

Abraham

Dan Snaddon

Used by permission, as published on plymouthbrethren.org. More of his ministry at dansnaddon.org.

Also online at <https://plymouthbrethren.org/series/10599>

KEE Ministry Library · Faithful Men
kee-ministry-library.netlify.app

Abraham: Studies in His Life

Read Genesis 11:31-32.

These verses introduce us to Abraham—the friend of God—the father of the faithful.

Abraham was a very important man—the Holy Spirit gives him great prominence in a moment.

The first 2000 years of human history are all covered in the first eleven chapters.

Twenty generations—twenty centuries of history.

The second section begins with a record of Abraham, and please note that chapters 12-50 cover only a period of about 400 years, and is entirely devoted to the history of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Abraham's great grandson Joseph.

The other 38 books of the Old Testament deals with the history of the nation of Israel which sprang from Abraham.

The rest of the Bible is occupied with and centers in Abraham's greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bible is a book of Redemption, it is the unveiling of God's plan of redemption.

First it was Abraham, then Isaac, then Jacob, his children.

From them came the Christ—they refused Him—and he turned to the Gentiles and became not only the Messiah but the Savior of the world.

Salvation is of the Jews—John 4:22; Romans 1:16.

The Bible being a progressive revelation of the character and plan of God. (Heb. 1). Little time is spent in past history. Eleven short chapters covers 2000 years.

God wastes no time in the past.

For instance: In Genesis 1:1 God tells us all we need to know where the world came from. (10 words). As to our origin the Bible is very brief (27 words). "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."—Genesis 2:7.

God in His word is more concerned with the future of the world, and as to where we are going to spend eternity.

Genesis is the Book of Beginnings—the Seed Plot of the Bible.

1. The beginning of the human race in Adam.
2. The beginning of the post deluvian earth in Noah.
3. The beginning of the chosen nation in Abraham.

Abraham is venerated by Jew, Christian, Mohammedan.

Let us now consider these four men Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph and see if God's plan is not taking form in their lives and relationship with Him.

In the plan of salvation there are four important steps.

Paul writing to the Romans unveiled these for us.

8:30—"Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified them he also glorified."

Notice now the four words which Paul uses to describe God's full salvation.

Predestination—Calling—Justification—Glorification.

Let us now link these four steps of faith in salvation with the four men in Genesis.

Abraham is the great example of divine, sovereign predestination.

Isaac is the great example of divine calling. Abraham chose Ishmael—God said “In Isaac”, etc.

Jacob is the great example of divine justification. Jacob had nothing to commend him to God. He was justified by divine grace alone, “Jacob have I loved”, etc.

Joseph is the great example of glorification. Sold by his brothers and left for dead, he becomes ruler in Egypt at the right hand of the king.

Let us now look at this a little closer:

1. Abraham is the example of divine predestination. He was not a Jew when God called him, he was a pagan and an idolator. Yet God passed by the whole nation of Chaldeans and chose Abraham and said to him, “I will make of thee a great nation.” This is nothing else than sovereign grace. God did not see a thing in him that would make him worthy to be called rather than others. But in sovereign grace he chose Abraham. Apply this as the Spirit leads.

2. Isaac is the example of divine calling. The second step in the plan of salvation is “Whom he did predestinate, them he also called.” Abraham could not wait for God’s time, but took matters into his own hands—Ishmael. He loved this boy, but God said, “In Isaac shall thy seed be called.” This was contrary to human reasoning, but he called Isaac.

3. Jacob is the example of divine justification. Jacob—the crook, rascal, cheat, liar, thief, conniver. Why did God choose Jacob? It was Jacob who stole Esau’s birthright, cheated his father, connived with his mother and ran away to his uncle Laban and almost ruined him. But God justified him and loved him. Oh the marvel of God’s grace. Apply this.

4. Joseph is the example of divine glorification. The last step of salvation reads like this, “Whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Joseph was despised by his brothers, cast into a pit, sold for twenty pieces of silver to a heathen band, again resold in Egypt, falsely accused, put in prison, then exalted to the right hand of the king. His brothers despised and rejected him, others falsely accused him. But God raised him up to sit with the king.

Faith's Demands

Genesis 12:1-9

Hebrews 11:8-10

God finds the sinner.

Notice where God found him (Abraham).

In Ur of the Chaldees—far from the promised land.

“Ur” means flame—“Chaldee” means destruction.

God found Abraham in the place of a flame and in the land of destruction.

This is where God finds every sinner.

In Adam we are alienated from God, we come under His judgment, and live on an earth destined to destruction.

Ephesians 2:12—“That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.”

Abraham was a sinner—He was an idolator, he came from a pagan country, from a pagan home, He and his family worshiped other Gods.

Yet, this was the man that God chose by his sovereign grace. God purposed to save him through His grace and because of his faith.

Romans 4:3—Abraham believed God and it brought him into right relationship with God.

If we are going to get right with God, we must believe as Abraham did.

God not only chose him but because of his faith He justified him.

How can a man be justified before God?

How can a person be brought to stand in God's sight without a trace of sin?

1. By sovereign grace—Romans 3:24. "Being justified freely by his grace."

2. By precious blood—Romans 5:9. "Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."

3. By faith—Romans 5:1. "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

O joy of the justified, joy of the free

I'm washed in that crimson tide opened for me

In Christ my Redeemer rejoicing I stand

And point to the print of the nails in his hand.

Oh Jesus the crucified, Jesus is mine;

Tho' once a lost sinner, yet now I am Thine;

In conscious salvation I sing of His grace.

Who lifts now upon me the smile of his face.

Does God see you as He saw Abraham? Yes, He does, says someone. What shall I do? Jesus Christ is mighty to save, able to save to the uttermost, able to save you. You have to believe this and trust him unreservedly. And you will be saved.

Incomplete Obedience

God not only saved Abraham, but he called him to leave his old life, and to walk by faith, trusting God.

Abraham obeyed, and went out, not knowing where, but he trusted God for every step—Hebrews 11.

Abraham set out for the “Promised Land.” They had gone about half the distance when God stopped him at Haran.

Now “Haran” means dry, parched, fruitless, defeat; the opposite of “Canaan” which stands for fruitfulness, and victory.

Abraham dwelt there for six years—wasted years. He built no altar, he never prayed, there is no record of any communion with God—no victory, no progress, no spiritual growth.

Is this a picture of you?

Off on a burst of enthusiasm, but grinding to a stop halfway to God’s best for you. Instead of victory in Christ, God has to cleanse you.

What was the reason for the wasted years at Haran?

Abraham had believed God, and had gone out of Ur of the Chaldees. He had left the city of land and the land of destruction. So far so good.

But Abraham had not obeyed completely.

What were God’s instructions? See Genesis 12:1—“Now the Lord said unto Abraham, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee.”

11:31 shows us where Abraham failed. He took with him his father, Terah and his nephew, Lot.

God’s implicit instructions were:

1. Leave your country.

2. Leave your friends.

These would represent “the world” and “the flesh.”

These must be left behind. Lay aside every weight.

Abraham took his relatives with him and got bogged down in Haran, the dry, parched and fruitless county.

He had never learned the important truth of separation—from the world and the flesh.

One of the great needs of the believer today is to learn the lesson that separation from the world and the flesh is essential to spiritual growth and progress.

Terah, Abraham’s father, died in Haran. See 11:32.

Terah means “delay.”

For approximately six years Abraham had lived with Terah in Haran.

Now notice what happens after Terah’s death.

Read vs. 4-5—Abraham is on the move. Before Abraham realized God’s perfect blessing in Canaan (the “Promised Land”) two things were necessary:

1. Renouncing the world

2. Renouncing the flesh

Paul says that “the scriptures that were written aforetime were written for our learning.”

Paul perhaps has this incident in Abraham’s life in mind when he writes in Ephesians 4:22, “Put off, crucify the ‘old man’, of nature which is corrupt. And put on the ‘new man’ which is created in God.”

This is not an easy thing to do, sometimes it is painful.

Abraham later on had to separate himself from Lot, then he had to sacrifice his own son Isaac, and finally Sara his wife had to be buried.

Many believers need this experience today. They need to be liberated from the chains of fleshly slavery, and emancipated into the perfect freedom in Christ.

God promised to bless Abraham—12:2-3.

The journey of Abraham from Haran to Canaan is recorded in vs. 6-9.

First of all Abraham came to Sichem, the place of strength. Then he came to Moreh, the place of instruction. Then on to Bethel, the house of God, where he built an altar to the Lord, and called upon his name.

His obedience to God's will has brought him back into full fellowship with God.

Abraham Under Trial

Genesis 12:10-20

Before we consider Abraham's frailties as a man let us look for a moment at his greatness.

In God's eyes Abraham was a great man.

Consider the prominence of the Biblical record given to Abraham.

The first 2000 years of human history are covered in the first eleven chapters of Genesis.

The second section of Genesis begins with the record of Abraham.

Chapters 12-50 cover a period of approximately 400 years. These chapters are devoted entirely to the history of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

The other 38 books of the OT deal with the history of the nation which sprang from Abraham—Israel.

The Bible is a book of redemption.

It was through the seed of Abraham that God gave us our Bible. God also gave us, through Abraham, our Lord and Savior.

Careful reading of the Word leads us to believe that God speaks very little about the past, but He speaks a great deal about the future.

In ten words He tells how the world began in 1:1. This is all God says about the origin of the earth. The rest of the Bible is occupied with the future of the world.

The record of man's origin is also brief—2:7. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into His nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul."

In 27 simple words God told us all He wanted us to know about our origin, where we came from. The rest of the Bible is concerned about where we are going.

The natural man is intensely interested and concerned with the origin of the earth. He searches the heavens with his telescope. He digs with his spade. He burrows through the rock with his drill.

Astronomers, archaeologists, geologists, and chemists are all busily engaged in trying to find out how and when the world came into being.

Man has come up with a thousand foolish notions about evolution. Many of the theories are discarded before they are circulated.

At this time we are expected to believe that man began as a little cell; the cell became a plant; the plant became a fish; the fish began to fly; the bird then lost its feathers, grew hair and climbed a tree; the monkey then lost its tail and most of its hair; and the result was man.

How much easier it is to believe the Word of God, and to forget the past and prepare for the future.

Let us now look at the patriarch Abraham.

Abraham's conversion was very real. He lived in "Ur of the Chaldees." God found Abraham in the place of the flame (Ur), in the land of destruction (Chaldees).

This is where God finds every sinner. Children of wrath—Ephesians 2. Flee from the wrath to come—John 3:36.

Abraham's call was a definite call. He was called to renounce the certainties of the past, to face the uncertainties of the future, to look for and follow the direction of God's will.

As he obeyed, and in faith followed the will of God, Abraham's life was changed. He was separated from the world—he was set apart to God. He was a new creation, the old things had passed away.

This is how God expects conversion and His call to affect very believer.

The testing of Abraham's faith—12:10. "And there was a famine in the land; and Abraham went down into Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was grievous in the land."

At this time Abraham was dwelling in border land. Border land is always a dry place—famine soon comes.

It is at this stage that Egypt tempts, and Abraham went down, etc.

Instead of trusting the Lord who put Him in the land, he resorted to fleshly expedients.

God could have met his needs.

This was the same God who in later years fed Elijah by the brook, rained manna down from heaven, filled the disciples' nets with fish, fed a multitude from a few loaves and fishes.

This unchanging and all-sufficient God could have met his need, but Abraham took his own way, and payed the price.

We must not minimize Abraham's trial.

He had a large family and many servants, and a considerable amount of animals. These could not survive a prolonged drought, humanly speaking.

So Abraham in his worldly wisdom went down into Egypt. He did not mean to stay there for long, just to sojourn. For this he ultimately had to pay the price.

The point here is that God had brought him to this place, and he had received no direction from God to leave it.

Egypt offered immediate relief from the pressure and he took that way. Egypt is a type of the world.

While in Egypt several things happened to him:

1. He lost his sense of peace and security.
2. He resorted to lying, and became so fearful that he is willing to give his wife to the king to save his own life.
3. While there he engaged an Egyptian maid, who later became the mother of Ishmael, through Abraham, who is the father of the Arab race.

The present world feels the impact of Abraham's backsliding. The bitter conflict between the Arabs and the Jews. Both claim to be the descendants of Abraham.

Abraham was recovered from his backsliding. 13:1—Abraham went up out of Egypt.

Ashamed, rebuked, and repentant he returns to Bethel, where he built an altar.

It is a disastrous thing for a believer to flirt with the world.

Genesis 13:10—Lot lifted up his eyes—"the lust of the eyes."

Genesis 13:12—He pitched his tent toward Sodom—“the lust of the flesh.”

Genesis 19:1—Lot sat in the gate of the city—“the pride of life.”

The result of this flirtation with the world was spiritual bankruptcy. So deeply entrenched in the city was Lot and his family that the angel had to drag him out before it was consumed in flames.

His wife, who left her heart behind, looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt.

It is the same story in Ruth 1. Elimelech and his family left Bethlehem-Judah during a famine and went to Moab. While there disaster struck this family, and only Naomi was left. She eventually returned to Bethlehem-Judah.

She was so changed by her sojourn in Moab that her friends said, “Is this really Naomi?” She replied, “Call me not Naomi (which means pleasant), but call me Mara (bitter), the Almighty hath dealt bitterly with me.”

The case of Samson, and the history of the children of Israel, prove that it is disastrous for a child of God to compromise with the world.

Thank God there is a welcome for the backslider.

Abraham returned to Bethel—there he built an altar.

The prodigal returned to the Father—they began to be merry.

The Psalmist was extracted from the pit—there was a song in his heart.

Israel sang the Lord’s song after they crossed the Red Sea.

When we gravitate into the world for any reason there is always a price to pay.

Times of testing are designed by God to bring us into deeper spiritual experiences with Him.

God's children should realize that it is better to starve in Canaan in God's will than to live in luxury in the world. It is better to suffer with God than to be affluent with Satan. It is better to be poor with Christ, than to be rich without Him.

Some believers have prospered in the world, but they have sold their souls for a mess.

They have lost their joy and communion with God—they have lost an uncondemning conscience, a thankful and worshipful spirit, and vigorous testimony and effectual service.

The Test of Faith

There was a famine in the land—v. 10.

A famine in the land of plenty—a land flowing with milk and honey, the Land that the Lord had promised him.

Consider for a moment his experience thus far.

Chosen by God—obedient to His word—ties with the flesh and the world broken.

Strengthened at Sichem, instructed at Moreh, removed to Bethel (communion).

Picture Abraham here dwelling in the house of God, sacrificing, praying, fellowshiping with God.

Abraham was happy at Bethel.

We do not know how long he stayed in this blessed place, but there came a famine.

Had not God promised to bless him? Did not God ask him to dwell in this land? Was he not where God wanted him to be? Then why the famine?

God is about to test His servant. Abraham failed in this test. Instead of trusting God, he turned his back on Him. He took matters into his own hands and went down into Egypt (the world). If Abraham had stayed on amidst the famine, God certainly would have honored his faith. Abraham failed the crucial test.

Some of God's servants failed in the day of testing. For instance, Elijah in 1 Kings 18 and 19. Think of the prophet on Mount Carmel—the tremendous victory over Baal. See him now on top of the mountain. Jezebel sends him a message which said, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them, by this time tomorrow."—19:2. Elijah took to his heels and ran into the wilderness and sat down under a juniper tree and requested God to take his life. I am the only one left—everybody is against me. God said, "I have seven thousand in the nation who have not bowed the knee to Baal."—v. 18.

Abraham disobeyed—Abraham lost his faith in God. He is almost in Egypt, and began to fear for his safety. He resorted to telling lies—12:12-13.

Was God disappointed in Abraham? YES!

But look now at v. 17—"And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues." (Our God is a great God.)

God plagued Pharaoh, not Abraham. Pharaoh recognized the voice of God, and discovered the deceit of Abraham and asked him to take his wife and leave the country.

Chapter 13 opens with these words—“And Abraham went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife and all that he had.”

Abraham is on his way back, back to Bethel, the house of God.

1 John 1:9—If we confess our sin, etc.

Abraham’s actions up to this point of return could be described as “backsliding.”

Does this story fit your circumstances? Are you cold, unhappy, miserable? Description of a backslider.

There is only one answer to your problem: get back to Bethel, get back to God. Admit your backsliding, confess your sin, return to Him and His joy will flood your life.

Genesis 13:5-12

When Abraham miserably failed under testing he went down into Egypt, and Lot went with him.

While there Lot saw the world and tasted its pleasures, this was the first step in his spiritual ruin. Who was responsible for this? Abraham.

Unfortunately he was encouraged in this by an older brother. Lot became a source of grief to Abraham—see v. 7.

Poor Abraham's past mistakes were catching up with him. First, six miserable, fruitless years in Haran, now strife with the family.

"Whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap."

Abraham backslid into Egypt, under adversity, he stooped low to save his own skin.

While there he chose a lovely Egyptian maiden to help Sarah, his wife. This action brought endless trouble into his life.

The repercussions of this action can be seen today in the Arab nations—the Mohammedan religion.

Now Abraham is having trouble within his family.

Lot, whom he should have left in Ur of the Chaldees, is the cause of it.

Those mistakes or sins left indelible impressions upon Abraham, and he lived under the constant shadow of these sins.

No believer can backslide or disobey God's implicit commands and ever be the same afterwards.

He becomes what one would call a "crippled priest."

His spiritual growth is limited. His life of faith is stunted. Spiritual power is absent.

Abraham had left Egypt, but Egypt had not left Abraham.

13:2—"And Abraham was very rich in cattle, in silver and in gold."

Abraham was probably a shepherd, but now he had acquired cattle in Egypt and had hired Egyptians to look after the cattle.

Now where did the strife originate? It was because of the cattle and the Egyptian cattlemen.

There was open contention, and there was in all probability open fighting among the herdsmen.

Abraham was worried sick.

But look at the end of v.7—"The Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt in the land."

The tragedy of strife in God's house especially when unbelievers are looking on.

All this because of disobedience. This presents a grave warning which believers cannot afford to disregard.

However there was a blessing for Abraham in this trial.

At last he was separated from Lot who is a type of the world.

For Abraham to finally gain victory over the flesh and the world was not easy. Neither will it be easy for any of us.

Through the experiences of failure and success, defeat and victory, God was preparing his servant for spiritual maturity and for the distinction of being called the “father of the faithful” and “the friend of God.”

To say that Abraham profited by these experiences is an understatement.

Abraham never went down to Egypt again.

He did not rebel against God’s chastisement, but rather acknowledged his sin.

Look closely at Abraham now.

In the midst of the strife in his own family, he took a line of action which is absolutely magnificent.

Read vs. 8-9 at this point.

Here Abraham is saying, Lot, I am willing to be the least, I am willing to take the loss if necessary, I am willing to let you have the best; please take your choice.

This was just the opposite of what Abraham could have demanded of Lot.

For instance:

1. God called Abraham to Canaan, not Lot.
2. God had given the land to Abraham, not to his nephew.
3. God had made his covenant with Abraham, not Lot.

Abraham was the eldest of the two, and could have expected Lot to recognize this fact.

Yet Abraham humbly said, Take your choice, Lot.

What brought about this change?

Abraham was learning to trust God absolutely.

Abraham in effect was saying, no matter what Lot chooses God has promised me the land, and “I believe God.”

When Abraham had committed himself unreservedly into the hand of God, when he fully surrendered his will to God’s will, and completely abandoned himself, then and only then Jehovah revealed Himself to Abraham in a special way—see vs. 14-18.

In 12:2-3 God made a covenant with Abraham. It was a promise.

Here in vs. 14-18 we have God giving Abraham the land.

“I will give it to thee and to thy seed forever”—v. 15.

v. 18—Abraham removed his tent and lived in the plains of Mamre (“instruction”); which is in Hebron (“fellowship”). There he built an altar unto the Lord.

“He believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness—Romans 4:3.

Does it pay to trust the Lord?

Example: Job. His character—he was perfect and upright, he feared or worshipped God, he hated evil. He was prosperous.

Satan’s theory was that Job was good because God had made him prosperous. Satan said to God, “You have put a hedge around him and around his house and around his possessions. You have blessed the work of his hands, you have blessed his family and increased his lands. But

put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse you to your face." And God said, "Behold all that he hath is in thy power." Satan took from Job his family, possessions and lands. Job said, "The Lord gave the Lord hath taken away, blessed by the name of the Lord." Satan said, "Let me touch him and he will curse thee." Satan smote Job with boils. He sat down in misery and scraped himself with potsherd. His wife said to him, "Do you still trust God, curse him and die." His three friends were no more successful. Job said to them, "Though he slay me yet will I trust him."

God honored his servant. He blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning.

The Lust of the Eye Genesis 13:10-13

We would like to consider Lot, Abraham's nephew.

We are told nothing of Lot from the time Abraham left Haran, until now. See 13:5—"And lot also, which went with Abraham, had flocks and herds and tents."

These two men are brought together by the Spirit of God and contrasted for our spiritual help.

Abraham walked by faith. | Lot walked by sight.

Abraham was generous. | Lot was greedy and worldly.

Abraham looked for city whose builder and maker was God. | Lot made his home in the city built by man and finally destroyed by God.

Abraham was the father of all who believe and was made "heir of the world" (Rom. 4:3) | Lot sank to the lowest degradation and when the curtain falls on him he is a pauper living in a cave, having lost his possessions in the destruction of Sodom.

The different outlook of the two men are sharply contrasted in this incident.

Abraham walking by faith, heard God's word and believed it. Lot walking by sight chose the well watered plains of Jordan.

See v.10 for the description of the plain.

v.11—Then Lot chose him, etc.

Lot's downward career started when "He lifted up his eyes."

The human race started to drift from God when "Eve lifted up her eyes and saw."

Genesis 3:6—"When she saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof."

Aachan's Confession

"When I saw among he spoils a goodly Babylonish garment and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them and took them."—Joshua 7:21.

I saw—I coveted—I took.

Lot lifted up his eyes, and because of what he saw he chose.

"It was as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt."

The choice that Lot made, from the human standpoint seemed to be the right one.

There was a scarcity of pasture land for the animals.

So to the worldly eye of Lot the well watered plains seemed ideal.

What did God see there?

He saw two cities that were a cesspool of iniquity, full of wicked men and sinners. So, from God's standpoint, it was the wrong choice.

See the results—"Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom."—v. 12.

The various downward steps of Lot's course are marked out plainly for us to see:

1. He lifted up his eyes and beheld—v. 10
2. He chose him all the plain of Jordan—v. 11
3. He separated himself from Abraham—v. 11
4. He dwelt in the cities of the plain—v. 12
5. He pitched his tent towards Sodom—v. 12
6. He dwelt in Sodom—14:12
7. He becomes a judge, seated in the gate—19:1
8. His daughters are married to wicked men of Sodom—19:14

Consider Peter in this same connection:

1. There was boasting self-confidence—"Though all shall offend thee, yet will not I"—Mark 14:29.
2. Then there was the sleeping in the garden when he should have been watching and praying—Mark 14:37.
3. Then there was following Christ "afar off"—Matthew 26:58.

4. Then there was seating himself at the fire among the Lord's enemies—Matthew 26:69.

5. Finally came Peter's denial—Matthew 26:69-75.

What did Lot gain by his choice? He was a loser—he lost everything. 13:5 tells us that Lot was a rich man. 19:30 shows Lot destitute dwelling in a cave.

Let us now apply what we have been discussing to ourselves.

What choice have you made?

Are you walking by faith—trusting Christ for eternal life and a place in that heavenly city? Or are you walking by sight, and choosing the world with its pleasure?

Abraham found the city and living there now. Lot lost all that he ever owned—he made the wrong choice.

Choice not chance, determines human destiny.

The people's choice

“Whom will ye that I release unto you?”—Barabas

“What shall I do with Jesus called Christ?”—Crucify him
Joshua 24:15—“Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.”

The granddaughter of a man named Aaron Burr got saved. That same evening she asked her grandfather why he had not accepted Christ. He told her this sad story. When he was a young man he attended a particular meeting and was convicted but walked out without giving himself to Christ. Looking up at the starlit sky he said, “God, if you don't bother me, I'll never bother you.” “Honey,” he told his granddaughter, “God has kept his part of the bargain, He's never bothered me, now it's too late.”

“O sinner the savior is calling for thee,
Long, long has he called thee in vain;
He called thee when joy lent its crown to thy days,
He called thee in sorrow and pain.”

“O sinner the Spirit is striving with thee;
What if he should strive never more,
But leave thee alone in thy darkness to dwell,
In sight of the heavenly shore.”

“O turn, while the Savior in mercy is waiting,
And steer for the harbor light;
For how do you know but your soul may be drifting
Over the deadline tonight (today).”

The Last Shall Be First

Genesis 13

In order to address the subject of our chapter, we must regress for a few moments.

Before we can discuss “Restoration” we must consider the important subject of “Declension”—a falling away, a deviation from an accepted standard.

God could have met Abraham’s need in the place of trial. God had not deserted him. This was the same God who, in later years, fed Elijah by the brook, rained manna from heaven, filled the disciples’ nets with fish, and fed a multitude from a few loaves and fish.

Abraham did have a problem—at this time Abraham was living in border country. To solve this problem he, in worldly wisdom, went down into Egypt. For this move he had no direction from God, and ultimately he had to pay the price.

While in Egypt several things happened to him:

1. He lost his sense of peace and security.
2. He resorted to lying in order to save his own life.
3. While there he engaged an Egyptian maiden who, through Abraham, became the mother of Ishmael, who is the progenitor of the Arab races.

The world today feels the impact of Abraham’s “declension”: the bitter conflict between the Jews and Arabs. Both claim to be the descendants of Abraham. Declension brings only sorrow and disappointment.

This brings us now to the “restoration” of Abraham.

v. 1—And Abraham “went up” out of Egypt. This was a clean break with Egypt—this was a work of God.

Vs. 3-4—Abraham’s restoration was complete. Ashamed, rebuked, and repentant he returns. He was not just delivered from Egypt, he was brought back unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning—and there Abraham called on the name of the Lord. He built an altar and had full fellowship with God and His people.

God is only satisfied when the backslider is fully restored (i.e., the prodigal).

v. 2 reminds us that Abraham was “very rich.” Egypt made him very rich, with so many cattle and sheep it took an abundance of pasture and water. Because of the scarcity of these commodities it led to disputing, striving, and contention between the respective herdsmen of Abraham and Lot.

At this point Abraham is presented with a greater problem than that of the famine.

The conditions of the call of Abraham are clearly defined in 12:1. God asked him to leave country, kindred, and father’s home.

When he left his country, his father and nephew left with him.

To bring Abraham into line with God’s will his father must be removed at Haran. Lot continued to follow Abraham and deprived him from experiencing the full blessing of being in God’s will. God’s full blessing cannot be experienced until we are living within God’s perfect will.

The pressure brought about by the strife of the herdsmen revealed the true character of the two men.

Abraham was a man of faith, while Lot was a man of the world.

v. 8-9 is the revelation of the heart of the man of God.

In the interest of peace and harmony Abraham made a generous suggestion. Let there be no strife, we are brethren, separate thyself.

This introduces us to our third point: "Separation".

Lot chose the well watered plains of Jordan. There was plenty for his flock and plenty for his flesh.

His ultimate sin was in three stages:

1. He looked toward Sodom.
2. He pitched his tent toward Sodom.
3. He lived in Sodom.

The world would say that he made the right choice, but it was a spiritual disaster.

v. 12—Abraham dwelt in the land of Canaan. He was in the center of God's will, the place of His appointing.

v. 14—While in this happy state/condition God spoke to him.

Note that it was after the separation from Lot that God spoke to him. There must be "separation" before there can be "compensation."

When this separation was complete God said, "Lift up now thine eyes and look." "All the land that thou seest I will give it to thee and thy seed 'forever.'"

Lot, in the flesh, lifted up his eyes and chose accordingly without God. In the eyes of the world Lot was first, he did the right thing, he stood to prosper; but, he ended in

spiritual bankruptcy. He chose to save his worldly assets.

When God chose for Abraham, he gave him the “title deed” for the land and its treasures. He also promised Him descendants more numerous than the dust of the earth. This prophecy must have amazed Abraham for as yet he had no son.

Lot’s choice was temporal—God’s promises to Abraham were eternal. Truly, “the first shall be last, and the last shall be first.”

Abraham was called by God from Ur of the Chaldees—God led him in the way.

When he tarried at Haran, God waited for him.

When he went down into Egypt, God restored him.

When he needed guidance, God guided him.

When there was strife and separation, God took care of him.

No wonder Abraham could say, “Oh how great is Thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for them that follow Thee.”

In Abraham we see the man of faith going forth, trusting Divine guidance, believing Divine promises, receiving Divine assurances, inheriting Divine blessing, undergoing great testing, and being counted righteous and the friend of God. The glorious “Consumation” of a life of faith.

Matthew 19:30—“And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife or children, or lands for my name’s sake, shall

receive a hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.”

“But many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first.”

Matthew 10:37-39—“He that loveth father and mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. He that loveth son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me. He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it.”

The Assurance of Faith

Genesis 15; Romans 4:1-5

Paul is asking in Romans, “How was Abraham saved? Was it by faith, or by the works of the law?”

In the first three chapters of Romans, Paul has shown the utter depravity of man, and his complete helplessness to save himself by his own works, or by trying to keep the law.

How was Abraham saved? Quote v. 3—“Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.”

In modern language that would mean, “Abraham believed God absolutely, and God canceled his sins and declared him fit for heaven.”

Abraham was saved by faith, four hundred years before the law was given.

This was the principle of salvation in the OT, and it is the same today.

Discuss briefly her some people’s attitude, trying to work for salvation, etc.

Notice also the difference between believing God and believing in God.

Most people believe in God, but hardly believe a word He says.

Paul, in Romans 4, quotes from Genesis 15 when he says, “Abraham believed God.”

What did Abraham believe? (1) The word of the Lord, (2) Believed, (3) Fear not, (4) Reward.

Genesis 15 is the great faith chapter of the OT. In it God unveils His plan of salvation in all its fullness.

Consider verse 1—“Fear not, Abraham. I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.”

Chapter 14 reveals Abraham returning from his great victory over the four kings of the north. He has released Lot and his family, and the five other kings taken prisoner. With his three hundred and eighteen servants he had surprised the enemy by attacking at night. But in thinking of all this he becomes afraid, knowing that these kings will come back for revenge. Right at that point the Lord comes and encourages him saying, “Fear not, Abraham: I am thy shield.”

“Don’t be afraid, Abraham, for I will be your protector,” and also your exceeding great reward. This is the first thing that Abraham believed.

In vs. 2-3 Abraham reminds God of a promise He had made thirty years before. 12:2—“I will make of thee a great nation.”

In vs. 4-6 God reassures Abraham that he will have a son whose offspring would be as numerous as the stars of heaven. Now God asked Abraham to believe that He would give a long promised, long delayed, miraculously born, supernaturally given son.

In other words, God asked Abraham to believe what was humanly impossible and naturally unreasonable.

Chapter 17 tells us that Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90.

Paul, in Romans 4, tells us that Abraham's body was dead so far as pro-creation was concerned.

Sara was long past the time of life for childbearing, she was maternally dead.

18:11 informs us that they were "old and well stricken in years."

That means that they looked and felt their age. Describe.

To have children at their time of life was impossible.

Paul says that Abraham did not even consider this, "He believed God." "Somehow," Abraham said, "God will bring it to pass."

Faith is believing the unbelievable/impossible. Faith is confidence in another's word.

God said unto Abraham, "I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life."

In other words, God said, "I am going to set back the clock of time. I am going to make Sarah young again. I will put the clock back 50 or 60 years. She will become a beautiful, virile, healthy young woman again." He also would do the same for Abraham.

Sara laughed at the very idea and brought forth the classic phrase, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?"—v. 14.

Also in v. 14 the Lord confirms His promise to Abraham and Sarah. "At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son."

For the second time God says I will restore to Sarah the time of childbearing.

And God kept His promise. He brought about a transformation in Sarah which was wonderful. Describe this.

Do you believe this? Or do you think it is far-fetched?

Chapter 21 tells us of the birth of Isaac, God's promise fulfilled.

Chapter 20 tells us of Abraham and Sarah's visit to Gerar.

Verse 2, Abraham said, "She is my sister."

Abimelech the king took one look at her and escorted her to his palace.

Would this be the old woman 90 years of age and well stricken in years of chapter 18?

The king had the choice of any beautiful maiden in the land, would he have chosen a decrepit old woman?

What God did for Sarah he also did for Abraham. Abraham's youth was renewed, God made him a young man again.

Isaac is born and grows up into manhood.

Some 40 years pass by during which Sarah dies.

Then comes the amazing record of Abraham at the age of 140 years.

Genesis 25:1-2—Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Kenturah.

He was the father of 6 sons at least and probably a host of other children.

God's promises were all fulfilled.

Abraham believed God concerning the son.

v. 6—"Abraham believed God and he was justified."

Paul writing to the Romans declares that Abraham was saved by faith and not by works.

There is no salvation apart from Christ, "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."

"For there is no other name given among men, under heaven, hereby we must be saved."

Soon after Abraham's conversion, doubts began to arise in his mind. He wondered as to the absolute certainty of the promises God had made, and that he had accepted:

1. God had promised to give him a son.
2. God had promised to make his seed as numerous as the stars of the heavens and the sand of the seashore.
3. God had promised to give them a land to dwell in.

Abraham had God's word for all this, but being human required a sign. "Lord if I just had some evidence, external evidence, something in addition to your word, I would feel better."

"Lord God," he prayed, "whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?"

Abraham wanted a sign.

Many of God's servants have been like this. Take Gideon, for example. Despite the fact that God miraculously consumed the sacrifice on the rock, Gideon, when told to deliver Israel, asked to put the fleece out, and it was only when God soaked the fleece with dew in the first instance, and then kept it dry the

second time, that Gideon was assured that God would be with Him.

We are not different from Gideon or Abraham—we want to see evidence also.

Back to Abraham—God says, “Your seed shall be like the stars for number.” “I will give you this land to inherit.” “But how shall I know for sure?”

God answers him in one of the most profound and marvelous pictures in all the Bible.

Read vs. 9-10 and 17-18.

This was how God chose to establish Abraham’s faith, and also to make a covenant with him.

God told him to take a heifer, a goat and a ram all three years old, also a turtle dove and a young pigeon. He took those animals, killed them, and split them in two, then laid the pieces opposite each other with a space in between. The birds he laid opposite each other.

The stage is now set for the sealing of His promise and making of a covenant. There was nothing strange in this, the ancient orientals, when they came together to make an agreement, had different ways of confirming it. For instance:

1. The covenant of salt.
2. The striking of the hand.
3. The contracting parties would exchange a shoe.
4. For the more important and solemn transactions they would kill a calf, cut it in two, lay the pieces opposite each other, then the two parties would stand between the bleeding carcass, and joining hands would say, “Let

it be done unto him who breaketh this covenant; as was done to this animal. Let him die the death.”

It was a serious thing to break a covenant. Jeremiah 34:18-20—“And I will give the men who have transgressed my covenant who have not performed the words of my covenant which they made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof.” God then pronounces judgment.

So here in Genesis 15 God is making a covenant with Abraham to assure him. Abraham wanted a sign that God would implement His word. In effect God says:

1. I will give you a son.
2. His seed will be as numerous as the stars.
3. I will give you this land to live in.

If there was any doubt in Abraham’s mind, it was removed now.

Now this picture is typical and topical and has a special application for us today. Some of us are like Abraham, wanting extra assurance of our salvation. How can I know? We believe God’s word when it says:

1. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, etc.
2. That whosoever believeth, etc.
3. He that heareth my word, etc.

Quote from John 3—the importance of believing.

v. 15—That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, etc.

v. 16—A repetition of the above.

v. 18—He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the Son of God.

Give me a little more proof, someone cries.

We must return to Calvary and view again the slaying of the sacrifice.

We must witness God cleaving asunder His own Son.

We must hear the words of the savior.

“This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for many of the forgiveness of sins.”—Matthew 26:28.

The vision given to Abraham which ratified the covenant describes eloquently the cross-work of Christ:

The heifer—strength of manhood, perfection

The goat—sin offering

The ram—consecration

The birds—one from Heaven

Death passed upon them all, for without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness. The death of the sacrifice.

“Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.”

On the basis of this wonderful sacrifice, God can forgive sins and give eternal life to them that believe.

What greater proof do you need of your salvation?

Further more, He is in the glory bearing the wounds of Calvary—irrefutable evidence. John 10:28-29.

I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

My Father which gave them me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

Abraham the Intercessor

Genesis 18:22-33

Faith that is never tested will never grow strong. 1 Peter 1:7.

Faith must be put to work or it will always be weak.

This is the reason that God permits trials and testings, they sometimes test us to the very limit of our endurance, but they are meant for our good. Hebrews 12:11; 1 Corinthians 10:13.

Steel must be tempered by fire to become strong.

A tree must face the storms in order to become strong and be pruned if it is to bring forth fruit. When it is all sunshine it is all desert.

Silver must be constantly polished to remain bright.

The soil must be plowed and broken and crushed before it can bring forth fruit.

So the believer needs to be constantly tried and tested if he is to become fruitful for the lord.

Hebrews 12:6—"For whom he loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every Son whom He receiveth."

Abraham's life is a whole series of testings, trials, successes and failures, culminating in Genesis 22 with the offering of Isaac.

After each test Abraham's faith becomes stronger. See Genesis 18:22-33.

Abraham becomes an intercessor for Lot, his backslidden nephew. The wickedness of Sodom and

Gomorrah has reached a peak, so God determines to destroy them.

Before he does so he tells Abraham (see v. 17)—“Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do.”

When Abraham sees that God is determined to destroy the cities, Abraham began to pray—he interceded (i.e., he stood between God and cities, for the sake of Lot and his family.)

Abraham commences to intercede—v. 24.

God’s answer—v. 26.

Abraham becomes bolder, and reduces the number of the righteous in Sodom to forty-five, then thirty, then twenty and finally ten.

“Per adventure,” he pleaded, “if ten shall be found there.” God said, “I will not destroy it for ten’s sake.” 18:32. Ten righteous people could not be found, only Lot, his wife and two daughters, so God destroyed the cities.

There are some interesting lessons to be learned from this incident.

1. The importance of believers in the world. God would not destroy the cities as long as there were a few believers there. As long as the true Church is in the world interceding, the hand of judgment will be stayed.

Sodom was spared for a time because one man, walking with God, interceded and stood in the gap. But when Lot and his family were safely out, God destroyed the cities with fire.

The Lord said in Luke 17:28-30, “As it was in the days of Lot—so shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.”

The sins of Sodom are being repeated today with a vengeance. The wickedness, immorality, dishonesty, graft, violence, ungodliness of the world even surpass the days of Lot. Professing Christendom, like Lot are living in this, utterly blinded to the actual condition and the awful impending doom awaiting the ungodly.

Thank God for the faithful, who realizing the impending doom, stand as intercessors in the gap and stay the hand of God.

In Matthew 5:13 Jesus said, “Ye are the salt of the earth.”

Salt retards corruption, but will not prevent corruption from setting in eventually, but it retards and delays it.

Faithful believers, little known and often despised, are the “salt of the earth.”

2. The second lesson I would draw to your attention is the power of intercession.

The first great example is Abraham. The second is Moses, he by his intercession for Israel was also able to hold back the judgment of God—the great sin of making the golden calf.

God said in Exodus 32:10, “Let me along, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.”

God says to Moss, “Let me alone,” stop praying, stop standing between me and them. You are preventing me

sending my judgment and destroying the backslidden rebels.

Moses stood faithfully in God's presence and said, "Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people"—Exodus 32:12.

Apply this to illustrate the power of prayer.

The Rapture in Genesis

The presence of the "Dead Sea" in Palestine and also the surrounding desert stand as a striking proof of the fact and severity of God's judgment on the cities of the plain.

God could not destroy the cities as long as Lot was living there. So God took them out. When they were safely away God destroyed the cities.

This reminds us of a great NT doctrine: The Rapture—1 Thessalonians 4.

This is when the Lord will remove believers from the earth, and after this will come judgment.

The Rapture In Genesis

Genesis 19:12-26 v. 22—“Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do anything till thou become thither.”

Paraphrased it would read, “Hurry up, escape for your life, because I cannot destroy these cities until you get out.”

These words were spoken to Lot, who was carnal and worldly.

The cities had been good to Lot and his family. They loved the cities. Even at the risk of losing their own lives they lingered loathe to break or sever connections. The messengers took him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand and led them out of the city.

He was loathe to go despite the fact that he was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked, and that his righteous soul was vexed from day to day with their unlawful deeds. 2 Peter 2:7-8. But despite the unsatisfactory spiritual condition of His children, God could not destroy the cities so long as they were there.

There is a lesson here for the worldly Christian.

1. When Lot finally escaped he took nothing with him.

His works, his goods and possessions were burned though he himself was saved.

Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 2 that we are builders. Spiritual builders are building upon a foundation of gold, silver, and precious stones. Worldly believers are building upon wood, hay, and stubble. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, where our works will be tried by fire. If any man's work shall stand

the test he shall receive a reward. If perchance one's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss. Although he himself shall be saved by the skin of his teeth.

2. The second lesson is of a broader character.

The Lord Jesus used this incident to illustrate the times and the occasion of His coming, prior to the sending of the great tribulation. That is his judgment upon those who have rejected Him, both Jew and Gentile.

“And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it reigned fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.”—Luke 17:26-30.

The teaching here is plain.

The judgment of God did not and could not fall on the ungodly until Noah and his family were safely in the ark and Lot was safely out of the city.

Unbelievers, in the last day, will scoff at the idea of the Second Coming of Christ. They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming?” 2 Peter 3:4. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. 2 Peter 2:10.

He is coming soon, suddenly and silently.

People often wonder what happens when He comes and what happens after he comes.

Let us take what happens to the Christian first. (1) The Rapture—1 Thessalonians 4; (2) The Judgment Seat of Christ; (3) The Marriage of the Lamb—Revelation 19; (4)

The coming with Christ in glory to the earth—Revelation 19.

What happens to the unbeliever after the Rapture? There is ushered in a period of time (approximately 7 years) called the Tribulation. This in some places is called “the Day of the Lord.” It is a period of judgment and of great suffering. The flood-gates of God’s wrath are opened upon a world without believers and without the Spirit. These are described for us in Revelation 6-19. At the end of this period every unbeliever is resurrected to stand before the Great White Throne. See Revelation 20:11-15.

Romans 3:23—“The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Climax of Faith

Genesis 22

Read verses 1-2.

In this chapter we come to the climax, the acme and the goal of Abraham's faith.

It took the Lord 60 years to prepare Abraham for this climactic event. Prior to this incident God passed Abraham through the fires of trial. He embarked on the life of faith when he left Ur of the Chaldees. He was 70 years old then, and now he is 130 years.

In Genesis 12 we have the beginning of the journey of faith.

In Genesis 22 we have the climax of this life of faith.

Abraham's whole life appears to have been a preparation for this faith experience. Each trial, each test, each victory and each failure was in the over-ruling providence of God preparing Him for final victory. The veiled purpose of God in all this was to conform Abraham unto His own image. The first picture released from this type is that Abraham became like God in that he offered up his only son.

This to me is a tremendous commentary on Romans 8:28 —“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose.”

God is never in a hurry. One of the few times we do find Him in a hurry is when the father welcomed back the prodigal—he ran.

Normally God is not in a hurry. To young Timothy Paul wrote, “Lay hands suddenly on no man.” He also wrote that leaders in the church should not be novices. When God is preparing someone for His service, He takes His time and does the job thoroughly. The finished product is for His glory.

To you who are passing through deep waters, the road is rough, it is almost overwhelming and sometimes you cry out in your distress. Never forget that in it all God has one purpose and that is to conform us unto the image of Christ.

v. 1—“And it came to pass after these things.” After these things recorded in Genesis 12-21.

v. 1—And God said unto him, “Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.” Abraham is ready at last.

There is no quibbling, no arguing, no asking questions. He did not say now, “O that Ishmael might live before Thee.” Abraham finally became completely submissive, wholly yielded and a totally prepared vessel at the feet of God. That is the meaning of, “Behold, here I am.”

v. 2—“Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and get you into the land of Moriah.” In the Hebrew language this appears much more tender. “Take now your son, your only Isaac, whom you love.”

Nowhere in all the realm of Scripture will we find a clearer picture of Calvary than in this chapter. Linked with Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53, which are elaborations of this chapter, it gives us a marvelous prophetic picture of the love of God fulfilled at Calvary.

The Willing Father

Verse 2 continues, “Take now your son, your only Isaac... and offer him...for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains that I will show you.”

The first type or shadow we have here is of the Father’s willingness to give His only Son. Abraham, in the fullness of mature faith, was willing to make the supreme sacrifice, in order to please God Who had called him from the darkness of Ur of the Chaldees into the light of His presence and favor. I believe this but I cannot understand it. Neither can I understand how, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son,” etc.

This mystery deepens when we consider Isaiah 53:10. “Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief.” As we stand in holy reverence and contemplate this mysterious truth, may our hearts cry out, “My Lord, and my God.”

The Only Son

Isaac is called Abraham’s only son. What does this mean, for Abraham had other sons? Ishmael was born 13 years prior to Isaac. He also had other sons subsequently by a future marriage. Isaac was the only one that God recognized, and all the blessing that came upon the other sons came through Isaac.

In a sense God had other sons. Job speaks about a great host of angelic beings called the “sons of God.” Adam is called by Luke the “son of God.” We by our new creation are “sons of God.” Not one of these were able to meet God’s requirements. There was only One, God’s only Son

who was fit to become our substitute and satisfy God's righteousness.

The Well-Beloved Son

Isaac was Abraham's well-beloved son. "Take now your son, your only Isaac, whom you love."

God, also, had a well-beloved Son. We as parents know what human love is. We would give our lives for our children if occasion demanded it. All this is so shallow compared with the love which God had for His Son. It was hard for Abraham to give his well-beloved son. It was much more difficult for God to give His Son. Abraham gave his son because of his love for God; but God gave His Son out of love for His enemies.

Romans 5—helpless, sinners, enemies.

The Mount of the Lord

We are next told where Abraham is to go.

v. 2—"And get you into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will show you."

Practically all Bible students agree that the land of Moriah embraced the land of Palestine, and that the mountain where Abraham was told to go was Mount Calvary. This was the same mount on which God had ordained that His well-beloved Son should die. Abraham, by the Spirit, designated this place "Jehovah-Jireh", which means "the mount of the Lord."

v. 3—"And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him."

“Abraham rose up early in the morning.” Here we see in type “The Father setting apart His Son for sacrifice.” The Passover Lamb was separated from the flock four days before it was to be killed. Exodus 12:3. So here Isaac is taken by Abraham three days before he was to be offered upon the altar.

“Abraham rose up early in the morning.” There are two possible fulfillments of this type:

1. It was early on Wednesday morning that He was taken and tried then sent to His crucifixion.
2. The crucifixion of our Lord was something more than the frenzied act of those who hated Him without a cause. The cross of Christ was according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Acts 2:3. Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles and Jews only did “whatsoever” God’s hand and counsel, “determined before to be done.” Acts 4:28.

“Christ was the Lamb foreordained before the foundation of the world.”—1 Peter 1:20.

The Lord Jesus was marked out for sacrifice from all eternity. He was in the purpose of God “slain before the foundation of the world.”—Revelation 13:8.

These things are suggested in our type, “Abraham rose up early in the morning.”

v. 5—“And Abraham said unto his young men, ‘Abide you here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.’”

What took place on the mount of sacrifice was a transaction between the Father and the Son. Nothing is said of Sarah here. The mount came within the range of vision of the young men. Having come thus far they

were left behind: “Abide you here.” These two men watched Isaac carrying the wood on his back but what took place between him and his father they were not permitted to see. No human eye was to witness that.

How significantly all this fits into the offering of Christ. The two thieves followed our Lord, Abraham’s greater Son so far, but they were not permitted to see what transpired between the Father and the Son. The three hours of darkness concealed from every human eye the Divine Transaction between Father and Son.

The meal offering—baked in a pan or an oven.

Bearing the Wood

v. 6—“Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son.” Isaac carried the wood on which he was about to die. This is an unmistakable picture of the Lord bearing His cross to Calvary.

“Through the gate of the city they led Him bearing His cross,” etc.

Men placed the cross of wood upon Him—symbol of the curse. God placed the curse of sin upon Him.

The second picture we have presented here is the perfect obedience of Isaac. Isaac was no half-grown boy, but a full grown man who could easily have resisted his father. But instead of resisting, Isaac quietly follows his father. This immediately focuses our attention on our blessed Savior.

Hebrews 10:7—“Lo, I come to do Your will, O God.”

Psalm 40:8—“I delight to do Your will O My God.”

Christ and the Father were of one accord. Note how beautifully this is brought out in the type “and they went both of them together”, twice repeated.

v. 6—The next thing we notice is that Abraham, “Took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.”

As Abraham and Isaac walked toward the place of sacrifice Isaac carried the wood upon his back, Abraham carried the fire and the knife. Isaac is a picture of the Lord carrying His cross to Calvary, and Abraham is a picture of God the Father Whose judgment would fall upon His Son.

Fire and a knife speak of judgment (Divine). Fire expresses Divine holiness and Divine disapproval of anything contrary to the nature and character of God.

1. It was a flaming sword which turned every way that guarded the way of the tree of life. Genesis 3:24.

2. God’s disapproval and judgment was manifested against Sodom and Gomorrah when He burned them with fire.

3. God’s final judgment against sin will be exhibited eternally in the Lake of Fire.

In our type here the fire pointed forward to the judgment which would fall on the Lord Jesus, the Sin-Bearer, when He hung on the cross.

As Isaac’s father took the fire in his hand, so the Beloved Son of God was smitten of God and afflicted. Isaiah 53:4.

“They went both of them together.”

Abraham and Isaac were in perfect agreement. Abraham did not have to force Isaac to carry the wood or climb

the altar. See verse 9. There was no struggle, no murmuring, no objection. It is the eloquent picture of a son obedient unto death.

Abraham is a man of 130 years. Isaac is a young man approximately the age of the Lord Jesus. The old man ties the young man, in the prime of life, hand and foot, and places him upon the altar without one word of protest from the son. How well Isaiah describes this very scene, and also describes Him of whom Isaac is the type. Isaiah 53:7. "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." Perfect agreement between Abraham and Isaac also between the Father and the Son: "they went both of them together."

v. 7—Isaac asks the question, "Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

Describe the scene here.

These two men are going to worship on Mount Moriah. Isaac was carrying the wood, Abraham had the fire and the knife, and as they walked along Isaac asked the question, "Where is the lamb?" Isaac knew that to worship God meant an offering, but where was it?

The answer that Abraham gave is also remarkable. My son, "God will provide Himself a lamb." Abraham was not thinking of the ram caught in the thicket, he knew nothing of that. This answer expresses the quiet confidence that Abraham had in God and His purpose. He did not know at this time that Isaac would be spared, but he knew that God was able for the situation. This answer seemed to have satisfied Isaac.

The answer of Abraham was also prophetic—"God will provide Himself a lamb."

John 1:29—"Behold the Lamb of God," etc.

Romans 8:32—"He that spared not His own Son," etc.

v. 9-10—Alone with his son.

When they reached the appointed place the father and son were alone. The transaction was a very personal thing, it was not for human eyes to behold. When the awful moment of sacrifice came and Abraham raised that glittering knife to plunge it into the heart of Isaac, there was no one around. The scene was too sacred and holy.

Do you see the picture? When the moment of sacrifice came, God snuffed out the lights of heaven, and pulled down the shades of the sky, and for three hours in total darkness God was alone with His Son. We do not know what took place there. Of this we are sure, that God forsook His Son, this drew from His lips the heart-broken cry, "My God," etc.

v. 11-12—So far as Abraham was concerned, his son was dead. How long had he been dead? Three days.

Twice in Hebrews 11:17 the writer says, "He offered up Isaac" and "He offered up his only begotten son."

This offering actually took place three days before Isaac was put on the altar.

"Lay not thy hand upon the lad," etc. Isaac is delivered from actual death.

This ordeal was a severe test of faith for Abraham. On the one hand, there were the promises of God invested

in Isaac. On the other, God said offer up your son as a burnt-offering to Me.

Humanly speaking this was an impossible situation. Deep down in his heart Abraham was convinced that in order for God to accomplish in Isaac his plans, then God must act, and even though he slay his son in obedience to God's request, He would raise him from the dead.

v. 13—The ram, the substitute.

The type passes from Isaac to the ram offered up. Our text says, "offered up in his stead." This is a beautiful picture of Christ dying in the place of sinners who, like Isaac, are "bound" and have the wrath and justice of God suspended over them.

See John 3:36—"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Galatians 3:8—"The Gospel was preached unto Abraham." This is where God preached it to him.

The Resurrection

"Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure"—Hebrews 11:19.

Ascension of Christ

First of all let us consider Isaac. We read nothing more of him in this record after he was bound to the altar. He disappears from the story.

Verse 19 tells us that Abraham returned to the young men. Isaac metaphorically is left up in the mountain.

The next time he appears in the Divine record is when he meets his bride in Genesis 24:62.

This is a tremendous picture of the ascension of the Lord Jesus. Isaac disappears after his resurrection, and so does our Lord. During Isaac's absence Eliezer, the servant, type of the Holy Spirit, is sent by the father to seek a bride for his son. So, during our Lord's absence the Holy Spirit is sent by the Father to call out a Bride from among the nations, for His Son.

In closing let me review briefly this wonderful picture of God's program beginning with the birth of Christ. In Genesis 21 we have the birth of the promised son. Isaac is supernaturally, miraculously born against the laws of nature. In Genesis 22 we have the death of this son on Mount Moriah or Calvary.

In the close of this chapter we have the resurrection of this son, Isaac, then follows the ascension in type as he disappears from view.

Faith and Its Reward

Genesis 15:1-6

In Romans 4:1-5, Paul asks, "How was Abraham saved? Was it by faith or by the works of the Law?" In the first three chapters of Romans, Paul has shown the utter depravity of man, and his complete inability to save himself by his own works, or by trying to keep the Law. How was Abraham saved? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." In modern language that would mean, "Abraham believed God absolutely and God canceled his sins and declared him fit for heaven." Abraham was saved by faith, four hundred years before the Law was given. This was the principle of salvation in the O.T., and it is the same today. [Discuss briefly here some people's attitude, trying to work for salvation] Notice also the difference between believing God and believing in God. Most people believe in God, but hardly believe a word He says.

Genesis 15 is the great faith chapter of the Old Testament. In it God reveals His one and only way of salvation. Here for the first time God unveils His plan of salvation in all its fullness. Consider Genesis 15:1. "Fear not, Abraham: I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." Genesis 14 reveals Abraham returning from his great victory over the four kings of the north. He has released Lot and his family. With his three hundred and eighteen servants he had surprised the enemy by attacking at night. But in thinking of all this he becomes afraid, knowing that these kings will come back for revenge. Right at that point the Lord comes and

encourages him saying “Fear not, Abraham: I am thy shield. Don’t be afraid, Abraham, for I will be your protector and also your exceeding great reward.” This is the first thing that Abraham believed.

In verses 2-3 Abraham reminds God of a promise He had made thirty years prior. See Genesis 12:2, “I will make of thee a great nation.” In verses 4-6 God reassures Abraham that he will have a son whose offspring will be as numerous as the stars of heaven. Now God asked Abraham to believe that He would give him a son who was long-promised, long delayed, miraculously born, and supernaturally given. In other words God asked Abraham to believe what was humanly impossible and naturally unreasonable. Genesis 17 tells us that Abraham was one hundred years old and Sarah was ninety. Paul in Romans 4 tells us that Abraham’s body was dead as far as pro-creation was concerned. Sarah was long past the time of life for childbearing, so she was maternally dead. Genesis 18:11 informs us that they were “old and well stricken in years.” This means that they looked and felt their age. To have children at their time of life was impossible. Paul says that Abraham did not even consider this; instead “He believed God.” “Somehow,” Abraham said, “God will bring it to pass.”

Faith is believing the unbelievable – the impossible. See Romans 4:18-22. Faith is confidence in another’s word. God said unto Abraham, “I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life.” In other words God said, “I am going to set back the clock of time. I am going to make Sarah young again. I will put the clock back 50 or 60 years. She will become a beautiful, virile, healthy young woman again. He also would do the same for Abraham. Sarah laughed at the very idea and brought

forth the classic phrase “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” In verse 14, the Lord confirms His promise to Abraham and Sarah, saying, “At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.” For the second time God says I will restore to Sarah the time of childbearing and He kept His promise. He brought about a transformation in Sarah, which was wonderful. Do you believe this? Or do you think it is far fetched?

Genesis 21 tells us of the birth of Isaac, God’s promise fulfilled. Genesis 20 tells us of Abraham and Sarah’s visit to Gerar. In verse 2 Abraham says, “She is my sister.” Abimelech the king took one look at her and escorted her to his palace. Would this be the ninety-year-old woman, well stricken in years, of Genesis 18? The king had the choice of any beautiful maiden in the land, would he have chosen a decrepit old woman?

What God did for Sarah, He also did for Abraham. Abraham’s youth was renewed. God made him a young man again. Isaac is born and grows up into manhood. Some 40 years pass by during which Sarah dies. Then comes the amazing record of Abraham at the age of 140 years. See Genesis 25:1-2. Abraham remarried; his wife’s name was Kenturah. He was the father of at least six sons and probably a host of other children. God’s promises were all fulfilled. Abraham believed God concerning the promise and his son.

Genesis 24

The Mission of Eliezar, a Type of the Mission of the Holy Spirit Read verses 1-4 and verse 10.

In studying the historical records of the OT, we must remember that underneath each one there is some great spiritual truth.

1 Corinthians 10:11—"Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the end of the age is come."

2 Timothy 3:16-17—"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Behind every historical record in scripture there is more than mere moral instruction.

Paul mentions it is profitable for doctrine, then reproof, correction, instruction. "The things written aforetime were written for our learning."

Genesis 24 contains in type the great doctrine of the ministry and work of the Holy Spirit.

In this chapter we see the Trinity at work: Abraham as the Father, Isaac as the Son, and Eliezer as the Holy Spirit.

In this connection we see the mission of Eliezer corresponding to the work of the Holy Spirit.

1. Eliezer was sent by the father in behalf of his son Isaac. In John 14:16-17, Jesus says, "And I will pray to

the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth."

2. Eliezer was given complete authority to administer the affairs of the son and to seek out the bride for Isaac. Verses 2 and 10. This is the Holy Spirit's role in the world today. He is in charge of the affairs of the Son.

3. Verses 2 and 3 state distinctly that the bride must not come from among the Canaanites, but from the family of Abraham. This necessitated that the bride come from a far country. Under no circumstances was Isaac to be taken to the border land. See verses 6-8: "Bring not my son hither." This is a beautiful type. When the Church as the Bride goes to meet her heavenly Isaac, he will not come to her home on earth to get her. Instead the Holy Spirit will bring her to meet Him in the air. 1

Thessalonians 4:16-17: "The dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the hand in the air."

4. When Eliezer left the father's house he had two things in mind: (1) To find a bride for Isaac; (2) To speak of his glories. This was in accordance with the father's will, see verse 9. So it is with the Holy Spirit today. "He shall not speak of Himself: but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak"—John 16:13. It is the work of the Spirit to speak the word of the Father concerning the Son. This is why there is so much about the Lord Jesus Christ in the NT, and comparatively little about the Holy Spirit.

5. Next please notice where Eliezer went. See verse 10. This was in the land of Ur of the Chaldees from which Abraham himself had come. There is a perfect

description of where the Holy Spirit came to seek the bride for Christ. A world of sinners who are under the judgment of fire and who live in the city of destruction.

Meeting the Bride: vs. 15-33. The servant explains his mission and tells of the glories and riches of his master. Vs. 34-56.

The Bride's Decision: v. 58. On the way to meet Isaac the servant tells more of his master and his master's house.

The Meeting: v. 63. Apply all this to the Holy Spirit's work in our life.

The Second Coming

John 14:1-6 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

There are in the NT 260 chapters and 318 references to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The OT abounds with passage which speak of Christ's return to reign upon this earth.

There are different aspects of His coming:

1. In relation to the Jew.
2. In relation to the Church.

There is not one reference in the OT which points to the Lord's coming to take a people out of the world to the Father's house.

The NT also contains many references to this event, but also introduces to us the fact of His coming to rapture the Church. Perhaps the only reference in the Gospels to this aspect of His coming is in John 14.

We are indebted mainly to Paul and his writings for the revelation of the rapture of the church.

Paul, in writing to Titus, brought the two aspects of his coming into sharp relief: "Looking for that 'blessed hope' and the 'glorious appearing' of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ."

In John 14 Jesus foretells his coming for his own. In 1 Thessalonians 4 Paul describes the "Rapture" and shows that it is sign-less and timeless. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul by revelation supplies some of the detail.

We shall not all die, but all will be changed. This changed will be instantaneous, and shall take place at the blowing of the last trumpet.

After receiving our incorruptible bodies we shall be translated or raptured in clouds and meet the Lord in the air.

After meeting the Lord, and meeting with loved ones, certain great events are going to take place:

1. The Judgment Seat of Christ.

Described for us in 2 Corinthians 5:10 and Romans 14:10. Every believer will be required to be examined by the Lord. This event is explained in more detail in 1 Corinthians 3:9-15. This examination takes place immediately following the rapture.

Revelation 19:8 shows us the bride already rewarded prior to the Lord's return with His Bride. "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Judge. All judgment is committed unto the Son in John 5. this judgment is not to determine our salvation but rather to make manifest what we really are. It is our works that will be brought under judgment. It is not the Lord's purpose to chasten us for our sins but to reward us for our service. Our work is going to be tested by fire. That which is God glorifying will stand the test. That which is not will be burned up.

2. The Marriage of the Lamb.

Each one clothed in garments of fine linen—Revelation 19:8. This "marriage" takes place in heaven. It is from

heaven that we descend with Him on His glorious return—Revelation 19:14. Then throughout eternity we shall dwell in perfect bliss, showing forth His glory, and displaying to wondering angels the glory of His name. Will you be one of these happy people?

What happens to those who are left behind when the Lord comes?

First of all, there will be the shock and consternation caused by the rapture of the born-again believers. There will be abject misery and anguish among those who know the truth and yet have rejected it. But this will be of short duration. With the rapture of the believers and the removal of the Holy Spirit, there appears on the scene one whom Paul describes as the “Wicked or Lawless one.” He is the head of the Roman Empire and as such he is the political leader and rules relentlessly over the nations of the earth. He is known as the Beast.

Then there arises the “second beast.” His power comes from Satan through the “first beast.” He is the religious head. He promotes and compels all peoples to worship the first beast instead of God. He is given power by Satan to do miracles, Paul describes them as “powers, signs and lying wonders”—2 Thessalonians 2:9.

These men with their power, subtilty, and deceit will enslave the bodies and minds of the people, so that they will believe a lie rather than the truth.

Someone asks, “Will there not be some saved during the tribulation?” The answer to that is, “Yes.”

But who will be saved? Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2 talks of some who are perishing, “who received not the truth,” prior to the rapture.

God will send these strong delusions so that they will believe the lie. That they all might be damned who believe not the truth—verses 10-12.

This being so, no one who rejects Christ outright before the rapture, will be given the chance to accept him after.

Apply this solemn truth to present audience. The tribulation period will be a time of unprecedented suffering. This is described for us in Revelation 6 to 19.

Those who survive the awful calamities of the Tribulation, and those who don't will stand before the "Great White Throne," then banished into eternal hell.

The reason why we stay with you is to warn you of these things, to tell you to flee from the wrath to come, and to tell you that "Jesus saves."

Abraham's Test

Genesis 22

Genesis 22:1 says, "And God did test Abraham." Some time later, God did test Abraham. He tested Abraham's sincerity, loyalty, and faith. The offering of Isaac may have occurred at the place where Solomon built the temple (see 2 Chronicles 3:1). Isaac was not a child, but a young man. Abraham laid the wood for burnt offering on Isaac; this was a heavy load.

Abraham's Promise

Abraham's spiritual experience was marked by four great crises, each of which involved a surrendering of something that was naturally dear to him:

- He surrendered his country and his kindred.
- He surrendered his nephew Lot, who was especially dear to him, and was his heir and a fellow-believer.
- He surrendered his own plans for Ishmael.
- Finally, he surrendered Isaac, his miraculous son.

Abraham wanted a son and heir above anything else. Sarah, his wife, was barren. They had tried everything to have a child, but were unsuccessful. Time ran out. Humanly speaking, there was no hope. Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90. Abraham's body was dead, and Sarah's was long past the age of childbearing.

When Abraham began his walk with God, God promised that He would multiply his seed, that they would be as numberless as the stars, and as numerous as the sand on the seashore (see Genesis 15). God also promised to

make him fruitful; that kings would come from his seed, and that through his descendants all nations of the earth would be blessed. In Genesis 17, God again promised Abraham that Sarah would bear him a son, that she would be the mother of nations.

Abraham's Response

Gen. 17:17 – He fell on his face and laughed in disbelief, and said: “Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a son at the age of ninety?” Listen now to the cry of a desperate man: “If only Ishmael might be under your blessing.” I can see these things happening. God ignored this request from a distraught man, and said, “Sarah shall bear you a son and you will call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him, and an everlasting covenant with his descendants.”

The heavenly messengers appearing to Abraham in Genesis 18 was a theophany. The Lord reiterated His promise that Sarah would have a son. Sarah, who was in the next tent, heard this and, “laughed within herself.” First, we have Abraham laughing at God's promise, and now we have Sarah laughing. Abraham was incredulous, but the Lord said, “Is anything too hard for God?” (See Gen. 18:14).

In due course, Isaac was born (see chapter 21). After all that has transpired, can you imagine the special bond between Abraham and Isaac? There must have been joy, rejoicing, and praising God. Confidence in God was at its highest point. Now look at Chapter 22.

Consider the enormity and the immensity of the unusual request made by God. Abraham would be taken by surprise as his world crashed around him. He would be

stunned by the impact of this request. God did not say, “Take Isaac and offer him for a burnt offering.” Nor did He say, “Take your son, your ONLY son.” God said, “Take now your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love.” God is literally saying to Abraham: “You must put Isaac to death. You must offer him to Me as a burnt-offering.”

Abraham’s Surrender

Will he obey unreservedly and unconditionally? Will he surrender to God’s command? Before Abraham could obey God in this unbelievable way, a way contrary to human reason, he must surrender three things:

1. His heart - that is, his INTELLECT: What God had asked him to do did not make sense. Humanly speaking, it was incomprehensible; it defied human logic and understanding. Isaac was the child of promise—he was the miracle child. God’s future plans and purposes were invested in him. All Abraham’s hopes and aspirations were centered in Isaac. Now God says, “Put him to death.” To obey God and worship Him, Abraham must surrender his intellect.
2. His EMOTIONS: He loved Isaac with all his heart...all his hopes and aspirations were centered in him. To obey God, he must love God more than his son, and to demonstrate that love he must surrender to God his strong affection and emotions for Isaac, the son of promise.
3. His WILL: He had a choice either to do his own will, or to do God’s will, to keep what God had given him or to obey God. He elected to do God’s will. Abraham completely abandoned himself to the will of God. This was the supreme and ultimate test for Abraham.

All of this was against reason; yet Abraham was completely captivated, convinced and controlled by God, that he rose immediately in unquestioning and unhesitating obedience to the revealed will of God.

This was a very real experience for Abraham: "Take now thy son." This was the greatest crisis in his life. He had never been called upon to surrender his intellect, emotion, and will in this way. [Note that it is not enough to surrender the intellect and emotion apart from the will]. To serve God, and worship Him acceptably there must be a total yielding of the whole man. Paul urges us in Romans 6 to "yield ourselves to God."

Have you ever yielded your intellect, emotions, and will to God in total surrender? Do you have a true heart? Do you have a sincere, pure heart...a surrendered heart? God can do great things with anyone whose heart is surrendered to Him.

Abraham's Service

Read Genesis 22:3-5. Note three things here:

(1) Abraham did not choose his own service. God revealed it to him, and he responded with unquestioning obedience.

(2) Abraham went to the mountain, the place of God's appointing, in order to worship Him. He went with one specific objective. He did not go to serve God. "Abide you here, while I and the lad go yonder and worship."

(3) Abraham went in faith. "Abide you here, while I and the lad go yonder and worship, and come again to you." He is going to the mountain, the appointed place, to worship God by offering Isaac, but he also does this in

full assurance of faith, that God will bring Isaac back to life. What faith! Could we believe like this?

Abraham's Altar – [Read Genesis 22:6-9]. “They came to the place of which God had told him, and Abraham built an altar.” He built that altar with trembling hands. No doubt tears streamed down his cheeks. His heart was overwhelmed, and his spirit crushed. Despite the mind shattering circumstances, he built the altar.

Beloved, before we can worship God acceptably, we must build an altar with our own hands. We will not be asked to lay Isaac upon it, we will be asked by God to lay ourselves upon it. We will be asked to give ourselves as a burnt offering to be wholly consumed for the glory of God. [Note the difference between the sin offering and the burnt offering]

Abraham built an altar to worship God, and when he had completed it, he laid the one whom he loved with all his heart on it. The fact that it was his ONLY son gives the scene great intensity (he was not one out of twelve, comparing Isaac to Joseph for instance). [Describe the conversation between the father and son]

The Crisis: The Moment of Truth

Genesis 22:10 says, “And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.” The crucial and climatic moment had come. Abraham had built the altar—he had bound the sacrifice—now he raised the knife. God tested Abraham to the limit. What happens next? [Describe the trauma]

[Read Gen. 22:11-18] In Genesis 22:11, we have the first message: “Abraham, Abraham.” The repetition of the name denotes urgency. “Lay not thy hand upon the lad,

neither do anything to him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou has not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me.” Abraham had passed the test - the most severe test of his life.

Abraham cut the cords that bound Isaac to the altar with the knife that would have killed him. I’m sure he embraced Isaac. Then he lifted up his tear-filled eyes, filled with tears of joy, and saw a ram caught by its horns in the bushes. He slew it, and offered it up to God for a burnt offering. God got the burnt offering of Gen. 22:2. Abraham called the name of the place Jehovah Jireh (“The Lord will provide”). On this occasion, God provided a substitute for Isaac.

The second message of the Angel of the Lord was also very important (see Gen. 22:15). “By myself I have sworn,” saith the Lord, “for because thou hast done ‘this thing’” (see Gen. 22:11). What did Abraham do? (1) He offered/gave up his son Isaac to God. (2) Abraham surrendered his heart (i.e. his life), and (3) He surrendered himself without reserve to God.

Abraham had done many things at God’s request. He had left his home in Ur of the Chaldeans, leaving behind his friends and family. He had become a wanderer on the face of the earth and a tent dweller. He had sacrificed many things. These past surrenders, however, were leading to “this thing” - to this supreme and unequalled surrender of giving Isaac as a burnt offering to God.

The Result of Abraham’s Surrender

See Gen. 22:16-18,

“And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”

If we relate these promises to the Jews alone, the present day results fall far short of these predictions. The Jews number 2% of the American population, and only one third of one percent of the world's population. If you relate these prophecies to Abraham's spiritual seed then you come much closer to the actual figure.

In Revelation 5, the number ten thousand times ten thousands = 100 million. Then there are thousands multiplied by thousands, which project us into infinity. These in heaven would equate with the stars of heaven. Those on earth during the millennium and in the eternal state would represent the sand of the seashore.

Conclusion

Here is the story of one man with a true, pure, surrendered, and obedient heart, who, by his action brought, is bringing and will bring, unprecedented blessing upon the nations of the world. What would happen today if there were men and women who would surrender themselves unreservedly to God? John Wesley said, “Give me twenty Spirit-filled men and I will turn the nation around.” [Describe how he did it] Henry Varley, the noted English preacher, said to Moody, “The world has yet to see what God can do with a man who is wholly given up to His will.”

After listening to this touching story, each one of us has been challenged to some degree. Some of us may be on the “horns of a dilemma,” others may be in the “valley of decision.” What will I do? Your dilemma is intensified as we hear God say to us, “Take now that dearest idol, which you love, and tear it from my throne.” “The dearest idol I have known” (see Romans 12:1). Then present or yield your life to me as a burnt offering.

Mary’s perfume was completely used up when she opened the jar and poured it on the Savior. If she had kept it in the beautiful alabaster box, the world would have been the poorer. She opened the box and poured the perfume out on the Lord. She lost the precious, costly perfume; she gave it all to the Lord without reservation. Never was He more honored, and the aroma of the perfume fills the world.

Brothers and sisters, we may keep our life for our own selfish interest. We may carefully preserve our body from undue effort. We can fly in the face of God’s prediction that “whosoever would save his life shall lose it.” That is, those who would save their lives for themselves will never experience God’s best blessings in this life. They also will lose out at the Judgment Seat. On the other hand, the Lord says, those who would die to self and give their life to the Lord as a burnt offering will be filled with unspeakable joy in this life and receive an abundant reward in eternity.

Are there any in the audience willing to break open the alabaster box of their life and pour out the priceless perfume of worship, service, and devotion? Are there any who are willing to die to self for Jesus Christ? Real life comes through dying.

(A Christ-centered life, a spiritual life, an abundant life)
John 12:24 says, "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." The principle speaks of the hopelessness of living a selfish, egotistical life. Broken clouds produce rain, broken soil produces crops, broken seed yields grain, broken grain produces bread, and broken bread produces strength. The Lord is saying to each of us, "Son, daughter, give me your heart. Give me your life." May our response be, "You shall have my life, my heart, my all."

The Type of the Holy Spirit

Genesis 24

In the story of Genesis 24, a type of the Holy Spirit is present actively leading the principal characters involved: Abraham, Eliezer, Rebekah, and Isaac. We know from Jesus' ministry and the New Testament that the Holy Spirit was sent by the Father. John reports Jesus' teaching on the Holy Spirit in John 14:26: "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." In this story in Genesis 24, it seems that Eliezer's mission is to procure a bride for Isaac, although in this chapter of Genesis his character, the "servant," remains nameless. (See Genesis 15:2 and 24:2-4)

In Genesis 24:15, we are introduced to Rebekah. Abraham's head servant of his household, who we presume to be Eliezer, has been sent on this mission and meets Rebekah after he has just finished praying for the Lord's provision of a wife for Isaac. (See Genesis 24:14 and 24:17) His prayer of verse 14 has clearly been answered and provided by the Holy Spirit. We then see Eliezer displaying the riches of his master Abraham by giving Rebekah precious gifts of gold. (See Genesis 24:22) In Genesis 24:29-31, we are introduced to the character of Laban, Rebekah's brother, who clearly understands the situation that has presented itself to their family. This is further evidence that the Holy Spirit is leading in their understanding and knowledge of what Eliezer had come for. In John 16:13, Jesus teaches us that "...when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will

guide you into all truth.” It is evident that in this set of circumstances in Genesis 24, the Holy Spirit is indeed guiding each of the characters into understanding the truth of what is happening and what decisions they should make. Next, we see that Eliezer declares his mission and identifies his master Abraham, exalting and honoring him in his speech. (See Genesis 24:32-35) This demonstration is also a type for the Holy Spirit who never speaks of Himself, but honors the Father and gives glory to Him only. Here Eliezer is modeling the very same relationship by honoring his own master and not speaking of himself or his errand as his own.

Next, the story recalls Eliezer reporting Abraham’s desire for a bride for Isaac. (See Genesis 24:38 and Genesis 2) Here, we do not see Eliezer wavering on his decision for the right person for Isaac, rather, he is absolutely certain that Rebekah was God’s choice after being led by the Holy Spirit. (See Genesis 24:43-49) Eliezer persuades Rebekah’s family that she should go with him back to his household. (See Genesis 24:50-51) When the decision is made and the result is final, Eliezer worships God again to thank Him for the Spirit’s provision and guidance. We actually see Eliezer worshipping God three times in this story, thanking God each time He has provided Eliezer an answer for his prayer and provided all he asks through the Holy Spirit. (See Genesis 24:26, 24:48, and 24:52) At this point, he brings forth jewels of silver and gold and raiment for Rebekah, also giving precious things to the family. In doing this, he is displaying the glory of his master Abraham and honoring the God of Abraham as well.

We also know that the Holy Spirit guides Rebekah’s decisions in this story. In Genesis 24:58, her family asks

her, “Will you go with this man?” and she responds in faith, “I will go.” Rebekah simply arises and follows her call to go with the servant Eliezer to a strange and unknown household, away from her family and the familiar. Then, the first time we see Isaac after his experience on Mount Moriah is when he goes out to meet his new wife, Rebekah. (See Genesis 24:63-65) We meet him while he is “meditating in the field in the evening,” no doubt praying for his new wife. We see in the final words of this chapter that the two are married and the union is indeed blessed. (See Genesis 24:67) In looking at these characters and the progress of these events, the Holy Spirit clearly orchestrates, brings to fulfillment, and guides the details and inner workings so that the Lord’s purposes are accomplished. In much the same way that Isaac rushes to his new bride arriving on the camels in Genesis 24, we shall see our Savior returning to claim His chosen bride, the church. This will be the first time believers see Him after His dreadful experience of Calvary. While Adam’s bride was formed from one of his ribs, Christ’s bride whom He secured through the shedding of His blood, came from Christ’s wounded side. Let us remember that we are His true bride, as Rebekah was Isaac’s true bride, and bring all the glory to Him who works through the power of the Holy Spirit in this story and in our own particular stories as well.

The Test of Abraham's Faith

Genesis 22:1-14

This story of God testing Abraham's faith is one of the clearest types of the crucifixion that appears in the Old Testament. There is indeed no type or pattern giving a clearer picture of the death of God's only, unique, and well-loved Son. This is also one of the most tender scenes in the Bible, second only to the pathos, or emotional appeal, of Jesus' death on the cross at Calvary. In Genesis 22:11, God addresses Abraham as "Abraham, Abraham!" This is interesting and significant, because the duplication of names in the Scriptures usually introduces matters of great importance. For example, take a look at the following name duplications found in the Word where God speaks to men:

Exodus 3:4 - God calls out to Moses.

Genesis 46:2 - God speaks to Jacob in a vision.

1 Samuel 3:10 - God calls Samuel in the night to prophesy.

Luke 10:41 - Jesus speaks to Martha and exhorts her not to worry.

Luke 22:31 - Jesus predicts Simon will betray him three times.

Acts 9:4 - The Lord asks Saul why he is persecuting him.

There are three other occasions where Jesus, Himself, used the name duplication:

Matthew 7:22 - Jesus speaks with His disciples about those who will try to enter the "kingdom of heaven."

Luke 13:34 - Jesus laments the state of Jerusalem.

Matthew 27:45 - Jesus cries out on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

This incident where God asked Abraham to sacrifice his own son was the supreme test of Abraham's faith. This offering took place on one of the mountains in the land of Moriah, where Jerusalem was later built. The people of God were centered in this locale as they would also be centered from the church in Jerusalem in the future, where the temple would be built. This could be considered the Christian center of the world. Many scholars also believe that this place could have been the location of Calvary as well!

In Genesis 22:2, God asks Abraham to do the unthinkable: "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering." This was all to be done for God, just as Jesus' trial, suffering, and death on Calvary was all for God's glory! God's command must have caused Abraham great concern, surprise, and astonishment. He must have been crushed at God's request. Isaac was his only son, the son of his old age, and most importantly, the son that God had promised Abraham.

Isaac's birth was a miraculous one, because of Sarah and Abraham's old age. When Abraham was 100 years and Sarah was 90 years old, God promised them a son. They laughed at God in their unbelief. We must consider how the Lord acted in this situation and opened Sarah's womb even though this seemed impossible to them. See Genesis 17:15-2, 18:10-15 and 21:1-7. Sarah would become the mother of nations, and kings would be

among her offspring through Isaac's line. God would also bless Abraham and his seed would be "as the stars and as the sand on the seashore." See Genesis 22:17.

Abraham's Love

Let us consider the awful results of unbelief evident in the story of God's promise to Sarah and Abraham and Hagar's son Ishmael. See Genesis 16:12. Consider the statement from Genesis 22 in which God named Isaac as Abraham's "only son." What about Ishmael? He was the son of the flesh, conceived through Hagar, Sarah's servant woman. We can see that Abraham loved his boy Ishmael too.

In Genesis 17:18, Abraham laughed before God's promise to provide them a son, saying, "O, that Ishmael might live before Thee." To this God replied, "I will make him fruitful, multiply his seed, I will make him a great nation." (Genesis 17:20) From this seed, God created the seed that eventually became the nation of Islam. However, it is clear that the promises of God were invested in Isaac, not Ishmael.

God had promised to make Isaac's seed as many as the stars and the sand. But Isaac was twenty-five years old and unmarried. If Abraham slew him, then how would the promise be fulfilled? It is also evident that Abraham loved Isaac with a passion and that Isaac was his pride and joy. In Genesis 22:2, God called Isaac the son "whom you love." Note that this is the first mention of love in this story. God's ultimate plans for Abraham and his covenant with him were foreordained in Isaac.

Most likely, Abraham's hopes, aspirations, and his own posterity were dependent on Isaac's survival. So when God's command for sacrifice came to Abraham, his faith

in God and his love for Isaac was tested to the uttermost. This was a challenge to the depth of his being. Try and understand in your mind Abraham's dilemma. First, note the magnificence and splendor of his faith in God. Secondly, note his love for Isaac that was immeasurable, because as a father he was consumed by the promises invested in him by God. Despite all this, his love for God was greater than his love for Isaac!

In this act, Abraham exemplified the truth of many Scriptures yet unwritten. For example, the greatest commandment communicated by Jesus and God both in the Old Testament and the New: Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, and mind. See Deuteronomy 6:1-5 and Matthew 22:37-38. Luke 14:26 also reminds us that our love for the Lord must exceed our love for family, and even our own life. To be a true disciple of Christ we must bear the stigma of the cross. Paul exhibited this willing attitude to sacrifice in his commitment to "go."

This introduces us to the idea of believers having the Lord as their "first love." For example, Jesus asks Peter in John 21:15, "Lovest thou Me more than these?" Peter proclaims that he does love the Lord. We have another example in Luke 7:36-50. The woman, identified as a sinner, brought an alabaster box of perfume, knelt behind Jesus at His feet, weeping profusely, and washed His feet with her tears and then wiped them with her hair. She kissed His feet repeatedly and anointed them with the perfume. This is a picture of a woman engrossed with and overwhelmed by the power of a new affection for Jesus. John 12:1-7 portrays a similar situation with Mary anointing the feet of Jesus with

expensive oil. Jesus commends Mary, so committed and devoted to Him, for her use of this costly oil that she uses for a worthy recipient. Song of Songs 8:7 says, "Love as strong as death, many waters cannot quench it, neither can the flood drown it."

Abraham's Worship

In Genesis 22:5, note the first mention of the word worship. The "law of first mention" is at work here, which is a principle used in interpreting the fundamental meaning of a word in Scripture as it appears for the first time. In this case, true worship is found and can be examined in this passage since this is the first occurrence of it in the Scriptures. Abraham giving Isaac back to God is an eloquent and articulate picture of worship at its highest and best on the human level. He gave back to God what God had given him, and no mortal could have given more. On the divine level, when the Lord Jesus offered Himself to God, without spot, through the eternal Spirit, it was worship exalted, distinguished, unexcelled, and unsurpassed. As the burnt offering, He was all for God, and through this offering, God was never more glorified.

Abraham's Faith and the Lamb of God

In Genesis 22:5, note Abraham's faith in worship. He declared that they would "come again to you." The writer to the Hebrews indicates that Abraham believed that even if he slew Isaac, God would raise him from the dead. Hebrews 11:17-19 states, "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called,'" concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from

the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense."

Abraham's faith in God was remarkable because there is no recorded instance of resurrection up to this time in world history. The first story that includes a resurrection in the biblical narrative is in 1 Kings 17:17-24 where the widow's son is raised by Elijah. In Luke 8:40-54, Jesus raises Jairus' daughter from the dead as well. Again in Acts 9:36-42, Dorcas serves as another example of a resurrection as a result of Peter's prayer. Yet the most important resurrection from the dead in the Bible is that of Jesus Christ, the only Son of God.

In Genesis 22:6, we see that Isaac carried the wood intended for his own bodily sacrifice. In much the same way, Jesus was also forced to carry the cross on which he was sacrificed and died as the lamb for the sins of the world. Here in Genesis 22, Abraham carried the fire and the knife to sacrifice his son. God similarly laid on the Lord Jesus the punishment for our sins, but the people afflicted Him with the physical sufferings.

In Genesis 22:7, Isaac asks his father, "Where is the Lamb?" The Lord knew that He was the Lamb that was to be sacrificed on the cross for the people of God. In the Scriptures, Jesus and his disciples bear witness to this fact. In John 1:29, John the Baptist proclaims, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Jesus declares before Pontius Pilate, "For this purpose came I into this world." (John 18:37) Peter proclaims that Jesus "was foreordained before the foundation of the world," (1 Peter 1:20) and that "He was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." (Acts 2:23)

In Genesis 22:8, Abraham tells his son, "God will provide Himself a lamb." Indeed, once Isaac is spared by the angel of the Lord, this promise is fulfilled in Genesis 22:13 with the promised ram as a sacrifice offering. In Genesis 22:9, Abraham and Isaac build the altar together, Isaac is bound by his father, and then laid on the altar. In Genesis 22:10, Abraham raised the knife to slay his son, yet it never fell on the victim. The Angel of the Lord called out to Abraham, "Lay not thy hand on the boy, or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son from me." This sacrifice from Abraham to the Lord displays a "type," or pattern, of the sacrificial system that was not totally fulfilled until Christ came and offered the ultimate and final sacrifice for His people on the cross at Calvary. As John the Baptist proclaimed, let us proclaim as well: "Behold! The Lamb of God!"

Test of Faith

Genesis 12:10-13:4

Genesis 12 and 13 present Abraham, the great patriarch of Israel, with a test of faith. Let us look at this story and the context involved behind the great father. In Genesis 12:10, we see that there is a famine in the “land of plenty – a land flowing with milk and honey, the land that the Lord had promised Abraham.” Consider for a moment Abraham’s experience thus far, prior to the famine. He was chosen by God and obedient to His Word, and had broken his ties with the flesh and the world to follow God’s command. Before arriving in the Promised Land, before the famine occurs, Abraham is taken through many different places and experiences God’s presence and provision. At Shechem, he was strengthened by God, at Moreh, he was instructed by God, and at Bethel we was removed by God with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east, where Abraham built an altar to God. (See Genesis 12:4-9)

Let us picture Abraham here at Bethel dwelling in the house of God, sacrificing, praying, and fellowshiping with God. Abraham was happy here. We do not know how long he stayed in this blessed place, but a famine had definitely arrived. But why? Had not God promised to bless him? Did God not ask him to dwell in this land? Was he not where God wanted Him to be? God was about to test his servant! Yet, Abraham failed in this crucial test. Instead of trusting God, he turned his back on Him, taking matters into his own hands and going down into Egypt, where he could escape the famine. If Abraham had stayed on amidst the famine, God certainly

would have honored his faith. God was the one who fed Elijah by the brook, and sent manna from heaven to the Israelites. He also filled the disciples' nets with fish, and fed the hungry multitude on a few loaves and fish, so, surely, the Almighty God was capable of meeting Abraham's need even when there was famine in the land. But Abraham failed in this test.

Many sons of God failed in the day of testing. For instance, consider Elijah and his victory over the people who worshipped Baal in 1 Kings 18-19. Imagine the prophet on Mount Carmel, running over the top of the mountain. Jezebel sent him a message which said, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them." (1 Kings 19:2) Elijah took to his heels, ran into the wilderness and sat down under a juniper tree requesting God to take his life. He cries out, "I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too." God responds to Elijah, saying, "Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel and all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him." (1 Kings 19:18) Elijah had not trusted in the Lord, yet failed in his day of testing by the Lord.

Abraham had also disobeyed when he lost his faith in God. In Genesis 12:12-13, He was almost in Egypt with his wife Sarai, but instead of trusting God, He began to fear for his safety and began telling lies. Was God disappointed in Abraham? Look now at Genesis 12:17: "And the Lord plagued the rock and his house with great plagues." We see here that our God is a great God who can send such great earthly wonders, like plagues, to curse Pharaoh, but not Abraham. Pharaoh recognized the roles of God, and discovered the deceit of Abraham

and asks him to take his wife and leave the country. (See Genesis 12:19) Then Genesis 13:1 opens with those words: "And Abraham went up out of Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had." Abraham is then on his way back to Bethel, the house of God. I John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." Abraham's actions up to the point of return to Bethel could be described as "backsliding" or a lack of faith.

Despite Abraham's backsliding and believers' occasional lapses in faith, let us remember the story of the prodigal son, where the son who turns his back on his life and family is welcomed back with celebration despite all of the sin he had lived in and committed. (See Luke 15:11-32) Let us also remember the story of Naomi in the book of Ruth. There is a famine in Bethlehem, and Elimelech and Naomi leave for Moab with their two sons. They had failed in their testing with disastrous results. While there, Abimelech and the two sons die, leaving Naomi with her two daughters-in-law. Naomi decides to go back home, back to the land of Judah and the house of praise, to her hometown of Bethlehem. The city was awed when they saw her, saying, "Is this really Naomi?" But she said to them, "Call me not Naomi," which means 'pleasant,' but ordered them to call her Mara, which means 'bitter,' for, as she reasoned, "the Almighty God has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord has brought me back empty." (Ruth 1:20-21) The Lord had tested them with the famine and as a result they experienced many hardships from trying to escape the famine. Indeed, the Lord sometimes tests us to bring out the best in us.

Take Job as another example. Job was a good man, evidenced by Job 1:1, saying, "He was perfect and upright, he feared God and avoided evil." We also know that he was a rich man, evidenced by his prosperity mentioned in Job 1:2-4. Satan's theory was that Job was good because God had given him riches and prosperity, and that God had sheltered him. "Let me touch him," taunted Satan, "and he will curse you to your face." (Job 1:11) The Lord told Satan, "Behold, all that he has is yours." (Job 1:12) God had confidence in him that he would be sustained and not curse God for his trials and extreme suffering.

Do these stories fit your circumstances? Are you cold, unhappy, or miserable? Have you relied only on yourself and failed to trust God in his time of testing? There is only one answer to your problem. Get back to Bethel - back to God - admit your lack of faith, and confess your sins. Return to Him and His joy will flood your life.