearing about anything else. And yet there are very few that seem to realize that suffering and testing and trials are related intimately with these words in Scripture.

And so it was in the life of Abraham.

We have testing in Gen. 12, Gen. 13, and now in Gen. 14 -- all different, but all trials nevertheless.

But it will be very encouraging to us to note the place that the Lord has in all of these chapters -- especially with respect to His sovereignty! And this comes very much to the surface here in Gen. 14.

What is the situation here?

Note 12:6b and 13:7b.

It is very apparent that Abram had been called by God into a land that was of great interest to many people and to many kings! The chief of them was Chedorloamer (mentioned 3rd in 14:1, but 1st in 14:5 -- probably indicating his ascendancy over the other kings during that 13 year period). He was a kind of "Napoleon of his age" (Meyer, F. B., Abraham, p. 58). And, facing a revolt among some of his subjects, he seems intent upon re-establishing his power over all of his subjects.

We would not be interested in this and it is doubtful if it would be referred to in the Bible if it were not for . . .

I. THE INVOLVEMENT OF LOT (Gen. 14:1-12).

Note "Bera king of Sodom" in v. 2. And then notice "Sodom" in vv. 8, 10, 11, 12, especially v. 12. And see the way in which things had progressed for Lot from 13:12b.

Could we say that, just as there is an unwritten account in connection with ch. 12, i.e., how the Lord would have provided for Abram IF he had stayed in the land, so we have an

incident here which should not have been written. Lot is in trouble, and he is in trouble because he made a very, very foolish mistake in Gen. 13 when he decided to pitch "his tent toward Sodom" (v. 12b).

How tragic to read, "and they took Lot . . ." (14:12a).

But the second thing we see in the chapter is . . .

II. THE INTERVENTION OF ABRAM (Gen. 14:13-16).

Providentially someone "escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew" (v. 13).

What could have been his reaction? That it was just what Lot deserved?

Yes, that could have been Abram's feeling -- BUT IT WAS NOT! Instead, "he armed his trained servants" and went out to win what was undoubtedly one of the most amazing and most miraculous victories in all of Scripture.

V. 16 tells us the most important result of the battle. V. 17 calls Abram's victory a "slaughter."

But the important part of these verses is the title given to Abram: "the Hebrew."

It relates him to his ancestor, Eber. And it becomes the prominent designation for his descendants, the Hebrews.

But basically it is formed from the Hebrew verb, עָבַד, which means to pass over, meaning in this case one who had come over into Canaan from beyond the River Euphrates. It marked out Abram as a foreigner -- in Canaan, but not a Canaanite!

And even more significant spiritually it meant that he was a man of God who had maintained his separation from the Canaanites. They looked upon him as a stranger and a pilgrim

This was not the case with Lot -- who had become one of them!

BUT NOTE: When Sodom needed help, it was not Lot whom God used, but Abram, "the Hebrew."

But victories always bring their dangers, and let us never forget it. It comes to Abram in . . .

III. THE INCIDENT WITH THE KING OF SODOM (Gen. 14:17, 21).

What a temptation this must have been! And how reasonable it was!

Note something very important: The people were more important to the King of Sodom than were these things. And, of course, the people would have included Lot!

But how infinitely wise and important are the ways of God with us. He knows what is ahead. And we often learn that something unexplained and unexplainable that we have gone through has been God's preparation for that which He knew was coming!

And so we have . . .

IV. THE DIVINE INTERLUDE (Gen. 14:18-20).

An interlude has been defined as "a performance between the acts of a play" (Webster's New World Dictionary, p. 393).

The Lord sends a man, a very important man, into Abram's life to prepare Abram for the temptation that is coming.

And this man brings to Abram a new revelation of God. It is "the most high God"!

I want to spend another Sunday on Melchisedec because he is so very important in Scripture, but let us look just at this revelation today.

"God" here is the Hebrew word, El. (אֱלֹהִים). It speaks of God's might, power, strength.

77:4y

As "the most high" we are to understand one who is exalted, supreme, the greatest One, the One over all, the Sovereign.

And as such He is "the possessor of heaven and earth." This (אֱלֹהֵינוּ) means that God is the Founder, the Creator, the One who erected the heavens and the earth -- and thus, the One who owns it, its Possessor, its Owner, its Master!

In the NT, cf. Col. 2:8-10.

With such a God, Abram did not need any help from the King of Sodom -- nor from anyone else. And neither do we!

What was the result? Note . . .

V. THE INDEPENDENCE OF FAITH (Gen. 14:22-24).

Here is a man jealous for the glory of God. He knew what the King of Sodom would say, and he was not about to let that happen!

What could have been of less significance than "a thread" or "a shoelatchet"? We would say a thread or a shoestring!

And this was a settled conviction between Abram and his God!
Note: "I have lift up mine hand . . ."

Concl: Do you see that the most practical truth in all of the Word of God is the knowledge of the Lord?

What we know of the Lord has the greatest effect upon all of our lives. It is seen in what we do.

Cf. Daniel's three friends, and Paul on the way to Rome during the storm.

Let us not turn from a passage like this amazed with the courage and faith of Abram; let us turn away to worship the God of Abram who made him what he was!

And He will do the same for us!

MELCHIZEDEK
Genesis 14:18-20

Intro: Melchizedek is mentioned in only three books of the Bible, and yet is one of the most important of all of the people mentioned in Scripture:

- 1) In Genesis 14 -- historically.
- 2) In Psalm 110 -- prophetically (v. 4).
- 3) In Hebrews 5:6, 10; 6:20; and 6 times in chapter 7 -- vv. 1, 10, 11, 15, 17, 21 -- doctrinally.

There is no doubt but that Melchizedek is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ! This is very evident in all three passages where Melchizedek is mentioned. But it is brought out especially by two statements:

- 1) That Christ, the Messiah, is "a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Psa. 110:4) -- quoted in Heb. 7:17, 21.
- 2) That Melchizedek was "made like unto the Son of God."

So it is very clear that we do have Christ in the OT. Here in a type.

Concerning this, Spurgeon once said,

"For my part, I am far more afraid of making too little of the Word than of seeing too much in it" (Vol. 30, p. 122a).

It is obvious from Hebrews 5-7 that this is truth which is to be classified as solid food, or "meat."

Let us see its application to us because, if Melchizedek is a type of Christ, then Abram is a type of those of us who are believers. And, therefore, what Melchizedek was to Abram, we can expect Christ will be to us -- and do for us!

It even is an account that foreshadows what the Lord will do in connection with His second coming.

Read Psalm 110.

But let us return to its meaning for us today.

I. THERE IS A BATTLE GOING ON. Note the context in Gen. 14.

Ours is a spiritual conflict, but it often involves people as well as Satan and demons, and even the sinful nature of our own hearts. We say, and say truthfully, that our conflict is with:

- 1) The world.
- 2) The flesh.
- 3) The Devil.

And, it is true of us as it was with Abram in this particular battle, we are outnumbered and out-powered until humanly speaking there is no hope for victory!

As I mentioned last week, this could easily be the most amazing victory that is recorded in Scripture (apart from the victory which our Lord won on the Cross).

No Christian is prepared for the battle which he faces until he sees that there is no possibility for him to be victorious in his own strength. Have you learned this?

II. THE SUDDEN, UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL OF MELCHIZEDEK.

We do not have any prior reference to his existence, and all of a sudden he is there. See Gen. 14:17, 18.

This certainly would have to be classified as one of the most important things that happened to Abram during all of his lifetime!

We, too, can expect these special visitations of blessing from the Lord -- but may I add -- ALWAYS THROUGH HIS WORD!

What a glorious prospect this is!

But now we come to the heart of things, and to that which is mentioned in our text: Gen, 14:18-20.

III. MELCHIZEDEK AS A TYPE OF CHRIST.

We see this in four particulars:

A. By who Melchizedek was -- his name and his titles.

I personally do not believe that Melchizedek is Christ, but that he is, as Heb. 7:3 says, "made like unto the Son of God." And as Psa. 110:4 says, that Christ is "a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." But he is a most remarkable type of Christ!

Note four names and titles that are given:

1. Melchizedek, which means, "king of righteousness." See Heb. 7:2.
2. King of Salem, which means, "king of peace." Note the grammatical connection between "Salem" and shalom.
3. As both above indicate, he is a king.
4. "The priest of the most high God."

Therefore, we can say that he is both a king and a priest who is characterized by righteousness and peace.

Notes:

- 1) We must begin with righteousness.
- 2) Righteousness precedes peace. Cf. Rom. 5:1; Isa. 32:17;
- 3) King suggests our Lord's sovereign power. 57:20,21.
- 4) As our priest he represents us before God as our intercessor.

We need to meditate much on these wonderful truths.

B. By what is not stated concerning Melchizedek.

This is the special emphasis in Hebrews 7.

We do not know:

- 1) About Melchizedek's birth -- where or when.
- 2) His parents, or any of his ancestry.
- 3) When he died -- and there is a special reason for this as we see in Heb. 7:3b, 8, 16, 17, 21, 23, 24, 25, 28.

F. B. Meyer has written,

"The fact on which the inspired writer fixes is -- that no information is afforded us on any of these points. There is an intention in the golden silence, as well as in the golden speech of Scripture (italics mine). And these details were doubtless shrouded in obscurity, that there might be a still clearer approximation of the type to the glory of the Anti-type, who abides continually. He is the Ancient of Days; the King of the Ages; the I AM. . . He does for us not what He did for" Abram then, "and what He will do for the last sinner who shall claim His aid" (Abraham, p. 69).

C. By what he (Melchizedek) brought to Abram: "bread and wine."

We see these two elements again in the first part of Num. 15 where the meal offering and the wine of the drink offering are added to the burnt offering.

To our minds since the death of Christ they speak of the elements that we use as we remember the Lord at the Lord's table.

And here is a major suggestion as to the meaning of the Lord's table for us -- just as it was for Abram's refreshment after the battle, so we are to be spiritually refreshed at the Lord's table.

And so it speaks of our salvation and of the work of our Saviour. Cf. the basic truth in John 6:53, and 35.

Finally as to Melchizedek himself . . .

D. By what he (Melchizedek) did (is he a type of Christ).

He acts here as a priest, standing between Abram and the most high God.

He blesses Abram, and he blesses God -- but in a different sense.

Here we see Christ as our Intercessor. Do you remember Heb. 7:25? And also in that series of question which Paul asks and answers in Rom. 8 we have that wonderful truth in v. 34,

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of the God, who also maketh intercession for us."

Thus we have Him again as the Living One, the Risen One, Who makes intercession for us -- seeking our blessing.

And note how Melchizedek is concerned about the glory of God -- just as our Lord Jesus Christ is to an infinite degree!!!

Now from all of this we come to one more thing:

IV. ABRAM'S RESPONSE: "And he (Abram) gave him (Melchizedek) tithes of all." See v. 20b.

And this is stated after Melchizedek had prayed, "And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand."

All that Abram had won in the battle was his because God had given it to him. So it really belonged to God. And in recognition of this, Abram gives a tithe to the Lord -- not because he had to, but because he wanted to. How significant this is in understanding the tithe, or any giving, wherever it is mentioned in the Word of God! It is the first time the tithe is mentioned.

What have you given to the Lord?

Concl: Note that all of this was to prepare Abram for a far greater danger than he had faced in his battle with the kings: the temptation that the King of Sodom would propose to him.

How important to pay close attention to the things the most high God is saying to us, and doing with us.

THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM
Genesis 15:1-6

Intro: Although our Bibles are divided into chapters, there is a continuity to it all which is brought out in these chapters which give us the life of Abraham. We see it in the words which begin the chapters: "And . . . After . . . Now . . . And . . ."

It is very obvious that chapter 15 is related to chapter 14: "After these things . . ."

Because of the events of chapter 14, we find Abram in chapter 15 both fearful and discouraged.

This is often the aftermath of a great time of victory and blessing!

And it would seem that Abram was so down that he was not even praying -- and so that chapter begins with the word of the Lord coming to him, and coming in a vision.

And so the first thing we have in chapter 15 is . . .

I. WHAT THE LORD DID AND SAID (Gen. 15:1).

Several things are of special interest.

- A. God's timing: "After these things . . ."
- B. The revelation.

Of special interest also is the statement, "the word of the Lord came unto Abram." Remember this because we have it again in v. 4

- C. God's command: "Fear not" -- which tells us that he was afraid, and the circumstances of the preceding chapter tell us why!
- D. God's promise: "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."

Peace comes in knowing Who the Lord is.

Our testings always become the circumstances under which we learn more of the Lord.

God's performances always surpass His promises.

II. ABRAM'S RESPONSE TO GOD (Gen. 15:2, 3). These are the first words which are recorded that Abram spoke to the Lord.

Note three things:

- A. Abram's theology: "Lord God" -- Adonai Jehovah, or Master and Lord.
- B. Abram's deep concern: "What will Thou give me . . ." No promise could possibly take the place of THE promise.
- C. Abram's tendency to introduce man's ways into God's work.

This is probably the most difficult thing for all of us to learn: Isa. 55:8, 9.

III. THE LORD'S ANSWER TO ABRAM (Gen. 15:4, 5).

- A. Concerning his heir (v. 4).
- B. Concerning his seed (v. 5) -- used in four ways: (1) of Isaac, (2) of Israel, (3) of Christ, (4) of all believers.

Here it must be used in the latter sense.

Contrast this with Gen. 13:16.

What was Abram to understand?

- 1) What an amazing purpose God had.
- 2) That it was so great that only God could do it.
- 3) That his seed would have a heavenly character.
- 4) That his seed would be appointed as a heavenly people to give light upon the earth.
- 5) That just as the stars were for signs and for seasons, so the purposes of God would be manifest through this spiritual seed.

IV. THE RESULT (Gen. 15:6) -- which has to be classified as one of the most important verses in all of the Bible. It is quoted in Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6; James 2:28.

This is the basic doctrine concerning God's way of salvation. It is by faith.

Three questions:

- 1) Was this the first of Abram's faith, or the last? No! See Heb. 11:8. See also the quote at the end of Rom. 4 which really has to do with Gen. 17, not Gen. 15.
What are we to learn from this? At least two things: (a) That there will always be a mystery surrounding God's dealings with men. We cannot say it will be the same all of the time. (b) That faith is continuous -- and it will be seen again and again.

- 2) Where did Abram's faith come from? Was it something that he worked up in his own heart? If so, how could he keep it worked up.

Note the two similar statements in vv. 1, 4 -- "the word of the Lord came."

And then note such verses as Rom. 10:17; Heb. 12:2; Eph. 2:8, 9. Faith itself is a gift of God, brought to our hearts through the Word of God.

- 3) What was the result? "And He counted it to him for righteousness."

And the NT quotations by Paul and James teach us that salvation has never been on any other basis -- and that it never will be! Salvation in the OT is the same as salvation in the NT! It is always by faith alone. It is always by grace. It is always a work of God -- from start to finish. And it always results in the justification of unworthy sinners. There is no other way!

Concl: We have a twofold application that is very evident here:

- 1) for one who is a child of God, and
- 2) for one who is not a child of God.

For the first, see v. 1.

For the second, see v. 6.

HOW CAN WE KNOW?
Genesis 15:7-21

Intro: How would you answer the question, When was Abram saved?

Before you say, "Why, in Gen. 15:6 of course," remember what Heb. 11:8 tells us:

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."

Could Abram have exercised obedience in his life through faith before he had saving faith? Or, to state it another way, Is there a difference between the two? Cf. Col. 2:6, 7.

We could raise the same question about others -- Joseph, Moses, David, Nicodemus, Paul -- if we were forced to point out a precise moment.

What does this mean? Does it mean that there is not a definite time when we pass from death to life? No, it does not mean that. Spiritual birth is just as definite as physical birth. But it does mean that we do not always know -- even about our own new birth, i.e., as to the exact time.

AND WHEN WE TALK ABOUT THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT THE LORD DOES NOT POINT ABRAM TO THE TIME OF HIS FAITH, NOR TO THE CHARACTER OF HIS FAITH, BUT THE LORD POINTS TO OTHER THINGS OUTSIDE OF ABRAM.

Abram's condition here is an illustration of what that anxious father said to the Lord when the Lord came down from the mount of transfiguration,

"Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24b).

Do you understand what he meant? Do you ever believe and not believe at the same time?

Or, perhaps we should ask another question: Is it possible to KNOW that you are saved? Look at Abram's question in Gen. 15:8.

Many Scriptures could be cited in answering this, but let us take one at the moment: 1 John 5:13,

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

Note that:

- 1) Assurance is for those who have believed; not for the unbeliever. This certainly was true in Abram's case. Faith first; assurance follows.
- 2) Salvation is something we can know about and be sure of.
- 3) Salvation is a present possession.
- 4) Salvation is manifested by a continuation of our believing.

But -- note a couple of other things before we see the answer to the question, How Can We Know?

Note why Abram needed assurance. See vv. 2, 3. He was having a hard time putting his experience together with the things that the Lord had said to him.

This is one of the reasons we need to be assured too -- again and again!

Note also the problems that arose when the Lord was assuring him:

- 1) "The fowls came down upon the carcasses," i.e., the birds of prey. Difficulties will always arise when we draw near to God to find peace for our souls.
- 2) "An horror of great darkness fell upon him" (Abram). We cannot understand these times, but we certainly know what they are -- and they usually come when we are seeking the Lord about something!

But having recognized some of the problems, let us notice how the Lord gave Abram the assurance that he was seeking. And I trust that you will see how it applies to your salvation.

There are four things here for us to see. And it is interesting to note that two of them had been given before Abram asked for assurance, and two after!

I. BY THE CHARACTER TO GOD.

See this in Gen. 15:7 -- "I am the Lord." But notice it also in v. 1 -- "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."

From Abram's words in vv. 2, 3 we can see that Abram was more concerned about what the Lord would give him than he was concerned about who the Lord is.

The character of the Lord is the foundation of it all. If He is not faithful, if He does not remain the same, we have no basis for assurance at all. This is why it is important in preaching the Gospel for us to deal with the character of God, and why it is imperative that every child of God begin his life as a Christian by concentrating upon the knowledge of God.

Note how this is brought out in 2 Tim. 1:12,

"For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

Secondly, our salvation is guaranteed by:

II. THE WORD OF GOD.

Note: It is the Lord Who is speaking in vv. 1, 4, 5, 7, ff.

We used to sing that chorus:

He cannot fail, for He is God;
 He cannot fail, He's pledged His Word;
 He cannot fail, He'll see you through;
 He cannot fail, He'll answer you.

Even Balaam was forced to admit this to Balak when he said,
 "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son
 of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall
he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make
 it good?"

The Psalmist expressed it this way:

"For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" (Psa.
 119:89).

Isaiah wrote:

" . . . the word of our God shall stand for ever" (Isa.
 40:8b).

Even our Lord said,

"Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall
 not pass away" (Mark 13:31).

The Word of God will last longer than the State of Oregon,
 or than Mt. Hood. In fact, it was by the Word of God that
 Mt. Hood came into existence.

What does the Word say? Listen to these words of our Lord:

"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall
 never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of
 my hand" (John 10:28).

And remember, as we saw last week, " . . . faith cometh by
 hearing . . ." (Rom. 10:17).

But there are two more guarantees:

III. THE SACRIFICES WHICH ABRAM PREPARED.

This was all in preparation for the confirming of God's pro-
 mises. How gracious of God to do such a thing! See Gen.
 15:9, 10.

What is the Lord doing with these sacrifices? One thing:
 He is pointing ahead to Christ. This is true of the OT sac-
 rifices from Gen. 3 on. Cf. John 1:29.

The NT is full of this great truth -- that the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ is sufficient, totally sufficient for all of our sins. Cf. 1 John 2:1, 2.

My faith has found a resting place,
Not in device nor creed,
I trust the ever-living One;
His wounds for me shall plead.

I need no other argument,
I need no other plea;
It is enough that Jesus died
And that He died for me.

Do you believe that? Paul said that our Lord "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 4:25b; 5:1).

Finally:

IV. THE CONFIRMATION OF THE COVENANT.

Who went between the pieces of the sacrifices?

If both the Lord and Abram had a part, then both should have gone **between** the pieces laid out on the ground. But only the Lord did!

What does this mean?

It means that the fulfillment of the promises resulted solely upon the Lord -- in no way upon Abram!

Is this not the meaning of Phil. 1:6 -- "Being confident of this very thing that . . ."?

Concl: Do you see where your assurance comes from?

It comes from: 1) the character of the Lord.
2) the Word of God.
3) the sacrifice of Christ.
4) the fact that salvation is a divine work, not a human work, nor a divine and human work. It is a divine work alone!

Assurance does not come from what you have done, but from God! Dwell on these truths, and your heart will be strengthened so that you will never fall.

THE SIN OF IMPATIENCE
Genesis 16

Intro: Not many of the Lord's people look upon impatience as a sin. However, when you begin to note the passages which deal with waiting on God and waiting for God, you can see that failure to do so is disobedience, and all disobedience is sin.

In chapter 12, we saw the impatience of Abram; here we have the impatience of Sarai. Ch. 16 is a carryover from ch. 12. It was in Egypt that they got Hagar.

There seem to be many more possibilities that we will run ahead of the Lord than that we will lag behind.

When we run ahead of the Lord we not only complicate things for ourselves, but others suffer because of it too.

I. THE NATURE OF SARAI'S IMPATIENCE (Gen. 16:1-4).

Although the promises to Abram had not specifically mentioned Sarai as yet, she did have two things that could have helped her:

- 1) The Lord gave Adam only one wife -- thus setting the pattern for all marriages.
- 2) In chapter 15 the Lord had warned Abram about thinking in terms of the ways of men (i.e., with respect to Eliezer).

II. THE IMMEDIATE RESULTS (Gen. 16:4b-6).

- A. Hagar despises Sarai. Hagar was no model person.
- B. Trouble between Abram and Sarai.
- C. Sarai's harsh treatment of Hagar.

The result of this was that Hagar left.

Note: The remainder of the chapter shows how the purposes of God are to be seen even in times of man's disobedience. Hagar was quite evidently one of God's chosen ones, and she had been brought into Abram's home for that purpose. But what is going to happen to her now that Sarai has driven her away?

III. DIVINE INTERVENTION (Gen. 16:7-12).

Where was Hagar going? Back to Egypt.

Who went after her? Abram? No. Sarai? No. "The angel of the Lord"? Yes! Who was he -- an ordinary angel? No. He was obviously a member of the Godhead. See v. 13. Which

Person was He? See John 1:18. It has to be the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God!

What an important lesson this is for us!

- 1) It shows that the Lord is greater than our sins.
- 2) It shows that the Lord can, and often does, deal with people directly, completely independent of His own people -- and in spite of them.

What happened?

- A. He "found her" (v. 7) -- and this was without any prayer on Hagar's part or Sarai's part or Abram's part.

This should remind us of another woman whom the Lord found at a well. Cf. John 4.

- B. He knew her by name (v. 8a).

Cf. John 10:3b,

" . . . and He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out."

Also John 10:27,

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

And Isa. 43:1,

"But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine."

This surely must have amazed Hagar.

- C. He began to probe into her conscience (v. 8b).

Here we have 2 questions, and Hagar's answer to one of them.

She, too, was impatience, running ahead of the Lord even though at this point she probably did not know Him in saving faith.

- D. He told her what to do (v. 9).

How different it is ~~when~~ the Lord speaks directly to us!

With all of the problems, there was no better place for Hagar to be. Obviously she must have seen the difference in Abram and Sarai's home.

But that would have been impossible for her to do if the Lord had not also told her . . .

E. He told her what HE would do (vv. 10-12).

Our obedience to the Lord would be impossible without His promises to us.

IV. HAGAR'S RESPONSE (Gen. 16:13, 14).

There are three things here:

- A. The Name she gave to the Lord (v. 13a).
- B. The question she asked -- in wonder, hardly able to believe what had happened to her (v. 13b).

There are many ideas that can be seen in this question, but one is brought out by the Hebrew -- "as if she knew that she had not fully seen the Lord" (Spurgeon, Vol. 31, p. 623), but that her eyes had been opened to the glory which she would never be able to exhaust!

- C. The testimony that she left (v. 14).

Note the ~~two~~ things about God that had been written upon her heart:

- 1) That God was a living God.
- 2) That He is a God who sees us -- i.e., that He knows us, knows where we are, knows our needs, and has the answer!

V. HAGAR'S RESTORATION AND RECONCILIATION (Gen. 16:15, 16).

How simple it seems!

Conclu: What a tremendous example we have of:

- 1) The sovereignty of God.
- 2) The unchanging purposes of God with respect to individual people. Here is an OT example of salvation for a Gentile -- by God's grace.

CB - 11/20/77 am.

WHY DOES THE LORD WAIT SO LONG?

Genesis 17:1-8

Intro: We are immediately introduced to the time factor in Abram's life: "when..."

Review the verses which point out the time: 12:4; 16:3, 16; 17:1 - 24 years since coming into the land - WHY?

Why is this so often (in most cases) God's way in the Scriptures?

Why, with us even today?

not only do the same problems continue, but they get worse.

WHY?

Genesis 17 gives several answers.

I. BECAUSE OF THE NEED WE ALWAYS HAVE FOR A DEEPER AND CLEARER KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD: "I am the Almighty God."

not only "Almighty," but All-Sufficient.

Somehow we are so constituted that it takes a deterioration of our circumstances for us to see the need of looking to the Lord.

His whole life appears to have been a mistake.

note: If Abram needed this at 99, then none of us can say we do not need it.

II. TO GET ABRAM'S EYES ON THE GREATEST PRIORITY IN HIS LIFE - not only his walk, but his walk in God's presence.

This means:

- 1) To know that the Lord is always there, that He sees, knows, etc - and that He does so as "the Almighty God."
- 2) To realize that the most important thing is that the Lord be pleased.

Dr. Griffith Thomas:

- 1) Enoch - Gen. 5: 22, 24. Noah - Gen. 6: 9. They walked "with God."
- 2) Deut. 10: 4 - walking "after the Lord"
- 3) Col. 2: 6 - "in Him."
- 4) Here in Gen. 17: 1 - "before Him."

III. TO KEEP ABRAM'S EYES ON THE GOAL OF HIS REDEMPTION - "and be the perfect."

Sanctification follows justification. If we do not see the second, how can we be sure of the first.

at 99 Abram still was not "perfect" - and neither are we.
note the change of his name.

IV. TO MAKE HIM REALIZE THE ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY OF THE WORD OF GOD.

Note that this is a passage where the Lord is speaking (until v. 17 - and then Abraham says 2 wrong things.

The fulfillment of God's word is for God as simple as v. 4 indicates.

IV. TO HUMBLE ABRAHAM - "and Abram fell on his face; and God talked with him..." note conclusion in v. 22.

note: This is the third name for the Lord in this chapter.
cf. 2 in v. 1, + now "God" here
- the Creator because creative power would be required.

Does Abraham's question suggest his despair? (See v. 17 - also his prayer in v. 18.)

But the Lord let it come to the point of absolute hopelessness before Abraham saw the hand of the Lord.

Concl.: what shall we do?

- 1) Obviously, we have to go on living from day to day.
- 2) Wait! Do not take matters into your own hands.
- 3) Listen to the Word of God. Concentrate on the character of God - His wisdom, His power, His love, etc. Drink in the promises of God. When you can't do anything, or do not know what to do, concentrate on what God is doing and what He will do.

THE UNBELIEF OF ABRAHAM
Genesis 17:9-27

Scripture reading: Genesis 17:15-22.

Intro: One of the paradoxes of Christian experience is that while a Christian is a person who believes God, yet much of his life is characterized by unbelief. He believes and at the same time he does not believe. He believes God for salvation, but he has difficulty in believing God concerning the situations and trials that he faces every day.

This is illustrated by the man who came to the Lord when He came down from the mount of transfiguration. He had a son who had been demon possessed since his childhood. No one had been able to help the son -- not even the disciples! And so when the Lord said to him,

"If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23),

he responded by saying,

"Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

This is true of Abraham.

While Hebrews 11:8 tells us that "by faith Abraham, when he was called . . . went out," and the following verse says that "by faith he sojourned in the land of promise," yet when we turn to the Genesis record we really see more of his unbelief than we do of his believing.

And the same is true of us today!

If I were to ask many of you today,

Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour?

Do you believe that He has forgiven your sins?

Do you believe that the Bible is the Word of God?

Do you believe that someday you will be in heaven?

Do you believe in the coming of the Lord?

you would answer with a resounding, YES!

But -- if I were to ask you if you believe that the Lord can take care of that problem you are facing today, you might say,

Well, I think so, or

I hope so, or possibly you might even say,

I don't know!

What you are saying is that "I believe God concerning the big things that have to do with my eternal salvation, but I have some doubts about the things I face every day!"

Abraham would know exactly how you feel.

Let us examine his life at this point in Genesis 17 to see 3 things:

- (1) Why he felt this way.
- (2) The proof we have that he was having difficulty believing God.
- (3) God's answer for his unbelief.

I. WHY DID ABRAHAM HAVE TROUBLE BELIEVING GOD?

There certainly is more than one answer to this question, but there is one specific answer given here in Gen. 17 -- and we have touched on it before.

It is this: THE LONG TIME THAT ABRAHAM HAD BEEN WAITING -- TWENTY FOUR YEARS!

This was the problem with the man spoken of in Mark 9.

Their hopes had been built up time and time again, only to be dashed in disappointment. And they had both come to the place where they hated to go through that disappointment again.

Perhaps it is even in reverse from Abraham's case -- possibly you have been praying that something would not happen, and it has happened -- and so now you are in the Slough of Despond!

Note how Gen. 17 begins:

"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine . . ."

The longer we have to wait for God the more difficulty we are going to have in waiting upon God!

II. WHAT PROOF DO WE HAVE THAT ABRAHAM WAS HAVING TROUBLE?

I see two things in the chapter which show that he was in trouble spiritually:

- 1) What was going on in his heart.
- 2) The way he was now praying.

A. What was going on in his heart?

See v. 17, and note those words, "in his heart"!

Notice that his outward behavior was fine ("Abraham fell upon his face"), but all of the time he was talking to himself!

Sarah does the same in Gen. 18:12 when this same news was given to her.

And maybe the very same thing is going on in your heart this morning. Outwardly everything seems fine, but in-

wardly you are having trouble with your faith! You are saying things to yourself that you really wouldn't want anyone else to hear! Is that the way it is?

And then look at Abraham's prayer.

B. His prayer. See v. 18.

"O that Ishmael might live before thee."

Note the connection between this and the Lord's word to Abraham in v. 1, "Walk before me"!

What had happened?

Abraham's discouragement had turned his hopes in another direction entirely so that he was now even praying contrary to the will of God.

Sometimes people get so discouraged that they quit praying altogether! Is that where you are?

Now we are ready to ask,

III. WHAT IS THE SOLUTION FOR ABRAHAM'S UNBELIEF?

You will probably be amazed when I give you the answer -- and yet it is the prominent theme in vv. 9-14 and vv. 23-27.

The answer for Abraham's unbelief was to be found in circumcision!

For us it is not in the physical act (because the NT makes it clear that this is no longer required), but it is in the spiritual significance of the act as we have the teaching in the OT and the New.

Let me mention 4 things which have their application even for us today:

A. First, circumcision was "a token," i.e., a sign. See v. 11b:

" . . . and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you."

It was a sign like the rainbow was a sign -- not something which Abraham had to do in order to secure the promises of God, but a sign in his flesh of the fact that God would be faithful to His promises.

In other words, this harmonizes with the first thing that the Lord said to Abraham in this chapter: "I am the Al-

mighty God . . ."

Circumcision was to be a God-given means of causing the people to think about the faithfulness of God. Instead, it became to the people a work that they did to be added to what God would do. And there is no peace in that kind of a thing!

It was a sign to many:

- 1) Originally to the parents.
- 2) Eventually to the circumcised son.
- 3) Later to the son's wife.
- 4) Still later to the son's children.
- 5) Generation after generation for the whole nation.

The Lord may wait. He may do something very different from what I want Him to do or expect Him to do. **BUT ONE THING IS SURE: GOD WILL ALWAYS STAND BEHIND HIS WORD!**

- B. Secondly, circumcision was a sign of ownership -- that these were people who belonged to the Lord.

The Lord did not command Abraham to circumcise the **Canaanites**, but He did command him to circumcise everyone who had become identified with him -- whether by birth, or by purchase!

It illustrates the truth of 1 Cor. 6:19, 20.

- C. Thirdly, circumcision pictures separation from dependence upon the flesh.

Such separation calls for humility and it leads to holiness.

Such is the teaching of Deut. 10:16 where the people were told even in the OT day to circumcise their hearts "and be no more stiffnecked."

The NT teaching is found in Col. 2:11 -- and note that **circumcision** is not something that we have to do; it has already been done spiritually:

"In whom (Christ) ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ."

Paul gives the same teaching in Phil. 3:3,

"For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

- D. Finally, circumcision pictures obedience.

This is what it meant to keep God's covenant (v. 9) as contrasted with breaking it (v. 14).

We see this in Lev. 26:14-16a,

"But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant: I also will do this unto you . . ."

And since our obedience is an expression of our love, the Lord said to the children of Israel on the promised land through his servant, Moses,

"And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."

Thus, even in the OT circumcision represented not what the people were doing for the Lord, but what the Lord was doing for them, and not what He had done outwardly, but what He had done inwardly.

One of the distinguishing marks of a child of God is His obedience to the Word of God.

What does it mean as far as your faith is concerned? It means that in times of discouragement and need, we must always give the greatest possible priority to our obedience to the Lord.

Concl: And so we have God's answer to Abraham's unbelief as seen in circumcision:

- 1) He needed to get his eyes on the Lord -- and to remember His faithfulness to His promises.
- 2) He needed to remember that He was not his own -- but that he belonged to the Lord. The Lord has the right to do what He wishes with that which is His own.
- 3) He needed to see that the delay was for the purpose of delivering him from his own fleshly sinful efforts.
- 4) He needed to learn the importance of continuing to walk in obedience to God's Word while he was waiting for God to meet his needs.

Let us take Abraham's lesson as for ourselves. That is why it is written in Gen. 17!

THREE VISITORS FROM HEAVEN
Genesis 18:1-15

Intro: Chapters 18 and 19 go together because the account of the destruction of Sodom begins in chapter 18 and is concluded in chapter 19.

This is important to know when we seek to identify the "three men" who are mentioned in v. 2 of our text. The following verses show that they were THREE VISITORS FROM HEAVEN, but . . .

I. WHO WERE THEY?

The first part of the answer is given in v. 1: "And the Lord appeared unto him (i.e., Abraham) in the plains of Mamre," or "by the oaks of Mamre" (NASB). This was Hebron (13:18).

But this is probably a parenthesis -- for the information of the reader, but a fact not yet known to Abraham.

And so one of the visitors was the Lord!

According to John 1:18, this had to be God, the Son -- the Lord Jesus Christ in a kind of a preview of the Incarnation!

But who were the other two?

See 18:22 and 19:1. They were two angels!

What an amazing thing this is! It certainly indicates that their mission must be tremendously important.

Secondly, note . . .

II. THEIR UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL. See v. 2a.

The Lord hardly ever let men know that He was coming to them. Cf. Moses at the burning bush, and Samuel in the temple.

And the same is true in His special times of visitation with us -- not a physical appearance, but real nevertheless!

How were they received? Do you suppose they felt like you do if company unexpectedly arrives on your front porch? How did Sarah feel?

III. ABRAHAM'S GRACIOUS HOSPITALITY (Gen. 18:2b-8).

To indicate that Abraham did not know yet who they were, we have Adonai (which means, Master) instead of Jehovah which is used in v. 1.

The term Adonai + "thy servant" later in v. 3 indicate Abraham's humility.

Notice his insistence that they stay to eat. And then the speed with which he orders the preparation of the food. Note his generosity! AND MOST OF ALL HIS RECOGNITION OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE! See v. 5.

The lesson here is so important that it is referred to in the NT in Heb. 13:2,

"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

The NASB reads, "without knowing it."

Think of it -- having the Lord and two angels suddenly show up for dinner! Don't you know how thankful Abraham was later when he learned that it was the Lord? Do you look forward to having guests in your home? Do you serve them the best? If you knew that the Lord was coming, what would you serve Him?

While the Lord may not come Himself, it is very likely and often is the case that those unexpected visitors are messengers of special blessing from the Lord!

But let us move on. Next we want to consider . . .

IV. THE REASON FOR THEIR VISIT.

It turned out to be twofold, but we are concerned at the moment with just one of them. It is to be seen in the question which "they" asked, "Where is Sarah thy wife?"

The angels were interested in this too. Cf. Jer. 1:12.

And Abraham answers. See v. 9. That probably meant not only that she is close enough to hear, but also that she is listening!

But, why Sarah?

Here again we must go to the NT to see what ultimately happened to Sarah. See Heb. 11:11,

"Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised."

Spiritually Sarah was not as far ahead as Abraham. And there definitely was a relationship between Sarah's faith and the birth of Isaac. Therefore, the Lord Himself comes with two angels for the specific purpose of strengthening Sarah's faith.

This teaches us that the delays we face are to strengthen our faith, not to destroy it, because "without faith it is impossible . . ." (Heb. 11:6).

God sometimes work when "we believe not" (2 Tim. 2:13), but His best and greatest blessings always come when we believe.

Do you suppose the Lord is saying this morning, "Where is _____" -- with your name in there instead of Sarah's? Note carefully how the Lord spoke about her and to her.

V. THE LORD'S WAY OF DEALING WITH SARAH (Gen. 18:10-15).

A. First, He gives her His Word. See v. 10, and on to v. 12.

Note each detail of God's Word in v. 10a:

- 1) Who is going to do what needs to be done.
- 2) What He will do.
- 3) When He will do it.
- 4) What will be the result.

Did she believe the Lord (and it must have been at this point in v. 10 when Abraham learned that it was the Lord -- as He said, "I will . . .")?

No, she did not!

Why? Because she had two problems:

- 1) She had always been barren; she had never had a child.
- 2) Now she was too old to have a child.

So we see from this that:

- 1) The Word does always do its work immediately.
- 2) The Word often throws us into turmoil when we contrast the Word of God with the reality of our circumstances!

Every child of God has to learn as that dear Puritan, Thomas Manton, once wrote,

"God is not tied to the order of second causes, much less to the road of common probabilities; he will turn nature upside down rather than not be as good as his word. . . therefore if God hath said it, it shall come to pass, though heaven and earth be blended together in confusion. If God's hands were tied, we might startle at a difficulty; but because nothing is too hard to providence, nothing is out of order to faith, therefore no difficulty can stand in the way of faith and providence" (Vol. 14, p. 278).

And so what did the Lord do next?

- B. He revealed to Sarah some things concerning Himself.
See vv. 13-15.

Note: In ministering to her faith, the Lord uses His Word and Himself.

This raises the question, Where does faith come from?
Let F. B. Meyer answer it for us:

"You ask how to obtain this faith. Remember that faith is the receptive attitude of the soul, begotten and maintained by the grace of God. Christ is the Author and Finisher of faith; not only in the Abstract, but in the personal experience of the soul. Faith is the gift of God. If, then, you would receive it, put your will on the side of Christ; not a passing wish, but the whole will of your being: will to believe patiently, persistently, yearningly; let your eyes be ever toward the Lord; study the promises of God; consider the nature of God; be prepared to be rid of everything that grieves His Holy Spirit; and it is as certain as the truth of Christ, that you will have begotten and maintained in you the faith that can move mountains, and laugh at impossibilities" (Abraham, pp. 119, 120). (The italics are mine.)

What did the Lord show Sarah about Himself?

1. His omniscience (v. 13). Cf. Psa. 139; Heb. 4:13.
2. His omnipotence (v. 14a). God's promises often seem absurd until you remember God!
3. His unchanging faithfulness (v. 14b).

What is this? It is a repetition of v. 10. Didn't Sarah's unbelief change God, and His will, and cause Him to forget about her? ABSOLUTELY NOT!

What do the repetition of His promises mean? Joseph could tell us -- as he told Pharaoh. See Gen. 41: 28, 32 -- especially v. 32,

"And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass."

Concl: Did God succeed with Sarah? Read again Heb. 11:11.
And remember the confidence of Paul regarding the Philippians in Phil. 1:6. God is not only working for us, but in us -- and He cannot and will not fail!

ABRAHAM, THE INTERCESSOR
Genesis 18:16-33

Intro: In chapter 18 Abraham is unexpectedly visited by the Lord and two angels.

They have two reasons for coming to Abraham -- the first is given in the first part of chapter 18; the second, in the latter part.

The first has to do with Sarah; the second has to do with Sodom.

The first speaks of blessing; the second, of judgment.

How wonderful to see Abraham in this role -- as an intercessor! We have seen him in others, but there can be none greater than this.

We have three things in this passage:

- I. Why Abraham could be an intercessor -- or, a look at THE PURPOSE OF GOD (vv. 16-19).
- II. Why Abraham need^{ed} to be an intercessor -- or, a look into THE REVELATION OF GOD (vv. 20-22).
- III. How Abraham prayed -- persistently, humbly, knowingly (vv. 23-33).

- I. WHY ABRAHAM COULD BE AN INTERCESSOR, or, THE PURPOSE OF GOD (Gen. 18:16-19).

On two things we need to be clear:

- 1) The apparent uncertainty of God -- in vv. 16-19.
- 2) The apparent ignorance of God -- in vv. 20-22.

Both of these are ways in which the Lord accommodates himself to man.

The Lord is not in a dilemma here. The point is more, How can I hide from Abraham what I am doing in view of the purpose that I have in calling him?

In the second part (vv. 20-22), God intends that we see evidence of His righteousness in judgment.

But to go back to vv. 16-19 . . .

V. 18 gives us what had from the beginning been God's purpose in calling Abraham -- twofold:

- 1) "Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation."
 - 2) "All the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him."
- Cf. Gen. 12:1-3.

But how would that be accomplished? See v. 19 and note again

that we must always begin with God! "For I know him" -- a special use of the word, "know," meaning, I have chosen him. Cf. Amos 3:2a, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." Also, Hosea 13:4, "Yet I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no saviour beside me."

God had chosen Abraham that ultimately all of the nations of the earth would be blessed in him. But how would that come about?

Note the relationships in vv. 18, 19:

- 1) Abraham.
- 2) His children.
- 3) His household after him.
- 4) They would become a mighty nation.
- 5) Then the ultimate goal: "and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him."

What a message for fathers! To command their children in the Word of God and in the ways of the Lord -- that they might keep them.

And what in particular was the message here?

That judgments come from God. They are not accidental. And they come upon God because of man's sin, i.e., the things that men do which displease and dishonor God!

Are we teaching our children this, fathers?

There can be no blessing without this. The nations will not learn salvation if we ignore this in our homes, families, and so on.

But let us go on to . . .

II. WHY ABRAHAM NEEDED TO BE AN INTERCESSOR, or, THE REVELATION OF GOD (Gen. 18:20-22).

Notice the tragic, the pathetic expression, "the cry" -- in both vv. 20, 21. Cf. Gen. 4:10 where the Lord, speaking to Cain about the death of Abel says, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground."

The Lord knew what was going on in Sodom (just like he knows what is going on in Portland), but, so Abraham would know, and so we would know, that He is not hasty, impetuous, unjust, in His judgments, we have this amazing story of the Lord doing two things:

- 1) Coming down to the earth to investigate personally the situation.

- 2) Bringing two angels to confirm that the judgment was just.

What amazing condescension on the Lord's part!

But now to the prayer so we can see . . .

III. HOW HE PRAYED (Gen. 18:23-33).

The first thing that impresses us about his prayer is that:

- A. He prayed persistently.

We could say that he prayed importunately.

He presents 6 petitions to the Lord -- as his faith was being strengthened. He went from 50 (vv. 24-26)

to 45 (vv. 27, 28)

Note: Abraham's recognition to 40 (v. 29)

of the prevailing to 30 (v. 30)

influence of sin. to 20 (v. 31)

Cf. Calvin, Genesis, pp. 490, 491. to 10 (v. 32).

Why he did not go farther, we do not know. But what we do know is that there was only one hope from Sodom and Gomorrah, and that was for someone to pray for them. And it must be that this persistent, intense, form of prayer was pleasing to the Lord because it is not only here in the Bible, but as Abraham prayed, God answered.

Was Abraham's chief concern for Lot?

- B. He prayed humbly.

You can always tell how much a man knows about the Lord by the way he talks to Him.

Note vv. 27, 30, 31, 32. "Dust and ashes."

Would you think that Abraham had self worth?

Oh, how we need to remember that the Lord is God, and that it is a miracle of His grace that He has made it possible for us to approach Him in prayer!

Pray! Pray always! Pray persistently! But pray humbly!

One more thing:

- C. He prayed knowingly.

Knowing what? Know that the Lord was "the Judge of all

earth," and that He would "do right"!

As John Calvin once wrote:

"He reasons from the nature of God, that it is impossible for Him to intend anything unjust . . . So, whenever different temptations contend within our minds, and some appearance of contradiction presents itself in the works of God, only let our persuasion of His justice remain fixed, and we shall pour into His bosom the difficulties which torment us, in order that he may loosen the knots which we cannot untie. . . He can no more be drawn aside from equity, than he can deny himself to be God" (Genesis, p. 489).

Concl: Let us remember --

- 1) That God designs our circumstances so that we will pray.
- 2) He hears our prayers, and answers them.
- 3) He is always righteous in what He does.
- 4) His purposes will never be set aside, but they come right down to the basic things of the way we live, and the things that we are teaching our children.

A CITY THAT CRIED
Genesis 19

Intro: Abraham and Lot lived about 20 centuries before Christ. We are living 20 centuries after Christ. Thus, approximately 4,000 years separates us from Abraham's day.

However, times have not changed much.

Chapters 18 and 19 of Genesis teach us that SIN was the problem in that day, and SIN has continued to be the main problem of man down to the present hour -- and it will continue to be until the Lord sets up the new heaven and the new earth.

Genesis 19 is not an easy chapter to read -- and it certainly is not an easy chapter to teach. The reason is that here we see humanity living on the lowest possible level (according to Rom. 1) -- where men and even women had gone beyond the desecration of the marriage relationship (which is adultery and fornication) into the complete perversion of that relationship -- the sin which carries the name of Sodom down to the present hour.

And let us be clear on this one point: It is still sin! Sin is not determined by society, but by God. Our courts do not have the right to determine right and wrong. That is always determined by God. And, since God never changes, neither does the nature of sin change.

As preparation for this chapter, let us see from Rom. 1 that sodomy, or homosexual behavior, is the result of other sins, and thus comes on a society as a judgment from God. And, in turn, this brings a rash of other sins of the most serious nature. This is all made very clear in Rom. 1.

(Read Rom. 1:20-32 -- and note carefully that it all begins with the rejection of God Himself.)

Let us examine the case a little more carefully as far as Sodom is concerned . . .

From the words of the Lord Jesus in Luke 17 where He was describing the last days, after referring to Noah (and remember that the Lord destroyed that whole generation) He spoke of Lot's day in these words,

"It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all" (Luke 17:28, 29).

Ezekiel tells us more:

"Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and

her daughters had arrogance, abundant food, and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy" (Exek. 16:49).

When you put all of this together it seems that you come to an exact picture of the very thing that is taking place today in America! We reject God and His Word,
 are proud,
 live for pleasure and for money,
 want all of the leisure time we can get,
 have an abundance of food,
 go on buying and selling, planting and building,
 eating and drinking, as though this way of life were to continue forever!

One of the most solemn words the Lord Jesus Christ ever uttered was, "Remember Lot's wife" (17:32)!

So -- what we have in Genesis 19 is a result, the consequences of man's godlessness, a judgment from God intended to bring a city to repentance -- just as today our problems are obviously designed for the same purpose!

What were the results?

I. FOR SODOM.

- * We have the main outcome given in ch. 18 as well as in ch. 19 -- it was a cry, an outcry!

What does this indicate?

It speaks of pain, of agony, of the greatest kind of distress and despair, of utter misery. See Gen. 18:20, 21; 19:12, 13.

- * But this was not all . . .

The first part of ch. 19 indicates that there was a refusal to give up their sin.

May I state it another way? They were unable to give it up. They were in bondage to it. It held them captive. The situation was going to get worse and worse until judgment finally would be measured out by God!

- * And then look at v. 14 . . .

No one wanted to believe, or would believe, that God would do anything about it. See Gen. 19:14. When Lot talked to his future sons-in-law they thought it was all a big joke!

How many people do you know today who are even considering the possibility that GOD would do anything about our times?

II. FOR LOT.

What a tragic story his is!

Peter tells us (2 Pet. 2:7, 8) that while Lot was living in Sodom he was "oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men, and that he "felt his righteous soul tormented day after day with their lawless deeds."

Here is a man who started out by pitching his tent toward Sodom (Gen. 13:12).

Next we find him living in Sodom (Gen. 14:12).

Once he was delivered from the Sodomites, but he went back to live with them (Gen. 14).

Finally he even became a city official -- he was sitting in the gate when the angels came (Gen. 19:1), and the men rebelled when he sought to act as a judge (Gen. 19:9).

And most tragic of all is what happened to his wife, and what happened to his daughters at the end of chapter 19. We are not even told how long Lot lived, where he died, or when.

Here was a man of God whose life was characterized by compromise, and who evidently thought that he was going to be able to clean up the world!

What a picture of the Church today!

III. FOR GOD.

Are you not amazed at His patience -- toward Sodom, toward Lot?

And perhaps the most touching and encouraging statement in the chapter is what we find in v. 29 -- "God remembered Abraham." This takes us back to Abraham's prayer in Gen. 18. He had not talked to the Lord about what the Lord would do if LOT were the only righteous person in the city -- which turned out to be the case!

How precious the people of God are to the Lord Himself! He could not destroy the city of Sodom until Lot was out of there! And one big reason for this was because Abraham had prayed!

Concl: What should this mean to us?

Let me mention three things:

First: We must never allow the world to change our attitude to-

ward sin. There can be no compromise. We are to be guided by the Word of God, and we must live in obedience to that Word -- REGARDLESS!

Second: Let us have no doubts about the certainty of divine judgment. It is coming! We are living in a world that is doomed, marked out for judgment. Only in the Lord is there any hope at all.

Third, and finally: Look at Gen. 19:12 -- especially those of you who are parents, or grandparents. But even you young people and children.

What about your family? Your children, your sons-in-law, your daughters-in-law, your brothers, your sisters, your parents, your grandparents -- are they saved? Have you ever talked to them about salvation, about the Lord? Are you just depending upon the fact that they have been raised in Sunday School, have gone to church, have been in a Christian home, perhaps have even gone to a Christian school. All of that is good, but none of that by itself will make a person a child of God. Only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ can anyone escape the judgment to come! May the Lord write these words upon our hearts until we can never forget them:

"Hast thou here any besides?"

— And what about you?

Wherever we stand this morning, may the Lord enable us to see things as they really are, in our own hearts, in the lives of our loved ones, and in the world -- that we may be giving ourselves to live in God's way and to do His will in these days when the world is hastening on to the final judgment!

AN OLD PROBLEM IN A NEW PLACE
Genesis 20

Intro: After what John Calvin calls a digression (the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah), in ch. 20 we are back in the main stream of the book of Genesis.

It is like re-reading Gen. 12 all over again.

In Gen. 12, Abraham was in Egypt; here, in Gerar -- the country of the Philistines.

But the problem has to do with Sarah in both cases.

Ch. 12 records events which took place about 24 years before the events of ch. 20. And, when you read Gen. 20:13, you can see that Abraham's problem in this area was of longer standing than even the days when he went down to Egypt -- perhaps 30 years or even more! He had trouble trusting the Lord for his own personal safety! And the tragedy of it all was that he was willing to jeopardize the safety of Sarah in order to protect himself! But more about that later.

Let us get the story fresh in our minds. (Read the chapter.)

I. THE OUTLINE OF GENESIS 20.

- I. Abraham's wisdom (vv. 1, 2). Note that the Lord is not mentioned in these two verses.
- II. God's Intervention with Abimelech (vv. 3-8).
- III. Abraham's Explanation to Abimelech (vv. 9-13).
- IV. Sarah's Restoration (vv. 14-16).
- V. Abimelech's Healing (vv. 17, 18).

II. SPECIAL LESSONS.

- A. "We are never safe so long as we are in this world" (F. B. Meyer in Abraham, p. 150).

We are never safe from ourselves -- our own foolishness, our own actions, nor from the threats which we face from circumstances involving ungodly men.

- B. The sovereignty of God: "But God came . . ." (v. 3).

What was the main issue?

Was it Sarah's protection? That was involved. But there was something even greater here. It was the design of God to prevent any disturbance in His saving purpose -- the birth of the promised son of Sarah, leading ultimately to Christ.

How often we face some great threat to our faith just before we are to experience some great blessing from the Lord!

C. The restraining hand of God (v. 6).

Abimelech had not sinned with Sarah, but he did not really know why!

This is one of the great truths about the Lord that we find all through the Word of God.

Matthew Henry (Vol. I, p. 128):

"Note, (1.) There is a great deal of sin devised and designed that is never executed. As bad as things are in the world, they are not so bad as the devil and wicked men would have them. (2.) It is God that restrains men from doing the ill they would do. It is not from him that there is sin, but it is from him that there is not more sin, either by his influence upon men's minds, checking their inclination to sin, or by his providence, taking away the opportunity to sin. (3.) It is a great mercy to be hindered from committing sin; of this God must have the glory, whoever is the instrument, 1 Sam. xxv. 32, 33" -- which tells how Abigail hindered David from taking vengeance upon Nabal.

D. Abraham's failure -- when he was almost 100 years old!

Sometimes the people who have been under the Word the longest show the greatest lack of spiritual maturity.

Abraham failed:

(1) As a husband. Would any of you ladies like to have Abraham as your husband, and would you want one like him?

(2) As a man of God. Or, we could simply say, as a child of God!

And why did he fail as a man of God?

Because he was man-centered in his ways. See v. 11. He was looking at God through men instead of looking at men through God.

(3) As a witness to Abimelech.

A study of the names of God used in this chapter is very interesting. There are four:

(a) The simple Elohim in vv. 3, 11, 13, 17. This means Deity generally (K & D, I, 239).

(b) Elohim with the definite article: ה'אלהים. This is "the personal and true God" (K & D, I, 240). See vv. 6, 17.

(c) Adonai in v. 4.

(d) Jehovah, but not until v. 18.

Abraham's failure as a witness is best seen in v. 13 where he seems to be accommodating himself to that which he thought would be acceptable to Abimelech -- the simple Elohim, which Abimelech could have accepted as gods.

K & D say (I, p. 240):

"On the subject of his emigration, he expressed himself indefinitely and with reserve, accommodating himself to the polytheistic standpoint of the Philistine king: 'when God (or the gods, Elohim) caused me to wander,' i.e. led me to commence an unsettled life in a foreign land; and saying nothing about Jehovah, and the object of his wandering as revealed by Him" (the last italics, mine).

What do you think about Abraham now? Would you have chosen him? And, if you had chosen him, would you have kept him?

All of this leads us to a final lesson, which has to do with

E. The character of God.

First . . .

1. As to His grace.

We see this in His choice of Abraham -- and also in His choice of us. And in the fact that He kept Abraham (He did not discard him for someone else), but also in the fact that He keeps us.

Remember 1 Cor. 1:26-31.

What the Lord did through Abraham is not to the glory of Abraham, but to the glory of God! He was a trophy of God's grace, and an illustration of how far the Lord in His grace will go!

2. As to His sufficiency.

Before Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees, he asked himself the question, Will the Lord be sufficient for anything that can arise in my life? And his answer was, For most things, but not for all.

But now we see that the Lord can not only care for Abraham and Sarah, but He can overrule in the complications that are brought about by Abraham's unbelief.

The Lord was giving the answer for the future descendants of Abraham and for every child of God down to the present hour -- and to the end of time! He is always sufficient for any and everything!

He even straightened things out between Abraham and Abimelech!

The Lord is greater than all of the unbelievers in the world,
and greater than His people, in the worst of their failures!

Concl: Where do we stand in relation to a chapter like this?

Are we keeping our eyes on Him? Do we know that His purposes can never fail because He can never fail?

Have we known the Lord a long time, and yet it is obvious when people look at our lives, and/or listen to our talk, that we know very little about trusting Him, about doing His will for His glory?

Then let us learn from Abraham's experience, and ask the Lord to take us and make us what He wants us to be.