

GLIMPSSES OF GOD

Volume I

An Inductive Study of Genesis 1 – 25

By

O. William Cooper

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GLIMPSES OF GOD

Volume I

An Inductive Study of Genesis 1 – 25

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The cover picture, a view of the Chilk Mountains of the Wilderness of Judea, along the Jerusalem to Jericho road, was taken by Dr. Yaacov Fleming, Founder and President of Biblical Resources of Jerusalem, Israel.

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PREFACE

One of the crying needs of the church is the discipling of new converts, who know little about God, and Christians who have not grown in their faith since their spiritual birth. Discipling does not progress without a corresponding growth in the knowledge of the Scriptures. This is not best accomplished by studying books about the Bible, but must be pursued through a study of the Scriptures themselves. People within the body of Christ need to be enabled to interpret the Scriptures for themselves. In turn, this will enable them to become intimately aware of the character and will of God. As people discover who God is, they also begin to discover what God wants them to be. This was the message of Isaiah's life. When he saw God, in the temple, he also heard God call him to be a prophet.

This study is based upon a fundamental principle – all Scripture was given with a dual purpose in mind:

1. To convey the basic teachings of the individual books through which God reveals Himself, and
2. to reveal the person and nature of God.

Scripture must be seen with these ideas in mind. We must, therefore, continually ask ourselves not only what has this portion of Scripture taught us concerning the subject of the text, but we must also ask ourselves, what has this passage taught us concerning the person and nature of God.

This volume is an Inductive Study. Inductive Bible Study is a study tool which enables the student to allow the Scripture to present the message it was written to convey rather than a message one brings to the text. Inductive Bible Study seeks to discover the message of a particular verse, phrase or word in view of the overall teaching of the particular book of the Bible under discussion. It should be clearly understood that Inductive Bible Study is a tool. Like all other tools of Bible study, it is limited, but also very helpful. This study is not intended to be a seminar in teaching the study method of Inductive Bible Study. Such seminars will be taught on request, in local churches. In this volume, we will attempt to enable students to discover what God is teaching through the inspired Scriptures.

The guide questions for GLIMPSES OF GOD have been placed into a three-ring binder so that the students or readers can do their own study and add it to the text as prepared by the author. The colored pages in this volume contain questions for a personal study of Genesis 1 – 25. It is the intent of the author for students to dig into the Scriptures themselves by diligently studying the biblical text and answering the questions presented, and then supplementing their work with the insights which the author has discovered and shares in the commentary following the questions.

This volume is called "GLIMPSES OF GOD." This is not just a fancy title to grab a reader's attention, but it was the author's intended purpose in this writing. Because this is true, you will find repeated instances, throughout the study, where this idea is highlighted.

It is our purpose, in this volume, to help the student accomplish two goals:

1. We want to enable you to do an Inductive Bible Study of an Old Testament historical book for yourself.
2. We want to provide an Inductive Study of the first half of the book of Genesis.

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This is done in such a way that after the students have done their own study by answering the questions provided, they can compare their findings with ours in the commentary.

Logos Ministries, Inc., exists to be an arm of the local church. It was created to strengthen members within the church fellowship rather than to take the place of the local church. It is our desire to be a supporting servant to each pastor and the members of the congregation. **Logos Ministries** is committed to complement and increase the spiritual productivity of the local congregation and the individual.

Because the Scriptures are the product of the Holy Spirit speaking through the hearts and minds of chosen writers, it is our conviction that the most important part of Bible Study is preparation by prayer. We urge you, before each time you study, to prepare yourself by spending time in prayer and meditation.

No book can be produced without the author's deep indebtedness to a host of people; some of whom the author could never recall. I am deeply indebted to Dr. Yaacov Fleming, founder and director of **Biblical Resources** of Jerusalem, Israel. The picture that appears on the cover of this volume is used with Dr. Fleming's permission. The educational materials produced by Dr. Fleming have been most helpful. I am also deeply indebted to the Board of **Logos Ministries**, whose encouragement and support have made this publication possible. I am most grateful to my wife, Ruth, for her untiring efforts in proofreading, her encouragement to launch this ministry and for the freedom, across more than 30 years of ministry, to spend the hours required to produce a work such as this. I never cease to be amazed at the grace of God which has granted me the privilege and opportunity to be a servant in this manner.

O. William Cooper

January 29, 1991
Loveland, Colorado

INTRODUCTION

Volume I is a study of Genesis chapters 1 – 25. The remaining half of this study will be found in Volume II. We want to reflect upon these chapters to discover what God is saying to us through this author.

On one occasion, Jesus said to Nathanael,

*"I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."
John. 1:48*

This was a picture of a devout Jew taking time for his daily reflection on the portions of Scriptures that he had learned as a child. Though he had no copy of the Torah of his own, still Nathanael took time to reflect on the Word of God that he had committed to memory. He poured over it again and again to discern what God was saying to him through it. It is in times of reflecting such as this that we can discern what God is also saying to us through the words of the Biblical books.

It is not accidental that Jesus said of some,

*"For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them." Mat-
thew 13:15,16*

It is in intense meditation and careful reflection that eyes and ears discern the simple truths that are found in the Scriptures.

This study has been designed in such a way that you can approach it from one of two ways. You can read the white pages of this book and hopefully the portion of Scripture will take on new meaning and life for you as you study with us. We will attempt to help you see the message through the eyes of the author. The second approach is that you can answer the questions, found on the colored pages of the text, for yourself **before** you read the text of this book. This will enable you to compare your observations with ours.

The Book of Genesis does not tell us who wrote its message. Early Jewish writers have solidly stood for the Mosaic authorship of Genesis, as well as the rest of the Pentateuch - the first five books of the Bible. It appears to be clear that Jesus and other New Testament personalities were convinced that Moses wrote Genesis as well as the other four books of the Pentateuch. More recent writers, for a variety of reasons, have favored looking elsewhere for the authorship of this important book. I can not prove my position, but I would not be surprised if Moses wrote the book of Genesis.

As we begin this study of the first half of the book of Genesis, we need to note that we will be using what is called Inductive Bible Study. It is not pouring one's own interpretation into the text, but letting the text speak for itself. Very often, the way a message is written carries as much meaning as the message itself.

We will focus on three parts of Inductive Bible Study:

1. Observation – Discovering what the book/passage says.
2. Interpretation – Discovering what the book/passage means by what it says.
3. Application – Applying what the book says to our lives.

In the course of this study, we will attempt to focus our attention on each of these parts.

GLIMPSES OF GOD - I

THE NAME OF THE BOOK

The name of the first book of the Old Testament, in Hebrew, is "Bereishis" which literally means, "In the beginning." In the Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, the name of the first book is "Geneseos." It is from this Greek name that we derive our English name "Genesis." The Greek name "Geneseos", found in 2:4 as well as in 5:1, means "birth" or "genealogy." It appears that the name was given to the book in Hebrew, Greek and English, because of the depiction of creation in the opening chapters of the book.

An Overview of Genesis 1-25

Any good book will contain many words, but it will contain only one simple idea. One of the things we must do, as we move through a study of the book of Genesis, is to discover the one idea that the author is trying to convey. In order to accomplish this goal, we will use several means to discover the spiritual history.

The study of a good book is a lot like studying a beautiful flower. You enjoy it from a distance as long as you continue to discover different features about the flower. As you move ever closer to the subject, you will notice a number of things:

1. The general color of the flower,
2. The size of the blossom,
3. The shape of the blossom,
4. The direction in which the blossom points,
5. The position of the flower in the vase, and
6. The shading of the petals.

Eventually, however, as you come right up close, you observe intricate details about individual petals and their shape that you could not observe from a distance. That is exactly how we begin a study of the book of Genesis; with each question we come closer to a fuller understanding of the text. That process begins as we give titles to each chapter of the book. The titles I have chosen for each of the 25 chapters in this study are as follows:

1	Creation
2	The Formation Of Woman
3	The Fall
4	Cain And Abel
5	From Adam To Noah
6	Flood Preparations
7	The Flood
8	The End Of The Flood
9	The Covenant With Noah
10	Noah's Lineage . Shem, Ham and Japheth
11	The Tower Of Babel
12	The Call Of Abram
13	Separation of Abram And Lot
14	Lot Rescued By Abram

15	God Covenants With Abram
16	Hagar And Ishmael
17	The Covenant Of Circumcision
18	The Three Visitors
19	Destruction Of Sodom And Gomorrah
20	Abram Deceives Abimelech
21	The Birth Of Isaac
22	The Sacrifice Of Isaac
23	Abraham Buries Sarah
24	Rebekah - Isaac's Wife
25	The Death Of Abraham

As I studied each of the chapters, in order to assign a title to them, some ideas stood out in my mind:

1. There is a strong focus on the person of God – who God is.
2. There is an equally strong emphasis on the actions of God and the qualities necessary to produce them.
3. There is an ongoing contrast between who God is and what He does, on the one hand, and who mankind is and what mankind does.

We will be Watching these emphases throughout the study, and then refer to them again, as we reflect upon their impact, in the conclusion of the study.

There are occasions when certain words, in Biblical quotations, are highlighted. These are emphasis' which I have chosen to insert and do not appear in the in the text of the New International Version.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 1

GENESIS 1:1 – 2:3

1. There are seven paragraphs in this passage. Please read each paragraph carefully and write a title, on the chart below, of seven words or less for each paragraph.

1: 1 – 5	
1: 6 – 8	
1: 9 – 13	
1: 14 – 19	
1: 20 – 23	
1: 24 – 31	
2: 1 – 3	

2. Scan 1:1–2:3 again. Look for impressions about God. What is the author saying about God?
Look again at this passage. What repetitions do you find? What does that tell you?
3. 1:1 is a single sentence. What is the subject of the sentence? What is the verb of that sentence? What do you learn from that search?
4. In 1:1, the author tells us that God created. In 1:2 he tells us that the "Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Who is the "Spirit of God"? If God created, then what is the Spirit of God doing in 1:2?
5. In 1:3, God said, "Let there be light." What does this tell you about the nature of light? What does this tell you about God?
6. In 1:6–8, the author speaks of an "expanse". What is that? What would it have been like before God's creative activity on the second day? Why was it important that God named the expanse? What does that tell you about God?
7. In 1:7, there is a very brief sentence, "And it was so." What does this add to the message the author was conveying in the book?
8. As in 1:5, 1:8 ends with a specific time designation -"And there was evening, and there was morning – the second day." What information do you gather from this statement?
9. 1:9–13 describes the third day of creation. Look to see how this paragraph relates to the previous paragraph, 1:6-8. What do you learn about creation from this comparison? What do you learn about God?
10. 1:9 begins, "And God said." Verse nine ends with the words, "And it was so." What is the author trying to convey in these phrases? What difference does this make in your understanding of the message of the creation story?

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11. 1:14–19 describes the fourth day of creation. Make observations about the content of this paragraph – i.e., What facts are given? What is the significance of the fact that the phrase "and it was so" appears in the middle of this paragraph?
List the things that this paragraph says that God did. What did you learn?
12. 1:20–23 describes the fifth day of creation. What would be the consequences if 1:14-19 exchanged places with 1:20 – 23?
13. In 1:22, God gives a command to His creation. Study the passage. What does this tell you about creation? What does this tell you about God?
14. Study 1:24-31 carefully. There appear to be two distinct parts to the paragraph. What is the content of each part? Make comparisons of the two sections. Identify contrasts between the two parts. What does this tell you about creation? About God?
15. 1:26 contains the only such statement in the whole creation story. What do you learn from this?
16. 1:27 states twice that God created man in His own image. What advantage does the second statement add? This is also the first mention of male and female. Why is that significant in relationship to the rest of creation?
17. 1:28 contains an instruction for human beings which was given to no other part of creation. What does this tell you about the place of people in creation? What does it tell you about God?
18. 1:29 identifies the food supply for people, while 1:30 seems to identify the food supply for the rest of creation. As you study these lists, what do you learn?
19. 1:31, is the only place in the story of creation where it says, "God saw all that He had made, and it was very good." What difference does that make? What does it tell you?
20. Study, again, the chart in question 1. What progression can you find? What is the pinnacle of the creative process?
21. Review 1:1–2:3 again. What, in your estimation, is the most important teaching in the passage?
22. In view of what you have learned about God in this passage, how will you change your conduct in the place where God has called you to invest your life every day?

LESSON 1: GENESIS 1:1– 2:3

I. – Introduction

As we begin this study, we need to become aware of some information about the book. The name "Genesis" is taken from the title given this book in the Septuagint – a Greek Version of the Old Testament. The name stands for "beginning" not just of the creation, but of the recorded activities of God in establishing His kingdom. In the Hebrew Old Testament, the name affixed to this book is "Bereishis" which is the word from verse one "In the **beginning**".

In the German Bible, Genesis is referred to as Moses I. Martin Luther believed that the Pentateuch, the first five books of our Bible, were written by Moses. The heading in the King James Bible reads, "The first book of Moses." This view was also held by several ancient Jewish Rabbis. Other ancient Jewish scholars held that Joshua wrote it. The Mosaic authorship is a view shared by many evangelical scholars today. There are many of the more liberal scholars who believe that the Pentateuch is a compilation of pieces of four different documents which they call J, E, P and D. These letters stand for the following:

1. J – A document that stressed the name "Jehovah."
2. E – A document that stressed the name "Elohim."
3. P – A document that stressed the priestly function and contribution.
4. D – A document stressing the Deuteronomic influence.

No copy of any of these four documents is available for our use at this time. By the same token, no original copy of any book of the Bible is available, either. I personally believe that it was the work of Moses. That, of course, can not be proven.

If the book was recorded by Moses, then it would seem reasonable to assume that it was written around 1500 BC. It is not possible to be more specific concerning the date of authorship at this time.

Genesis is presented in a form of writing called historical prose. It is not a history book. It is a book that uses actual historical events to convey a spiritual message. In order to discover that message, in its fullness, we must delve deeply into the historical facts included in the book.

There are four ingredients in historical prose:

- a. People
- b. Events
- c. Places
- d. Time

Historical events take place as the other three ingredients interrelate and react with each other. As we study this book, we need to be alert to the ingredients and their many relationships. When we have identified the historical ingredient, we will be continually asking ourselves, what spiritual truth is this story trying to convey to us?

Most historians write about events that took place before their birth. The author of Genesis, however, begins his historical report by writing about something far different; something he can not fully grasp. He begins writing about a situation before there was time or creation. Understandably, that is a bit difficult for him to write and for us to comprehend.

1:1-5 Day One - The Earth is Formed

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Genesis 1:1

The name for God, in verse one, is Elohim. It is interesting to note that the name for God is in the plural, but the word for "created" is in the singular. It suggests that the plural form for God is a form of reverent/worshipful address that can be found in many languages. The singular verb, however, indicates the author's intent - the one God produced all the action.

The text assumes the eternity of God at the time of beginning. (God was not beginning). God, in His eternal existence, was acting to bring about the beginning of all things. When we think of creation, we think of the appearance of things. Creation includes things, but more basic than things is the initiation of time. Time and history came into being.

This word "created" is a verb that is exclusively used to describe divine activity. It is significant that the author opens the book of beginnings by ascribing to God the entire sphere of creating.

One document says, "In the beginning the SON OF GOD created the heavens and the earth." This is precisely the way the author of Hebrews 1:1-4 speaks.

The first chapter of Genesis provides many facts, but the primary message of these verses is simply this - God did it! As we continue through the book, we will sense this message to occur again and again.

The six paragraphs of chapter one describe the creation. The paragraphs appear as follows:

1. 1: 1-5 Day one - creation
2. 1: 6-8 Day two - the firmament
3. 1: 9-13 Day three - vegetation
4. 1:14-19 Day four - sun, moon and stars
5. 1:20-23 Day five - fish and birds
6. 1:24-31 Day six - animals and mankind

Verse 2 indicates that creation was an action followed by a process. When it says, "God created..." it is not identifying the type of action - instantaneous or process. Genesis is simply saying God did it. In a literal sense the word means to "carve", or "hew". In the form used in this text, it always means "to create". God acted and the heavens and the earth were created.

Verses 1-5 form a paragraph that describes the Divine activity of one day. This day may be 24 hours or it may represent an era of many years. The text does not give a scientific paper on creation, but stresses the fact God did it!

Verse two describes the initial stage of creation. It uses such words as "formless" "empty" and "dark". The word "formless" or "without form" comes from the root idea of "confusion" or "emptiness". It is a word used in the Old Testament to identify a barren desert wasteland, but not devastation. The words "formless" and "empty" or "abandoned" are used together in several places in the Old Testament. They describe something that is not only void of clear shape, but also untouched. The word "dark" is the opposite of light. In this instance it describes primeval darkness; a condition which is present because no light exists. The paragraph may well be identifying the condition of the earth as being covered

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completely with water. In view of the way the author describes the scene, that would not be difficult to understand. Notice the way the author says it,

"Darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." Genesis 1:2

In verse three the author describes how light entered into the world.

"And God said, let there be light: and there was light." Genesis 1:3

It would be phenomenal to be able to make light. It is even greater to speak light into being. Speaking light into being adds authority to omnipotence.

Notice that following each step in the creative process, God evaluates that which has been accomplished. The author expresses it this way.

"And God saw the light, that it was good..." Genesis 1:4

There are 13 words in the Old Testament for "good". The word used here, "toy", is the most common one. It suggests something that is fitting; something that is as it should be. That is not surprising since it is a divine activity.

The author indicates that God divided the light from the darkness. He then gave a name to the light – "day", and to the darkness "night".

The author also indicates that this is the end of the first "day" of creation. In true Jewish fashion, he said,

"And there was evening, and there was morning – the first day." Genesis 1:5

The Jews count their days from sundown to sundown. We, on the other hand, begin our day with midnight. Again, the indication of "the first day" does not necessarily mean a 24 hour period. It is sometimes used to identify a 24 hour span of time, but it is often used to indicate indefinite periods of time. Indeed, in the Psalms it is identified with a period of 1,000 years.

1:6-8 Day Two – The Firmament

Having created on the first day, God continues the process of completing His masterpiece. As before, God spoke this creative activity into being. The author wrote,

"And God said, 'let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water.'" Genesis 1:6

We call this the firmament. The Hebrew text refers to it as an expanse. It is a gaseous expanse by which God separated water on the earth from water above the earth. This is a work of completion rather than bringing something into existence from nothing.

Throughout the Scripture the naming of an object indicates possession, ownership. A man named his son and thus indicated that the son belonged to him. The author of Genesis expressed it this way,

"God called the expanse 'sky.'" Genesis 1:8

You may have noticed that there is an omission in this paragraph. There is no statement that "God saw that it was good" as found in verse four. We can not be certain of the exact reason for this situation. It is possible that this is because day one represents divine

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activity bringing something into being from nothing. Day two, on the other hand, represents a divine process of completing that which He had created. We have no clear insight concerning this situation.

Again, the author of Genesis identifies the time frame by means of a typical Jewish expression. He said,

"And there was evening, and there was morning – the second day." Genesis 1:8

1:9–13 Day Three – Plants And Trees

God spoke the gathering of the waters under the firmament together. Again this speaking things into being is an expression of authority as well as omnipotence. The result of God speaking the gathering of the waters together caused certain results:

1. There were pools of water gathered.
2. Dry land appeared.

Again, the naming process is described. God identified the new entity. This was necessary because there had never been pools of water or dry ground prior to this time. We must remind ourselves that the naming process also gives an understanding of the fact that naming identifies ownership. As a father names his son, the creator names the different elements of His creation.

In verse ten, as in verse four, the author describes God's evaluation of His creative activity. The author says,

"And God saw that it was good." Genesis 1:10

The word for "good" is the same as in verse four. As previously indicated, it is "fitting"; it is as God intended it to be. We will look at this issue throughout chapter one of Genesis.

The author continues with his description of the creative activity of God. Up until this time the creative acts of God have followed a progression:

1. Creation out of nothing.
2. Separation of water and land.
3. Up to this point, there is nothing on the land or in the water.

Now, God is going to take another step in the creative process. He will cover the land. The author describes it in these terms:

"Then God said, 'Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.'" Genesis 1:11

There is indication here that the pattern God follows in creation is one of lavishness. It is not a picture of a single seed bearing plant or tree. God spoke into being a whole array of plants and trees that bear seeds for their own propagation. This tells us something important about the nature of God. There is a generosity in the nature of God that confounds our understanding. Did you ever wonder why there are so many seeds in a tomato? This is just one more expression of the Divine lavishness. For the first time, God's creation takes on direction and indicates purpose. This creation is to spread and enlarge the use of the earth. Human semen contains thousands of fertilizing agents when only one is needed. It was a lavish God who brought our creation into existence.

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Automobiles go through repeated modifications and recalls and never are they really perfected. Creation was different. It was created and it was "good." It was fitting. It was what God intended for it to be .no recalls!

Notice that nowhere does Genesis tell us how any of this happened, except to say, God spoke and it was accomplished. This tells you something of the greatness of God and the purpose of Genesis.

In verse 12, the author again evaluates, from a Divine perspective, that which had been created:

"And God saw that it was good." Genesis 1:12

The wording is exactly the same as in verse four. It is repeated, word for word, as a means of emphasis. The author is stressing that this portion of creation was discerned to be as God had intended it to be; it was fitting in terms of the rest of the divine creativity. There is, however, something distinctive to be found in this statement. Notice that in verses one through four, the statement, "and God saw that it was good", appears only once. In verses nine through 13, the statement appears twice on the same day of creation. The only reason I can see for this change is the fact that in verse four there is just one creative act. In verses nine through 13, there are two distinct creative acts:

1. v. 10 - The appearance of dry ground. This occurred when the waters were gathered.
2. v. 12 - God spoke vegetation into being.

This is not a unique situation. We will see it again later on in the chapter.

Again in verse 13, the author uses the same time designation used to identify days one and two. This is a form of Hebrew poetry called parallelism. The repetition of this form lends emphasis to the text. It is not a scientific time mark as one would use in research. It identifies an expression, a time designation that sets this portion of creation apart from other stages or parts of it. The author said,

"And there was evening, and there was morning - the third day." Genesis 1:13

1:14-19 Day Four - Sun, Moon and Stars

Again, in this paragraph, the strength of the Divine activity is heightened by the fact that He spoke this portion of creation into being. God said,

"Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth." Genesis 1:14,15

God indicated that this portion of creation was to have a three-fold purpose:

1. To separate the day from the night
2. To be for a sign –
 - a. To mark seasons
 - b. To identify measures of time
3. To give light on the earth

Reflection reveals that this embodies several things. First, if these lights are to separate day from night, then it follows that there had not been a separation previously. Apparently it was all the same. Second, if the lights are for a sign to mark seasons, then it follows that

there had not been seasons prior to this and there had been no clearly marked identification of time.

Look at this paragraph a moment. There are two parts to it.

1. Verses 14, 15 give the information in general form.
2. Verses 16–19 fill in the details concerning this information.

This is a frequent pattern in Genesis. Notice, beginning with verse 16, the author is being very specific about what he said in verses 14 and 15. In these verses, the author indicates that God said, "let there be lights in the expanse of the sky". In verse 16, the author becomes quite specific pointing out that this meant that there would be two great lights. The greater of these two lights was to govern the day and the lesser was to govern the night. He continues that God also made the stars and placed them in the expanse of the sky. The purpose of these was to give light to the earth.

It is interesting to note that God did not give names to the greater lights, which we call planets. The stars, or lesser lights, on the other hand, were identified by the name with which we still refer to them. It should be noted that there is a difference of opinion concerning whether or not there was creation on this day. On day one God created the heavens and the earth. Some say that this infers that the heavenly bodies were created at that time. Still others state that the greater and lesser lights along with the stars were created on day four of creation. The evidence is not conclusive for either position.

Again, the author indicates that God "saw". The word the author used is commonly chosen to describe a prophet, a "seer". It is to see from a Divine perspective. God saw that what He had done was "good." It was what He intended it to be.

The author again uses the parallelism to emphasize the passage of time:

"And there was evening, and there was morning – the fourth day." Genesis 1:19

This is not a description of a 24 hour span of time. It is rather a way to emphatically point out that a certain time period had come to a close. The length of that time period is not at all clear.

1:20-23 Day Five – Fish and Birds

The author begins the paragraph with the words,

"God said, 'Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.'" Genesis 1:20

The implication of this statement is that prior to God's statement, the water was not teeming with fish and the air contained no birds. God is progressively carrying out His design for His creation. He formed the world first, then filled it with those things which He wanted to live there. This tells you something about the nature of the creating God.

Notice that in 1:20, God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures." In 1:21, the author says,

"So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems..." Genesis 1:21

As we have seen previously in the chapter, the speaking and acting of God stress His authority as well as His omnipotence. This gives one further insight into what God is like.

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The author of Genesis not only tells us about creation, but he also gives glimpses into the mind of God. Note what the author says in verse 21,

"So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind." Genesis 1:21

The picture of the Divine creative activity is very specific. God did not just create a fish, but a variety of kinds so that the seas were **teeming** with them. God did not just create a bird. God created a whole host of kinds of birds whose names and pictures would fill several volumes. We now know that God created a plethora of insects that form the food base for many of these birds. There is a lavishness in creation which is characteristic of who God is.

How many cucumber seeds does it take to start a new plant? Yet, look at how many seeds there are in every cucumber. The same is true with the tomato, the onion, the dandelion, the pine cone, and many others. Whatever else He is, God is lavish.

When God had completed the task of creating the fish and birds, He again "saw" that it was good; it fit exactly what He intended creation to be.

God had not placed His blessing upon anything, up to this point. The author forcefully points out that God blessed the fish and birds, when he records:

"God blessed them and said, Be fruitful and increase in number..." Genesis 1:22

The word "bless" literally means "to kneel; to endue with power, to enable one to succeed." God approved the enabling and then commanded them to multiply. Again, this is a glimpse into what God is like.

Until now, in the creative process, God has placed no demands upon what He created. Now that is changed. For the first time God says,

"Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." Genesis 1:22

There is an indication here that God had a specific purpose in what and how He created. He did not just create the birds to look beautiful and stunning. God intended both the fish and the birds to multiply. We now know that they form an important segment in the food chain of this intricate creation. The fact of creation gives God the authority to control the directions and actions of what He created.

The author concludes this paragraph, as he completed the others, with the repeated statement about time:

"And there was evening, and there was morning – the fifth day." Genesis 1:23

As we indicated previously, the repetition or parallelism is a Hebrew means of strong emphasis. The emphasis is on completion of this phase of the creative activity rather than on the passing of 24 hours.

1:24-31 Day Six – Animals And Mankind

In the Hebrew text, these verses comprise only one paragraph, though there are five areas which are covered. They are as follows:

1. 1:24, 25 - Creation of animals
2. 1:26, 27 - Creation of mankind

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3. 1:28 - God's blessing and command to mankind
4. 1:29, 30- God's provision for animals and mankind
5. 1:31 - God's evaluation and time designation

Notice the way the creation of animals is reported.

"And God said, 'Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind.' and it was so." Genesis 1:24

Now notice how it is reported in verse 25,

"God made the wild animals according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good." Genesis 1:25

In verse 24 God told the land to produce living creatures and in verse 25 it says God made them. Which is correct? Some would say this is an error. I believe not. These are, apparently, two ways of reporting the same event. One can not vouch for exactly how God did that, but it is my understanding that however it happened, God did it.

Again, in verse 25, God looked upon what He had created and determined that it was "good"; it had become what God intended it to be.

The account of the creation of mankind is different from the report of every other facet of creation. Notice the way the author records it,

"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'" Genesis 1:27

Notice that God said, "Let **us** make man in **our** image." The words "us" and "our" are plural while image is in the singular. This is not surprising. In Genesis 1:1, where it says "God created", the word "God" is in the plural while the word "created" is in the singular. The plural reference to God is a linguistic means of emphasizing God's greatness and majesty. It is also a reference to the multipersonality in God. The singular verb, on the other hand, stresses the oneness of God.

The word "image" refers to a likeness, a representation, that which causes a distinctive shadow. It is a sharing of a small portion of God's splendor. God has chosen to place a unique gift upon mankind. This gift sets them apart from all the rest of creation. We are made in God's likeness; that which sets God apart from all else He created. Human beings share God's likeness in several ways that are not characteristic of the rest of creation: We have the capacity to think in a way that no other part of creation can. We have a moral capability that is not possible for any other created being.

God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness..." The word "likeness" has to do with serious comparison. It does not mean that when you see a person you would recognize God if you saw him. It means that God created man so that he was like God in some manner. It may be in the fact that mankind is intelligent, in a way that no other facet of creation is intelligent. Mankind bears in his being some imprint of the creator and this is a unique gift of God. It must be noted that the word "image" and "likeness" are difficult to differentiate. Some have concluded that one refers to the personal features of God while

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the other refers to the spiritual likeness. Imagine being created in the spiritual likeness of God!

God did not just create mankind in His image. He created man for a specific purpose. God said,

*"...and let **them** rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." Genesis 1:26*

The use of the plural "them" suggests that this took place after the creation of woman, though chronology is a low priority in this description of God's creative activity. God decreed that mankind was to "rule" over creation. Mankind was to be lord of creation. The word used for "rule" is sometimes used to convey the idea of "to step upon." It is obviously a bestowal of power that is unique in all creation. Mankind was to "rule over" creation, not to abuse it or waste it. He was to exercise authority over; give direction to all creation on behalf of God. Until this is accomplished, mankind is not functioning as God intended. The dominion of mankind over creation is universal. There is no part of creation over which man was not to have dominion.

Verse 27 is a recapitulation of the story of the creation of mankind in verse 26. This is often done, in Hebrew literature, for purposes of emphasis. This verse is the first place in Genesis where "woman" is mentioned specifically. She is inferred in the previous verse when the author refers to mankind as "them." One must remember that this is not a scientific report of data, but a description of creation whose major purpose is not to be a schedule of events, but rather a means by which to describe something beautiful about the person and character of God.

In verse 28 you find only the second use of the word "blessed". It is the same word used in verse 22 when God blessed the birds and sea creatures. The word bless comes from the root which means "to kneel" or "to endue with power." Both portraits are significant in this instance. Kneeling was considered the grateful response to a gift. When a person is knighted in the British realm, that person kneels before the queen to receive the gift, the endowment. The word "blessed", as used here, is considered a future form. That means that it is unfinished, it is coming to pass. It might be rendered, "God will be blessing them."

In concert with that blessing, God also gave to mankind a series of instructions. Notice how He said it,

"God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'" Genesis 1:28

They are to be "fruitful". This is an imperative, but it can be a military type command, an exhortation, or an entreaty. In this instance, it appears to be an exhortation or mild command. The point of this imperative is obviously directed toward increasing the number of persons occupying creation.

Mankind was instructed to "subdue" the earth. It means "to tread upon" or "to bring into subjection." Mankind is to bring the earth under his control. People are portrayed as rulers over the earth. This would be a way of managing the earth so as to preserve or improve

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upon its usefulness. A look at history indicates that this has not really happened since the Fall. The earth is being exploited, but it is not being managed or improved.

God also said,

"Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Genesis 1:28

How does one "rule over" fish, birds and animals? The word "rule over" and "subdue" are similar in some respects. The word "rule over" comes from the root "to tread", as they did with grapes at harvest time. It is used to describe dominion. People are instructed to have dominion; a kind of control that results in management and preservation of the forms of life God created. Mankind is cast in the role of manager in residence of all creation.

As we have tried to stress, the creation narrative attempts to speak of time in general terms rather than scientific data keeping. It is interesting to note, however, that there is a progression in God's dealing with mankind:

1. God created mankind.
2. God commissioned mankind to a purpose.
3. God provided for mankind in this mission.

God said,

"I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food." Genesis 1:29

Some have interpreted this to mean that mankind was to be vegetarian. That would be a conclusion from the silence of the text, for nothing is said about mankind eating flesh until after the Fall. That is not a necessary conclusion from this text. It is clear from this, however, that God gave mankind every seed-bearing plant and tree to provide for their sustenance. That is, frankly, all that it tells us. God has assumed responsibility for the provision of every need of mankind.

At the same time, God identifies the provision He has made for the birds and animals of the earth. He said,

"And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground -everything that has the breath of life in it - I give every green plant for food. And it was so." Genesis 1:30

Again, some conclude from this text that originally all animals were vegetarian. This does not say they were not to eat flesh, it simply says they were given green plants to eat. The emphasis of the author is that God had made full provision for the needs of His creation.

In verse 31, God again evaluates all He has created. There is a slight variation in the way the author records this experience. He says,

"God saw all that he made, and it was VERY good." Genesis 1:31

The change is the insertion of the word "very". After most of the other phases of creation, the author reports that God saw that it was good. There are two facets to this situation. First, God is looking not only at the final stage of creative activity and concluding that it was "very good". God is also looking at everything that He had created and con-

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cluded that all of it was "very good"; all of it was accomplishing the purpose for which He created it.

As we indicated earlier, there are two places in this chapter where the author deviates from his pattern of reporting God's evaluation of the day's creative activity. They are:

1. Day three - 1:9–13
2. Day six - 1:24–31

In both instances there are two places in the paragraph where it says, "God saw that it was good." Again in this instance, day six, it appears that the reason for the change is that this day includes two very divergent types of creative activity:

1. The creation of living creatures/wild animals
2. The creation of mankind

The author concludes the report of the six days of creative activity by identifying a time frame. As we have indicated several times, this is for purposes of emphasis rather than for purposes of scientific precision.

2:1-3 Day Seven - The Day Of Rest

Chapter two begins with a summary statement concerning the completion of the creative process. The author said it this way,

"Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array." Genesis 2:1

Using the words "in all their vast array," the author has pointed to all that mankind has been able to discover and identify during the thousands of years they have been on the earth. The sad fact is that we have not yet discovered all that the author was talking about when he said, "all their vast array." We are reasonably certain there is nearly as much we have not pinpointed as there is that we have already discovered.

Verse two points to a final but diverse segment of the creative narrative. The author indicates that the creative activity had come to a conclusion by the end of the sixth day.

The Christian's understanding of the seventh day, or Sabbath, is sometimes not very biblical. Notice the way the author states it,

"By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work." Genesis 2:2

What does it mean to "rest"? It is not the solution for tiredness. God did not get tired, He is omnipotent. Throughout the rest of the Old Testament, this word for "rest" is used to describe the Sabbath rest. It indicates putting an end to something; to cease. It is the announcement that the creative act has been accomplished. It is a celebration of completion. Today, it is the celebration of the conclusion of the work of the week. It is possible that the idea of Sabbath carries with it the notion that this is a day which not only divides the month into weeks, but a day on which the believer should follow the example of God and rest also. Deuteronomy 5:12–15 gives us additional meanings to add to this understanding. Whatever the meaning, God made it clear that this was a day for His rest; the completion of His creative activity. The author presents this in such a way that the Sabbath is included as part of the creative process.

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If you review this portion of Scripture, you may discover a fact usually overlooked. People tend to think of the creation of human beings as the pinnacle of the creative process. This is not quite the case. Certainly people are the highest form of created beings. The pinnacle of the creative process, as described in this passage, was the divine celebration of the Sabbath, the day of rest. In some way, our celebration of the Sabbath needs to reflect the joy of that Divine accomplishment.

The author continues,

"And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done." Genesis 2:3

God not only used the seventh day as the sign of the completing of His creative activity, He made it a day set apart for God. It was a "holy" day. God sanctified it; He set the seventh day apart from all other days as the exclusive property of God. The author explains this sanctifying of the seventh day as a memorial of the completion of God's creative activity.

We have read the creation story repeatedly. In most instances, I suspect, it is reading without stopping to ask any questions about what it means. We need to ask ourselves, on our day of rest, do we ever pause to reflect upon the creative power of God and praise His unspeakable name?

We live in a world that is constantly being amazed at the power displayed around us.- Despite the power of nuclear weapons and all kinds of electronic equipment, no one has been able to create anything. God alone creates. We serve a God whose power is unique in the annals of history. Do we ever stop to reflect on what that means? Does it have any effect on the way we do business every day? Does it make any impression on the way we view our weakness when it comes to dealing with temptation? Does it make any difference in the way we think about what God can enable us to do on His behalf? Just what does it mean to us that God is the omnipotent creator?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 2

GENESIS 2:4 – 3:24

1. There are five paragraphs in this portion of Scripture. On the chart that follows, write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

2: 4 – 17	
2: 18 – 25	
3: 1 – 8	
3: 9 – 21	
3: 22 – 24	

2. There appear to be two different accounts of creation – 1:1-2:3 and 2:4-6. Review both accounts:
Identify the ways in which the two accounts are similar.
Identify the ways in which the two accounts are dissimilar.
What have you learned from this comparison and contrast?
 3. In 2:18-25, the divine name "the Lord God" ("Jehovah Elohim" in Hebrew) is used. What does this add to an understanding of the paragraph?
 4. What difference does it make that mankind gave names to the living beings of creation?
 5. The author makes careful emphasis of the fact that woman was created, by God, out of man. What difference would this fact make?
 6. Read carefully the man's response to the creation of the woman, in 2:23 ff. How does the author describe the relationship between the man and the woman? What does this mean to you?
 7. In 2:25, the author attaches an evaluation of the situation for the man and the woman. How would you describe this situation? What does this mean?
 8. In 3:1–8 the author describes a conversation between the woman and the serpent. Were serpents actually able to carry on intelligent conversation? What is the problem with this conversation? Study the list of questions asked of the woman by the serpent. What was the serpent doing? Why was it doing this?
Compare the serpent's promise with the results which followed. List the promises. List the results. What did you learn from this?
- In 3:8, the author identifies the fact that the man and woman hid themselves from God. What does this information add to the story?
In 3:8, the author continues to use the name, "The Lord God." What does this add to the story?

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9. In 3:8, the author identifies the time of day God came looking for the man and woman. What is the significance of this information?
10. In 3:10, God cries out to the man and woman, "Where are you?" God is all knowing. Why, then, does God ask the question, "Where are you?" Why wouldn't God just go to the place where they were hiding?
11. In 3:10, the man answers God's question. This short sentence tells a lot about the man and his situation. What did you learn from this sentence?
12. In 3:11, God confronts the two concerning the reason for their hiding. Of whom is God speaking, in 3:11, when He said, "Who"? Review the second question God asked of them. What does this question tell you about God?
13. In 3:12, the man answered God's question. Study the response. What does it imply? What does this response tell you about the man? What is God's response to the man's answer?
14. In 3:13, the woman responds to God's penetrating question. Study her response. What does it imply? How does God respond to her answer? Why didn't God ask questions of the serpent as He did of the man and woman?
15. In 3:14-19, God passed judgment upon all three. What is the significance of the order in which these judgments were pronounced? God sentenced the serpent to henceforth "crawl on your belly." What is the implication of this sentencing? Many people see Messianic intent in the pronouncement of 3:15. What is the author's intent here? What are the implications of the judgment pronounced in 3:16? What is the woman's "desire"? What does God mean when He said her husband would "rule over her"? In 3:17-19, God passes sentence upon the man. What were the wrongs with which God charged "the man"? What is the difference between the "painful toil" mentioned in 3:17 and "subdue the earth" and "have dominion over it" as described in 1:28?
16. In 3:20, the author indicates that the man named his wife "Eve", which means "living". What is the significance of this information?
17. In the closing sentence of this paragraph, 3:21, the author surprisingly described a gift God prepared for the man and his wife. Think carefully about this gift. What does this tell you about God? Why did God prepare this gift?
18. In 3:22-24, God drove the man and his wife out of the garden. What reasons does God give for this action? In what way is God's action not really a form of judgment?
19. Review these chapters. Look to see what you have learned about God.

LESSON 2: GENESIS 2:4 – 3:24

This portion of Genesis Two is made up of two paragraphs. They are as follows:

1. 2:4–17
2. 2:18–25

2:4-17 The Follow-up of Creation

This paragraph deals with three areas of a single subject. In 2:4-6, the author writes of the creation itself. Some scholars conclude that 2:4-6 is a different picture of creation than chapter one. Look carefully at the text itself.

1. There is no description of the creative process as in Genesis one.
2. There is an affirmation that God did it.
3. There is no evaluation as is repeated so often in the Genesis one account.
4. There is no description of how God did it.
5. The passage begins after creation already existed.
6. The completion of creation is not reported here.

It is my opinion that the information in chapter two supplements the statement of creation in chapter one. I do not see them as conflicting reports.

Notice the way verse four begins.

"This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created." Genesis 2:4

The Hebrew text, however, might well be translated in these terms, These are the generations of the heavens and the earth... This is interesting because on more than one occasion in Genesis, such as 11:10, this is the formula used to identify the progeny of a given man. The formula is used here to describe the creation of the world. The author is saying that God is uniquely responsible for the creation of the world.

In verse four, the author mentions the day in which God created the heavens and the earth. As in chapter one, the word "day" is not a designation of 24 hours, but an indefinite span of time. Verse five makes it clear that creation was not an isolated incident. The heavens and the earth already existed. There are not, however, any of the forms of life with which we are familiar. There is also an indication that the processes with which we are familiar - wind, rain, etc. - have not yet been instituted. This segment also includes a glimpse of creation that does not yet include the creation of mankind. The ground was watered by a mist. Thus, it was not a desert.

Verse seven is the second area within the paragraph. In this verse, the author makes reference to the creation of mankind. The decision to make man in the "image of God" is not included. Some feel that verse seven contradicts 1:27. That is not a necessary conclusion. It is possible, for instance, that 2:7 only gives further information concerning 1:27. It is my considered opinion that 2:7 does not contradict 1:27, but rather describes how God accomplished the announcement of 1:27. The emphasis of the author is that God did it. Review chapters one and two. Notice how many times it says that God did something. Then notice that on certain occasions the author mentions that "Jehovah God" (Jehovah - Elohim) did something spectacular. The double name for God is a Hebrew way to stress an idea. In so doing, the author also uses the meaning of the different names to emphasize

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what he is trying to say about God. Jehovah is the unspeakable name of God. It signifies "being" and justice. In Exodus Moses talked with God about His name.

"...And they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them? God said unto Moses, 'I am who I am:.'" Exodus 3:13,14

"**I am who I am**" is the name "Jehovah." It is a way of stressing the eternity of God. Elohim, on the other hand, speaks of the authority of God, the eternal judge, the Mighty One who wields authority, the Omnipotent and all-powerful one. The plural – "im" ending – is yet another way to stress the Divine omnipotence. Notice what God did, in verse seven, concerning the creation of man:

1. God formed man from the "dust" of the earth.
2. God breathed "the breath of life" into the nostrils of man. This is more than the announcement of breathing. The other creatures in creation also breathe, but it does not say that God breathed "the breath of life" into their nostrils. It must be somehow different.

The result was that man "became a living soul." We are not able to explain, precisely, what this means. Again, this is said of no other creature that God created. Mankind is different from all other portions of creation. This not only announces the creation of man, but also indicates that this creation is demonstrably different from every other facet of creation. Whatever the difference was, God did it.

In verses eight through 17, the third area of this paragraph, the author describes the habitat into which God placed man. We must remember that this report was written by and for people from an arid region. Multiple bodies of water are a rarity in that portion of the world. One of the States of our country announces on its license plates that it is the land of 10,000 lakes. Basically, Israel, as we know it now, has one major lake and a handful of small rivers. Imagine what would go through their minds to read that God placed mankind in an area where there were four rivers.

Verses eight through 10 describe this human habitat. The text speaks of planting a garden. It is not clear that this is or is not different from what is described in Genesis one where the author describes the creation of trees and shrubs. Again, the emphasis is not on the detail, but on the fact that God did it. Verse eight indicates that it was to the east, in Eden. We have no first-hand knowledge of where Eden is, but other information in the text is helpful in placing this garden.

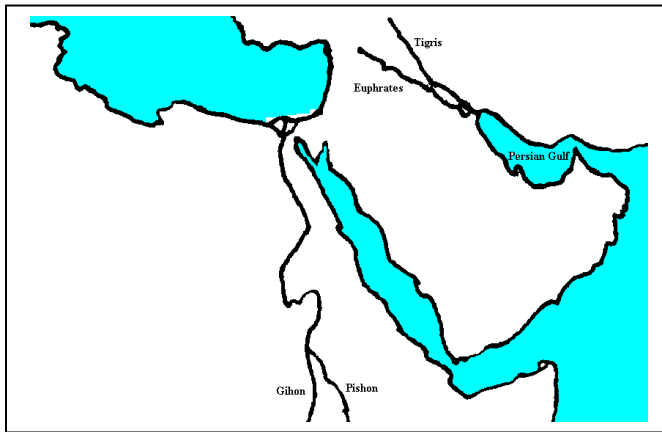
Verse nine identifies the content of the garden. All of the food bearing trees and plants were growing there. In the midst of the garden were two special trees – the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It is not clear that the reference to "the tree of life" means that the one who eats its fruit would live eternally, though I tend to believe that this is true. It is clear that such a person would at least live a much longer time than one who had not. Some have read this and concluded that God was de-meaning mankind; trying to keep His creation in ignorance. That is not the case. We will deal with this at length later.

There was a river with four sources that watered the garden. Most scholars are unclear as to the location of Pishon or the "Havilah", which is a region surrounded by a branch of a river in Eden. There are some scholars, however, who believe that the Pishon is one of the canals, called rivers, which connect the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers. The truth is that we do not know.

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Verse 13 indicates that the name of the second river is Gihon. One is hard pressed to discern the difference between the name for river and the name for a canal. It appears that this refers either to one of the irrigation canals which flow between the Tigris and the Euphrates or to one which flows from the mountains westward toward the village of Ur from which Abraham came. Elsewhere this word is used to describe the Tigris river. The directional information in verse fourteen confirms the idea that this is the Tigris river.

The name of the fourth river is clearly the Euphrates river.



This map should give you an idea of the area being referred to in the text.

The location of this area is quite certain. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to locate any remains that could substantiate the fact that this is the Garden area.

Verses 15-17 describe how God placed mankind in the garden and the instructions He gave them. The stated purpose was to "dress" the garden and to "keep" it. It is a way

of saying to cultivate or work the ground and to protect it.

In verse 16, Jehovah God instructed mankind that they were free to eat of every tree of the garden. God cautioned them, however, that they were not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

This was not just a random prohibition. God explained that death was the penalty if they should disobey His command and eat of the fruit of that tree.

2:18-25 The Formation of Woman

Notice that six times in this chapter, 2:4, 2:5, 2:18, 2:19, 2:21 and 2:22, the author speaks of God as "The Lord God". As previously indicated, this double name is for purposes of emphasis; a way to stress what the author is trying to say about the character of God. The double name, the "Lord God", is "Jehovah Elohim" in Hebrew. The Name "Jehovah" stresses the justice of God while the name "Elohim" stresses the mercy of God. This is the stress of the author.

The initiative for the creation of woman was Divine. Notice what God said,

"The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone.'" Genesis 2:18

In the Hebrew text, however, God did not say, "It is not good for man to be alone..." God actually said, "It is not good that man should be alone." Solitariness is not the problem. The idea of man being with out a mate is not good; it does not move toward a fulfillment of the Divine intention. The presence of a mate insures continuance for man. Without a mate, the pinnacle of creation would eventually pass from the scene never to be found again. It should be noted that some have suggested that the creation of woman indicates a change in the Divine plan. On the contrary, it seems to me that the creation of woman after the creation of man rather than simultaneously, as in the case of the rest of creation, stresses the great importance God placed upon the relationship between the two persons.

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It is good to remember that chronological precision is essential in secular history, but it is much less significant in spiritual history. The author is not trying to give a sequence of precise events so much as he is using historical events to convey a spiritual message.

Again, the statement in 2:19 elaborates upon the statement of creation in 1:25. There is no way in which these statements are contradictory. The statement in chapter two, about the creation of the animal kingdom, compliments the creative announcement in chapter one.

In 1:28, God gave mankind several instructions.

1. Be fruitful and Multiply.
2. Replenish the earth.
3. Subdue the earth.
4. Have dominion over the fish.
5. Have dominion over the birds of the heavens.
6. Have dominion over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

The act of God, in 2:19, in bringing the beasts and birds to man to see what he would name them, is in keeping with these commands. The act of naming establishes authority over that which receives the name. God named the heavens and the earth, the light and the darkness because He rules over them. Man is to name the birds and animals because he has been instructed to have dominion over them. The names that man gave are the names that were used. As God directed, man exerted his dominion over the other creatures of God's creation.

Verse 20 concludes with a dark, sad note for man. The author says,

"but for Adam no suitable helper was found." Genesis 2:20

The Hebrew text literally says "to stand against or opposite him." The issue here is not survival. The man or the woman could survive without the other for one generation. It is a question of meaning; of value. Man was the only part of creation that was without a mate when God completed His creative activity. This was not an afterthought. Because man was the only created being with the capacity of intense thought, the absence of one who provided purpose and value in life would help him realize what was lacking in his existence. When man came to that awareness, God met the need. He took the essence of the solution of the human need, the filling of the empty void in man, out of the man himself. This added an even greater personal dimension.

Jehovah God caused a deep sleep to come upon the man. God, in 2:21 and 22, was taking another step to help man grasp just how important this helpmeet was for him. The woman was not a separate, different being. She was indeed part of him. The man indicated his awareness of this when he awoke. He said,

"This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, for she was taken out of man." Genesis 2:23

In English, the word "woman", is a derivative of the word "man". In the Hebrew it is the same. The word for man is "ish". The word for woman is "ishshah." Man must forever remember two special things about the woman:

1. She was made from the sensitive part of man, while man was made from the insensitive ground.
2. Woman was a gift brought to man by God Himself.

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Only then does the Divine intent begin to be apparent. The author, in 2:24, speaks clearly of this intent,

"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and they will become one flesh." Genesis 2:24

The focus of man's attention shall be upon the woman God brought to him. She shall be so important in his life that he will cleave to her. Her presence shall complete his being. Their oneness is an indication of harmony, not a numerical designation.

The original condition of man and woman, in their creation, did not make their differences a matter of shame. Nakedness was not cause for alarm. The author presents this brief sentence just before his portrayal of the Fall. It appears that the location of this announcement is not accidental.

Chapter Three

There are three paragraphs in this chapter:

1. 3:1-8 - The Fall of Mankind
2. 3:9-21 - The Aftermath of the Fall
3. 3:22-24 - The First Change of Address

As you observe chapter three, notice that on nine occasions God is referred to as "Jehovah God". Neither the serpent nor Eve spoke this Divine name. On each occasion it was used to tell us something special about the character of God. "Jehovah God" is a combination of two Divine names -"Jehovah" and "Elohim". In the repeated use of this compound name, the author stresses the name "Jehovah", which emphasizes the justice of God, and "Elohim", which highlights the mercy of our God.

3:1-8 The Fall of Mankind

The book of Genesis gives us no indication of just how much time elapsed between the creation of woman and the temptation by the serpent. Again this is not important to the author. His intent was to tell us something about God, not to give precise events.

Having established the completeness of creation, the author now turns his attention to the temptation of mankind by the serpent.

This is the first mention of a serpent in the book. The author begins by identifying the personal character of the serpent. He speaks, thinks, deceives, lies, challenges, etc. Whatever else he may be, the serpent is more subtle than any beast God created. This is the reason that we have used the personal pronoun "he" throughout this discussion. The serpent has limited usefulness, but great potential to do harm. The word "subtle" means crafty and tends to be the opposite of innocent.

The serpent spoke to the woman and challenged God's statement, though not directly. Notice what the serpent said,

"Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" Genesis 3:1

I like the statement of the Hebrew text,

"Is it true (so) that God has said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" Genesis 3:1

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The answer to the question is "no." God did not say that and His words may not be construed in that fashion. It is an attempt to pervert; to misdirect the woman's thinking. It is a way of engaging one's thought. Having engrossed the woman in conversation through this deception, the serpent can then move the conversation in the direction of his choice.

Verses two and three make it clear that the woman had heard the command very clearly. She was very precise in her restatement of what God had said.

"We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,' but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the' garden and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" Genesis 3:2,3

If, however, you compare 2:16,17 with 3:2,3 you will note that the latter has an appendage, namely, "and you must not touch it..." In our best Hebrew texts, the appendage does not appear in 2:16, 17. By the same token, in these same texts, the appendage does appear in 3:2,3. There is no valid question about the wording of the text in either situation. A number of scholars, both Hebrew and English, have indicated that this is because the man made this addition, when he told the woman, as an extra precaution because of his fear that she would not take it seriously. Though this idea is held by some serious scholars, there is no basis for it from the text. The truth is that we do not know why it is in the text.

The serpent had engaged the woman in discussion, concerning the command of God, and he was now free to draw the woman into deeper questions about what God had said. The serpent continued,

"You will not surely die,' the serpent said to the woman, 'for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'" Genesis 3:4,5

If you look carefully at these verses, a number of things stand out. The serpent's "subtle" nature comes to the fore in this statement.

1. He contradicted God. God said, "You will surely die." The serpent said, "You will not surely die."
2. The serpent ascribed unfortunate motives to God. In essence the insinuation here is that God is trying to keep mankind in ignorance and thus control them.
3. The serpent also implies another unfortunate motive for God. If God can keep people from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, then He alone will be God. This suggests that God is not seeking the best and highest for us. He rather is trying to protect His position of unique wisdom.

The text does not say that the woman was convinced by this argument, but her actions imply such. Whatever her reaction, three things finally convinced her to disobey God and follow the lead of the serpent:

1. She saw that the tree was good for food.
2. She saw that the fruit was delightful to the eye.
3. She saw that the tree was desirable to make one wise.

The woman acted upon her inclinations. She followed a pattern that is still active today in the spread of evil.

1. She took the fruit.
2. She ate it.
3. She gave it to her husband.

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4. He also ate it.

People talk a lot about youth "peer pressure." This is not unique to young people. People who sin seek to involve others in their sinful ways, whatever the form of sin may be. When Israel moved into the land of Canaan, God told them to drive out the people of the land. God knew the propensity of human beings to get others to share their wrongdoing.

Notice, in verses seven and eight, the results of their disobedience.

1. Their eyes were opened.
2. They discovered not wisdom, but their own nakedness.
3. They hid from each other
 - a. They knew they were naked.
 - b. They made aprons.
4. They heard the voice of God
5. They hid themselves from the presence of Jehovah God.

These results are hardly what they expected. They thought they were going to be as God, but what they discovered was their own nakedness. What a blow!

What happened with the first appearance of sin has not changed down through the centuries. It always promises more than it delivers. It always damages and never improves the person. The author is recording an historical situation, but he is also telling us something about the nature of sin.

Notice, also, that when man sinned, God did not abandon him, but came seeking him. This tells you something about the nature of God. People tend to turn their back; to put distance between themselves and other people who fail. God is ultimately holy, but His love for people is so intense that He goes in search of them at the very time that they alienate themselves by their sinfulness. That adds even greater perspective to the merciful aspect of "God."

The author includes some important information that almost eludes our attention.

*"Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden **in the cool of the day.**" Genesis 3:8*

Did you ever wonder why God went walking in the "cool of the day"? If our understanding is correct, the "cool of the day" is the evening. God may well have gone walking, looking for the man and the woman in the cool of the day because they would have been busy caring for the land, as they were supposed to do, at any other time.

3:9-21 The Aftermath of The Fall

In verses nine through 13, God came calling for the man. The all-knowing God, aware of man's disobedience and rebellion, aware of man's hiding, goes seeking for the erring man whom He loved. This tells you something about the character of this all-powerful God. He sought for man knowing that man had sinned. God's love for man was not contingent upon man's obedience or compliance to Divine edict. God's love is what we refer to, in the New Testament, as Agape: unconditional affection. God loves us just because we are, not because we are pleasing.

God called out,

"Where are you?" Genesis 3:9

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It sounds a little like a parent calling for a child who has gone farther from home than he was supposed to go. Isn't it just like God to go searching for the man who had turned his back on God and decided to do his own thing? God knew where the man was. Why, then, did He cry out, "Where are you?" It is the Divine way to confront the man, in love, in order to create a climate for reconciliation. It is less condemning to identify your location, when in error, than to be discovered.

Notice the answer that the man gave to God,

"I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." Genesis 3:10

Fear and hiding are symptoms of guilt. The man knew that he had disobeyed God. He did not want to be confronted with his error, so he hid. His explanation exposes his guilt. He had no way of knowing that he would be naked until he had eaten of the forbidden tree and had his eyes opened. Temptation never warns us that there are severe consequences to disobeying God, but the ramifications are present and damaging just the same. Just ask the youth who took "crack" because other young people told him it was "cool". Now you will find him in an institution minus his mind. The spiritual history told in Genesis is a message about God, but it is also a message about what sin is and does.

The conversation in 3:9–13 closely resembles a parent-child talk. Notice the way God responds to the man's explanation,

"Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" Genesis 3 : 11

The all-knowing God does not have to ask if something happened, He knows! His question to the man, however, will force the man to focus on the disobedience and talk about it. The picture of God, here, is one who is intensely interested in whether or not people carefully obey His commands.

Though the book of Genesis is a revelation about who God is, it also gives some careful descriptions about the character of mankind. God had asked a demanding question of the man. The question was designed in such a way that the answer would implicate the guilty. When cornered, people tend to respond in a given way. They tend to shift blame away from themselves and toward any other possible source of responsibility. Notice the man's reply,

"The woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Genesis 3:12

It is interesting to note that God does not challenge the man's answer to His penetrating question. The man never blames anyone else for his mistakes, but the insinuation is there. He mentions the fact that God placed the woman there with him. He then mentions the fact that the woman gave him the fruit. Only after this did he admit that he did the eating. All of his insinuating to the contrary, he was not forced to disobey. He could still have refused. It is a factual report, but it is also a description of the nature of mankind. This should not be mistaken as a flaw in God's creation. Quite the contrary; God created mankind with the capacity to make moral choices, even if those choices turned out to be contrary to God's will and design.

In verse 13, God turned to the woman to confront her with her conduct. He said,

LESSON 2

"What is this you have done?" Genesis 3:13

Clearly these people were held accountable for their disobedient actions. God expects her to explain what and why she did as she did.

The woman's response gives an insight into her thinking as well. She said,

"The serpent beguiled me and I did eat." Genesis 3:13

True to form, she insinuated that the responsibility lay with the serpent. This design, though not false, tends to shift the spotlight away from a guilty party. Ultimately, she had to admit that she did the eating. Naturally, she was not forced to eat. There is something in the person that does not want to accept responsibility for his/ her own actions.

Having questioned each participant, God now proceeds to place judgment upon each one involved. In verses 14 and 15, God began the process with the one who originated the temptation - the serpent. God said,

"Because you have done this, Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." Genesis 3:14,15

There are many who look at these verses and conclude that there is a Messianic intent in 3:15. The statements of the text are accurate in terms of a Messianic intent by the author. We can not say, with confidence, that that is what the author had in mind, but it is clear that the passage fits the possibility of such an intent.

When "the man" blamed the woman, God then asked a question of her. When the woman blamed the serpent, however, no question was asked. Judgment was passed.

There are several parts to the judgment of the serpent. Look at them in a list.

1. The serpent was cursed above all livestock and wild animals.
2. The serpent will crawl on its belly.
3. The serpent will eat dust all its life.
4. God placed enmity between the serpent and the woman.
5. Enmity would continue between both sets of offspring.
6. Her offspring will kill the serpent.
7. The serpent will strike her offspring.

As you look over this list, certainly it is clear that this is exactly what has happened. The snake may make some contribution to the eco-chain, the cycle of ecology in the universe; but how many people do you know who really love snakes? A curse rests upon the snake and has down through centuries. When God said the snake will crawl on its belly, people assume that there was a time when the snake moved upright. There is a partial indication of this in the cobra family. Indeed, there are ancient images of the snake in an upright position. It is not difficult to understand the enmity between the woman and the snake, and between the woman's offspring and that of the serpent's.

In verse 15 the author changes the announcement from general terms to specific ones. The text identifies her seed as "he". "He will crush your head." We understand the "he" to be Jesus. We believe this is a messianic announcement. To the best of our knowledge, Jesus did not kill snakes. It seems that this word picture attempts to indicate that Jesus

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would destroy not snakes, but the evil one the snake represented. The New Testament makes it clear that this is to come.

A second figure is used when God said, "You will strike his heel." We understand that this is a foretelling of the coming crucifixion. There are many who look at these verses and conclude that there is a Messianic intent in 3:15. The initial attempt has to do with the current participants in Genesis 3. God was saying that Satan, symbolized by the serpent, would devastate the human family. There can be no doubt, however, that the statements of the text are appropriate to a messianic intent if indeed that is the author's purpose. We can not say, with confidence, that is what the author had in mind, but it is clear that the passage fits the possibility of such an intent. The efforts of Satan to interfere with the ministry of Jesus were obvious both in the temptation in the wilderness and the crucifixion. We should note, however, that what was intended to destroy Him and His ministry turned out to be the glory of His efforts to serve and please the Father.

In verse 16, God passed judgment on the woman. God said,

"I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." Genesis 3:16

There are three facets to this judgment:

1. Pain in childbirth
2. Your desire will be for your husband
3. Your husband will rule over you

We are quite aware of the great pain which mothers experience during childbirth. This represents a change that God never intended for them to experience.

The next two facets of judgment deal with the relationship between husband and wife. It is not clear what change is being described when God said, "Your desire shall be for your husband." It may represent the wife's deep desire to please her husband. Whatever it represents, it is different from God's original intention and it represents a lesser relationship.

Currently, there is great sensitivity about the idea of the husband ruling over the wife. The word for "rule over"

– *mashal* – definitely means to rule, but there are many shades of meaning when one refers to rulership. The same word is used to describe Joseph's rule over Pharaoh's house. There is no doubt, however, that Pharaoh was the one who had ultimate authority. The same word is used in 1:18 to describe the sun's "rule" over the day and the moon's rule over the night. One must look to the context to discern the intended use here. It appears that the intent is to counsel to give direction, to care for. It is definitely not a dictatorial relationship. Again, it represents a situation different from the divine intent; a relationship less than was previously envisioned.

In verses 17–19 God turns his attention to man and speaks in judgment. The text portrays God as one who judges, but does so with reason, not just whim. Notice what God said,

"Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' Cursed is the ground..." Genesis 3:17

LESSON 2

There is a certain predictableness in God. Disobey and judgment will be forthcoming. One is able to disobey God, but one is not able to avoid the consequences of such disobedience.

The judgment visited upon the man was specific,

"Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." Genesis 3:17–19

Notice that the ground was cursed "because of you." The ground had done nothing for which to be judged. Reflect on a list of the judgments passed upon man by God.

1. Note that the man was not cursed, though a curse was placed upon the serpent.
2. The ground was cursed.
3. Through suffering you will eat of the ground all your life.
4. The ground will produce thorns and thistles for you.
5. Sweat will be required in order to get daily food.
6. He will return to the ground from which he came.

The serpent was cursed; the ground was cursed: but mankind was not. He alone was made in the image of God. Man alone was blessed of God. God punished him, but did not curse him.

What does it mean that the ground is cursed? The ground has done nothing wrong, so it is not being punished. God did affect the ground, however, in such a way that it did not produce effortlessly as it had before. It can mean that fewer seeds sprouted and the harvest was less. It can also be that plants not used for food (weeds) seem to flourish better and faster than food plants.

God announced that man would eat of the ground through great suffering. It includes pain in getting sufficient food from the ground. It also includes other forms of pain man will experience as he scratches his existence from the ground. This took on greater meaning when Cain killed Abel.

Thorns and thistles were not a new life form created as part of the judgment. Indeed, these plants existed before the disobedience of the man and woman. However, something happened to those plants. The plants that we call weeds -thorns, thistles, crabgrass, dandelions etc. – grow with a greater vitality than previously known. Look at your lawn. During a dry season, the dandelion and crabgrass grow with a vigor which surpasses the grass even when growing conditions are ideal. Look at your garden, the plants we call weeds grow faster than the seeds for food that you planted. It is evidence of this judgment.

"By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food." People inaccurately say that work is a part of the judgment. This is not true. Look at 2:15. The divine plan was never to create glorified retirement for mankind. He was placed in the garden to "work it" or to till it. Work was clearly a part of the original divine intent. That work, however, was not designed to be drudgery. There is a difference between work and drudgery even today. Some of us intensely enjoy making things from wood. It is not work, but relaxation. On the other hand, thousands of people, the world over, experience drudgery earning their living by making things out of wood.

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It is also interesting that God said "by the sweat of your brow you will eat your food." The word translated "food" is "lehem" which is usually translated "bread." It is possible that the intent here is that though animals can eat the grain and plants of the field as they grow, man, because of his judgment, must now prepare his food. Only death will relieve us of this judgment.

It is also possible that God was speaking of the fact that the death, which had been promised originally for disobedience, entailed a return to the earth from which mankind came. If this is the case, then it represents a different scenario for human future than God originally intended. We have no way to be certain concerning this idea.

This is the end of the judgment. Meditate upon these judgments to see what you can discover. Notice that each of the judgments is ongoing. If you violate the speed limit, you pay a fine and it is concluded. This is different. The man and the woman disobeyed the command of God and they were judged, but the judgments upon the serpent, the woman and the man are as present and active today as they were the moment God spoke them. Every facet of these judgments is having a devastating effect upon our lives each day. No one escapes. Everyone involved was judged and their lives were never the same again. The judgments were severe. The judgments changed their lives radically, and from that time forward people could only view the changes as tragic.

Verse 20 gives a glimpse of mankind's response to tragedy. They experience great pain, but eventually move ahead with their lives. Nothing could have been more devastating to mankind than this judgment, but eventually they learned how to pick up the broken pieces of life and continue. This verse is a return to the work God gave man in 2:20. He had been called upon to give a name - have dominion over - all creation. He comes now to give a name to his own partner. He called her "Eve" or "Havvah". The term means life or living. The author indicates that she was given this name because she was the mother of all the living. It is a name of respect and appreciation and should be remembered as such.

This paragraph is one of pain and judgment. In characteristic fashion, the author tucks in, at the end, a brief picture of who God is and what He does. Notice the way he describes God,

*"The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them."
Genesis 3:21*

Mankind had been rebellious and disobedient. God had to keep His word and judge them for such actions. At the same time, look at what God did. Mankind, by eating of the forbidden tree, learned of their nakedness. God, in His mercy, made a covering to veil their shame. Notice, the text says God made garments of skin. This requires the death of an animal. It is a sacrifice of one or more of the animals over which man was to have dominion. Even the first sin was covered by a sacrifice. In the presence of sin and judgment, God extends His marvelous mercy. God did good.

He provided benefit for mankind who had only done evil.

That is an astounding picture of what God is like.

LESSON 2

3:22-24 The First Change of Address

Many people look upon the man's expulsion from the garden as a part of his judgment. Look carefully, this can not be the case exclusively. Verses 22 and 23 are one sentence. Notice how the author speaks,

"The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat and live forever.' So the Lord God banished him from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken." Genesis 3:22,23

God did not say, "The man has now become like **me**." He said, "The man has now become like one of **us**." Here the plural form is at least a literary tool by which they ascribed greatness to God, if not a reference to the Trinity.

In the midst of the painful experience of human rejection, God expresses deep concern for the welfare of mankind. Knowing the human proneness to rebel, God was concerned lest mankind not only sin, but perpetuate that sin and its consequences eternally by also eating of the tree of life. In His great concern and mercy for mankind, God removed them from the garden to carry out the work to which they had been assigned in an area away from the tree of life. Mankind would otherwise live eternally in sin and never die! Knowing man's propensity for wrong directions, God further protected mankind by placing guards at the gateway and around the tree. God made every possible effort to insure that mankind would do themselves no further harm. This is an even stronger picture of the mercy of God, protecting mankind who was bent on rebellion. It tells you something important both about mankind and about God. The contrast in portrayal is stunning. Mankind is bent on misdirection, rebellion and disobedience. Free to choose, they repeatedly choose an evil direction for life. God, in His holiness, is bent on showing mercy and administering reconciliation. In the midst of the sin of mankind, God seeks them out and makes preparation for their safety.

Reflect on this paragraph for a few minutes. Notice the words the author uses. Observe that verse 23 reads as follows,

*"So the Lord God **banished** him from the garden of Eden" Genesis 3:23*

On the other hand, notice the wording in verse 24,

"After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword..." Genesis 3:24

The word "banished" literally means to "send away." It is the word used in Genesis 12:20, when Pharaoh **sent away** Abram and his wife. On the other hand, the word "drove" means to expel. It is the same word used in Genesis 4:14, where Cain was "driven out" from the face of the ground. It is to be thrown out as Hagar and her son Ishmael were, in Genesis. 21:10. How does one account for this apparent repetition?

First, note that the word "drove" is a stronger word than the previous word, "banished." Some Hebrew scholars believe that man was banished from the garden only to return. God then more forcefully "drove" out the man and placed a cherubim to secure the entrance to the garden against man's reentry. There is no textual evidence to support or deny this idea. It is just as possible that the first statement, in verse 23, is a record that it happened.

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The second statement, verse 24, may have been an attempt to convey some semblance of the emotional state in which God sent the man from the Garden of Eden. Whatever the reason for the difference, God did it to protect mankind rather than to punish them. This, again, is a picture of who God is and what He is like.

The tragic picture of mankind's rebellion and expulsion from the garden is a dark cloud that has a bright silver lining. In the midst of their total rebellion, God provided a covering; a place to hide in their intense shame. In the tragedy of human rejection of God, He made a sacrifice that covered human sin.

It is so beautiful to observe how God reveals the beauty of His mercy even in the ultimate expression of human rebellion.

As you think about the astonishing mercy of God and the shocking rebellion of mankind, how will this affect your thinking about just how kind God really is? How will it affect the way you think about your failures? About the failures of others? If God goes seeking after mankind in the midst of their disobedience, what does that say about our response when people reject and confront us? Just how does one face his/her debt to God in view of these understandings? In view of the overflowing mercy of God, just how generous can we afford to be with other people who are really just as human as we are, but are not perfect?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 3

Genesis 4-1: 5:32

- There are 14 paragraphs in this passage of Scripture. In the chart which follows please write a title of seven words or less for each

4:1-8	
4:9-15	
4:16-24	
4:25, 26	
5:1-5	
5:6-8	
5:9-11	
5:12-14	
5:15-17	
5:18-20	
5:21-24	
5:25-27	
5:28-31	
5:32	

- In 4:1-8, the author describes the sacrifices of Cain and Abel. What reasons can you find for God accepting Abel's sacrifice, but rejecting Cain's? Put yourself in Cain's situation. How would you feel? Why would you feel that way?
- In 4:6-7, there is a verbal exchange between God and Cain. What is God's emotion as He speaks to Cain? Describe what God said about Cain. Describe what God said about sin.
- The murder of Abel is described in 4:8. What evils are reported in this verse? What is the relationship between 4:6-7 and 4:8? List as many reasons as you can, from the text, for this tragic event.
- In 4:9-15, the author describes the judgment of Cain. Read again the exchange between God and Cain in 4:9. Why did God ask concerning Abel's whereabouts? What emotions do you detect in Cain's reply? Why would Cain ask such a question?
- In 4:10-12, God responds to Cain's reply. What emotions do you detect in God? Describe, in your own words, the judgment God placed upon Cain. What difference can you see between the curse, in 4:10, and the curse in 3:17?
- Cain responds to his judgment in 4:13-14. Describe his summary of the judgment. Is Cain's summary accurate? How would you describe Cain's attitude toward the judgment he received?

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8. In 4:15-17, God responds to Cain's description of his judgment. Does God agree or disagree with Cain's description? How do you account for the fact that God both placed Cain under a curse and at the same time gave him the promise of protection? What does this tell you about God? In 4:17, the author wrote that "Cain went out from the Lord's presence." In your own words, what does this mean?
9. In 4:18 - 24, the author gives a brief summary of the lineage of Cain. What can you learn from this summary? Draw a contrast between the boast of Lamech, in 4:23-24, and the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 18:21-35. What did you find? What does this tell you about Lamech? What does this tell you about Jesus?
10. The author describes the time in which Seth was born, 4:25-26, as a time of change. What kind of change was it?
11. 5:1-5 claims to be a very brief summary of Adam's lineage. What does this paragraph tell you? What is the atmosphere of this paragraph? Read 5:1 again. Why would the author begin in this way?
12. The author summarized the life of Beth in three verses – 5:6-8. What information can you gather from these verses? If he lived 912 years, what would that tell us about his relationship with his family?
13. A brief summary of the life of Enosh is given in 5:9-11. Why would the author tell about the son named Kenan, but fail to mention the names of the other children? If Enosh lived 815 years after his son Kenan was born, what does that tell you?
14. There is a brief summary of the life of Kenan in 5:12 – 14. If you were summarizing his life, what would you want to include? What has the author told us?
15. Beginning with Adam, 5:3, each succeeding generation lived a little shorter lifetime than the predecessor. This is quite obvious in 5:15 – 17. What can we learn from this? What information has the author given us, in 5:15 – 17, about Mahalalel?
16. In 5:18-20, the pattern changes. Jared lived at least 67 years longer than his father. Notice that 5:5,8,11,14,17 and 20 all end with the identical phrase, "and then he died." What is the purpose of this constant repetition?
17. The pattern changes in 5:21-24. What changes do you see in this paragraph as compared to the previous six paragraphs. What is the significance of these changes?
18. What does the author mean, in 5:21-24, when he said, "Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him"?
19. In 5:25-27, the author talks about Methuselah. Why is it so vitally important that the men in this chapter lived so long? What message is conveyed because God blessed them so much?

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20. In 5:28-31, the author identifies the lineage of Noah. What does Lamech hope for in relation to his son Noah? How do you think Lamech felt about the curse God placed upon the land?
21. Notice, in 5:32, that though many of his ancestors were summarized as "and then he died" nothing of this nature is said of Noah. Why do you think this is true? What difference does this make?
22. As you reflect upon this passage, what does it have to say about the sovereignty of God?
23. If God holds each person responsible for the consequences of their actions, What does this say about how you plan your day? About the way you respond to other people? How will you change your outlook because of this study?

LESSON 3: GENESIS 4:1 – 5:32

Chapter Four - The First Family

There are four paragraphs in chapter four. They are as follows:

1. 4: 1–8 - Cain Killed Abel
2. 4: 9–15 - Cain Receives Judgment
3. 4:16–24- The Lineage of Cain
4. 4:25,26 - The Birth of Seth

4:1-8 Cain Killed Abel

Genesis 4:1 is one sentence. This brief sentence records the events of at least a year. The previous chapter describes how Eve and her husband disobeyed God and were punished. When she gives birth to a child, note that she attributes this to the help of Jehovah. This says something about her awareness of Jehovah. She understood that though God would judge her disobedience, still He would be her help in childbirth. The name "Cain" comes from the Hebrew word "Canah" which means "to get or acquire." In reporting fashion, the author also records the birth of Abel.

From Genesis 1:1 – 2:4, the author refers to God as "Elohim". This stresses the mercy of God. From 2:5 to 3:24, the reference is to Jehovah God or Jehovah-Elohim. God has, in the face of human disobedience, tempered His justice with mercy. In the passages immediately following 4:1, the author uses just Elohim. The stress has moved from the justice of God to mercy and then to a stress on the mercy of God. This is entirely fitting, for mankind could not survive without the mercy implied in this name.

We need to remember that Cain is the eldest son; Abel the younger son. It is not surprising that the eldest son was a tiller of the ground. This was the occupation God mentioned for Adam at creation and when he was placed in the garden. The domestication of animals was a longer process.

Did you notice that Eve took the time to explain the meaning of the name Cain, but she did not do the same with the name of her second son, Abel? Abel or "Hevel" literally means "futility," "breath," "vanity." There are scholars that believe that Cain was born within the garden of Eden, but Abel was born after the expulsion of his parents from the garden, while others hold that both children were born following the expulsion of their parents from Eden. We can not be sure about this. Though shepherding was generally looked down upon as a lowly vocation, it must be remembered that it was a vocation taken up by those who wished to spend their time in the contemplation of spiritual things. Take for example the lives of David, Amos and Moses to list a few. This attitude did not last. People apparently forgot the privilege they had of raising the sheep required for the sacrifices and began to see it as one more boring job.

The drama of the death of Abel is dealt with in 4:3-8. Notice how the author describes the first deliberate expression of worship.

*"In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock."
Genesis 4:3*

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There is no record that God told them to worship. They just worshipped. This is not surprising. There is something in the heart of persons that moves them to worship. There is an inner need; a longing to worship.

As you study this paragraph, you notice that Abel's sacrifice was accepted and Cain's was not. The text does not explain this fact. People have conjectured that it was because the animal was of greater value than the fruit. That is true, but the issue was not the value of the sacrifice. Notice the way the author describes the sacrifices brought by the brothers.

"...Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock." Genesis 4:3-4

There is a deliberate contrast, identified by the use of the word "But", between the description of Cain's offering and Abel's offering. The fruit Cain brought appears to have been just some of the crop that he gathered. The sacrifice of Abel, however, was different. The author uses two ways to describe the difference:

1. It was the fat portions. This was considered to be the best. It was not just one of his lambs, it was the fat portion of the lamb.
2. It was not just one of the new lambs, but one of the firstborn, considered to be the best that the ewe would produce.

The contrast is not between meat and fruit, but between the gift of just some of the harvest and the very best of the young lambs that Abel had. Some scholars believe that the sacrifice of Cain was flax and for this reason God commanded Israel not to wear garments of mixed wool and linen. We can not verify this contention.

In verses four and five, God responded to the two offerings. God had "respect" for Abel's offering, but no "respect" for that of Cain. The word "respect" literally means to turn the eyes toward. If something was acceptable, one would turn his/her eyes toward the object. In ancient Israel, when a newborn child was brought to a father, if he accepted the child, he would hold it and turn his eyes toward the infant. If he did not, he would simply turn away. Notice how the author records this procedure,

"The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor." Genesis 4:4-5

God accepted both Abel and his offering. God rejected both Cain and his offering. The quality of Abel's life was as superior to that of Cain as Abel's sacrifice was superior to that of Cain. The quality of Abel's life was as important as the value of the gift he brought to God.

The response of Cain was predictable. The author said that "Cain was very wroth" and "his countenance fell." It is interesting that today people still become upset when God rejects their half-hearted sacrifices. It is as though God was required to accept whatever people bring Him.

Notice, in 4:6, God challenges Cain's response. God said,

"Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it." Genesis 4:6-7

The crux of God's principle here is that right conduct always, ultimately succeeds and is blessed. By the same token, evil always, ultimately fails and is condemned. In essence,

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God is saying, if your motive is right, you have nothing to worry about. Time will vindicate you.

When God said, "Why are you angry?", He was saying that there is nothing to be gained by feeling unjustly treated. God placed the emphasis not on the value of the gift, but on the nature of Cain's conduct. "If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?" God said, "Why is your face downcast?" He was saying that self-pity will get you nowhere. David understood the words of God very well. David said, in the great Psalm of his confession,

"You do not delight in sacrifices, or I would bring it; You do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. Psalm 51:16,17"

Notice again that even in God's judgment, there is mercy. Having rejected the sacrifice of Cain, God warns him of pending danger from the attack of sin. Notice His words to Cain,

"But if you do not what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it." Genesis 4:7

This is a vivid picture of the stance of sin in relation to the person undergoing temptation. As God warned Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree in the midst of the garden, God warns Cain concerning the threat of sin in the midst of his anger.

The solution God offered was that Cain must rule over temptation rather than allow sin to rule over him. The author is saying some important things about sin. The intent of sin is always to possess/control the person. At the same time, it is possible for mankind to rule over sin. Too often, people feel that sin is inescapable/inevitable.

Verse nine portrays Cain's actions as deliberate; premeditated. The text says,

"Now Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let us go out to the field.' And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him." Genesis 4:9

It is the picture of deception and intrigue. Remember, we emphasized that Cain was the elder of the two. As far back as we know, to be the eldest son was to hold a position of honor and privilege. It appears to have been more than Cain could handle for his younger brother to be accepted and himself rejected. Whatever the cause, Cain killed his brother. The disobedience of Adam and Eve found expression in the conduct of their son, Cain. The spread of evil, like dandelions, rabbits and mosquitoes, is shocking.

4:9-15 Cain Receives Judgment

It sounds as though God spoke to Cain immediately following the murder. There is no way to discover the time lapse in this story. God said,

"Where is your brother Abel?" Genesis 4:9

This is strictly a rhetorical question. God knew quite well where Abel was. There is an insight, here, into the character of God. This innocent question gave God an opportunity to engage Cain in conversation as well as open the door for Cain to confess the wrong he had done. God does not allow people to get away with wrong-doing, but He will offer a way to restore them from their sin. God's question was an appropriate one. Their lives were close-

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ly enough related that they would have clear knowledge of the other's actions. This question may indicate that Cain had hidden the body. This is a hint at best and can not be verified.

Cain's reply lacks the concern of God's question. Notice what he said,

"I don't know," he replied, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Genesis 4:9

The first thing one notices about this reply is that it is harsh. Cain may not have had the understanding of God that we possess today, but he knew enough to realize that a harsh reply was inappropriate.

Cain said, "I don't know." This is a lie! Cain knew only too well where his brother was and how he got there. This encounter tells you something about the nature of sin. As in this instance, one sin will inevitably lead to another sin, usually dishonesty.

Cain also said, in apparent sarcasm, "Am I my brother's keeper." The word "keeper" means guardian. The word used here is the same word used in 3:24 of the cherubim who were to guard the way to the tree of life. Remember, Cain was totally frustrated. His younger brother was given the place of honor ahead of him. Local custom decreed this belonged to the older brother. Now God holds him responsible for the honored, younger brother. From ancient times, the oldest brother held an unchallenged place of honor in the family. No family member could be honored more than the oldest brother. This was the problem in the family of both David and Joseph. It is as if Cain was saying, "Am I to guard him while he guards his sheep?" The error here is one of attitude. Cain's attitude was one of abuse; of ridicule. It was as though he were making fun of God's question.

God spoke in even graver tones saying,

"What have you done? Listen! your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground." Genesis 4:10

"What have you done?" is again a rhetorical question. God knew what Cain had done. That is why He was questioning him. It is a way of pushing Cain to look carefully at the seriousness of the thing he had done. So many times God, in the Scriptures, asks the rhetorical question in an effort to engage people in conversation to help them discover just how serious their evil activities really are. In the Hebrew, the statement of God reads, "your brother's bloods cry out

The word "blood" is in the plural. It is a way of referring not only to the life of Abel which was prematurely destroyed, but also of the descendants of Abel who would never be born. God uses a word picture. He portrays the blood as crying out as a person cries out. It is a way of expressing the fury pent up when one is denied their progeny. It is as though the blood itself is crying out to be avenged.

In verses 11 and 12, God pronounces judgment upon Cain. Notice the gravity of this judgment.

"Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth." Genesis 4:11-12

There are a number of factors in this judgment:

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1. "You are under a curse." The Hebrew says, cursed are you more than the ground." At least six different words are translated "Curse" in the Old Testament. The one used here relates to "being bound like a spell" or "being trapped," "walled off from others." Everything about the life of Cain was affected by being cut off from other human beings in a special way.
2. You are driven from the ground. This location was home to them. He will now be driven from familiar surroundings into territory which was less familiar and less productive. Among the Hebrew people, ground where blood had been shed was cursed as was the produce of that ground. Look at the prophecy that Haggai gave. In effect he was saying, land touched by the dead will not bear as other land.
3. The land will not bear fruit on your behalf. The yield will not just be less, but non-existent. This means that it will not be possible for Cain to stay in one place, which is the next part of the punishment.
4. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth. It is not surprising that later on, when the laws governing social life were given, the punishment for accidental murder was to be banished from society. He would be unable to build a home, walls or fences. He must constantly be looking for more fertile land and be concerned about safety.

In verses 13 and 14, Cain responds to the punishment God pronounces. In the English, verse 13 is a statement. In the Hebrew it is a question, "Is my iniquity too great to be forgiven?" This question infers the answer, yes it is too great to be forgiven. There is irony in this answer. God was the one who could forgive sin, but He left Cain with a punishment seemingly greater than his ability to bear.

Cain suggests a scenario of five things that will happen to him because of this punishment:

1. Cain was driven from this land. He will be a stranger wherever he goes.
2. Cain was driven away from the face of God. There is nowhere one can go and be away from the presence of God. This is a royal reference. To be hidden from the face of a king means to be banished from his presence; to be held in his severe disfavor. To come before a king in such a situation was certain death.
3. Cain will be a fugitive in the earth. It does not mean that all people everywhere will engage in a manhunt for Cain. It has to do with a mind set; an attitude toward oneself. It is to see oneself as being made vulnerable by the consequences of evil acts.
4. Cain will be a wanderer. It isn't that Cain just cannot stay in one place. It is that life will be lived so close to the place of extinction that he must constantly be on the move to survive.
5. Cain will be a wanted man. Anyone who sees him will take his life. It is the feeling of being constantly hunted, it is like being a person with a bounty on his head.

God responds to Cain's evaluation of the Judgment in verse 15. He said,

"Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over." Then the Lord put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him." Genesis 4:15

Here is a beautiful picture of the mercy of God. Even when God is declaring judgment on Cain, God still protects and makes promises to him. That is the kind of God we have. God made a promise to protect Cain during the time that he was being punished by God.

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The "seven fold" is not an exact number, but a symbolic one. It means they will be punished many times over. Seven was chosen because it is the symbol of completeness. In the Hebrew this sentence reads, "Whoever slays Cain before seven generations will be punished." The emphasis is not on the severity of their punishment being seven times harder than Cain's, but on how long this protection lasted.

The identity of the mark which God said would be placed on Cain is unknown. It is reasonably certain that this does not mean a physical, visible mark. In some way, God made it clear to men and beasts that Cain was not to be harmed.

People have pondered long over who these men might be who would kill Cain. The reference might be to other children of Adam and Eve. It might also be the lineage of Abel. The book of Genesis makes no effort to list all of the children of any of the major participants. It does list those most important to the spiritual history as it is being told. These positions necessitate the probability that Cain and Abel and Seth married either their sisters or the daughters of one of the other brothers.

4:16-24 The Lineage of Cain

The author begins the story of Cain, and his family, by announcing the beginning of Cain's judgment. Note the way the author expresses this tragic experience,

"So Cain went out from the Lord's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden." Genesis 4:16

When the author speaks of "going out from the presence of God", he is speaking figuratively. There is no place one can go and be out of the presence of God. If you look carefully, you will note that there are two statements in the sentence. First, the author indicates that Cain went out from the presence of God. This kind of statement usually means that the person is no longer in fellowship with God. It describes a moral direction for the life of this person. Cain, no matter what his previous spiritual condition was, now has ceased from fellowship with God.

Second, Cain now lived in the land of Nod - the land of Wandering – which was east of Eden. It means that Cain became a wanderer rather than one who built a home and lived in the same place all the time. The area is desert and lends itself to such a lifestyle. The descendants of Cain should not be confused with the descendants of Ishmael who later inhabited the area.

The author identifies the descendants of Cain. It is interesting that the author only lists six generations of Cain's descendants. This is in keeping with the judgment of God as indicated in 4:15.

The author speaks of Cain's wife bearing a child. As so often happened, the names of the women are not listed. It appears to be reasonable to think that Cain's wife was also his sister. There was no prohibition against it at that time. There also appears to have been no other possibility.

The descendants of Cain are as follows:

1. Enoch - dedicated, initiated
2. Irad – meaning unknown
3. Mehujael - smitten of God
4. Methushael - man of God

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5. Lamech - strong youth
 - a. Tubal-cain - Tubal the smith
 - b. Jabal – meaning unknown
 - c. Jubal – meaning unknown

Cain may have gone from the presence of God, but the meaning of the names of some of his descendants indicates that God was not totally forgotten. At least three of the descendants have names which suggest that God was important, to some degree, in the life of his family. You will also notice, however, that beginning with Lamech this situation changes drastically. One can only conjecture concerning the reason for this situation. It may be that Cain tried to warn his family concerning repeating his error.

There is no other listing of descendants of Cain. We do not know what happened to them after this time.

More is said about Lamech than about any descendant of Cain. This is appropriate because he represents the direction Cain and his family took. If you read verses 19-24 carefully, you will discover something about the character of the man. He was the first one in the Bible mentioned as having two wives. The names of the wives are also significant:

1. Adah - beauty, ornament
2. Zillah - shadow or protection

This is the first mention of sensual considerations in the Scriptures. He was a man of carnal preoccupation. Lamech talked with his two wives. Notice how he spoke. His words seem to be filled with pride in himself. His pride has to do with his ability to defend himself physically. In our time this would be considered the "macho man".

His words also seem to betray a sense of arrogance. He lifts up his own importance when he said that if a person who harmed Cain would be punished seven times, then the person who harmed him would be punished ten times more than the one who might kill Cain. The inference is that Lamech is ten times more important than his forefather Cain. The He-brew text speaks of Lamech's conversation with his wives in terms of a question,

"Have I killed a man by my wound, or a child by my injury?" Genesis 4:23

Some scholars believe that Lamech was telling his wives that though they had been afraid to bear children because of the curse on Cain after seven generations, they should have no fear because he had done no one any harm. The text is not clear enough to be certain at this point.

4:25,26 The Birth of Seth

Verse 25 sounds as though Adam knew Eve following the conversation of Lamech with his wives. We need to remember that spiritual history is not preoccupied with chronology, but with the message about God.

Notice the way the author describes the birth of Seth,

"Adam lay with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, ..." Genesis 4:25

Some scholars take this wording to mean that there had been an interruption in their sexual relations perhaps because of the tragedy that befell their son Abel or because of

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their repentance over their disobedience in the garden. This interruption is possible, but the evidence is thin.

The naming of a child was a very important task in those days. A careful look at what is said concerning the naming of a child can yield significant information concerning the child, the parents or the times in which they lived. Notice what Eve said when her son was born,

"She gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying, 'God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him.'" Genesis 4:24

The significance of this statement can be best observed when compared with her statement following the birth of her other sons. Notice what she said when Cain was born,

"She became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, 'With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man.'" Genesis 4:1

The difference between the two statements can be seen in the highlighted statements above. When Cain was born, the emphasis of her statement was on what she had done, even though it was with God's help. On the other hand, when Seth was born, her emphasis changed. Now, she describes the birth as a gift from God. This represents a very significant change in Eve's attitude toward the events in her life.

The rest of Eve's statement is also significant. Notice her outlook on the events in her family as they relate to God.

"God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him." Genesis 4:24

Eve was dealing honestly with the events within her family. Cain had killed Abel. She admitted the reality of her loss. On the other hand, there is no indication that she was bitter or blaming Cain unduly. This appears to be a depth of spiritual insight not previously seen in Eve.

Most of the early life of Seth passed between verses 25 and 26. In verse 26 Seth is now a man. To him a son was born. The boy was named Enosh or Enos. This is translated "Enquired of the Lord" or "Petition of God". The idea behind this name seems to be that they requested the son from Jehovah. Again, this apparently represents a significant change in the spiritual life of the family. It is very different from Cain.

There follows one of the strongest statements in the early chapters of Genesis. The author wrote,

"At that time men began to call on the name of the Lord (Jehovah)." 4:26

These brief words have sparked a great deal of controversy. Some of the Hebrew scholars tend to interpret these words to say that at this time people began worshipping idols. It is possible that the author was saying that in contrast to this general idolatrous direction, here was one family who began to turn to the Lord. On the other hand, the English versions translate the verse as an announcement that a change had taken place. People were now participating in the praise and worship of God as never before. As we will see later, this family produced men like Enoch and Methuselah. Both of these men are well known in the Old and New Testament as people who trusted in God and served Him with all their

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hearts. It is my considered opinion that the text portrays this as a time when people changed and began to worship God with intensity.

Chapter 5 - Adam to Noah

There are ten paragraphs in chapter five. They are as follows:

1. 5: 1–5 - The Life of Adam
2. 5: 6–8 - The Life of Seth
3. 5: 9–11 - The Life of Enosh
4. 5:12–14 - The Life of Kenan
5. 5:15–17 - The Life of Mahalalel
6. 5:18–20 - The Life of Jared
7. 5:21–24 - The life of Enoch
8. 5:25–27 - The life of Methuselah
9. 5:28–31 - The Life of Lamech
10. 5:32 - The Life of Noah

This chapter is an overview, a brief report of the lives of ten generations. The men whose lives were most significant to the story of Genesis will then be discussed in greater detail.

5:1-5 The Life of Adam

The author goes to great lengths to clarify that this is in fact the lineage of Adam. The author said,

"When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them and when they were created, he called them man." Genesis 5:1,2

If you read 5:1,2 carefully, it sounds as if God is starting all over from creation again. This is just about what is happening. The evil one, Cain, killed the righteous one, Abel. There would be no one to carry on the plan of creation. This picture of the creation of man and woman presents them as equals. They were both made in the likeness of God. This does not mean that they looked like God, but that they had similar characteristics, especially pertaining to the freedom to choose good or evil. They were both blessed. This may signify that they received the blessing of procreation without which both of them came into being as adults. Notice that it does not say that God called him man, but that He called them man. This is what we refer to when we use the word "mankind." Neither of them, separately, qualifies to be called "man" as used in this instance. It takes both to make up the entity called "man." Actually the name "Adam – man" is used in at least six different ways in the Old Testament.

1. The name of our first parent
2. The name also for Eve
3. The name for their progeny
4. The human race is called "Adam, man"

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5. The woman as opposed to the man
6. The man as opposed to the woman

In verse three there is a statement that has caused much concern and debate. The author said,

"When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his image; and he named him Seth." Genesis 5:3

Understandings of Adam's age in this statement run in many directions:

1. It was 130 years like our years.
2. It was 130 years, but each of shorter duration.
3. It is a mistranslation of the large numbers used throughout chapter five.
4. It is full 130 years, like our years, but this happened only until the Flood.

In each instance these scholars are attempting to understand a life span which is unlike our own. The truth is that we can not corroborate these statements in chapter five. We have no reason to doubt their possibility. The dependability of Scripture suggests that one accept these numbers as true.

Note that the lineage is traced through Seth. This is necessary because Abel was killed by Cain and apparently left no progeny. The lineage of Cain lasted for six generations, but in the seventh it perished as God had said.

The author said about Seth,

"When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth." Genesis 5:3

It does not mean that he looked like Adam. It suggests that he had similar characteristics and capacities, especially the freedom and ability to choose right and wrong.

The text makes it clear that Adam and Eve had other sons and daughters, but these children do not figure in the spiritual history upon which this book focuses and so they are not even named.

Whatever the length of time these numbers represent, Adam lived 930 years and died. The intent of the author is physical death. The warning of God, in 2:17, indicates that something would happen that would be different from what God intended for mankind. It was presented as the punishment for disobedience. The Apostle Paul speaks of this situation in these terms,

"For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive." I Corinthians 15:22

The word Paul uses – apothnaesko – refers to physical death, the separation of the soul and body. In I Cor. 15:22 this death is contrasted with resurrection. This creates a problem if Adam had not disobeyed because the world would become overcrowded with standing room only. That problem, however, can not mean that this is proof that God was not talking about physical death. It only tells us that we do not know, we do not now understand how God would deal with the apparent dilemma. It could mean that death was never to have held the distress that it involved following the disobedience in the garden. Whatever the scenario, Adam died and his death was final. A number of scholars believe that Adam and Eve were buried in the Cave of Machpelah. This, of course, can not be verified. It

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should be noted, however, that Adam lived 930 years. This means that he lived to see eight generations of his family. All of the descendants listed from Seth to Lamech were still alive when Adam died.

5:6-8 The Life of Seth

The entire lifespan of Seth is less than that of Adam. Adam was 130 years old when Seth was born, but Seth was only 105 when Enosh was born. Adam lived a total of 930 years while Seth lived a total of 912 years. As in the case of Adam, Seth had other sons and daughters, but they were not involved in the story of spiritual history which our author is telling in the book of Genesis. We need to remember that this chapter is simply giving an overview of the generations between creation and the flood. No attempt is made to tell the complete story. The author simply tells of the births of the members of the family who figure in the family line of the ten generations from creation to the Flood. Some Jewish scholars, from ancient times, believe that each of the ten generations following Adam provoked God by their evil ways. The text is silent at this point.

5:9-11 The Life of Enosh

The name Enosh or Enos means "to inquire of the Lord." As indicated earlier, the meaning of a name had great significance in that time and place. It tells something about the parents who gave that name. You will remember that at the end of chapter four, the author remarked that this was the time people began calling upon the name of the Lord. It may indicate that he was given the name because his parents had indeed asked God for this son. We can not be certain whether it means this or that they hoped that this kind of lifestyle would be characteristic of him. Enosh had over 800 years to watch as he was a part of the life of his father Seth for that length of time. We can not be totally clear about the length of time as recorded in this brief picture of the ten generations who followed Adam. Whatever it was, at age 90 Enosh became the father of Kenan. As with the other generations, Enosh had other sons and daughters, who remain unnamed for us. Still they account for the growing number of people who populated the earth. Enosh lived another 815 years and died at the age of 905.

5:12-14 The Life of Kenan

Kenan, the great grandson of Adam, and grandson of Seth, had the opportunity to watch the life of his father, Enosh, for 815 years. Because they lived as an extended nomadic family, he also had the opportunity to watch the lives of his grandfather and great grandfather for many years. Kenan was 70 years of age when he became a father. Notice that the ages are gradually declining. His first mentioned son was Mahalalel. Kenan died at the age of 910. Again, nothing is said concerning the man or his family except that he had other sons and daughters. The race is quickly expanding.

5:15-17 The Life of Mahalalel

Mahalalel was able to watch and learn from his father, Kenan, for 840 years. Mahalalel was 65 years of age when he became the father of Jared. Mahalalel lived another

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830 years before he died at the age of 895. During that time he, too, had other sons and daughters whose names are not a part of this brief record. We have no dependable account concerning the kind of the life he lived.

5:18–20 The Life of Jared

Again, Jared was able to watch the life of his father Mahalalel for 840 years. When Jared was 62 years of age, he became the father of Enoch. As you will notice, the author of Genesis makes no comment about the quality of Jared's life. He lived another 800 years after the birth of Enoch. This means that he was still living when God took Enoch to heaven. The text indicates that Jared had other sons and daughters who are not named in the text. The author has focused upon only the ones who are significant participants in the lineage of Noah. Again, notice the refrain at the end of this brief paragraph. "And he died." The constant repetition of this phrase is definitely for purposes of emphasis. Adam was told that he would die and they all died.

5:21-24 The Life of Enoch

Enoch was 65 years of age when he became the father of Methuselah. He had other sons and daughters, but their names are not included. Unlike the five generations reported before Enoch, the author describes his spiritual condition, when he said,

"Enoch walked with God..." Genesis 5:22

He is the first, in Scripture, of whom this could be said. He walked with God for 300 years. This stands in stark contrast to the silence concerning the previous five forebears. What does it mean when the author says, "Enoch walked with God?" It is to make God the priority of one's life. It is to dedicate the entirety of one's life to the service of God; to focus the totality of life on emulating the quality of God's character. It is to immerse oneself in the instructions and example of God.

One of the outstanding characteristics by which we mark the life of Enoch is that he made fellowship with God an important direction of his life. It was also to live in stark contrast to the other people of the culture in which he lived. The things said of Enoch could be said of no one else in that culture. There is little doubt that this was painfully clear to Enoch. The text gives no inkling of what all this involved or how he was able to live such a life before God.

Some have looked strangely at the idea,

"...then he was no more, because God took him away." Genesis 5:24

This is not as strange as some might think. The idea of "being no more" is mentioned at least two other times in the Scriptures. Job said,

*"I will soon lie down in the dust; you will search for me, but I will be no more."
Job 7:21*

David said,

*"Look away from me, that I may rejoice again before I depart and am no more."
Psalm 39:13*

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In both Job 7 and Psalm 39, these are expressions that describe death in more delicate terms. The author, of Genesis, however, is saying that Enoch at one time could be found, but at another time he was nowhere to be found. God had taken him without death. The context is clear. Of the other men, whose lineage is described, the author repeatedly said, "And then he died." The author does not say that about Enoch. The change reflects a different scenario. Enoch did not die. Notice also that of each of the previous forebears, the author said, "And ... **lived** after he begat ..." Only of Enoch does he say, "and Enoch **walked with God** after he begat ..." These facts are important for at least two reasons.

1. It deals with a man who lived a life of obedience in severe contrast to the way people around him lived their lives. It was possible to live such a life in that time.
2. This obedient man did not die. It is possible that this gives us a clue concerning what would have happened had Adam done as God commanded.

5:25–27 The Life of Methuselah

Methuselah was of the seventh generation after Adam. Methuselah knew Adam for 243 years. Can you imagine knowing a relative from seven generations before your own? We should remember that many people who were seventh-generation were favorites. Among the Jewish people, it was felt that greater sanctity rested on them. Moses, for instance, was the seventh generation after Abraham. David was the seventh son in his family. The number seven was very important to the Jews.

Methuselah became the father of Lamech at the age of 187. During his remaining 782 years, he had many other sons and daughters. Obviously, Methuselah is well known for the fact that he was the world's oldest man. Despite this notoriety, the closing words of this paragraph about Methuselah ring out again, "And then he died." He lived longer than anyone else, but ultimately he died.

5:28-31 The Life of Lamech

Lamech was born when his father Methuselah was 187 years old. Lamech knew eight generations of his forefathers. At the age of 182, Lamech became the father of Noah. Lamech was the father of a number of other sons and daughters, but they did not figure in the spiritual history being described in this record. Nothing is recorded about his character or way of life, but he lived to the age of 777 years. The final statement about Lamech, as about his forefathers, was the simple statement, "And then he died." The repetition of this phrase was the author's way of emphasizing that God not only said they would die, the process indeed took place.

5:32 The Life of Noah

The name Noah is usually considered to mean "rest". If you look carefully, you will note that there are a number of facts about the life of each of the other nine men in this chapter, but almost no information about Noah. This is not surprising. The purpose of the chapter appears to be to show the family lineage from Adam to Noah through Seth. Having arrived at the story of Noah, just enough is mention-ed to get started with the more lengthy narrative.

The verse tells us that Noah was 500 years old and he begat Shem, Ham and Japheth. At first glance, it sounds as though the three sons were triplets. We will see later, in 10:1-10, that when the author lists the lineage of the three sons, the lineage of Japheth was listed

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first. In such a listing the eldest son is almost always listed first. It is probable that the sons were not triplets, but the text is trying to say that at age 500 Noah began to father children. We do not know how to account for the fact that in verse 32, the sons appear to be listed in reverse order by age. There are those who believe that in this instance the sons were listed in the order of their wisdom or stature, rather than their age. The truth is that we have no way to be sure.

This is a section of the book that people often skip as uninteresting and unimportant. That is not so. As we have seen, tucked away in the midst of a passage, which to some appears to be unimportant, are some exciting truths to be found.

The picture of God, presented in chapters three and four, focuses upon omnipotence, all-powerfulness. It is expressed against disobedience bringing judgment and supportively with obedience in the translation of Enoch. As you contemplate God's limitless power, what impact does it have on the way you expect God to work in your life? What difference will it make in what you will attempt, with God's help, on behalf of His kingdom? What will it do to the list of things that you feel you can not do for God in the church? What effect will it have on the seriousness with which you view the instructions of Scripture?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 4

GENESIS 6:1 – 7:24

1. There are seven paragraphs in this portion of Scripture. On the chart that follows, write a title of seven words or less for each of the paragraphs.

6:1–4	
6:5–8	
6:9–12	
6:13–22	
7:1–5	
7:6–12	
7:13–24	

2. 6:1-2 are a summary statement of the spiritual climate of that day. Describe their spiritual condition in your own words.
3. God announced His judgment on mankind in 6:3. What reason does God give for this judgment? What does God mean when He said, "For he is mortal"?
4. How would you explain what the author said in 6:4?
5. In 6:5-8, God responds to the human lifestyle that was becoming normal in that day. In 6:5, what was it that seems to have caused God to judge mankind? What does the author mean when he said, "It repented the Lord that he had made man"? What is the difference between "it repented the Lord that he made man," and "it grieved him at his heart"? We have a difficult situation in 6:7. God is immutable/unchangeable, but he appears to be changing. At the creation of mankind, God concluded it was "good." Now, in 6:7, it repented Him that He created man. How do you explain this apparent change?
6. Review 6:5-8 again. Verse 8 begins with the word "but" which identifies a strong contrast. What is the author trying to say with this contrast?
7. Genesis 6:9-12 purports to describe the lineage of Noah. Why, then, does the author immediately begin to describe the qualities of Noah's life? How does the author describe Noah's spiritual life? What does he mean?
8. Notice the intense contrast between 6:9 and 6:12. What does the author tell us in these verses?
9. What does the author say about the ungodly conduct?

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10. In 6:13, how do you account for the fact that God said, "I am going to put an end to all people..." when at the same time He was instructing Noah on the construction of the ark?
11. What is the significance of the carefully detailed description of the construction of the ark?
12. Reflect on the contrast that is drawn in 6:17,18. Why does God plan to treat the two groups differently? Why does God so carefully identify the actions of both 6:17 and 6:18, as His own? Can you think of any kind of flesh that was apparently exempted from this destruction. In the covenant God made with Noah, in 6:18-21, what do you see concerning the character of God?
13. There is a brief glimpse of the man Noah in 6:22. What does the author tell us about him?
14. In 7:1-5, God instructed Noah to enter the ark. In 7:1 God gave an evaluation of Noah. What did He say? In 7:2-3, God instructs Noah to take different numbers of various animals and birds into the Ark. Why did He do this? In 7:4, Jehovah, the God of justice, warns Noah of the deluge which will come in seven days, but there is no word about warning the other people. What does this say about God? What message does this give to us? 7:5 is basically a repetition of 6:22. What is the author trying to say?
15. In 7:6-12, the author described the flood in summary fashion. Why is it important to give Noah's age in 7:6? In 7:7-8, it says that two of every creature came into the ark. In 7:2, however, God decreed that two of some animals should be taken into the ark while a larger number of others were to be saved. How do you account for this difference? In 7:10-11, the author indicates that the "fountains of the great deep were broken up" seven days after the beginning of the rain. What can we learn from this? In 7:6, the author told us that this all happened in the 600th year of Noah's life. The message is essentially repeated in 7:11. What reasons can you think of for repeating this message?
16. The author described the floor of the ark in 7:13-24. In 7:15, the author mentions that everything came into the ark, two by two. We know, from our previous study in 7:2, that some did not come in two by two, but by seven. How could we account for this apparent change? There is a vivid contrast between 7:21-23a and 7:23b. What is the contrast? What is its significance?
17. 7:24 gives a time designation concerning the flood. What is it? What is its significance?
18. What does the whole story of the flood tell us about God?
19. What changes will you make in the way you serve and obey God because of what you have learned in this lesson?

LESSON 4: GENESIS 6:1 – 7:24

Chapter Six – A Righteous Man in a Wicked World

The four paragraphs in this chapter are as follows:

- 6:1- 4 - God Warns Noah Against Evil
- 6:5- 8 - God Chose to Destroy Creation, but to Spare Noah
- 6:9-12 - Noah was Righteous in a Wicked World
- 6:13-22 - God Commanded Noah to Build and Occupy an Ark

This chapter is a dark page in the history of mankind. It should not, however, be surprising because these judgments are the natural results of an evil way of life.

6:1-4 God Warns Against Evil

This paragraph is the topic of intense interest among Biblical scholars. Notice the way the author begins,

"When men began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful and they married any of them they chose." Genesis 6:1–2

There is strong debate concerning the identity of the "sons of God" and "the daughters of men." Let us deal first with the meaning of "the sons of God."

The word "God" used here, is Elohim. This word is used as one of the proper names of God. We must be aware of the fact that the term is also used to identify authority. It has been used to identify certain angels, other human beings, as well as ruling persons and families. Some have understood this phrase to refer to angels who rebelled against the power of God and were removed from heaven. Their coming to live on the earth was marked by an extremely evil life style. Some have understood this to refer to the evil descendants of Cain. We can not verify such an idea. Others have concluded that as the population increased, rulers gained more and more power. These rulers may have decided to have a large harem composed of every woman they saw who pleased them. No one can speak authoritatively as to which is correct.

The meaning of "the daughters of men" is equally debatable. The positions are not nearly so diverse concerning this phrase. Many believe this phrase refers to the daughters of the lower class, the non-ruling population. These were people who had no control over their destiny. Still others believe they were degraded people who had given themselves over to a lifestyle of evil. We can not speak authoritatively on this issue.

God responded to the way people were living. God said,

"Then the Lord said, My Spirit will not contend with man forever, •for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years." Genesis 6:3

Whatever the specific conduct of the people, God was clearly upset with their sinful ways. The degree of God's distress can be identified by the fact that it moved Him to think in ultimate terms. In effect, God was saying that there would now be a time limit on hu-

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man existence. This was new. God did not do this even when our first parents disobeyed Him in the garden of Eden.

Notice again, what God said,

"My spirit will not contend with man forever for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years." Genesis 6:3

The Hebrew form, from which the word "contend" comes, literally means "to hold in contention", "to strive as in the games". The author is saying that God will struggle with persons in an attempt to win them over to righteous living, but there comes a point beyond which God will not struggle with us any longer. At that point, only judgment awaits them. The results of human, sinful conduct was that the length of life was reduced from the general vicinity of 900 years to 120 years. This is a drastic reduction in longevity. It is a great price to pay for a sinful life style.

Again there is much discussion concerning the meaning of "the Nephilim" or "giants" as some versions translate it. It must be affirmed that the word is correctly understood as a synonym for giants in Numbers 13:33. The word itself literally means "fallen" or "fallen ones." We must hasten to add, however, that though the term was used as a synonym for giants, it was also used to describe people with great power. There is something to be said for this position.

Notice the way the author states this,

"The Nephilim were in the earth in those days, and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them: the same were the mighty men that were of old, the men of renown." Genesis 6:4

Notice that the author speaks of "the sons of God", but he also speaks of the "daughters of men." A number of ancient scholars believed that this was the author's way of distinguishing between the sons of Seth ("sons of God") on the one hand and the daughters of Cain ("the daughters of men") on the other. It appears certain that Cain had sons and daughters. It is reasonable to assume that they were not righteous. There would definitely be a serious attempt to keep the two separate. If, indeed, this describes the intermarriage between the sons of Seth and of Cain, then it is appropriate to understand this as a time of serious faltering and degradation.

Again, if Nephilim is reference to men in positions of great power rather than great stature, then it is appropriate for the author to conclude the verse and the paragraph with the words,

"The same were the mighty men that were of old, the men of renown." Genesis 6:4

The "men of renown" or "giants" or "nephilim", in my estimation, were people who, though large physically, were people of great power in their culture.

This paragraph comes to a close on a very dark, sad note. God had created mankind to obey Him and live a life that reflected His glory. The longer mankind was on the face of the earth, the farther they went from God's intention. It was as though they were looking for ways to rebel against God.

LESSON 4

6:5-8 God Chose to Destroy Creation, But to Spare Noah

Many people are uncomfortable reading this paragraph. It sounds to them as though God is changing His mind. We will give this idea particular attention.

Notice the way the author describes the thinking of God,

"The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time." Genesis 6:5

This is the foremost thought in the paragraph. God evaluated human conduct and He was distressed by what He saw. God saw at least three things in this verse:

1. The extent of human wickedness.
2. Every human thought and plan of mankind was evil.
3. These evil inclinations were constant.

Human nature had become totally different from the character of God. God was always holy, while man, from the time of the Fall, was increasingly evil. This painful evaluation was the basis for what God did in this paragraph.

Verse six frightens many people. Notice how the author says it,

"And the Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth and his heart was filled with pain." Genesis 6:6

Some people are stunned to read that the words,

"And it repented the Lord..." Genesis 6.6a

Some translations use the word "repented" where this translation uses the word "grieved." The shock, for these readers, is that it seems to them that God is admitting that He made a mistake in creating human beings.

In any discussion of these ideas, there are some considerations that come to one's mind. As people try to sort out this issue, they usually begin by remembering that God is good and this never changes. On the basis of this, people wonder, how could God be grieved that He made man on the earth when He created man and concluded that it was "good"? God could not have changed His mind about His creation. They wonder how an all-knowing God could create mankind with power of choice and not know that people would do evil?

We need to begin by defining the word "grieved." The Hebrew word "naham" has several meanings, one being "to breathe deeply." It is used to describe the idea of "comfort" as in Isaiah 40:1,

"Comfort, comfort my people, says your God." Isaiah 40:1

And in the "Shepherd Psalm",

"... your rod and your staff, they comfort me." Psalm 23:4

On the other hand, the same word is used to describe another deep emotion – grief. The King James version translates this word as "repent" 38 times.

When this word is used concerning God, it is used in an anthropomorphic way. That is, it describes infinite, Divine characteristics in human terms, i.e., the Bible talks about the ears, nostrils, and eyes of God. These are anthropomorphisms. God is a spirit and has

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no ears, eyes, or nostrils. The grieving of God appears to be a contradiction, but it really is not. It just seems that way from our very limited perspective.

When the author says that "it grieved God", he was describing a heart filled with pain. It was a deep, intense pain because of what mankind could have become had they been obedient. It is a deep sorrow over what relationship could have developed, but was now destroyed. It is an attempt to describe the indescribable pain God experienced at the rejection by His greatest creation. Notice the way the author says it,

"The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth and his heart was filled with pain." Genesis 6:6

Literally, the Hebrew word speaks of physical pain or emotional sorrow. It describes what Joseph's brothers felt when they discovered that this leader of Egypt was indeed their brother. It describes the inner churning of the brothers of Dinah, when they discovered the tragedy that had befallen their sister, Genesis 34:13.

God was filled with indescribable pain as He observed the evil directions of His creation.

Notice how the author begins verse seven,

"So the Lord said," Genesis 6:7

This is his way of indicating that the previous scenario is the basis of the action which is to follow. Read verse seven several times,

"So the Lord said, 'I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth – men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air - for I am grieved that I have made them.'" Genesis 6:7

It sounds like fury and unlimited anger. It sounds like an intense longing to get even. If a man had said this, we would understand it to be revenge of the first order.

God's statement may seem like a vengeful comment, but that is not really the case. Read the balance of the chapter carefully and you will begin to see that there is some mercy even in the presence of man's rebellion. Look more carefully, there is more here than a violent reaction to a tragic turn of events. Creation was a "good" idea. Creation continues to be a "good" idea, even though mankind did some terrible things. This creation, however, had become useless, counter-productive in its present fallenness.

This whole scenario is a bit like surgery. There are times when the surgeon must create intense pain by cutting away damaged flesh in order that healing can commence. The dramatic difference between revenge and restoring is to be discovered in the motive. Both involve cutting. Revenge is a response in kind – getting even; hurting as much as one has been hurt. Restoring, on the other hand, involves cutting in order to promote healing. There is no possible way to do this without the pain of cutting. The Divine purpose in what He was about to do was to rectify the damage that mankind had done. Only for this reason would God say,

"I will wipe mankind, whom I have created from the face of the earth –men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air - for I am grieved that I have made them." Genesis 6:7

LESSON 4

The situation that existed at that time rendered fellowship and relationship between mankind and God impossible. God therefore acted to make this relationship possible. Though it may be difficult to comprehend, the destruction by a flood was ultimately an act of mercy and not revenge. God's intent was to rectify the damage rather than to get even with rebellious mankind.

The Hebrew word "maha" or "wipe" is found here for the first time. It is used symbolically several times. It was used to describe what happens when a copyist removes words from a scroll by wiping the ink off the skin. It is the word Isaiah used when he says,

"The sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces." Isaiah 25:8

It is the same word used in II Kings, where the author wrote,

"I will wipe out Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down." II Kings 21:13

This word describes the removal of undesirable material from a dirty dish. It is not just the inflicting of pain, but the removal from that place. The word reflects both the ease with which refuse is removed from a plate and the completeness of that cleansing. It appears that God chose the word "wipe" rather than "destroy" because there is no resistance by man to God's necessary action.

Notice the sharp contrast between verses seven and eight. Verse seven describes the Divine action that would remove evil mankind from the face of the earth. Verse eight, on the other hand, describes the relationship of Noah to God. The author wrote,

"But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord." Genesis 6:8

The word "but" indicates that the author is presenting a powerful contrast. The idea here is that Noah found favor in the sight of God to the extent that the others did not. This is a strong statement. The disfavor of God was so intense that God decided to wipe mankind from the face of the earth. The favor of God, which Noah enjoyed, was just as intense. This is not to suggest that Noah was somehow not human. Along with his complete humanity, Noah lived in such a way that he found favor in the sight of God. What a man he must have been!

6:9-12 Noah - A Righteous Man in a Wicked World

As we indicated in 2:4, "this is the account of..." is a way of identifying the progeny of a certain individual. In this particular instance, it is the progeny of Noah.

The Hebrew text, for this statement, reads a bit differently,

"These are the generations of Noah." Genesis 6:9

Immediately following such a statement, one would expect to see the names of a man's children. In this instance it was different. Before introducing the heirs of Noah, there is an evaluation of the man himself. Notice that the author lists three characteristics of Noah. These qualities would grace the lives of any one of us. This description helps one to understand why Noah and his family alone were saved from the flood.

The author begins this record by describing the life of Noah,

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"Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God." Genesis 6:9

The Jewish people understand the word "righteous" in a slightly different sense than we do. The words "righteous, justice and charity" all come from the same stem. The word "righteous", "tzaddik" in Hebrew, describes the person who studiously pursues worship and sincere obedience to the law of God. This righteousness, however, must contain all of the elements of charity and fairness in one's dealings with all others if it is to be real. Noah was a righteous man in a world where this was not a valued quality. Noah's neighbors were people of violence.

Noah was blameless. The description "blameless", "tamim" in the Hebrew, carries the idea of completeness or perfection. It has to do with moral perfection rather than social rightness. In Job 9:20, the word carries the idea of wholeheartedness. Noah was a man who was without blame; he was complete in an era when people were anything but perfect and lived lives full of blame. Noah stood in stark contrast to the people among whom he lived. Notice that the author says,

"And perfect in his generations." Genesis 6:9

It is appropriate to speak of "his generations" because he saw several generations, but lived a blameless life in them all.

Noah "walked with God." To walk with God can have several connotations. It can be that he walked with God as opposed to walking before God, as Abraham did. Walking with God implies lesser strength than walking **before** God. By the same token, it may mean that Noah conducted himself in such a holy way that there was a vital fellowship between himself and God during all those years. The truth is that none of these suggestions are necessary. We ultimately do not know which was intended, but the idea of holy living is definitely involved.

Verse 10 sounds as though Noah had only three sons. This may well be the case. At least we do not know the names of any other sons or daughters.

Verses 11 and 12 give one the impression that they are a repetition of verse five. This is not really the case. Look more carefully at both verses and it will become evident that there is additional information included in verses 11 and 12. Look carefully at both passages.

1. Verse five
 - a. Human wickedness was great.
 - b. Every inclination of the human heart was only evil always.
2. Verses 11 and 12
 - a. The earth was corrupt.
 - b. The earth was full of violence.
 - c. The people had corrupted their ways.

Verse eleven speaks of the earth as "corrupt." The word "corrupt" refers to things that are immoral and idolatrous. Whatever this is, the author points out that this is before God; it was not a hidden, clandestine act. On the other hand, the text goes on to say that the earth was full of violence. This conveys the idea that the evil had become blatant, unabashed activity.

LESSON 4

Note that in verse 11 the author said that the earth was corrupt before God. The whole social order was infected with immorality, idolatry and lawlessness. In verse 12 the author said that God saw that the earth was corrupt. God saw the evil just exactly as it was. It wasn't glossed over and it wasn't made worse than it actually was.

Note also that in verse 12 the author indicates that this was a universal situation. This was true of a broad spectrum of people; it was the rule rather than the exception.

6:13-22 God Commanded Noah to-Build and Occupy an Ark

Hidden in the midst of this story about the sinfulness of man is a revealing message about the character of God. God is patient and this patience is a vital ingredient in His pristine holiness. In spite of the gross evil of mankind, God was patient and waited for them to change their ways for 10 generations. There came a time when the evil was so intense that God made a decision to destroy mankind. At that point God acted. The time for patience and long-suffering was over. Now it was the time for action and nothing could stand in the way. That tells us something about who God is. God is patient, but His patience always stands in tension with His absolute holiness.

In verse thirteen, God makes His intentions known to the man who lives closest to Him. The bulk of the people had no idea that God was going to destroy the earth. Noah lived close to God and He confided to Noah the things He was going to do.

In this verse also, God not only identifies the judgment that is to come, but also gives His reasons. The reasons are these:

1. All flesh has reached its saturation point of evil.
2. People have filled the earth with violence.

The judgment is this: God will destroy the people along with the earth they corrupted.

The omniscience of God goes beyond rational thought, but He tends to relate His actions to human understanding where possible.

Verse 13 appears to be a repetition of the message of verse 12. In fact, it is a different facet of God's message to Noah. The author is describing the basis for God's actions just prior to reporting God's judgment of mankind in the flood. This verse differs from two previous verses where the announcement of human degradation was made. Verses three and seven report the Divine decision. Verse 12, on the other hand, is a Divine announcement to Noah of what was going to happen.

Notice, in verse 13, that there is a progression of evil. First mankind becomes evil and through their efforts the whole earth is infected. It is not surprising, therefore, that God decided to destroy not only mankind, but also the earth which mankind had corrupted.

Beginning with verse 14, God gives Noah specific instructions for building an ark. This is mercy in the midst of judgment. God could have saved Noah in a variety of ways, but He rather chose the prolonged method of saving him within an ark. This gave the neighbors time to ask questions, consider their circumstances and repent of their sins. It was difficult and long for Noah, in view of the taunts and ridicule he must have experienced. Nevertheless, it afforded plenty of time for thoughtful people to repent and change their way of life, but there were none who repented.

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God's instructions were specific. The ark was not just to be built. Noah was to build the ark of a specific kind of wood. We are unable, at this point, to identify the kind of wood to be used. Scholars differ widely concerning the name of the wood.

The ark was a vessel, but its purpose was more than to house the family of Noah. God intended this vessel as a way to save all forms of life, not just Noah and his family. Note that it was not to be a boat. That is a totally different word. It was simply to float on the water, not be conducted on a specific course or direction by human skill. God was to take care of what happened to this ark, not man.

This ark was to be made to a specific design,

"Make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out." Genesis 6:14

The ark, as we will see, was to have rooms, different decks and meet certain size limitations. It was to be coated with pitch inside and out. God was making the craft doubly safe for the precious cargo it was to carry. The comparison between the ark, in this instance, and the basket, in Exodus 2, in which Moses was placed for safety, is more than accidental. Both were coated with pitch to protect the occupants. Both were vessels for the protection and deliverance of cherished cargo.

Verse 15 continues the specific details of the construction of this very special vessel. The author quotes God in these words,

"This is how you are to build it: the ark is to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high." Genesis 6:15

The Hebrew text of this verse does not mention feet, but cubits. A cubit is the distance between a man's elbow and the tip of his middle finger - about 18 inches. The distance described in the English text is accurate even though it is registered in feet. Note that the ark was designed to be six times as long as wide. It was ten times longer than it was high. The ark was designed to withstand the greatest possible storm. This gives one some idea of the great value God attached to the cargo of this ark.

Verse 16 continues the detailed instructions God gave to Noah. God said,

"Make a roof for it and finish the ark to within 18 inches of the top. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks." Genesis 6:16

The Hebrew and English texts are quite different in this verse. The Hebrew text speaks of "a light" rather than "a roof." The idea of a "light" or window in the roof is probably more accurate than that of a roof, though it is appropriate to believe that there was a roof on the ark.

Speaking of "finishing the ark within 18 inches of the top" brings many suggestions from scholars. It could mean that they were to put pitch to within 18 inches of the top of the sides of the ark. It could also mean that there was to be an 18 inch overhang or an 18 inch casement around the window. The text is not that clear. We will therefore be well advised to be generous in our understanding.

God continued,

"put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks." Genesis 6:16

LESSON 4

Again, the instructions were very specific. Our limited knowledge of the sea suggests that this last instruction was well advised. The interior of vessels, in very early times, were reached by means of a hatch from above. This vessel was to have a door in the side. This would be appropriate in view of the terrific amounts of rain they were to encounter. Massive amounts of water could be expected to leak into the ark through a door in the top of the ark. It must also be remembered that God, not Noah, closed that door. When God closed the door, it was secure. It should also be remembered that the ark was very high. A door in the side of the ark would facilitate the entrance of the large numbers of animals far better than having to take them to the main deck and then lower them into the hold.

There are perhaps a number of miracles identified with this vessel. It is amazing that it was able to withstand the storm on the sea. A greater miracle was the fact that Noah was able to get his family and all the kinds of animals into the vessel along with sufficient food and room for refuse from all aboard.

In these few verses, the author has circumscribed the work of 120 years of the life of Noah and his family. The text does not say so, but there is good reason to believe that Noah and his family were the recipients of unbelievable persecution. Remember, they lived in the midst of people who delighted in doing evil. This was an area of the world where there were few streams much less a body of water that could support such a craft as Noah was to make. This whole process took place over 120 years. Just imagine the taunting he must have taken over building a boat in the desert. Again, many scholars believe that it had never rained prior to this time. There is no proof for this, but a semiarid region would have little if any rain. There is no mention of rain in the Scriptures, prior to this event. All of these things go together to make Noah look ridiculous in the eyes of his evil neighbors. Nevertheless, in the midst of God's judgment, He made careful preparations for the protection of the people who found favor in His sight.

Verses 17 - 22 take a completely different turn. God explains to Noah what is about to happen and indicates what Noah is to do when it does occur. Notice verse 17,

*"I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish."
Genesis 6:17*

God does not explain why He chose to destroy the earth with floodwater. But in doing so, God is going to start over with people who had not been party to the infamous way of life which had engulfed the lives of most people.

In verse 18, God quickly reassures Noah that he will not be involved in this destruction. The author begins verse 18 with the word "but". This indicates that there is a serious contrast between the previous statement and what is to follow. The author continues,

"But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark – you and your sons and your wife and your son's wives with you." Genesis 6:18

This is a picture of a provident God. In the midst of the devastation of the whole earth, God takes time to share with Noah that he and his family will be safe and God will establish His covenant with him. This is a new beginning.

When God first created mankind, He established a covenant with them. Now He was starting over again with mankind and He immediately promised a covenant. A covenant ascribes responsibilities as well as promises to the parties. The nature of this covenant was

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not immediately revealed. It is interesting that the covenant had an effect upon Noah's children as well as himself. This grows out of the Hebrew idea of family. If you touch a man, you have touched his family. They are an integral part of each other.

In verse 19–21, God gives Noah further instruction concerning the use of the ark. The author quotes God as saying,

"You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you." Genesis 6:19

The emphasis here is not so much that Noah is to go out and get the animals, but that when the animals come to him he is not to forbid them entrance into the ark. They are sharers of life with him and in the new order they are to continue to share that life. Noah is to struggle on their behalf as he would for his own.

Verse 20 is a restatement for purposes of emphasis. The verse re-emphasizes these things:

1. They were to accept two of every kind of animal that came to them.
2. This instruction included two of every kind of bird.
3. It included two of every kind of creature that moves along the ground.
4. It was Noah's task to keep them alive.

Verse 21 is a different kind of instruction. It deals with the care of the animals. Noah was instructed to bring every kind of food that was to be eaten by any kind of animal and store this food in the ark. This meant that there had to be a harvest time in order to secure this food. Imagine the size barn it would require to store all the food necessary to provide for all the animals. Just think, Noah had to know all the different kinds of food each animal and bird needed. Noah was to care for them as carefully as he did for himself.

Verse 22 is the conclusion to this segment of the book. Notice how the author says it,

Noah did everything just as God commanded him." Genesis 6:22

The author is talking about the construction of the ark, the assembling of the inhabitants and the accumulation of food. In a world where people delighted in doing their own thing, without concern for what God commanded them, Noah was different. He was given specific instructions and no matter how it sounded to him, Noah did exactly as God commanded. That is astonishing when we remember that he was building a boat type structure in an arid region. It gives you some idea of Noah's commitment to God. It also gives you an idea of the contrast between Noah who, "did everything just as God commanded him", and the other people, who did only the things that pleased themselves.

Chapter Seven – The Flood

Chapter seven is composed of the following paragraphs:

- 7: 1- 5 - God Instructs Noah to Enter the Ark
- 7: 6-12 - Noah Enters the Ark; Rain Begins
- 7:13–24 - The Flood Killed All Other Life

LESSON 4

7:1-5 God Instructs Noah to Enter the Ark

Notice the way the author speaks of God. In Genesis 6:22, the author refers to "God" while in 7:1 he refers to "Lord." This is very significant in view of the fact that in 7:1 he is beginning to describe the coming of the flood. In the Hebrew text, the name "God" is "Elohim" while in 7:1 the name "Lord" is "Jehovah". The name "Elohim" is commonly associated with mercy while the name "Jehovah" is most commonly associated with God's justice.

The text is written as though Noah was all by himself in a barren place. This was not the case. It is certain there were many other people in the area and they had to be aware of the entrance of these people and animals into the ark. Imagine the surprise of the people of that area when the animals came to Noah on their own volition. Animals tend to avoid people if at all possible, but that is not what happened here. The shock had to be substantial. This was a semi-desert area where a boat type structure was humorous, to say the least. There had to be a great deal of ridicule vented upon Noah. Nevertheless, God instructs Noah to go into the ark with his family and make it available for the animals and all other living creatures as well.

In verse one, God gives the reason that He has invited Noah into this place of refuge. God said,

"...Because I found you righteous in this generation." Genesis 7:1

The mercy and salvation of God were made clear by the fact that Noah had been observed to be righteous in a sinful generation. It was not just a total eradication.

The instructions of God continued in verse two,

"Take with you seven of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and two of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate." Genesis 7:2

God does not tell Noah the reason for inviting seven pairs of some animals and one pair of others. It appears that the reason for this is that the clean animals were also used for sacrifices and they needed to have enough so that propagation could take place unhindered. The number "seven" was a symbol of completeness, sufficiency. It can be assumed that this also had a part in the use of this number.

According to verse four, the rain had not yet commenced, but that it would begin within seven full days. Again, it does not take much imagination to realize that the people, having seen the family of Noah and the animals go into the ark, would make it a point to remind Noah, daily, that the rain had not yet begun. Their ridicule must have been biting for him. The people apparently had ridiculed him for 120 years, but for these seven days they might well have taunted Noah more abusively than ever before. Nevertheless, he did not come out of the ark.

The promises of God, in verse 4, were firm:

1. It would not rain for seven days.
2. It would then rain for 40 days and 40 nights.
3. Every living thing on the face of the earth will die.

Notice the way God said it,

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"Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, And I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made." Genesis 7:4

The way this is written indicates that the author is describing overt, Divine activity. This is not the accident of nature. God made an indisputable decision to destroy. This says something very real about the nature of God: God does judge people.

One wonders why God chose to say, "I will wipe from the face of the earth?" He could have used a number of other words - i.e. "destroy", "annihilate", or "slay." "Wipe" carries the idea of removing every trace of existence. It is not just that the people will be dead, there will be no trace of their existence. That is just what God did.

Notice that 6:22 and 7:5 carry the same message. It is the author's way of emphasizing that Noah was a very obedient servant of God in a culture where this was not the norm. Repetition is one of the strongest forms of emphasis. Noah did everything God commanded. That had to be difficult. God wanted Noah to do some things that would bring Noah ridicule and humiliation. At great personal sacrifice, Noah did exactly as God commanded him to do.

7:6-12 Noah Enters the Ark; The Rains Begin

This paragraph is an overall picture of the flood. More specific information will follow. You will notice that on several occasions, in the story of Noah, there are specific indications of time. These are identified with the age of Noah. The author is taking special pains to present this in news-reporting style. This is not a dream or fantasy. It is an actual, traceable event.

The flood waters came during the six hundredth year of Noah's life. This whole experience had been 120 years in the making. That was plenty of time for Noah to build the ark. It was also plenty of time for the people who scoffed at him to repent of their very evil lifestyle.

We must remember that the author is not trying to give us a blow by blow account of history. He is trying to tell us what happened in such a way that it reveals something important about the nature of God. Because this is true, we must be careful about thinking of the events in sequential order. There are events that did, in fact, take place chronologically. We will attempt to identify these elements as we come to them.

Verse seven is not trying to say that the flood waters came and then the family got into the ark. This whole paragraph is a general overview. It is more like a list of events rather than a chronological statement. Noah and his family did get into the ark. The flood waters did come in the six hundredth year of Noah's life, but these two experiences did not necessarily occur in that order. The family did get into the ark. The animals did come in pairs to Noah, both clean and unclean, male and female, and they, too, came into the ark. The only statement, thus far in the paragraph, that is chronological is verse 10.

"And after the seven days the floodwaters came on the earth." Genesis 7:10

Did Noah and his family get into the ark before the floods started or did they enter the ark at the very last minute? There is no verifiable answer to that question.

Apparently, Noah and his family got into the ark and lived there for a full week before any rain fell. Think about that for a minute. Imagine what it would be like to live in that

LESSON 4

situation. You get everything into the ark and you are ready for the flood, but now you have been waiting for a week. People have been ridiculing you for years about your pipe dream of a flood. There is a temptation to believe that the ridiculing neighbors might have been right. How does one handle it when the scorn of disbelievers challenges one's faith that is not founded upon logic?

Think about Noah's family for a minute. Apparently God did not say anything to them. It is most reasonable to believe that they were caught in a bind. They wanted to be supportive of Noah, but there must have been some misgivings about the fact that for 120 years Noah had been saying it was going to rain. Now you have been cooped up with all these animals in this ark for a whole week and not a trace of rain. What do you think was going through their minds? What do you think it did for morale on that ark?

Again, we have no word that tells us that the animals had been living in close proximity to human beings prior to this time. Now, suddenly, all these animals were living in elbow to elbow proximity with these strange creatures that walked upright and talked to each other. That also had to take some adjusting, even for the animals.

There appears to be a problem when a comparison is made between the instructions in verse 8 and those in verse 2. Notice, in 7:2 the author quotes God as saying,

"Take with you seven of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and two of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate, and also seven of every kind of bird, male and female to keep their various kinds alive throughout the earth."
Genesis 7:2,3

On the other hand, look at 7:8,

"Pairs of clean and unclean animals, of birds and of all creatures that move along the ground, male and female, came to Noah and entered the ark as God had commanded them. Genesis 7:8,9

Verses two and three speak of two pairs and seven pairs, while verses eight and nine speak only of pairs. How does one reconcile this apparent problem? We need to remember that in this paragraph the author is trying to give an overview rather than a historical statement. Verses two and three are the definitive statement. There were two pairs of the unclean animals. There were also seven pairs of the clean animals. The difference was apparently because the clean animals were going to be used for sacrifice and the inclusion of seven pairs tended to guarantee the survival of these species.

Notice in verse nine, the author says,

"As God had commanded Noah." Genesis 7:9

It is interesting that in the Hebrew, the word "God" is "Elohim" while in the rest of the chapter the author uses the unspeakable name, "Jehovah." Whatever else may be involved, one must remember that throughout this story you find both names being used. In almost every instance, the name "Jehovah" is associated with an expression of justice while the name "Elohim" is almost always associated with an expression of mercy. If one stresses either of these names to the exclusion of the other, one has a stilted view of who God is. The elements of mercy and justice are always involved together in identifying who God really is.

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Verse 11 is one of those instances where the author attempts to be very specific about when an event took place. Notice what he says,

"In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month - on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened." Genesis 7:11

An attempt was made to identify specifically just when this catastrophic event took place. This does not mean that it took place on February 17, but it does attempt to associate the event with a specific date.

Notice, in verse 12, that water came from two specific sources. The author speaks of "springs of the great deep" as well as "floodgates of the heavens". Water from beneath the earth and from the heavens above the earth burst forth and began to cover the earth.

We never stop to think of it, but if the "springs of the great deep burst forth," that would probably mean scalding hot water. It would be like a volcanic eruption with steam hotter than boiling water. Thus, it is more than accumulating water that covers the earth to destroy all other forms of life, but apparently there was also scalding, burning water from deep within the earth.

Verse 12 indicates that there was continuous rain for 40 days and 40 nights. This is an astounding flood situation. It would be more than frightening even in our times.

7:13-24 The Flood Killed All Other Life

As previously indicated, Genesis contains time frames which are very general and others which are quite specific. Notice the way the author words verse 13,

"On that very day Noah and his sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, together with his wife and the wives of his three sons, entered the ark." Genesis 7:13

The notation here, "on that very day," seems quite specific. The problem, however, is that we can not be dogmatic about which day that was. Could it have been the day the rains began? Could it be seven days before the rain began? On the other hand, it could be that it was on the very day that water from deep within the earth and rain out of heaven began to cover the earth. Ultimately, we can not speak authoritatively as to which it might have been.

As happens so often in Genesis, the author is trying to show that the commands of God were implicitly obeyed. God commanded Noah to take his sons and their wives and go into the ark and they did. God commanded that the animals and their mates come to Noah and they did.

Notice also, that the text mentions each of Noah's sons separately. The author could have just said, the sons of Noah, but he did not. He mentioned each separately, but Noah he mentions three times. The three boys and their wives were not saved because of their righteousness. They were saved because of the obedience of Noah. It is not surprising that Noah is mentioned three times in this paragraph. It is clear that in each of these three mentions of Noah's name, God is dealing strictly with him and not the rest of the family. God had called Noah to this task and dealt exclusively with him during the duration of the preparation.

LESSON 4

The author mentions the animals and their mates. He mentions the birds and their mates. Again, this is not repetition as such, it is an emphasis upon the fact that everything happened exactly as God had decreed.

Verse sixteen is a beautiful statement,

"The animals going in were male and female of every living thing, as God [Elohim] commanded Noah. Then the Lord [Jehovah] shut him in." Genesis 7:16

Notice that again the author uses the two different names of God to relay this message of Divine action. The author uses the name "Elohim", which stresses the mercy of God, to describe how God gave instructions concerning the things that were to be taken into the ark. Noah was to take his wife, his sons, his sons' wives, and specific numbers of every kind of animal. This also implies God's restrictions on the things that were not to be taken into the ark. By the same token, the author uses the name "Jehovah", which stresses the mercy of God, to identify the fact that when they were all inside the ark, God [Jehovah] shut the door to the ark to keep them in and the water out.

The fact that water covered the entire face of the earth is miraculous to us. To think of the ark 15 cubits, or more than 22 feet above the tops of the mountains is nothing short of a miracle.

In verse 19 the author is trying to describe the indescribable. The author says,

"They rose greatly on the earth and all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered." Genesis 7:19

The Hebrew text is more deliberate than this. It literally says,

"And the waters were mighty exceedingly, exceedingly..." Genesis 7:19

The Hebrew word "meod" "exceedingly", is used twice to show strong emphasis, literally "exceedingly, exceedingly" or "much, much." One "exceedingly" wasn't enough to get the reader's attention, so he repeated it in good Hebrew fashion to say that if "exceedingly" meant huge or the most you could imagine, it was even more than that! It was beyond human imagination. This was water flowing with force sufficient to uproot trees and destroy buildings and life itself.

Verse 20 is a restatement for purposes of emphasis. The author took pains to convey not only the idea, but also the emphasis. Some scholars object to verse 20 because they say there is not that much water on our planet. The bodies of water on the earth are not sufficient to flood the earth to a height of more than 22 feet, as Genesis describes. That is not, however, the extent of our water resource. There are great bodies of water under the earth and we do not know how extensive these are.

There is a summary statement in verse 21. Go back to Genesis 6:17, where God said, "Everything on earth will perish." Then notice that 7:21 is evidence that this was fulfilled. Every living thing on earth, except those in the ark, was destroyed. Notice how meticulously the author describes the completeness of the destruction.

1. "Every living thing that moved on the earth perished." 7:21
 - a. Birds
 - b. Livestock (Note the difference the author draws between the animals. Livestock usually refers to cattle and sheep – domesticated animals – while wild

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animals refers to all others. From this one might infer that by this time people had domesticated animals much as we have today.)

- c. Wild animals
 - d. All creatures that swarm over the earth
 - e. All mankind
2. "Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died." 7:22
 3. "Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out." 7:23
 - a. Men
 - b. Animals
 - c. Creatures that move along the ground
 - d. Birds of the air

The words "wiped out", "maha" in Hebrew, mean more than the fact that the animals and birds died. It is the same word that Moses used in his prayer after Israel sinned concerning the golden calf. Moses said,

"But now, please forgive their sin - but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written." Exodus 32:32

The word "blot" is exactly the same as used in Genesis 7:23. It carries the idea of total removal. God removed all forms of life from the earth as an eraser removes a name from a piece of paper. Study the list. Note that there is no mention of any seagoing animals or of fish. This appears to be a single exception to what was in process. The author is painstakingly and emphatically stating and restating that all other life, except that which was in the ark, was totally destroyed. He finally summarized the idea by saying

"Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark." Genesis 7:23

The author is making it clear that God is starting over with mankind. This is a picture of God's concern for creation of all forms.

Verse 24 is a single sentence, but it summarizes five months, 150 days, of the duration of the flood. We can only surmise what happened and how the people on the ark dealt with this experience. Can you imagine the concerns that would develop in the minds of Noah and his family as they waited 150 days for the water to subside? Think of all the feeding they had to do; the care they had to provide. This was a long way from a pleasure cruise. Add to this that people had probably never ridden on water before. That would heighten the anxiety level considerably. Just the inability to look out and see what was happening would be enough to disturb many people. God had patiently waited, for ten generations, for mankind to repent of their wrongdoing. Finally God's justice required that He punish evil. In this one can see clearly both the mercy and the justice of God. You see God both as Elohim and as Jehovah.

In the story of "the flood", the sovereignty of God is spotlighted. God had commanded His people to be obedient and holy. When His will is rejected, He will judge the guilty. In the midst of His judgment, He will also show mercy. It is not the picture of an angry despot fuming with revenge. The mercy of God in His judgment is even demonstrated in His names. The author uses both "Jehovah" and "Elohim", justice and mercy to describe God's sovereign power.

LESSON 4

You and I live every moment of every day in the presence of that Almighty Power which is at once thoroughly just and equally merciful. As you contemplate what you have learned about God in this passage, what impact will your discoveries make on the way you think about obeying the command of God? How will your attitude toward God be different because of this study? How will it affect the way you think of God's Mercy when you fail?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 5

GENESIS 8:1 – 9:28

1. There are eight paragraphs in this portion of Scripture. On the chart which follows, write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

8: 1–5	
8:6–12	
8:13–19	
8:20–22	
9:1–7	
9:8–17	
9:18, 19	
9:20–28	

2. In 8:1-5, the author describes the receding of the flood waters. In 8:1, the author said, "But God remembered Noah..." What does this mean? In the story of Noah, God acted to destroy life in the flood. God was also the one who acted to bring the flood to a close. What does this tell you about God?
3. In 8:6–12, Noah released a raven and a dove from the ark. Why did he release them? Why do you think he chose these birds as opposed to others? Why do you think the author specifically identified the kind of branch the dove brought back to the ark?
4. In 8:13-19, the author describes the exit from the ark by Noah and his family. Make a chart of the events and dates, in chapters seven and eight, associated with the flood. Study the list. What facts can you learn from the list? How much time elapsed between the entry into the ark and their exit from it? How much time elapsed between the point where the land emerged from the water, and 8:14, where the land was dry?
5. In 8:20-22, the author describes what happened after Noah emerged from the ark. Put yourself into his position. What would you feel as you came through the door? Notice the sequence of events. What does this tell you? Why would Noah make a "burnt offering" rather than some other kind? In these verses, observe God's response to Noah's offering. What does it tell you about God? God makes a promise in these verses. What is the essence of that promise?
6. In 9:1-7, God blessed Noah and his sons. What was that blessing? What limits or responsibilities does God place on Noah and his family?
7. God established a covenant with Noah and his seed in 9:8-17. Why was "Noah's seed" included? What promise did God make to them? God offered a "token" or "sign" of His covenant. What reason did God give for using this "token"? In 9:15, the author said, "And I will remember my covenant ..." What did God mean? Could God forget?

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8. In 9:18-19, the author identifies the sons of Noah as "Shem, Ham and Japheth." What are the possible reasons for listing them in this order? The author adds a footnote, "Ham is the father of Canaan." Why would he do this?
9. In 9:20-28, tragedy strikes in Noah's household. What was the tragedy in this paragraph? If Ham is the one who saw the nakedness of Noah, why was the curse placed upon his son, Canaan? There is a contrast between Ham on the one hand, and his brothers, Shem and Japheth, on the other. What is the contrast? What does it mean? What is the importance of telling the number of years that Noah lived after the flood?
10. As you review these chapters, what have you learned about God?
11. How will the study of this section affect your relationship with God?

LESSON 5: GENESIS 8:2 – 9:29

Chapter Eight: The Flood Ends

8:1-5 The Waters Receded

We tend to associate the name of Noah with the flood. We should remember, however, that God is the one who is acting. We need to watch to see what God is doing in this experience.

There are only three sentences in this paragraph -Verses 1–3, verse four and verse five. Our text reads,

"But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark..." Genesis 8:1

The chapter begins with the word "but". This indicates that a contrast is in progress. The author is contrasting the judgment of God, in the form of the flood, with the mercy of God in His dealings with Noah and those with him in the ark.

The name "God" – "Elohim" - is almost always associated with mercy. In this instance that is clearly the case. When something of this nature happens, one should be alert to see why the author has chosen to change the pattern. One must determine what changed the attribute of judgment into the attribute of mercy.

Another thing that captures our attention is that the text says, "But God remembered." Is the author suggesting that God can forget? If so, what does this do to the idea that God is Omniscient or all-knowing?

The word "remembered" literally means to kneel or to bless. "Remember" is an excellent word choice for this translation. This is a figure of speech with which we are quite familiar. We speak of "remembering" someone in our will. We do not mean that we have forgotten them until that moment. We mean that they will be benefited by the provisions we make in the will. This is exactly what the author is saying about God. God remembered Noah; God benefited him; God blessed him in a special way. The benefit that God provided for Noah, and all those in the ark, was that He caused the waters to begin to recede.

The author says,

"And he sent a wind over the earth and the waters receded." Genesis 8:1

There are two basic interpretations of this sentence.

1. Some translate it exactly as it is written.
2. The word for "wind" is the same word which is sometimes translated "spirit". Some translate this passage saying that "God sent His Spirit upon the earth." These interpreters reason that had the author meant wind, he would have said that God sent the wind upon the water because the earth was covered by water at this point. Instead, the author said, "He sent a wind over the earth...". The truth is that we can not be dogmatic because the language is inconclusive at this point.

We need to remember that the author is trying to describe something that was totally foreign to anyone's thinking. This kind of thing had never happened before. He struggled trying to put this experience into words. In verse two, the author is describing how the flooding came to a stop. He used images much like what we might use today. He says,

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"Now the springs of the deep and the floodgates of the heavens had been closed, and the rain had stopped falling from the sky." Genesis 8:2

It is a bit like saying that the faucet had been turned off. This does not mean that the water was going away. It just means that the increase of water had stopped.

This whole process of removing the water took place during the five months that Noah and his family were in the ark. It was a gradual process.

Verse four gives us, again, a time frame. The author speaks of the 17th day of the seventh month. This does not mean July 17. It does mean that this whole process began in the second month and it was now the seventh month. The emphatic statement of the date reminds us that we are dealing with specific events which took place at a precise time and a given place. The author is saying that on that particular day the ark came to rest on Mt. Ararat. The author is not saying that all the water was gone. It simply means that the water had receded sufficiently for the ark to touch land. There could have been hundreds of feet of water still remaining on the earth.

In verses four and five the author describes how the water receded. Over a three month period the water continued to recede until you could see the tops of the mountains. Again, this does not mean that all the water was gone. It had gone down far enough that the tops of the mountains emerged from the water.

8:6-12 Noah Released a Raven and Two Doves

This paragraph sounds like a single event. This is probably not true. It appears that Noah and his family and all the animals waited another 40 days inside the ark. Imagine what that must have been like. We tend to become restless if we are kept indoors by a snow storm or other inclement weather. Imagine 40 days with no place to go and nothing to see but the family and the animals.

Notice how the author described Noah's way to find out what was happening outside the ark,

"... Noah opened the window he had made in the ark and sent out a raven, and it kept flying back and forth until the water had dried up from the earth." Genesis 8:6,7

This does not mean that Noah sent out a raven and the bird kept flying until all the water dried up. It does mean that Noah sent out the raven and it flew around and then returned. Later he sent the bird out and it flew around. Finding no place to land, the bird returned to the ark. Again, Noah sent out the raven and it flew around looking for a place to land and finding none, returned to the ark. This continued to happen until at last the water had receded enough for the bird to find a landing place. We have no way to determine how long this experience lasted. It is important to remember that the author is trying to describe an experience, not a time sequence.

At this point, according to verse eight, Noah sent out a dove. The author indicated the purpose of this action,

"Then he sent out a dove to see if the water had receded from the surface of the ground." Genesis 8:8

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According to 8:5, the mountain tops were visible at this point, but not much more. A dove would not rest on a mountain top. It would rest in a tree or on the ground, if it were dry. This seems to account for the reason Noah chose to send out a dove.

The dove, in verse nine, could find no place to land. Apparently water still covered everything where the dove might find a place to alight. Because of this, the dove returned to Noah in the ark.

It appears that Noah expected that the water had receded enough so that the dove could find a place to land. This suggests that there must have been a degree of disappointment on the part of Noah. He brought the dove back into the safety of the ark to wait until the water had receded farther.

He waited another seven days, according to verse 10, before sending the dove out again to see what had happened. Noah wanted to know if the water had dried up as yet.

Notice what the author says in verse 11,

*"When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth."
Genesis 8:11*

There are two surprises in this verse. The first is that the dove had found a fresh leaf to pluck. This is a surprise because water had covered everything and virtually nothing would appear to be fresh. Nevertheless, here was a fresh leaf. Secondly, it is surprising that the dove plucked an olive leaf. The olive leaf has a somewhat bitter taste and the dove would not normally choose it. One can not be sure about the reason for this. It is possible that this is the only leaf that was available. It is also possible that it had symbolic meaning, as the olive leaf is sometimes associated with Israel and with peace.

Armed with this new information, Noah knew more than he had known before, but there were still some uncertainties. It is not surprising that verse 12 indicates that he waited an additional seven days before sending the dove out again. This time he got the conclusive information that he needed -the dove did not return.

8:13-19 Noah Left the Ark

Verse 13 is another of the time designations which the author uses to attempt to give us authenticity and perspective on this experience. The author said,

"By the first day of the first month of Noah's six hundred and first year, the water had dried up from the earth." Genesis 8:13

In 7:11, the author indicated that in the six hundredth year and the second month, the flood began. Now he speaks of the six hundred and first year and the first month. They have been in the ark for nearly 11 months. That is a long time to be cooped up in a building which is only 450 feet long, by 75 feet wide by 45 feet high.

When the author speaks of the water being dried up, one needs to remember that there are different levels of dryness. Noah, at this point, decided to take a look for himself. He removed the covering from the window, or opening, in the ark. He could see that the water was no longer standing on the ground. It appeared to be dry enough to walk upon, but probably did not seem to be completely dry.

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According to verse 24, Noah apparently stayed in the ark for an additional 26 days. It says,

*"By the twenty-seventh day of the second month the earth was completely dry."
Genesis 8:14*

There may be a thousand levels of dryness. By the author's statement, we assume that he means the ground had returned to about the same level of dryness that was present before the flood began. We should remember, however, that they did not come back to the exact same place from which the ark first moved. At the beginning of the flood, the ark was not in the mountains. It must have been to have been in an arid region in the vicinity of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

We need to put the time frame for this story in perspective. A chart of the events may be helpful.

7:11	Rain Fell - 600th Year, 2nd Month, 27th Day
7:17	40 Days Of Rain
7:24	Noah Stayed In The Ark 150 Days
8: 4	The Ark Came To Rest - 7th Month, 17th Day
8: 5	The Waters Receded Until The 10th Mo., 1st day
8: 6	After 40 Days Noah Opened Window - Sent Bird
8:10	He Waited 7 Days Before Sending Dove
8:10	He Again Sent Dove - Brought Olive Branch
8:12	After 7 Days, Sent Dove - Dove Did Not Return
8:13	601st Year, 1st Month, 1st Day - Ground Drying
8:14	601st Year, 2nd Month, 27th Day - Ground Dry

From these verses it is clear that the entire experience took at least one year and ten days. Quite often, people think of the time in the ark as only 40 days. The difference between 40 days and a year and ten days is substantial.

In verses 15 – 17, God gave Noah instructions about leaving the ark. Noah was to take his family, every animal, bird and creeping thing that was with him and leave the ark. The announced purpose, which God gave Noah, was expressed in this fashion,

*"So they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number upon it."
Genesis 8:17*

It is clear that God wanted them to repopulate the earth. They were to resume natural reproductive functions. They are to have young and the young are to survive.

Verses 18 and 19 report that Noah and his family did exactly as God had commanded them to do. They left the ark and drove all the other inhabitants from what had been their safe haven for over a year.

The author presents this "exodus" in an apparently casual fashion,

*"So Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives." Gen-
esis 8:18*

Think about this for a moment. Imagine being confined to an area 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. Claustrophobia would really become a problem. You are shar-

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ing this space with all the animal types God created. Just imagine what that ark smelled like with a full year's supply of maturing manure! "So Noah came out..." You bet he did! I suspect he ran!

The description in verse 19 indicates that the other inhabitants of the ark came out by families.

8:20-22 Noah Worships; God Covenants

In this brief paragraph, it is our privilege to eavesdrop on one of the most beautiful and delicate exchanges to be recorded in Scripture. Notice the way the author begins,

"Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and taking some of the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it." Genesis 8:20

God did not instruct Noah to worship. This is a glimpse into the heart of a grateful man. There are some delightful pieces of information about Noah and about God in this brief sentence:

1. Noah built the altar to the Lord. In the Hebrew, this name for God is Jehovah, "yhwh". It is the name of God which identifies His eternity, but more importantly, it is associated with God's justice. The sacrifice which Noah made was an expression of gratitude for the mercy of God in sparing his life and those of his family. It is not an offering of appeasement as offered by those who worship idols.
2. The offering he made was a "burnt offering." The burnt offering was very special. It was used to express the complete surrender and dedication of a person to God. It was a way to express a desire to establish a relationship with God at a deeper level of purity and commitment than ever before. It was this message that Noah attempted to convey as he killed some of the clean animals that had been reserved for sacrifice. Because more than two of these animals had been brought into the ark there were still enough for propagation after the sacrifice. As the bodies of these animals were totally consumed, Noah was saying, "may my life be completely expended; totally consumed in a relationship of service and holiness befitting the mercy of God." It is an act of worship consecrated to pleasing God for His mercy and grace.

Did you ever wonder where Noah got the fire in order to make the sacrifice? Some scholars believe that God sent fire to consume the offering as in the case of Elijah. That is an interesting idea, but it is not so stated in Scripture. We honestly do not know the origin of this consuming fire.

Verses 21 and 22 are God's response to this beautiful sacrifice to His mercy. The author uses a metaphor to express the Divine response. Notice his words,

"And Jehovah smelled the sweet savor; and Jehovah said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground anymore for man's sake..." Genesis 8:21

God has no physical being, so He has no nose and does not smell. By the same token, God has no heart that pumps blood. Nevertheless, it is entirely appropriate for the author to use these metaphors to display the unthinkable in terms finite human beings can comprehend. The author is trying to convey to his readers the idea that God received the sacrifice with pleasure. I suspect that burning animals do not have a sweet smell. The idea that is being conveyed, however, is very accurate just the same. God takes pleasure, not in the consumption of an animal carcass, but in the obedience of a servant who loves and obeys

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Him. God takes delight in the relationship of commitment and dedication that Noah seeks to establish at a deeper level of holiness than ever before.

God was so touched by Noah's sacrifice that he took an oath,

"The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: 'Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done. As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.'" Genesis 8:21,22

This is an implied oath. In Isaiah 54:9,10, the author speaks of this event,

"To me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth..." Isaiah 54:9

This, for all intents and purposes, is an oath whose significance is that there are no circumstances under which it can be changed. No matter what happens, God took an oath with Himself and His word can not change.

Notice, first, that God did not say this to Noah. The text says that God "said in his heart..." This is something God thought, not something He shared with His servant Noah. God was so moved by Noah's expression of worship and commitment that He vowed never to do again what He had just done. God did not mistake Noah's sacrifice to mean that mankind would no longer sin and rebel. It meant that in spite of man's continual rebellion, God would limit Himself and never destroy the earth this way, no matter how badly mankind might conduct themselves. God was affirming that the order of things, the seasons, the day/night order, the cycle of planting and reaping, all would continue uninterrupted as long as the earth continues.

Notice, again, how God spoke about mankind,

"Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood." Genesis 8:21

It appears that God is saying that mankind is so bent upon his rebellious ways that there is no hope of their turning from evil on their own initiative. This seems to be another reason that God took the oath with Himself that He would not deal with evil in this way again. God did not say that all would be well forever. He simply said that this form of divine response would never be repeated.

Notice, however, that there is a time limit placed upon this oath. The author quotes God, in verse 22, saying,

"As long as the earth endures seed– time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease." Genesis 8:22

God is saying that this will not happen as long as the earth endures. The implication in this oath is that there will be a time when the earth will no longer endure. At that point, the oath is completed and everything can be destroyed.

Chapter Nine

The Covenant With Noah

Reading chapter nine is a little bit like creeping into a place of worship and eavesdropping as someone talks with God. It is as though God has wiped the slate clean and He is beginning all over again with mankind.

9:1–7 God Blesses Noah's Family

Following the burnt offering which Noah made, God now speaks to him. "Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them 'Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.'" Genesis 9:1

The word "blessed" literally means "to kneel." When a son was to receive the family inheritance, he was called upon to kneel before his father and then the gifts were bestowed upon him. That is the picture being portrayed here. God is bestowing great gifts upon Noah and his children.

God begins by commanding them to reproduce. A number of scholars have taken this to infer that all during the time they were in the ark the entire reproductive process was interrupted both among people and animals. This may be true, but there is no Biblical evidence, other than this inference, to substantiate such a view. Whatever else mankind was to accomplish, they were to maintain an abundant population on the earth.

God continued with the blessing,

"The fear and dread of you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air, upon every creature that moves along the ground, and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hands." Genesis 9:2

Adam was to have dominion over the animal world. The word "fear", in 9:2, can be interpreted by either "fright" or "awe". According to its use, in this verse, the idea of fright seems more appropriate. The word "dread", on the other hand, is most interesting. It is used in Isaiah 31:9 to describe a military leader whose courage and spirit have been broken. It is a brokenness that creates a sense of panic. Animals tend to be afraid of anything that can do them harm.

God continues with His blessing of Noah and his family,

"Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything." Genesis 9:3

Isn't that just like God! Mankind not only sins, but adopts evil as a rebellious lifestyle from early youth to the grave. When Divine longsuffering came to an end, God judged the evil, but when it was all over God blessed the remnant of mankind in a greater way than they had been before their disobedience. At creation, mankind did not have permission to eat any living animal. As this text indicates, they had been confined to the consumption of green plants. Now God was giving them freedom to eat of everything that He created.

Here is more evidence of how the book of Genesis gives us details of the lives of our early forefathers, but in the final analysis it is giving us a picture of who God is and what He is like.

As we said, God is beginning again with mankind. When God first created Adam and Eve, He gave them both commandments and blessings. One of those blessings was that

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they could eat of almost every tree of the garden. This was quickly followed by a prohibition from eating from a tree in the midst of the garden.

The same kind of thing is happening again. God has now given mankind not only permission to eat of all the trees he had created, but of everything that lives. Along with that blessing comes another prohibition. Notice what the author says as he quotes God,

"But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it." Genesis 9:4

The word "but" indicates a contrast is in process. God is contrasting the gift of having not only the green plants for food, but also the animals, with the prohibition from eating anything that has its lifeblood still in it. This is a bit different from the first understanding God had with Adam, but it is in essence the same. To eat of the lifeblood was thought to be a desecration of the gift of life, for it was known that life was in the blood. God was not so concerned about the blood as He was that mankind have due respect for the gift of life that He had given.

God continued,

"And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man." Genesis 9:5,6

Here again is an insight into the character of God. He had just given man a prohibition concerning the eating of flesh with the blood in it. This was immediately followed by God's assurance that anyone, whether man or beast, who sheds the blood of a person would also be killed. This places a very high value on human life. When God said,

"Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed;..." Genesis 9:6

There are some scholars who look upon these words as a definite prohibition against suicide as well as murder. It is clear that this is by way of implication rather than a pointed prohibition.

In 9:5 God decrees concerning the animal that kills a person. This idea is carefully observed in Exodus 21:28-29, where God made it clear that if an animal kills a man, that animal must be killed.

In verse seven, of Genesis nine, God reiterates His instruction that the human race be expanded,

"Be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it." Genesis 9:7

The instruction here does not include the animal world. This is not surprising, for in 8:17 provision has already been made for that. We must remember that there were many times more species of animals preserved in the ark than there were people altogether.

Notice that three separate terms are used in this sentence to suggest the expansion of the human race: Fruitful, multiply and increase. In the Hebrew, the terms are a little different, though the intent is the same.

The first term is "be fruitful". It is the root for the word "fruit." In other words people should spread as fruit does. From one seed comes a tree on which hundreds of apples grow each year.

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The second term is "multiply". It is interesting that it is the root from which the Word for locust is taken. Let the people be over the land like locusts on a field.

The third term is "swarm". It is a picture of something that is teeming with little creatures; of bees swarming on a hive.. Let the earth "teem" with the offspring of Noah's family.

For purposes of emphasis, God is saying in a number of ways that the human family is to increase greatly on the earth.

9:8-17 The Rainbow Covenant

It is at this point that we enter into that sanctuary where God and His servant speak in quiet confidence. We are privileged to listen in as history making agreements are made.

Notice that God, for the first time, speaks to both Noah and his sons. This is important because this is not just a covenant with Noah, but with him and with all his descendants. We are a part of that privileged posterity.

God says,

"I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you - the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you -every living creature on earth." Genesis 9:8-10

God has established the boundaries of those with whom He is about to enter into covenant. It includes all those beings who were in the ark as well as their descendants.

A covenant is an agreement entered into by two interested parties. This covenant is binding upon both groups. A covenant with a sign was not to be broken by either party except by death. It was absolutely dependable. That which one promises, one must do.

God said,

"I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth." Genesis 9:11

In this part of the covenant God has made several commitments:

1. The terms of the covenant are "never again." This is as broad a time frame as it is possible for human beings to grasp.
2. God promised that never again would all life be cut off by the waters of a flood. God did not say that all life would never again be destroyed. He did say it would not be done by means of a flood.
3. God promised that never again would there be a flood that would destroy the earth. Again, this does not mean that the earth would not be destroyed. It does mean that it will not be done by a flood.

This is a strong promise, a beautiful picture of the character of God. God found it necessary to act in judgment upon mankind, but in the midst of that justice the mercy of God is painfully obvious.

Covenants are characteristically brief and include no more than is absolutely necessary. God is not satisfied. He must commit Himself even farther,

"This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in

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the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth." Genesis 9:12-16

Again, there are several specific announcements in this covenant:

1. It is an agreement between God and every creature He preserved in the ark.
2. It is a covenant that does not expire with the participants. For one thing, God does not die. For another, when these people and animals die, the covenant continues to be in effect with their progeny. It is an eternal covenant.
3. The sign of this covenant is the rainbow. The text is not conclusive as to whether the conditions necessary for the formation of a rainbow were placed in effect at this time or whether a previous phenomenon was now highlighted and given special meaning. My own preference is that God took an already existing phenomenon, highlighted it and gave it special meaning. No one can speak with certainty at this point.

Do you remember having seen a rainbow? If you do, you will remember that the rainbow starts on the earth and moves up into the heavens forming an arc that returns to the ground. Earth and heaven are tied together in the rainbow as they are bound up in the covenant which the rainbow symbolizes.

4. Further, whenever clouds appear, and a rainbow appears in the clouds, God will remember this covenant. This is a monumental commitment. Only on days ending in "Y" are there clouds in which a rainbow can be seen somewhere in the world. This means that every day of every year God will be reminded that He has made a covenant never to destroy the earth with water again.

This whole picture includes an anthropomorphism —speaking of God in human terms such as the hand of God, etc. God spoke of His "Remembering" the covenant. He can not forget it. The rainbow reminds us of the many mercies of God, particularly freedom from fear of another flood.

God is intentionally making this covenant impossible for Him to violate. The purpose of this is to give human beings confidence that they do not need to fear that this will happen again.

In verse 17, God establishes the sign of His covenant a second time with Noah. It is as though God is saying, "I want it to be absolutely clear; you do not need to be afraid. I will never do that again under any circumstances."

By the way, what was Noah's commitment in this covenant? Notice that God makes no demands upon him whatsoever. On the other hand, isn't it interesting that this covenant immediately follows God's prohibition against eating flesh with the blood in it and the taking of life? Could it be that these are the terms God solicits from His creation? What does this say about the low value placed on life in the world today?

9:18-19 Noah and His Family Abandon The Ark

The author uses this brief paragraph to identify who it was that would carry out the directive of Jehovah to be fruitful and multiply in the earth.

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Notice, in verse 18, that it identifies Noah's three sons — Shem, Ham and Japheth. The author goes on, however, to give additional information only about Ham. The information that he gives is that Ham is the father of Canaan. Canaan was the fourth son of Ham. His lineage contains such names and places as: Sidon, Heth, the Jebusites, Amorites, Hivites, Girgashites, and others. Most of these are known for their evil tendencies. It is puzzling to us that from one family can come such diverse children. It happens today and we are just as shocked. It appears that the author listed this information about the lineage of Ham because of the tragedy which is about to be described.

It is interesting that God, who is all-knowing, would protect in the ark all the sons of Noah when one of those sons was definitely prone to evil ways. This God did in view of the fact that He had just destroyed the face of the earth because of the sinful ways of the people. This gives one an insight into the character of God, the merciful judge.

9:20-28 Noah Got Drunk

It is difficult to see how this paragraph fits into the rest of the story of Noah. One of the important factors about Scripture is that it makes no attempt to cover up the flaws in those whose lives and experiences it reports. Notice, what the author said about Noah,

*"And Noah **began** to be a husbandman, and planted a vineyard:" Genesis 9:20*

There are several pieces of information here. First, it indicates that Noah **began** to be a husbandman. This suggests that he had not been one previously. He had sustained himself in some other way. Secondly, it indicates that he planted a vineyard. This suggests that they may have planted vines before, but they had not planted these vines in rows and in abundance as we remember a vineyard. It also suggests that they had discovered that if you press the grapes and let the juice stand, it will ferment. This was probably the discovery of beverage alcohol. Whatever the situation, Noah drank the juice from his vineyard and became drunk.

There is much controversy about what it means when the author speaks of Noah's shame.

"When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent." Genesis 9:21

The message of the English text is that Noah lay naked inside his tent. Some scholars say, however, that the Hebrew literally says "her tent." This suggests that Noah may actually have been in his wife's tent. One thing to be said for this position is that Leviticus 18:8 says that one "should not uncover the nakedness of his father's wife because this is your father's nakedness." One problem created by this position is that one would not be sure whether the author was speaking of the father's nakedness, the mother's nakedness, or both. Still other scholars say that Ham took advantage of his father's defenseless condition and participated in perverted sexual practices. Whatever the truth may be, it is clear that this was viewed as a horrible tragedy and great punishment was deserved.

The author described the actions of Ham in these terms,

"Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside." Genesis 9:22

We usually think that Ham made one mistake. The author really speaks of at least two:

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1. He viewed his father's nakedness. The Hebrew here speaks of not just a glance at his father's nakedness, but a prolonged, intense look at his father's nakedness. This is particularly true if "his father's nakedness" is a reference to their viewing of the nakedness of their mother.
2. Ham publicly told his brothers, Shem and Japheth, what he had seen. It is one thing to see such an embarrassing scene. It is totally another, to broadcast such information broadly. It is possible to translate these words in such a way that Ham is gloating over the humiliation of his father that he had just seen.

Verse 23 begins with the word "but". This usually suggests a contrast. It is precisely this in the present passage. Verse 22 describes Ham's reaction to this embarrassing situation. Ham used his father's compromising condition as an opportunity to stare at and make derogatory remarks about his shame. Verse 23 describes a very different response on the part of the other two brothers. When informed of the humiliating condition, the other brothers took every precaution so as not to view the bodies and avoid further disgracing their father.

Verse 24 through 27 describe Noah's reaction when he awakened from his drunkenness. He found out what had happened. It may be that he wondered how he got covered up by the garment and began to ask questions. It may be that his wife or the other two brothers told him. We can not be certain. In verse 24 the text speaks of Ham as "his youngest son." Others translate this as "his small son." Whichever that may be, Noah was furious. He waxed prophetic, saying,

"Cursed by Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers." Genesis 9:25

The fact that Noah identified "Canaan" specifically has led some interpreters to believe that it was "Canaan" who uncovered Noah's nakedness, and not his father Ham. We can not be sure. The curse, however, is vivid. Canaan is to be the lowest form of a servant to his family. Such a curse did not make such things happen. We can be assured, however, that the family would take careful note of this and act accordingly. Canaan would be treated in this fashion by the family.

In verse 26, Noah changed the tone of his prophetic utterance by saying,

"Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem! May Canaan be the slave of Shem." Genesis 9:26

Shem is the forefather of the Semitic people. Notice that Noah did not pronounce a blessing on Shem, but upon Jehovah, the God of Shem. It is interesting that Noah used two names for God. He referred to God as Jehovah – the eternal, just one. He then referred to God as Elohim –the all-powerful, but merciful one. The significance of this might well be that Shem's judge was the God of mercy and blessing. Immediately following this statement Noah gave his final announcement or last will. In it he indicated that Canaan was to be the servant of his uncle Shem.

In verse 27, Noah also spoke of Japheth. He said,

"May God extend the territory of Japheth, may Japheth live in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be his slave..." Genesis 9:27

The sons of Noah are usually listed in this order:

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Shem, Ham and Japheth. It does not mean that this is their chronological relationship. It appears that Ham was the youngest. We will see later, that there is some confusion about whether Shem or Japheth was the eldest son and thus the heir.

It is clear •that both Shem and Japheth are blessed while Canaan is cursed. It is just as clear that Shem received a greater blessing than Japheth. Both Shem and Japheth are masters over Canaan. Japheth is to live in the tents of Shem. This means that he is under the direction of Shem. Shem, however, is under the direction of no one but God Himself. This is explained by some scholars by saying that it was Shem who decided to cover the nakedness of his father and then carried it out. Their support for this idea comes, in part, from the fact that in verse 23, it says,

"But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders. Genesis 9:23

The word "took" is written in the singular. This is unusual because the subject of the sentence – "Shem and Ham" is clearly plural. For whatever reason, Shem is clearly being pronounced the head of the family and Japheth will live under his direction while the descendants of Canaan are to be servants to the whole family. In effect, this is the last will and testament of Noah.

People are puzzled by this experience. How could a man who stood alone against the taunts and evil of the rest of mankind, change and get drunk and bring a dark cloud on his entire heritage? We do not really know how this happened. It is not foreign to our understanding, however. There have been people in many generations who took a strong stand for God and then in a weak moment behaved in a disappointing way. We ask the same question about Abraham, when he lied about his sister. We wonder in a similar fashion about David, when he sinned with Bathsheba. We must remember that this is just as shocking today. At the least, it reminds us that though they feared God, still they were human.

Verse 28 is Noah's obituary. Noah lived 350 years after the flood. He could tell his grand-children and his great grand-children of what God had done on their behalf. At the age of 950, Noah participated in that final human experience, his death.

These kinds of embarrassment have probably been found in almost every era. Ours certainly is not an exception. We need to notice carefully the extreme depths of the curse which was placed upon Ham because of his tragic action. God takes drastic actions against such severe expressions of evil.

In a world where these things are done and lightly condoned, we need to ask ourselves some searching questions. To what extent have the evil excesses of the world around me interfered with my desire to obey God? In view of the teachings of this passage, how will I consider the commands of God that I find in Scripture? What does the flawless holiness of God say about the way I live my life?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 6

GENESIS 10:2 – 11:32

1. In chapters ten and eleven, there are 17 paragraphs. On the chart that follows, please write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

10: 1	
10: 2– 5	
10: 6–14	
10:15–20	
10:21–31	
10:32	
11: 1– 9	
11:10–11	
11:12–13	
11:14–15	
11:16–17	
11: 18–19	
11:20–21	
11:22–23	
11: 24–25	
11:26	
11:27–32	

2. The paragraph, 10:1, is one sentence. What do you learn from the sentence? Noah's sons are listed, "Shem, Ham and Japheth." Does this mean that Shem was the oldest and Japheth the youngest? If not, what does it mean?
3. In 10:2-5, the author describes the lineage of Japheth. What do you learn from studying the list? What does this paragraph tell you about the progress of culture at that time? Can you suggest any reason why the author describes the lineage of only two of Japheth's seven sons?
4. In 10:6-14, the author describes the lineage of Ham. More space is devoted to the descendants of Ham than to either of the other two sons of Noah. What, if anything, does this tell you? The author's description of Nimrod is different from any other son. Why do you think this is true?
5. In 10:15-20, the author describes the lineage of Canaan separately. Can you discover any reason for this? What have you learned from the paragraph?
6. The author describes the lineage of Shem in 10:21-31. What did you learn from the paragraph? Why was Eber highlighted?
7. In 10:32, the author gives a brief summary of the chapter. What does it add to your knowledge?

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8. The author tells the story of the tower of Babel in 11:1-9. 11:1 says "The whole world had one language and a common speech." However, in 10:5,20 and 31, the author speaks of each son's family, "each with its own language." How can we account for this? Read the story again. What does it tell you about God? What motive does the author ascribe to God in confusing the languages? What difference does this make?
9. In 11:10-11, the author identifies the firstborn of Shem, Arphaxad. What information do these two sentences provide for you?
10. In 11:12-13, the author identifies Shelah, the firstborn of Arphaxad. What does this tell you? Why do you suppose there is such a wide difference between the age of Shem, 100, when Arphaxad was born, and the age of Arphaxad, 35, when Shelah was born?
11. In 11:14-15, the author identifies the first born of Shelah, Eber. What do you learn from these verses.
12. In 11:16-17, the author begins to identify the lineage of Eber. What information do you find there? Why do you think the author lists the name of Peleg, but none of the other brothers and sisters?
13. The author identifies Reu, one of the sons of Peleg, in 11:18-19. List the pieces of information you discover in this sentence. What does this tell you about the family situation of Reu?
14. In 11:20-21, you find information about Serug. List the information you found. What does this tell you about the family situation of Serug?
15. In 11:22-23, the author gives information about Nahor. What did you learn?
16. In 11:24-25, there is information about Terah. What did you discover?
17. Between 11:10 and 11:25, there is a steady decline in two areas: The age at which these men became fathers. The age at which these men died. Can you find any reasons for this?
18. What can you learn from the sentence that makes up 11:26? Were all three sons born when Terah was 70 years of age?
19. In 11:27-32, there is a very brief summary of detail about the lineage of Terah. What information did you discover? Notice when Terah left, Nahor did not accompany him. This seems most unusual. Look at chapters 24 and 31 to see if any help can be found there.
20. In all these accounts of the lineage of Noah's family, what insights have you gained into the person and character of God?
21. How will your discoveries improve the quality of your walk with God?

LESSON 6: GENESIS 10:1 – 11:32

CHAPTER TEN

The Generations Of The Sons Of Noah

The tenth chapter of Genesis is made up of six paragraphs:

1. 10: 1 – The Announcement
2. 10: 2-5 – The Sons of Jepheth
3. 10: 6-14 – The Sons of Ham
4. 10:15-20 – The Lineage of Canaan
5. 10:21-31 – The Sons of Shem
6. 10:32 – Noah's Family Becomes A Nation

Portions of Scripture that list the lineage of certain individuals, the "begets", tend to be overlooked by many Christians as they read through the Bible. It is our hope that we can point out some of the interesting information that can be gleaned from such portions of Scripture. We must remember that these portions are just as "inspired" as the logical explanations Paul gives us in Romans.

10:1 The Announcement

This chapter begins with the word "now". This suggests that we have come to a turning point in the story. The immediate context does not indicate this, but it will be obvious in a very short time.

This first paragraph consists of a single sentence. Most of the information in it has been stated previously. This tells us that the author is doing two things:

1. He is using repetition for purposes of emphasis.
2. He is now beginning a new segment of the story.

This information is stated as a foundation for that which is to follow.

Again, we should note that the three sons appear to be listed in an order that may or may not be chronological. It is entirely possible that Jepheth is the oldest son, and Ham the youngest. If this is true, then one might account for the order in the text by the fact that Shem is the forefather of Israel and as such would be first in the mind of the author. By the same token, Ham was the outcast of the family and would be considered of least importance. We should also be reminded that the Talmud, the collected writings/teachings of Jewish civil and religious law, lists the sons in this order: Japheth, Ham and Shem. We will not be able to clarify the issue beyond this point.

Notice what the author says about the three sons,

"And unto them were sons born after the flood." Genesis 10:1

At the least, this tells us that they had children following the flood. In the minds of many scholars, this wording suggests that the sons of Noah did not have children prior to the flood or during the year they were in the ark.

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10:2-5 The Sons of Japheth

According to this paragraph, the family tree of Japheth would look something like this:

<u>GOMER</u>	<u>MAGOG</u>	<u>MADAI</u>	<u>JAVAN</u>	<u>TUBAL</u>	<u>MECHECH</u>	<u>TIRAS</u>
Ashkenaz			Elishah			
Riphath			Tarshish			
Togarmah			Kittim			
			Dodanim			

This chart has been included to help you see what the author has

done. He has listed the sons of Gomer and Javan. The sons of the other five children of Japheth are not listed at all. Little is known about why this is true. The most common understanding is that these two formed new nations, and the others did not. This is not verifiable.

The fact, that the lineage of only two sons are listed, is further data that helps us understand that the author is not trying to give a full, blow-by-blow account of the entire history of Israel. He is selectively giving information that highlights the picture of who God is and what God does.

In verse five, the author says,

"The sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, The Kittim and the Dodanim. (From these the maritime peoples spread out into their territories by their clans within their nations, each with its own language.)" Genesis 10:5

The author is saying that the sons of Noah did not stay in the region of Ararat where the ark landed. The three sons of Noah spread out over vast regions of the earth. The reference to the "maritime people", points out that these people may have lived along the coastal regions of the Mediterranean Sea. It is clear that the author does not focus upon the lineage of Japheth as being primary to the story. Very little is said about some of his family and nothing about the rest.

10:6-14 The Sons of Ham

The reverse is true concerning the Sons of Ham. Though he is the outcast of the family, nearly twice as much is mentioned about his lineage as about Japheth.

Ham had four sons: Cush, Mizraim, Put and Canaan. Notice how the author identifies them.

<u>CUSH</u>	<u>MIZRAIM</u>	<u>PUT</u>	<u>CANAAN</u>
Seba	Ludites		Sidon
Havilah	Anamites		Hittites
Sabtah	Lehabites		Jebusites
Raamah	Naphtuhites		Amorites
a. Sheba	Pathrusites		Girgashites
b. Dedan	Casluhites		Hivites
Sabtecah	Capthorites		Arkites
			Sinites
			Arvadites
			Zemarites
			Hamathites

LESSON 6

Again, it should be noted that the author reports the lineage of the sons of Ham selectively. Not a word is mentioned about the lineage of Put. On the other hand, much more is said about the lineage of Canaan than any other descendant. Canaan is the one who was apparently involved in the evil of exploiting the nakedness of Noah.

Beginning in verse eight, the author gives some sidelight information about some of the people involved in this part of the family. He first mentions Nimrod. Nimrod literally means "rebel". It is generally agreed that he was one of, if not the first, to initiate idol worship. This could take many forms. It may mean that he started idol worship for himself. It may also mean that he was the first to direct other people, over whom he ruled, to join him in his evil religious pursuits. This is the more likely choice.

Doesn't it seem strange that the author takes the time to make the following report, when there is so much he could have said?

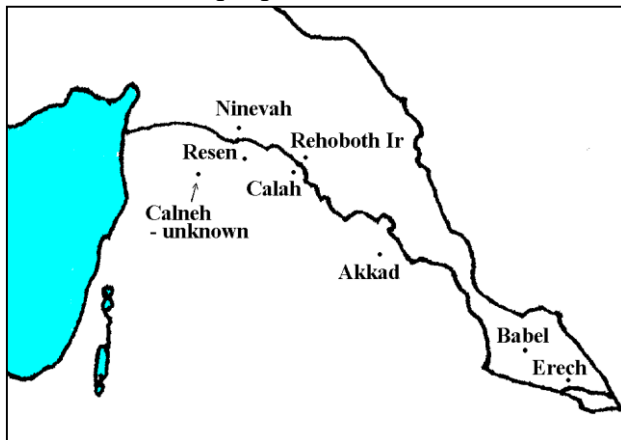
"He (Nimrod) was a mighty hunter before the Lord; that is why it is said, 'Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord.'" Genesis 10:9

The word "hunter" is a reference to what some people did to provide their food. It is often more than that, however. The name "Nimrod" was also used to suggest a person who is very diligent in his work; a person who was physically very strong; or a person who was a vicious tyrant. By the same token, it was also used to describe a person who could stalk his enemies as a hunter stalks an animal he is hunting. It describes a person who is a valiant warrior as well as the hunter for food. There is little doubt that Nimrod was a very strong ruler over people and that his rule over weaker persons was an affront to God. The phrase "before the Lord", in this instance, describes one whose tyranny is flaunted before God.

Verses 10 through 12 confirm this possibility. Notice the way the author describes this

"The first centers of his kingdom were Babylon, Erech, Akkad, and Calneh, in Shinar. From that land he went to Assyria, where he built Ninevah, Rehoboth Ir, Calah and Resen, which is between Ninevah and Calah; that is the great city." Genesis 10:10-12

The import of this list is that the territory of Nimrod extended over vast regions of that part of the world. It included what we call Babylon and Assyria. It is also important because it identifies the fact that Nimrod was the founder of a city called Ninevah, which was very important in the later history of Israel. These were territories that were a thorn in the side of God's people.



Look at the list of places where his lineage settled:

You may have noticed that the account of Nimrod was like a parenthesis; information which is pertinent to the story, but not in the direct line the author has been pursuing. Nimrod was a rebellious man who founded a rebellious empire. The author, in Genesis, is describing who God is and what He does. The writer also gives a picture of what evil is like and what it does to

the "good" world God created. He now returns to the account he was presenting prior to that of Nimrod.

Verses 13 and 14 describe the lineage of Mizraim in terms of the city-states he founded:

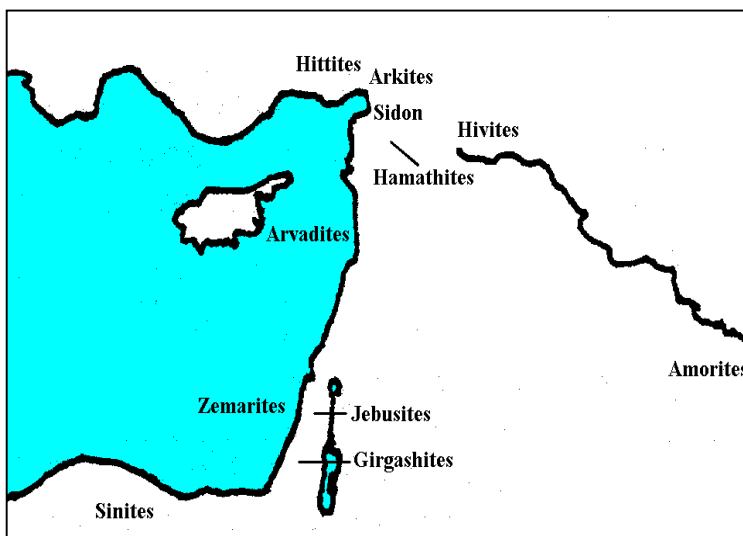
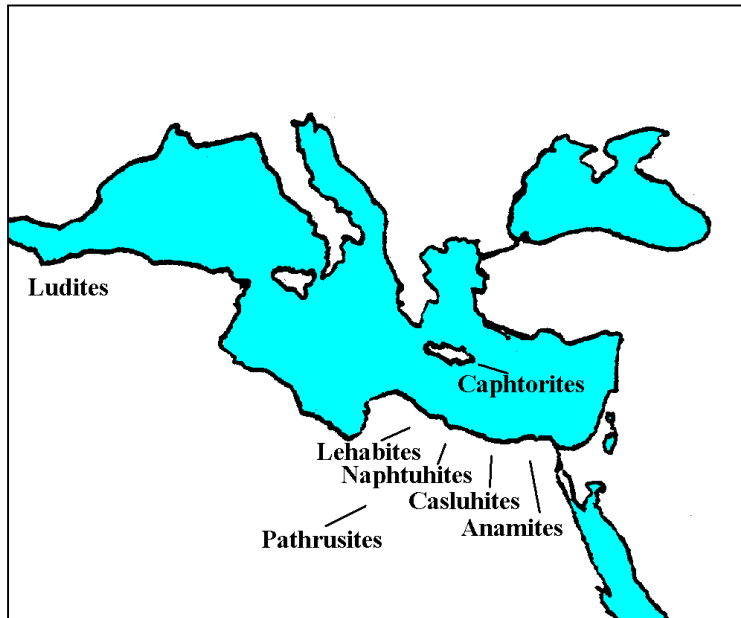
"Mizraim was the father of the Ludites, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites, Pathrusites, Casluhites, (from whom the Philistines came) and Caphtorites." Genesis 10:13,14

The sons of Mizraim spread out over a vast region of the Near-East. The names of the sons are clues to the places where they located their families.

10:15-20 The Lineage of Canaan

It is interesting to note that the author gives almost as much space to the lineage of Canaan, a grandson of Noah, as he does to Ham, Canaan's father and Noah's son. It suggests that this story is important to the overall message being given in this passage.

The author lists only one of the sons of Canaan, but lists 10 groups of people whose lineage is traced to Canaan. The map which follows should be helpful in identifying the areas in which they were located following the flood:



Notice the appended note, which the author adds, following the list of the sons of Canaan.

"Later the Canaanite clans scattered and the borders of Canaan reached from Sidon toward Gerar as far as Gaza, and then toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha." Genesis 10:18b,19

LESSON 6

Look at the map and identify the places mentioned in this passage. In effect, the author is saying that the sons of Canaan covered all of what we refer to as Israel.

The author closes the section, concerning the children of Canaan, with an interesting statement.

"These are the descendants of Ham by their clans and languages, in their territories and nations." Genesis 10:20

This is the first mention, in Genesis, of different languages. We will return to this statement when we consider the building of the tower, in chapter 11. Whatever else, the passage indicates that Ham's lineage was divided up by clans and that within these clans they used languages or dialects which were different from each other.

10:21–31 The Sons of Shem

The author has saved the best for last. It is very clear that the lineage of Shem is most important to the story the author is telling. More space is given to the lineage of Shem than to either of the other brothers. The placement is also significant in that his lineage is discussed last. The author can now lead into a discussion of the lineage of the patriarchs, beginning with Abraham.

Look at verse 21. The author finds it necessary to identify the sons of Shem, but his real interest is in the sons of Eber. This accounts for the way in which the author approaches this information.

He begins, in verse 21, by saying that Shem also had children. Notice what he says,

"Sons were also born to Shem, whose older brother was Japheth; Shem was the ancestor of all the sons of Eber." Genesis 10:21

Read this quotation again carefully. There is an emphasis here. It is as though he is stressing that Shem had sons just as Japheth and Ham became the father of sons. The fact that Shem is mentioned last may account for this emphasis. It is as though he is trying to correct a false impression. It is like saying, the fact that I mention him last does not mean that it was because he had no children. He also had sons.

The statement about the older brother is ambiguous. The language of the sentence does not make it clear whether the author is saying that Shem is the elder brother to Japheth or



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that Japheth is the elder brother to Shem. It may well be the way it is written in the translation, but we can not really be sure.

Notice the closing statement in the verse, "Shem was the ancestor of all the sons of Eber." This sounds strange in English. The help lies in the translation of the word "ancestor". This word can literally mean progenitor. It can also mean teacher, or one who disciplines; one from whom another learns. Shem is the progenitor to all the children of Eber and all the other children of his three sons. Shem, however, was also the teacher/master of all his grandchildren.

In verse 22, the author begins the listing of the sons and grand-sons of Shem. First the author lists the sons of Shem. There are five: Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud and Aram.

Having listed the names of the five sons of Shem, the author now begins to list the lineage of each. Notice that he begins with the last mentioned. This was customary in such lists.

Again, the author gives the lists selectively:

ARAM	LUD	ARPHAXAD	ASSHUR	ELAM
Uz		Shelah		
Hul		Eber		
Gether		Peleg		
Meshech		Joktan		
		Almodad		
		Sheleph		
		Hazarmaveth		
		Jerah		
		Hadoram		
		Uzal		
		Diklah		
		Obal		
		Abimael		
		Sheba		
		Ophir		
		Havilah		
		Jobab		

It is not accidental that the author lists the four sons of Aram, who were the ancestors of the Aramaens in general and Laben in particular, and the 17 descendants of Arphaxad, who, Josephus tells us, were the ancestors of the Chaldeans. But he lists not even the sons of Lud, who were apparently the Lydians, who lived in Asia Minor; or of Asshur, whose descendants peopled Assyria; or of Elam, who probably lived in the area of Persia. It is interesting that the listing of lineages, in I Chronicles 1, follows the same pattern.

The two sons, whose lineages are listed, are directly linked to the lineage of Abraham and through him to the other patriarchs.

Again, these families were involved in the dispersion that followed the confusion of languages. Notice where they migrated. Let us begin with a look at the sons of Aram.

THE SONS OF ARAM

1. Uz – location unknown.
2. Hul – Location uncertain
3. Gether - location uncertain

LESSON 6

4. Meshech - Location uncertain

It is interesting that the locations of the sons of Aram are, without exception, unknown. On the other hand, those of the persons who figure in the direct story line of the book of Genesis are known. This is just one more illustration of the selectivity of the author of the book.

Now, look at the lineage of Arphaxad. You will see an entirely different situation.

THE SONS OF ARPHAXAD

Shelah - The most important thing we know about Shelah is that he was the father of Eber at age 30. We are not certain where Shelah was located.

Eber – the son of Shelah. His name means that he came from across the river. He and his descendants lived on the East side of the Jordan.

SONS AND GRAND-SONS OF EBER

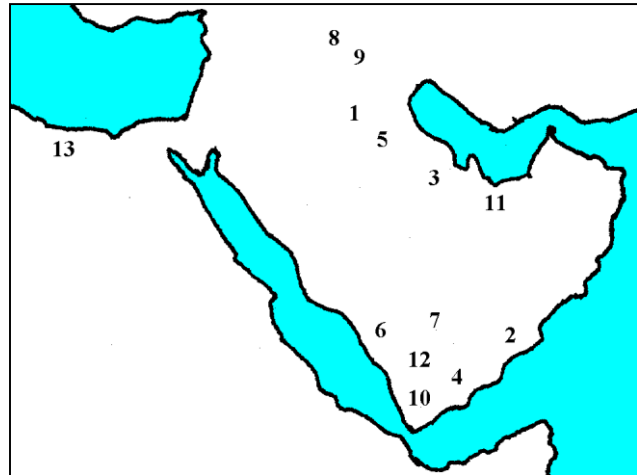
The Sons Of Eber

Peleg - He apparently lived in the area where the Chaboras and Euphrates rivers converge.

Joktan – whose name means "small" – was perhaps self– demeaning. We are uncertain of his location.

The Sons Of Joktan, Grandsons Of Eber

1. Almodad – Probably founder of an Arabian tribe
2. Sheleph – Lived in Sulaf – Southern Arabia
3. Hazarmaveth – A district in Arabia
4. Jerah – Probably lived in North Yemen
5. Hadoram – Probably established a tribe in Arabia
6. Uzal – Lived in Sanaa, Yemen
7. Diklal – East of Hejaz, Yemen
8. Obal – Founded an Arabian tribe
9. Abimael – Founded an Arabian tribe named Mael
10. Sheba – Southern Arabia
11. Ophir – Southeastern Arabia
12. Havilah – Between Babylonia and Assyria
13. Jobab – The city of Jobabiti, on the coast of Egypt



The above numbers identify the locations of the persons indicated, on the map.

You will notice, from the map, that the descendants of Eber, for the most part, lived east of the Jordan, in Arabia and Yemen.

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In verse 30, the author attempts to summarize the location of these people. He said,
"The region where they lived stretched from Mesha toward Sephar, in the eastern hill country." Genesis 10:30

Mesha is located in western Arabia, a desert district. Sephar on the other hand, is located in Southeastern Arabia near the seaport of Mirbat. A look at the map will be helpful in discovering the total area that these people occupied.

It is interesting to note how the author speaks in verse 31, "These are the sons of Shem by their clans and languages, in their territories and nations." Genesis 10:31

This is the second mention of different languages in the book of Genesis. (The first mention was in 10:20.) It is only fair to mention that there is good reason to believe that we are here talking about dialects rather than specific languages. The mention of clans, languages, territories and nations are all specific indications that a number of broader levels of community were developing, community being a group of people who have common interests. This sounds like an instantaneous thing, but in reality it covered a number of years.

10:32 Noah's Family Becomes Nations

This paragraph is made up of one sentence, and is a summary statement concerning the families of Noah's sons. It describes the process of cultural spread. Though all these people were related, they developed distinctive traits that were unique to their particular part of the family. These distinctives marked them as clans and then as communities and then as nations. The longer they lived in their particular part of the family, the more distinct their behavior and patterns became. None of this, however, took place prior to the flood. Though it is all described in a single sentence, it was a process that involved several years in development.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Tower of Babel

There are eleven paragraphs in this chapter. They are as follows:

1. 11:1–9 – The Tower of Babel
2. 11:10–11 – The Generations of Shem
3. 11:12–13 – The Generations of Arphaxad
4. 11:14–15 – The Generations of Shelah
5. 11:16–17 – The Generations of Eber
6. 11:18–19 – The Generations of Peleg
7. 11:20–21 – The Generations of Reu
8. 11:22–23 – The generations of Serug
9. 11:24–25 – The Generations of Nahor
10. 11:26 – The Generations of Terah
11. 11:27–32 – The Account of Terah

LESSON 6

As we begin this chapter we need to remember some things about portions of Scripture which people call "the begets." Most Christians have never read these chapters. If they do read them, it is in cursory fashion at best. Some have said that it is a bit like reading the phone book, minus the addresses and numbers.

We need to remember that these portions are not less inspired than the logical presentation of Paul in Romans or the discourses of Jesus in the Gospel records. Really, some exciting discoveries can be made if one takes the time to meditate upon these passages. The information that has been shared in this study about the people themselves and their locations are a case in point.

11:1-9 The Tower of Babel

We have an apparent contradiction in the text. In 10:31 the text speaks of "tongues", while in 11:1 the author speaks as follows:

"Now the whole world had one language and a common speech." Genesis 11:1

As was previously indicated, it is acceptable to translate the word "languages" as "dialects" in 10:31. If this is true, then it is appropriate to consider that these two passages are not really contradictory to each other.

As cultures developed, the movement was easterly. The plain of Shinar was attractive to them and they settled there. It was an area that was culturally advanced. You might remember that the mantle found under the floor of Achan's tent was a beautiful piece of artwork from Shinar. The general area of the Plain of Shinar is thought to be Babylon. It was a land that had sufficient food supply; a good military power-base and skillful artisans to produce some of the most beautiful pieces known to man.

Verses three and four are an attempt to describe a process of relationships that led to tragic circumstances. Notice what the author said,

"They said to each other, 'Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly.' They used brick instead of stone, and tar instead of mortar. Then they said, 'Come let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.'" Genesis 11:3,4

One wonders how they discovered the way to fire brick. How did they harness the use of fire? It sounds as though the use of brick was a casual decision. That could not be true. They used brick because there was no local stone for them to use. They used slime or tar for a bonding agent because there was no real mortar to be had.

In verse four, the author gives us a glimpse into the thinking of the people. Notice what they did and why they did it:

1. They wanted to build a city. This is the first mention of the construction of a city in the book of Genesis. There is nothing necessarily evil about the development of a nation or city. It can be evil if, in fact, it contradicts the express will of God. We can not make a categorical statement, in this area, but it is clear that God wanted the people to spread out over the earth, while their desire was to gather safely into nations and cities.

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2. This city was to have a tower. The top of this tower was to reach the heavens. This is a way of saying that the tower would be very high. It did not mean that it would reach to heaven or the sky. The city did not need a tower. A tower would be useful for protection, but prior to this time there is no record of war. A city could exist for centuries without the aid of a tower. It may have been useful for the observation of their crops and flocks, but little else.
3. In verse four, the words "so that..." give us an indication that a motive is being described. Their motive for building the tower "up to heaven" was two fold:
 - a. To make a name for themselves
 - b. So that they would not be scattered over the face of the earth.

These two motives were not pure. The first was a selfish and arrogant one. They wanted to be thought of as important, as outstanding. No other community had a tower that high, if they had one at all. The second was a rebellious motive. God intended them to be scattered over the face of the earth. Whether for fear or for disobedience, they were going to make it possible for them to stay in a central place and thus protect each other, a deliberate move against God's command to spread over the earth.

Verses five through seven describe the Divine response to the construction of the city and tower. Notice that the author speaks in anthropomorphic terms, that is, he speaks of God as if He were a human being. God came down to see the city and tower which the people were building. Notice what God said,

"If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come let us go down and confuse their language so that they will not understand each other." Genesis 11:6,7

The Divine reference is to the possibilities for evil. If they can work together to accomplish this level of evil, think of what future possibilities could do. It was important for God to put a stop to it at this point lest they plan to do things that might be much worse. It is not the venting of Divine anger so much as it is Divine concern for the evil potential and its spread, of which mankind is capable.

Verses eight and nine describe the consequences of the Divine action. Note what the author lists as the consequences:

1. They were scattered over all the earth.
2. The building of the city was stopped.

This is not so much the picture of an angry God as it is a picture of a sovereign God. God intended that mankind be scattered over the earth. Mankind's efforts to frustrate that design failed. Mankind decided to gather into a city, probably for protection. God wanted mankind to depend upon Him and not gather into the city. The Divine intent ultimately was victorious. They stopped building the city. It is interesting that some documents claim there was an unfinished tower which still stood just outside Babylon. This would have been centuries ago. The unfinished city was a monument to the sovereignty of God. Disobedience is always the precursor to idolatry of one form or another. This is precisely what some scholars believe was intended when the text talked about Nimrod. It is their assertion that Nimrod was behind this and preparing to make a place for the worship of idols.

Verse nine identifies the means God used to accomplish this intervention. God "confused the language..." First, note that the name for God, which the author used, was Jehovah. This is the name which suggests justice, but does not suggest mercy. The word

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"confuse" literally comes from the root that means "to mix" or "mingle". It was used to describe the mixing of fodder for the animals, and in a ritualistic way, to describe the mixing of oil with the cereal offering until every particle had been touched by the oil.

"Babel" is a play on words. It is a form of the root word "Balal" which means "confusion." God in His mercy so mixed up the language which the people had understood, that they were unable to communicate. This ended their ability to corporately disobey God. We do not know how God did this. The text only affirms that this is in fact what God did. Thus, God did scatter the people all over the whole earth.

11:10–11 The Generations of Shem

In this brief paragraph, the author turns his attention to the lineage of Shem. It is clear that the purpose of this was not to give a total historical account. The author is clearly setting the stage for a presentation concerning Abram. The people mentioned, in verses 10 through 26, clearly have no other significance in this story except as the stage from which the account of Abram is to be presented.

Verse 10 indicates that Shem was 98 years of age when he emerged from the ark. This passage was intended to identify the fact that Shem became the father of Arphaxad. Having established this fact, the author then indicates that Shem lived another 500 years and that he had other sons and daughters. These were not as important to the story as Arphaxad because these other sons and daughters were not involved in the lineage of Abram.

11:12-13 The Generations of Arphaxad

You will notice that in this brief paragraph the paternal age of parenting was greatly reduced. Arphaxad was the first person listed who was born following the flood. He became a father at age 35 while his father, Shem, became a father at the age of 100. Those who follow after Arphaxad lived shorter lives and became fathers at a much earlier age. It was mentioned earlier in the text that this would be the case.

At the age of 35, Arphaxad became the father of Shelah. As was also true in the previous paragraph with Shem, Arphaxad lived on many more years, 403 to be exact, and had other sons and daughters. These other children are not identified or described because they are not vital parts of the story leading up to the life of Abram.

11:14–15 The Generations of Shelah

Shelah lived a total of 433 years. At the age of 30 he became the father of Eber. Again, notice that the age at which these men became fathers is significantly lower than when their forefathers, before the flood, became fathers. This represents a dramatic change in the lives of the people after the flood. We do not know many of the events of Shelah's life. The most significant thing, according to the text, was that he was the father of Eber who was in the direct line of Abram. We also know that Shelah had other sons and daughters. Their lives were not instrumental in the lineage of Abram and are not even listed by name.

11:16–17 The Generations of Eber

Eber was 34 when he became the father of Peleg. He lived another 430 years. Thus, he lived 464 years all together. During that time he became the father of several other sons and daughters. The names and events of the lives of these children are not listed. Again, this is because the author is telling a selective story and these children are not involved directly in that account.

11:18–19 The Generations of Peleg

Peleg also became a father to Reu at 30 years of age. Peleg lived another 209 years after the birth of Reu. This means that Peleg died at the age of 239. This was 221 years before the death of his father Eber. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first mention, in Scripture, of a man dying during the lifetime of his father. During the 209 years following the birth of Reu, Peleg had many other sons and daughters, but their lives did not have a direct bearing on the life of Abraham and are thus not central to the story being told. For this reason neither their names nor the events of their lives are told.

11:20–21 The Generations of Reu

At the age of 32, Reu became the father of Serug. He lived another 207 years, or 239 years altogether. Notice that the life span of the people mentioned is gradually decreasing. During the 207 years following the birth of Serug, Reu had many other sons and daughters whose names are not listed in the text. With each generation listed, the author makes it increasingly clear that the central focus is on the lives of those who are directly involved in the lineage of Abraham.

11:22–23 The Generations of Serug

As you will see in the text, Serug was only 30 when his son Nahor was born. Following the birth of Nahor, Serug lived another 200 years, or 230 years altogether. To the best of our knowledge, this is the youngest that anyone had died to date, with the possible exception of Abel who was killed by his brother Cain.

During the 200 years following the birth of Nahor, Serug became the father of many other sons and daughters. The names of these children are not listed.

11:24–25 The Generations of Nahor

At the age of 29, Nahor became the father of Terah. To the best of our knowledge, no one, since Adam, had become a father at such a young age. Following the birth of Terah, Nahor lived another 119 years or a total of 248 years. This means that he died at least 81 years before his father, Serug. During the last 119 years of his life he had several other sons and daughters who are not named.

11:26 The Generations of Terah

Notice, there is now a change in the way in which this lineage is reported. Up until this point, the age at which a man became a father was gradually decreasing. Now that is changed. Terah was 70 years old when he became a father. Terah's father, Nahor, was only 29 when Terah was born.

Another change in this report is quite obvious. Prior to this, the name of only one son was listed. Suddenly, with the life of Terah, that is changed. The author lists the names of three of Terah's sons. The text reads as though the three sons were all born when Terah was 70 years of age. That is probably not the case. The birth order of the three sons is a subject of intense study by chronologists. There is good reason for listing three sons. The lives of all three sons have a direct bearing on the life of Abram.

In the paragraph, which is made up of verse 26, the author gives the lineage information in brief form. In the following paragraph, he gives more complete detail.

11:27–32 The Account of Terah

In most instances, the author lists the children of Terah in the same order – Abram, Nahor and Haran. This does not necessarily mean that this is the birth order, though with some families it does.

The author mentions the details of the life of Haran first. It is as though he wants to get this done and get on with other things. The author mentions three facts about Haran:

1. He became the father of Lot. We will be dealing with Lot in succeeding chapters. This identifies his origin.
2. Haran died in Ur before the family moved away from the place of their ancestry.
3. Haran died before Terah, his father, died. This was uncommon, but not unique. You will remember that this was also the case with Nahor, the grand-father of Haran.

In verse 29, the author begins the story of Abram. Both he and Nahor took wives. The text indicates that Nahor's wife was Milchah, the daughter of Haran. This means that Nahor married his niece, his brother Haran's daughter.

Verse 29 continues by saying,

"And the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Iscah." Genesis 11:29

Iscah was the father of Sarai. In fact, Abram also married his brother's daughter. This should not be considered strange for that time. It was sometimes necessary and not at all uncommon. They considered it necessary because they felt the only safe way to give one's daughter in marriage was to do so within the family. Unfortunately, this is still practiced in some parts of the Near-East. The modern results of such a marriage are disastrous for the children.

Verse 30 is a very brief statement, but filled with tremendous pain and suffering. The author said,

"Now Sarai was barren; she had no children." Genesis 11:30

Wrapped up in this seemingly innocuous verse is all the pain that a family in that situation could possibly experience. People of that day thought that if a couple had no children

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it was a punishment by God for their misdeeds. Immediately people would wonder, "What have they done?" The women of the area would have nothing to do with a childless woman. They would poke fun at her and suggest many harsh and false accusations. In all probability, she would not be allowed to come, with the other women, to the village well to draw water and talk. She would be ostracized. She would be treated much as the "Samaritan woman" in the New Testament.

This was also a shadow on the man's reputation. People in the community would have no respect for a childless man. A man without a wife and/or children could not be considered for a position of leadership in the religious or civil community. People would be loathed to do business with a man in such a dilemma.

There was also the fact that they would face the future old age with no one on whom they might depend. They might be the kind of persons that a family might want to befriend, but the fact that they were childless would keep people from offering any assistance in their old age.

Verse 31 gives one an insight into the family structure of that day. Notice what the author says,

"Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there." Genesis 11:31

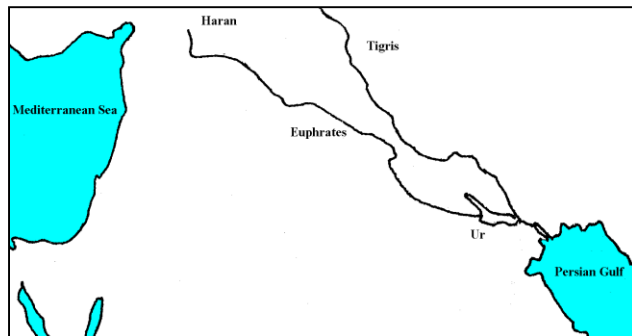
There are several observations to make concerning this verse.

1. Terah, Abram's father, made the decision. He took his son, his grandson and his son's wife and left the place of their heritage. This gives one an impression of the power and position of the father of a family.
2. The verse does not mention what happened to Nahor. One wonders why Terah did not take Nahor with him as well. This may be more evidence of the selective treatment of the historical information that the author practiced.
3. I suspect that most people are not aware of the fact that Terah left Ur to go to Canaan, but got only as far as Haran. This would cause one to ask the question, "if Terah and his family were bound for Canaan, then why did they settle in Haran?" Is it possible that he knew of what God was commanding Abram to do concerning Canaan? The next verse possibly provides a clue to this situation. The very next thing that is mentioned about

Terah is the formula leading up to the announcement of his death. That formula is found in verse 32,

"Terah lived 205 years, and he died in Haran" Genesis 11:32

4. You will note from the following map that Haran is a bit more than half way from Ur to Canaan. It was a very long trip for a man as old as Terah.



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5. Notice, also, that when Terah left Ur, he took with him his son Abram, Abram's wife Sarai, and Terah's grandson Lot, the son of Haran. Obviously missing from this list are the names of Haran and Nahor, Terah's other two sons. Haran was not present because he may have been dead. We know, however, that Nahor had not died. We will encounter him again in Genesis chapters 24 and 31. There is no explanation for the fact that this apparently younger son of Terah did not go with his father when Terah left Ur and went to Haran. Is there any connection between the name of Terah's son Haran and the city of the same name? There very well might be, but we can not be certain of that.

Terah died, in Haran, at the age of 205 years. This means that he lived until at least one of his three sons was 135 years of age. It was the hope of every father to see and enjoy his grand-children and great-grand-children for a number of years before his death. It appears that Terah got that wish.

As you conclude the study of this portion of Scripture, it is important to ask, "what have you discovered about who God is?" What have you learned when you discover that God confounded the designs of evil men and confused their language at the tower of Babel? What have you discovered when you learned that God's motive, in confusing the language, was not bitter anger, but concern over the potential extreme of human sinning?

In these chapters, it appears that many of these individuals lived uneventful, meaningless lives. To the overall picture of history, these seemingly uneventful lives were vital links to what God was doing in human history. What can a person glean, about God, from these observations?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 7

GENESIS 12:1 – 13:18

1. There are four paragraphs in chapters 12 and 13. On the chart that follows, write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

12:1– 9	
12:10–20	
13: 1–13	
13: 14–18	

2. God told Abram, in 12:1-9, to leave his country. Put yourself in Abram's place for a little while. As you respond to God's command, what concerns must you keep in mind? What would you think when God promised, "I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse"? What would come to your mind, in verse six, when you discovered that there were Canaanites living in the land God promised you? In verse seven, Abram built an altar to the Lord. It is stated as a result/response to God's promise to give the land to Abram's offspring. You are now past 75 years of age with no offspring at all. What would building the altar mean to you? If Abram was in the land of promise, and he knew it, why would he move and build another altar elsewhere?
3. The author describes Abram's trip to Egypt in 12:10-20. How would you feel if God gave you the land of promise and almost immediately the famine was so intense you felt it necessary to leave the land of promise for Egypt, a place of better pastures?
Put yourself in Sarai's shoes. How would you feel if your husband instructed you to tell a half-truth in order to deceive people, especially if it put you in an awkward position? What difference would this deception make? How would Sarai fare if she had not deceived the Egyptians and they had killed Abram in order to get her as a concubine for Pharaoh?
In verse 18, Pharaoh decided it was Abram's fault that this disease had come upon him and his household. Where would Pharaoh get such an idea? Of what did Pharaoh accuse Abram? How can we account for the fact that though Abram subjected the royal family to great danger, Pharaoh did not punish him in any way or take back the bride price he had given Abram?
In verse 17, the author teaches that "The Lord inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram's wife Sarai." What does this tell you about God?
4. 13:1-13 tells the story of the separation of Lot from Abram. What is the importance of the fact that Abram called on the name of the Lord when he returned to the place where he first built an altar?
Put yourself in Abram's situation. How would you feel, as head of the clan, if your nephew's herdsmen quarreled with yours? What difference did it make that the Canaanites and Perizzites were also in that part of the land? What did Lot do to alleviate the tensions?

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In 13:9, Abram said to Lot, "We are brothers." Is that true? If not, what did Abram mean? What risks did Abram take in making the offer he made to Lot? If you were a neighbor of Abram and Lot, how would you feel about the relationship between the two?

In 13:10-11, what was the basis of Lot's choice? What does that say about him? What is the author saying when he describes the situation of Lot and Abram in these words, "Abram lived in the land of Canaan while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom"? What does the author's explanation, in verse 13, add to your understanding of Lot's life and experience?

Put yourself in Abram's situation. You have been given the whole land by God. Your nephew chooses the best land and leaves you with the wasteland and you have far greater responsibilities than he has. How would you feel?

5. In 13:14-18, God makes a promise to Abram. What are the terms of the promise? There is an enormous contrast between how Lot treated Abram, in 13:10-13, and the way God treated Abram, in 13:14-18. What do you learn from this contrast?

Put yourself in Abram's place again. You are well past 75 years of age. You have been thrown out of Egypt in a severe famine. Your nephew, to whom you have been a benefactor, turns against you and leaves you with the worst possible land. How would you feel? Describe these feelings in detail. How would you feel, in verse 16, when God made promises concerning your offspring, when you are already over 75 years old and have no children?

Why would God want Abram to take such a long walk, in verse 17?

In 13:18, Abram moved to Hebron and built an altar to the Lord. What does this say about Abram?

6. As you review these two chapters, what beautiful things do you discover about God in the rubble of human devastation?
7. What will your Christian walk be like tomorrow because you have studied these chapters of Genesis?

LESSON 7: GENESIS 12:1 – 13:18

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Call Of Abram

We have come to one of the major divisions of the book-the story of Abram. As you read the account, take note of the "warts and all" approach of the author. This makes the whole book more believable for me.

12:1-9 God Sends Abram To Canaan

There is some controversy over when God gave the command of 12:1. Some scholars believe it was before they left Ur, while others believe it was following the death of his father, Terah, in Haran. One can not speak with conviction on this issue, but there are some interesting pieces of information. Note how the author wrote,

"The Lord had said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.'" Genesis 12:1

A more literal translation might read, "Get yourself out of your country..." The tone of this instruction is a bit like a parent would instruct a child, "I told you before, now do it!" This instruction is highlighted because the word "yourself" is in the singular and not the plural. This is evidence which tends to support a later time for the giving of the command. On the other hand, others believe that when God said, "...from your father's household..." He was talking about leaving Terah who had not yet died. There is no way to be certain about this issue. It is certain, however, that God gave Abram an unusual command to leave his homeland and family and go to an unidentified place.

The author reports that God told Abram to leave his country, his people and his father's household. This is everything and everyone in whom Abram could place his confidence and dependence. God is clearly asking Abram to move out on faith.

Put yourself in Abram's place. If you were Abram, you may or may not be the eldest son. One of your brothers is already dead and you, as the eldest remaining son, are responsible for the brother's wife and son. Another brother is not mentioned and this may suggest that he is no longer a part of the family picture. It may also mean that the other brother has left home and you, Abram, no matter what your birth order, are now the leader of the family. There is reason to believe that you are the lead a family of substantial wealth. You're living in those days now. It is very dangerous to travel to unfamiliar places with symbols of wealth. Bandits were as common then as they are today. To take large herds and large numbers of slaves on such a trip was an invitation to robbery and war. God is asking you, Abram, to express great faith in order to obey the command He had given. Again, to go either East or West would be sheer suicide because of the desert area surrounding the fertile land in which you now live. The people who live in the area are relatives and they do not look kindly upon your departure from their midst because you are a part of their support and defense system. It is difficult to explain this command of God to people who do not believe in God, but probably worship idols. Add to this the apparent fact that Terah is an idolatrous priest and the complications are greatly increased. All of these concerns

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make it a matter of great faith for you, Abram, to agree to obey the command of God to leave your family and go to an unknown land. What would you do? What would you think if God said that to you? How would you respond?

In view of this, notice the way God speaks to Abram in verses one through three. Verse one is a command, but verses two and three are God's promises for Abram's obedience. There are a number of parts to God's promises:

1. I will make you a great nation.
2. I will bless you.
3. I will make your name great.
4. You will be a blessing to others.
5. I will bless those who bless you.
6. I will curse those who curse you.
7. All the people of the earth will be blessed through you.

Again, put yourself in Abram's place. You are 75 years of age and childless. In your entire adult life, no one has blessed or honored you in any way. Others made fun of you and ridiculed your wife. You have never been thought of as any candidate for leadership. Your words have been disregarded because it was believed to be impossible for a childless man to speak words of wisdom. No one has taken you seriously because they feel God has punished you, or He would have given you sons! Against this background, God tells you to take charge of the family and lead them into a strange land whose identity you do not even know. God promises to make you into a great nation and you have no children. Just how does one understand such a promise? He promised to make your name great and your name has always been a source of ridicule. God promised to make you a blessing to others, when, as far as the Scriptures indicate, you have never been a source of blessing to anyone. God promised that you will be such a great person of power that He will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. Your lifelong experience has been that people took turns cursing and mocking you because you had no sons. Finally God promised that in you every people on earth would be blessed. The people of the earth do not even know you and those who do are not impressed, much less blessed. Ask yourself, now, just how hard would it be to believe the promises that God is making? Aside from the rigors and dangers of travel these things alone would demand unusual faith to even consider them as possibilities.

The author describes Abram's response, beginning in verse four. There is no reason to believe that every word or thought of Abram is reported, but the response is strong. Notice what the author says,

"So Abram left, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran." Genesis 12:4

If there were any second thoughts or contingency plans, the text does not record them. The New Testament gives an interesting account of what happened on this occasion. The author of Hebrews said,

"By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going." Hebrews 11:8

LESSON 7

The quality that enabled Abram to act on God's command was faith. Not only did he not know where he was going, he did not know that he was going to a place that would be his sometime in the future. It was not going to be his when he arrived. Such faith makes it easy to understand why he is referred to as "the patriarch."

The author includes this statement about Lot,

"And Lot went with him..." Genesis 12:4

This appears to be an indication that for whatever reason, Abram was now the head of the household, the heir of his father. He was making decisions which other members of the family would follow.

Abram, according to the text, was 75 years of age. Remember that people, since the flood, did not live as long as before. Abram was an older person now. Remember also that he did not have any descendants of his own. It may well be that he took the nephew, Lot, along because Abram had no one to take charge when he was too old to care for himself.

The trip from Haran to Canaan was approximately 500 miles. Most of this was over very rugged terrain. The availability of food and water for such a great company was doubtful at best. The possibility of attack, from robbers or local people who did not take kindly to a large family and herds going through their land, was very intense.

The author did not mention the extent of their wealth when Abram and Terah left Ur, but when Abram left Haran, the author specifically mentions how wealthy Abram was. At least one reason for the stay in Haran was the accumulation of great wealth and people who could be of assistance to Abram in the journey. Notice the author's description of what Abram took with him.

"He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there." Genesis 12:5

The author tells us nothing of the trip itself. One can only conjecture as to the conditions they encountered on their 500 mile journey. The author does make it clear, however, that they made the trip safely and arrived in Canaan.

In 12:6, the author indicates that Abram did not just reach Canaan, but went part way through the land to the area of Shechem. Again, this is more than an indication of where Abram stopped. Shechem was located in a small valley between Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal. At the time, the area was inhabited by Canaanites. The city was well fortified. Early digs have found massive defense walls more than 30 feet high. It was a city of great wealth and an important location defensively. Throughout biblical times, Shechem (Sychar in the New Testament, located 27 miles north of Jerusalem,) was to hold a place of great prominence.

During Abram's time, the area was inhabited by Canaanites. The significance of this information is a subject of intense question. Just why did the author tell us that the Canaanites were in the land at the time. Some scholars believe that it was a way of indicating just how strong Abram was in his faith. Remember, the Canaanites were fierce warriors. In spite of the fact that the Canaanites were in the land, still Abram did not waver in his obedience. Other scholars believe that this was included to explain why Abram did not settle down in the land until he came to Shechem. It seems that the significance of the

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verse, which follows this statement, is that it suggests a rationale for Abram's firm faith. The author says,

"But the Lord appeared to Abram and said, 'To your offspring I will give this land.' So he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him." Genesis 12:7

Notice that it says, "Jehovah appeared unto Abram..." This is the first mention of God appearing to Abram. God had spoken to him before, but had not appeared to him.

Even with the Canaanites in the land, when God said that the land would be given to Abram's seed, which did not now exist, he built an altar to worship Jehovah. It was an expression of the greatness of Abram's faith. The building of an altar was an expression of his gratitude to God that He had reaffirmed that Abram would have an heir, that he would be permitted to live in this land of promise, and that this land would one day belong to his descendants.

Abram was grateful for what God had just done, but he did not settle down. He moved on to another location. Abram relocated on a mountain between Bethel, on the West, and Ai, on the East. This is approximately 17 miles south of Shechem. The following map will place this in perspective for us.

Notice what Abram did when he relocated,

"There he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord." Genesis 12:8

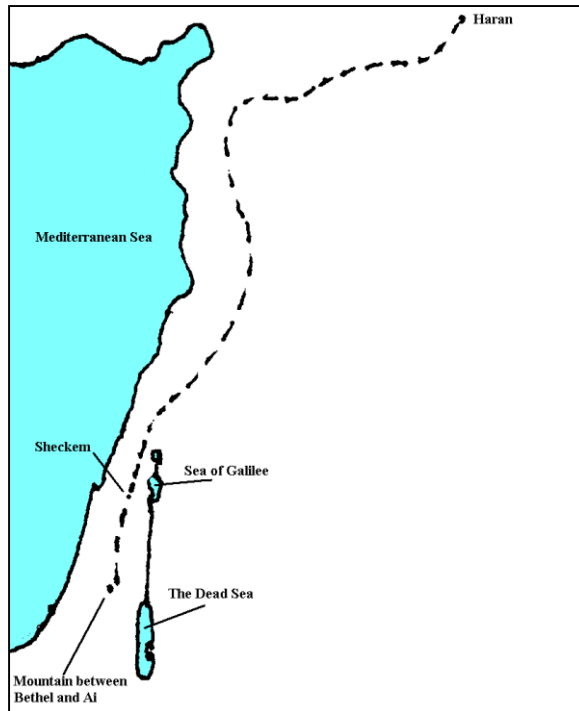
The building of an altar was an act of worship. This altar was dedicated to the Lord. It was Abram's way of honoring Jehovah. To "call on the name of the Lord" means more than simply using God's name. It involves affirming that Jehovah is God. It is an acknowledgment that God is greater than Abram; that Abram has needs which only God can fill.

Verse nine can be a bit deceptive. It sounds as though Abram started traveling southward and did not stop.

"Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev." Genesis 12:9

Abram did start south, but he did so in several stages. He would stay in a place for a few weeks and then move southward again only to stay in another place for a few weeks. In each instance, however, his journey was to the south.

One might wonder why Abram would leave when God had just made a promise concerning this land. First, notice that God did not command him to stay here. God, in fact, told Abram that this would belong to his lineage, not to him. Verse 10 will be helpful in this understanding.



LESSON 7

12:10–20 Abram Deceives Pharaoh

"Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe." Genesis 12:10

There are at least three pieces of information in verse 10:

1. There was a severe famine, at this time, in Canaan.
2. Because of this, Abram went to Egypt to live.
3. Abram's stay in Egypt was intended to be only temporary.

Moving one's tent during a drought was a common solution to the problem of famine. The people of the area would simply move their tents in the direction of the most rain until they found enough grass for their animals. In this instance it was a move toward Egypt. Put yourself in Abram's shoes for a minute. God told you to leave your father, your people and your nation and go to a place He would show you. You go and when you arrive, you find first another people, the Canaanites, and then a famine so severe that you have to leave the land to find food and pasture in another nation. Imagine how you would feel. Certainly, there would be a sense of consternation and frustration, to say the least. Interestingly, the text is silent about his feelings. It seems appropriate that confusion and frustration would be natural at such a time.

Verses 11–13 are a source of anger and frustration for women today, as well they might be.

"As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, 'I know what a beautiful woman you are. When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me but will let you live. Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you.'" Genesis 12: 11–13

We need to understand that this was not an unusual request for a husband to make of his wife in that time. A woman, of that day, did not think it unusual to make such a sacrifice in order to benefit her husband. She would see it as her duty. Fortunately, that is not true in our culture.

These verses show a side of Abram that had not been seen before. This is the manipulative part of his life. Obviously, Sarai was a beautiful woman, even though she was past 65. The fact that he said this to her before they entered Egypt indicates that this was clearly premeditated. He had been planning to do this. He was convinced that an Egyptian would kill him in order to take Sarai for his own wife. They probably would not kill her because of her great beauty. Abram developed a scheme that would protect him, but would expose her to the awkward possibility of being taken into a harem when she was already Abram's wife. He asked her to tell them that she was his sister. People tend to think that he was asking her to tell a lie on his behalf. This is not completely the case. He was asking her to deceive anyone who might inquire about their relationship. The truth is that they were, in fact, half brother and sister. They both had the same father, but different mothers. She would be thought of as his sister, but she was first of all his wife. It is possible that Abram was thinking of God's promise of a son, but it seems more likely that Abram was looking out for himself and it did not deter him that he might expose his wife to an awkward experience.

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Verses 14–16 indicate that Abram’s greatest fears were realized. Egyptian officials saw Sarai’s beauty and, as expected, conveyed this information to Pharaoh. Pharaoh took her into his palace. This does not mean that he had any inappropriate relationships with her. It means that she was taken into his harem. Pharaoh was in the process of making her one of his concubines. It was not uncommon for a marriage to be a full year in preparation. In the case of Esther it was a year before she stood in the king’s presence. This was a normal procedure of that day. They thought that if the ruler took the daughter of the foreigner into his harem, then the foreigner would think twice before declaring war on them.

Abram was treated well, as would be expected. He was given many gifts. This was the dowry which the Pharaoh would be required to pay to the family for taking the daughter into his harem. Pharaoh made a rich man just that much richer because he had taken Sarai into his harem.

There is serious debate about what the nature of the diseases were with which God inflicted Pharaoh and his household because of Sarai. Many scholars believe that it was a disease which came only to Pharaoh and which made cohabitation impossible. We honestly do not know the identity of this disease. Apparently this means that Sarai, though she was there, was not afflicted. For whatever reason, Pharaoh surmised that the fault lay with Abram and summoned him immediately. Notice Pharaoh's words,

"What have you done to me?" he said, "Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her to be my wife?" Genesis 12:18,19

Notice that Pharaoh did not place any blame upon Sarai at all. He placed the entire responsibility upon Abram, where it should have been. If you study the text, you will notice that Abram said nothing. This may well have been because Pharaoh was so upset that he gave Abram no opportunity to respond to his question. He had no sooner asked the question than he commanded Abram to leave the country. He said,

"Now then here is your wife. Take her and go!" Genesis 12:19

There is a strong emphasis upon the fact that Sarai is Abram’s wife. This is understandable because the Egyptians had a very strict code against adultery. A Pharaoh, however, could have as many wives as he wished without violating the law concerning adultery. He could not, however, take another man’s wife into his harem. Pharaoh was upset that Abram had come very close to placing him in a very compromising position with his own people. They would not easily understand this violation of their strict code of conduct. Now, Pharaoh was expelling Abram from Egypt.

Verse 20 is quite interesting. It is clear that Pharaoh gave strict commands concerning Abram’s departure from the country. Our text says,

"And they sent him on his way..." Genesis 12:20

A more apt translation might be that they escorted him to the border. It is interesting that as angry as Pharaoh was, he did not take back any of the gifts that he had given to Abram. He did not lecture Abram concerning the fact that these had been given under false pretense. Pharaoh let Abram take all that was his when he left the country. It is not clear whether this is a monument to Pharaoh's fear or his generosity. One consideration must be recognized. Pharaoh was very close to a violation of the law concerning the return of a

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bride. This law provided that a man may return his bride to her family if she proved not to be pure or if she displeased him. In such an instance, the gifts would also be returned. Sarai did not displease him, but she was not as he had been led to believe. You must also remember that Abraham had been Pharaoh's guest. He was a guest in the same way that a traveler would be a guest in a home. Broad provision was made for the comfort of a guest. The Old Testament had specific instructions concerning the treatment of strangers.

"Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt." Exodus 22:21

This and many other passages deal with minute details of the stranger's comfort in the land. Strangers must not be made to ask for help, it must be offered by the people.

We must call to mind that Abram went to Egypt because of the severe famine. Nothing was said, in the text, to indicate that the famine had ended. We only know that Pharaoh commanded them to leave the country. It is appropriate to pose the possibility that the famine was still in progress. This would add even more to the burden of the trip back into Canaan. The text is silent concerning the return trip. No mention is made about how they survived when the famine was apparently still in process.

CHAPTER 13

The Family Is Divided

There are only two paragraphs in chapter 13. They are as follows:

13:1–13 Abram and Lot Separate

13:14–18 God Promises Canaan to Abram and His Seed

13:1-13 Abram and Lot Separate

The author deals summarily with the trip from Egypt in verse one, but it had to be a strenuous ordeal. Look at the map, on the following page, and you will note that this is a long trip. It is more than 300 miles from Egypt to the Negev. This is not quite as far as they traveled en route to Canaan. Add to this the fact that they were moving a very large company of people, animals and possessions. Also, this was barren country. Food and water would be major concerns for this trip. It was no small feat to accomplish this journey.

It should be noted that the author carefully inserts the idea that Lot went with him. There are at least two reasons for this addition:

1. Lot could have stayed behind in Egypt. The text does not indicate that Pharaoh was angry with Lot, just with Abram.
2. Lot is going to be a very important character in the story which will shortly unfold. Abram had been rich when he entered Egypt. Now the author says,

"Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold." Genesis 13:2

The Hebrew text says that Abram was heavy or weighed down. It does not mean that he was heavy, personally, but that the baggage was immense. This gives one some impression of just how many gifts Pharaoh had given Abram and allowed him to take with him. Prior to this time, there is no mention of Abram possessing silver or gold. Now he emerges

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from Egypt possessing large amounts of both. It is fair to assume that either Pharaoh was the source of these gifts or Abram traded some of his other belongings to gain silver and gold. This would be better for traveling.

We assume that the famine was still in progress. Nevertheless, Abram headed back to the place from which he had started on this journey. Notice how the author describes it,

"So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him. Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold. From the Negev he went from place to place until he came to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had been earlier and where he had first built an altar. There Abram called on the name of the Lord." Genesis 13:3,4

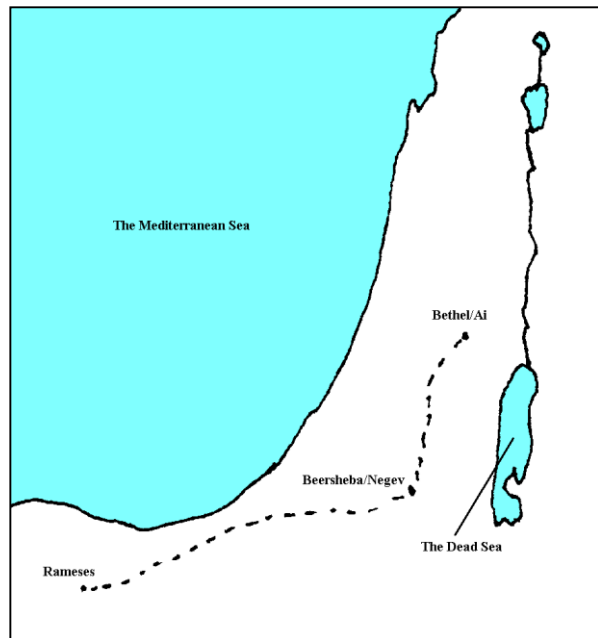
In 13:1, some translations read, "into the south", instead of "to the Negev." "Into the South" is an identification of the area around Beersheba. This is the southern part of the promised land. Abram had come from Egypt, in the Southwest, in a northerly direction up into Southern Israel.

Travel was not like it is today. There were no interstate highways to speed him on his way. The speed of travel took into account the ability of the persons involved to endure the rigors of such a trip. It also involved the ability of the animals to endure the hardship and find sufficient food and water for their survival. It had to be made up of a number of small trips. They would move from one place to another and stay there for a while to rest and fatten up the flock again. Eventually, they would move on to another place in the direction of their destination. A trip that would take us one day might take them many months to accomplish.

Interestingly, there is no mention of Abram praying during the time of his deception of Pharaoh in Egypt. From this fact, one can not deduce that Abram did not pray. However, Abram was caught and expelled and almost immediately there is mention of the fact that he called on the name of the Lord. I suspect that this is more than a coincidence.

When Abram returned to Canaan, he went to Bethel. It is intriguing that the author uses the name Bethel. All through the story of Abram, the name of this site is given as Bethel. The name of the place had previously been called Luz. It was given the name Bethel after Jacob had had a dream on this site. That story is recorded in Genesis 28:19. This suggests to me that the story was recorded after the experience of Jacob and recorded in this way so that the reader would tie the two together. This supposition, however, is not verifiable.

When Abram reached the place between Bethel and Ai, where he had previously set up his tents, the text tells us that,



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"There Abram called on the name of the Lord." Genesis 13:4

The name "Lord" is really "Jehovah" in the Hebrew text. As happens so often, the Scriptures use the name "Jehovah" when describing the justice of God. Abram had been through a very difficult experience. He could not feel good about his own actions while in Egypt. Having been expelled from Egypt, he returned to the place where God had appeared and spoken to him. Still in His justice, God is merciful!

When Abram called on the name of Jehovah, it is obviously a description of prayer, but even more than that. It is an acknowledgement of his need of God's help; a confirmation of the fact that he knew he could turn to God in times of stress, even when he had done wrong.

Notice, in verse five, how the author speaks of Lot,

"Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents." Genesis 13:5

This is the first mention of the fact that Lot also had visual evidence of great wealth. In the past, the author mentioned Lot as though he just went along with his uncle as a child would in the family. Here, Lot is mentioned as an economic force in the area. It is uncertain where or how Lot gained these riches. Most likely that it was in Egypt, but that can not be confirmed.

Verses six and seven list two basic reasons why Abram and Lot would have to separate from each other:

1. Their joint wealth was so great that there was not room for the herds of both men in the same place.
2. They had the added difficulty of having both the Perizzites and the Canaanites in the area with them. This is the first mention that the Perizzites are also in this part of the land. Until now, only the Canaanites have been mentioned.

Abram and Lot had their hands full trying to live in the same place with just their own families, slaves and livestock. This problem was compounded by the presence of the Canaanites. It became unbearable with the addition of the Perizzites.

If you read ahead to verse eight, it appears that the strife is not just between the two sets of herdsmen. It appears that there is, in fact, strife between Abram and Lot as well.

Verses eight and nine are Abram's suggested solution to their family problem. He said,

"Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers." Genesis 13:8

Abram's basis for his offer was that they were family. There was no place, in their thinking, for obvious division within the family. He was not saying which one was right. He was not saying that everything was fine. He simply said that there was a need to keep harmony because they were family.

In verse nine, Abram makes a shocking offer to Lot.

"Is not the whole land before you? Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left." Genesis 13:9

This offer was unbelievable. In that day, everyone insisted on the rights of the aged. Respect for age demanded that they be well cared for and given deference. Abram gave Lot first choice. This was extraordinary to say the least. It was an offer with no strings at-

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tached. If Lot chose to go East, then Abram would go West. If Lot chose to go West, Abram would go East. This was like giving Lot a blank check!

This could not have been an idle offer. Abram had to have thought this through carefully. By offering to allow Lot to choose the direction in which he would go and promising to go in the opposite direction, Abram risked giving the land of promise to one who, though a relative, had been making life miserable for him. This gives one some indication of the heart of Abram. He was willing to give up the most treasured possession he had in order to make peace with a selfish troublemaker. Did Abram remember how merciful God had been to him in his troubles in Egypt and attempt to express gratitude by the way he treated Lot? We are unable to be certain.

In verses 10 - 13, Lot makes his choice. Verse 10 is the rationale for the decision. He looked and found that the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered. What the text does not say is that the area to the West of this plain was a barren wasteland where it might rain an inch or two in a year. Notice how the author describes Lot's observation.

"Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt toward Zoar. (This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.)" Genesis 13:10

There was a large area of exceptionally good land in and around Sodom and Gomorrah. There was equally as much wasteland in the barren hills immediately west of what we refer to as the Dead Sea. Lot made a selfish choice. He took the best and he took it all. This is the second clue that there were more difficulties than just the trouble between herdsmen. First, there were quarrels between Lot and Abram. Their culture would not allow for such actions on the part of a young man. Secondly, Lot made a very selfish choice. He chose all the good land. He knowingly left Abram with the worst land in all Canaan when Abram had by far the largest herd to feed. This was unconscionable in view of the age of Abram and the fact that he had become Lot's benefactor when his own father died. We will want to continue to keep track of this process.

In verse 11, Lot made his decision. Notice the emphasis of the author,

"So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company.. ." Genesis 13:11

Remember, Lot had the smaller flock. Nevertheless, he chose the **whole** plain of the Jordan. This means that he took both the food and water for his smaller flock and left very little of either for Abram. This verse ends on a very sad note. "The two men parted company." It is not just that one had to go one way and the other had to go the opposite direction in order to find enough food and water to survive. This is a way of describing the termination of a relationship. Lot was finished with his uncle.

Verse 12 gives more information than it appears to give. The obvious information is that Abram lived in Canaan while Lot lived among the cities of the plain. Embedded in this statement are a number of other pieces of information. The fact that Abram lived in Canaan also tells us that he lived in an unprotected area. He probably had no near neighbors. He was always liable to attack by the native people of the area. On the other hand, the fact that Lot lived among the cities of the plain also tells us that he lived in a much safer area. In case of attack, he could flee to one of the cities and attempt to find refuge within. Abram had no such opportunity. Also, because Lot lived among the cities, there was a

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much more available market for his herd than Abram could possibly find. All of this had to be a part of Lot's selfish decision to take all the good land and leave the rest to Abram.

It is not incidental that the author included the information from verse 13. Notice what he said and how he said it.

*"Now the men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord."
Genesis 13:13*

The author does not mention the specific nature of the evil. He simply states that they were very evil and that they were sinning against the Lord in an ongoing fashion. It appears that this involved at least intense idolatry as well as severe moral decline. One can not say, with confidence, that Lot knew of this sin in advance. It is fair to say that there is a high probability that he knew of it. This is the third clue concerning the troubles between Lot and Abram. It may be that Lot had some problems with Abram's faith in Jehovah as well as some problems over the herds and pasture. Lot was apparently rebelling against the God of Abram.

13:14-18 God promises Canaan to Abram and His Seed

This paragraph is the third statement God made about the land of Canaan. One wonders why God repeats the promise to Abram at this time. Three reasons are often involved when God repeats a promise:

1. The first reason is to remind the recipient that God has not changed His mind.
2. The second is to stress the greatness of the gift.
3. And the third is in order to add even greater blessings to the gift.

Very often, when God repeats His promise, it is not a word for word quote. Usually there is an addition with each repetition of the promise. The promise, in this case, is made in 12:2,3; 12:7 and 13:14. Notice what each one includes:

12:2-3

1. God will make Abram a great nation.
2. God will bless him.
3. God will make his name great.
4. God will make him a blessing.
5. God will bless those that bless Abram.
6. God will curse those who curse Abram.
7. In Abram all the families of the earth will be blessed.

12:7

God will give Canaan to Abram's seed.

13:14

1. God will give Abram all the land he can see North, South, East and West of Bethel.
2. The land will be the gift to his seed for ever.
3. God will make His seed as the dust of the earth – innumerable.

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There is clearly new information in each repetition. It is one thing to make such a great promise, it is quite another to add such great gifts to that promise. It tells us something about the nature of God who will bless His people in the ways we have mentioned.

God's instruction to Abram, in verse 17, may seem a bit strange. It is not. Notice what God said,

*"Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you."
Genesis 13:17*

This was a very specific and necessary instruction. Whenever a person was about to purchase a piece of property, it was their custom to walk around the perimeter of the property as a way of claiming that which he had possessed. You will remember the parable Jesus told, in Luke 14:18, about the excuses given when a man wanted his guests to come to the banquet he had prepared. He said,

"But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.'" Luke. 14:18

This is the same practice God commands Abram to perform. He is to go and see his land of promise; he is to ceremonially lay claim to the property God has said would ultimately belong to him and his children. It is God's way of saying that this property is as much his as if he had paid the purchase price for it and laid claim to his purchase.

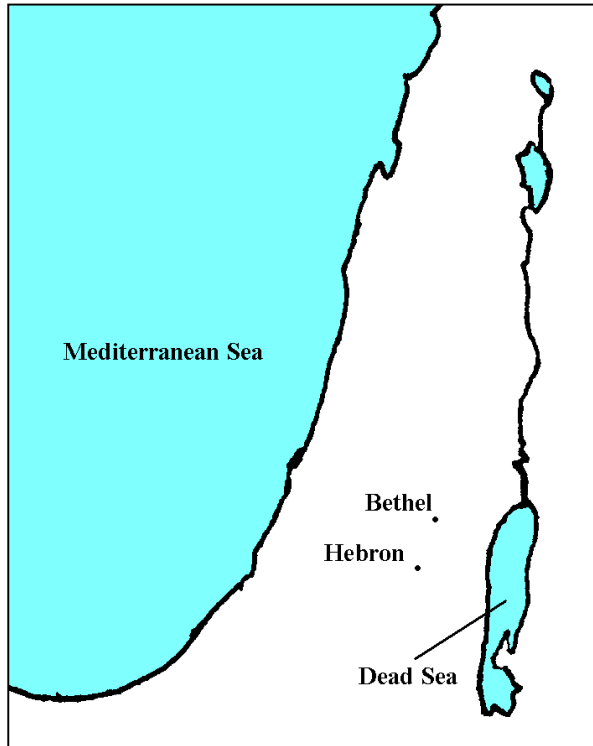
This is a long walk. The map which follows gives an idea of just how large a tract of land God was giving to Abram. It was a walk of at least 600 miles altogether.

Notice that in 12:2-3, Abram had been commanded to leave his father's house and God gave him the promise to take him to a land that would be his. Now in 13:14, when Abram is removed from his nephew Lot, his only apparent heir, God rehearses the promise again. As we continue with the study, this will become increasingly more significant.

One might expect to read that Abram did just as God had told him. Instead, verse 18 tells us that Abram moved his tents to Hebron, which is North and East of Beersheba. This does not mean that Abram disobeyed God. It is possible that Abram walked around the land he had been promised and then left for Hebron. As you can see on the map which follows, the trip from Bethel to Hebron is about 35 to 40 miles. It is a rugged, mountainous area that would take quite some time to cross.



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Hebron was destined to be a very important city in the history of the people of Israel. It was here that Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob and Leah were buried. It was in Hebron that David was anointed to become the King of Israel.

The thing that stands out, in the mind of the author, concerning this move to Hebron, was that Abram built an altar unto Jehovah. This tells us something concerning the priorities of Abram. When he arrived he could have made the provision for water his top priority. He could have focused his attention on security. Instead, Abram built an altar. He prepared to offer praise and worship to God. Even in tragedy, Abram could worship and praise God.

This chapter is a statement of sharp contrast. Lot had previously lifted up his

eyes to behold the very best land and water to be found in the area and taken it as his own. Abram was told to look to the East, West, North and South and all he could see would one day be his. However, the land, at least in part, was some of the poorest in that part of the world.

Notice in verse 18, that Abram moved to be near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron. This was some of the best wasteland left to Abram when Lot made his choice. Abram was clearly making the very best of a terrible situation. He did not blame God nor get angry with Him.

In the midst of a devastating tragedy, God was present and acting positively to change Abram's devastation into blessing. Though it may sometimes seem hard to see, this is precisely what God has done down through the centuries and continues to do today. It is in keeping with who God is and what He does.

In the rush of everyday life, in the trauma of living in a world tainted by sin and selfishness, what difference does it make that God is Jehovah - the God of justice and mercy? Think for a moment about the way you reflect on your weaknesses and failures. What light do these chapters cast upon your thinking concerning what God can do and how God feels about your imperfections? How will this knowledge, this discovery of God, impact what you will decide about asking God to change in your life?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 8

GENESIS 14:1 – 15:21

1. There are five paragraphs in these two chapters. Read each paragraph carefully. Write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

14:1–12	
14:13–16	
14:17–24	
15:1–11	
15:12–21	

2. How do you account for the fact that though Lot took the best land, Abram seems to have gotten along better than Lot did?
3. On the basis of your reading of chapters 13 and 14, can you see any trend in the life of Lot?
4. Look at the description of the battle in 14:13-16. What stands out in your mind?
5. Study the incident in 14:17-24. What comparison and contrast can you see between the king of Sodom and Melchizedek?
6. Review chapter 14 again. What do you find concerning the kind of man Abram was?
7. In chapter fifteen, the scene shifts. Read 15:2–3, and put yourself into Abram’s shoes. What would you feel? What would you be saying to God?
8. In 15:4-5, God answers Abram. What was God trying to say to Abram? Did Abram hear God? How do you know?
9. What pictures of God do you find in 15:1-11? What does that tell you?
10. Read again the account of the divided sacrifice in 15:9–21. Try to imagine what Abram felt as he experienced this. What did you feel? What did this sacrifice mean?
11. Review the dream recorded in 15:12-21. Write down the pieces of information contained in this dream. Study this list. What do you discover?
12. Review chapters 14 and 15 again. What pictures of God are to be found there?
13. As you contemplate the teachings of this study, what have you discovered that will impact the way you see your life in the world? What difference should others be able to see because of this?

LESSON 8: GENESIS 14:1 – 15:21

CHAPTER 14

Abram Rescues Lot

There are three paragraphs which make up chapter 14. They are as follows:

14: 1-12 – Lot Taken Captive

14:13-16 – Abram Delivers Lot

14:17–24 – Melchizedek Blesses Abram

14:1-12 Lot Taken Captive

Our translation begins chapter 14 with these words,

"At this time Amraphel, king of Shinar..." Genesis 14:1

Perhaps a better translation of the text might be, "And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel", or "And it happened in the days of Amraphel." This is mentioned because such statements usually precede troublesome experiences. That is certainly the case in this instance.

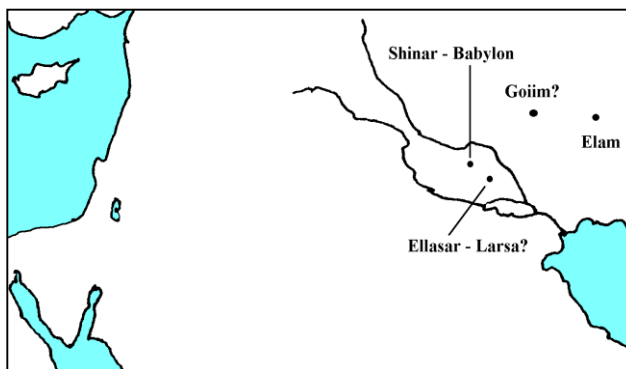
Amraphel is generally considered to be Nimrod. 11:2 and 11:9 also make it clear that Shinar is another name for Babylon.

It is interesting that the author begins the chapter by referring to Amraphel. Notice the other listings of these kings in chapter 14. Amraphel is not listed first again. The first place is clearly given to Kedorlaomer. We know him as Elam, the son of Shem and grandson of Noah. Kedorlaomer ruled over a small district named Elam in his honor.

In this alliance, there are four kings:

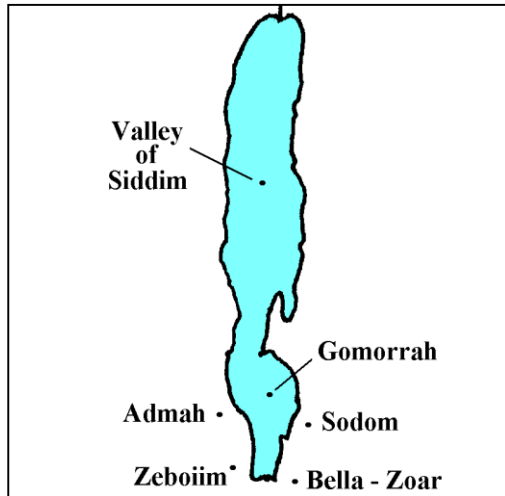
1. Amraphel - king of Shinar - Babylon
2. Arioch - king of Ellasar – Larsa
3. Kedorlaomer - king of Elam
4. Tidal - king of Goiim

The following map will show the location of three of the four kingdoms. Notice that Ellasar is a city, sometimes called Larsa. However, Shinar, usually called Babylon, is a nation and Elam is a whole territory. Goiim literally means nations. It is the Hebrew word used to identify gentiles. It is also a term of derision. The use of this word to identify the kingdom of Tidal may well describe



the fact that this city-state is made up of people from a number of different national backgrounds. It may be a provincial area North of Elam. There is no clue as to where this place was located. It is reasonable to assume that it is somewhere in the general area of Elam and Shinar.

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These four kings made an alliance to go to war against five other kings. This list of five kings is identified in verse two:

1. Bera - King of Sodom.
2. Birsha - King of Gomorrah
3. Shinab - King of Admah
4. Shemeber - King of Zeboiim
5. no name given – King of Bela – Zoar

For twelve years, the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim and Zoar had to pay high tribute to Kedorlaomer. They would not be allowed to rule their own land. They would be forced to provide young men for his army and

older people for slave labor.

Verse four indicates that in the thirteenth year of their captivity, they rebelled. This would create a real hardship for Kedorlaomer and his allies. This was a direct confrontation. Kedorlaomer insisted that they meet his usual demands. They refused to comply any more.

Verses five through seven describe the battle plan of the four eastern kings. On the following map notice how their armies moved toward Sodom and Gomorrah.

This battle plan would be an ambitious undertaking. It was a forced march of well over 1,500 miles before they reached their enemy - the five kings of the Vale of Siddim. The apparent wisdom in this plan is that a succession of victories from areas all around the Dead Sea would have a devastating effect upon



the five kings who were rebelling. This string of victories, however, would strengthen the boldness of the armies of the four kings of the East to handily conquer these five city-states. We do not know for sure that this was their thinking, but it seems plausible.

Verses eight through ten are a record of the battle. It sounds brief and tragic. It probably was not as brief as it sounds. On the other hand, it may have been even more tragic than it appears.

Notice the way the text describes the preparation for battle.

"Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim and the king of Bela (that is Zoar) marched out and drew up their battle lines in the valley of Siddim against Kedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goiim, Amraphel king of Shinar and Arioch king of Ellasar - four kings against five." Genesis 14:8-9

This was not a surprise attack by the four kings. The five kings from the West chose the place of battle to their own advantage. It was an area which they knew very well. The area had several bitumen pits from which slime was taken for mortar in the construction of

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buildings. Knowing the location of these was a distinct benefit to the Western kings. The surprise discovery of these by the enemy would be a severe hazard to the armies from the East. The Western armies set themselves in battle formation strategically so that the Eastern armies would be at a significant disadvantage in relation to these slime pits.

There are two lists of the kings from the East in chapter 14. It is interesting to note the order in which they are listed in each instance:

14:1-2

1. Amraphel – Shinar
2. Arioch – Ellasar
3. Kedorlaomer – Elam
4. Tidal – Goiim

14:9

1. Kedorlaomer – Elam
2. Tidal – Goiim
3. Amraphel – Shinar
4. Arioch – Ellasar

It is not possible to give a reliable explanation for the difference in the way these kings are listed. We lack some important pieces of information. It is interesting to note, however, that though Amraphel is listed first, in 14:1-2, that does not happen again. It is suggested by some scholars that the listing, in 14:1, ties in with the fact that this same Amraphel, or Nimrod, was responsible for suggesting that they build a tower to heaven. That is a feasible possibility. They further suggest that the change in the order, in 14:9, reflects the military power of each nation. This, too, is possible.

We should also note that there are two lists of the five kings from the West. They are listed in this order:

14:2

1. Bera - Sodom
2. Birsha – Gomorrah
3. Shinab - Admah
4. Shemeber - Zeboiim
5. King of Bela - Zoar

14:8

1. Sodom
2. Gomorrah
3. Admah
4. Zeboiim
5. Bela – Zoar

You will notice that the two lists are in precisely the same order. This suggests that there must be a reason behind the change in the lists of the other kings. It may be that the author is identifying the relative battle strength or importance of the five kings. We can not be sure.

Notice how the author describes the battle.

"Now the Valley of Siddim was full of tar pits, and when the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some of the men fell into them and the rest fled to the hills." Genesis 14:10

What an irony! The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah chose this battle sight particularly because of the advantage it provided for them. As it happened, this advantage turned out to be their undoing. In the end, the pits became a detriment which they had to overcome. Though the text does not say so, apparently in their rush to escape, either the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah (really Amorrah), or some of the men with them, fell into these slime pits they had counted on to be a source of protection. There are some scholars who feel that

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the kings hid themselves in these pits. It can not be verified. We do know that the kings were not captured in this aborted defense.

Verse 10 concludes by saying,

"...the rest fled to the hills." Genesis 14: 10

The Valley of Siddim, now the Dead Sea, has precipitous hills on both the East and West sides of the valley. There are no hills at all, however, on either the North or South sides. Masada is located on a high hill on the West side of this valley. These hills, across the centuries, have been a hiding place for highway robbers and people who were fleeing from the law. It would be very easy to hide in these hills. An army would not dare follow fleeing soldiers into that area because the fleeing soldiers would have a definite ad-vantage of surprise no matter how large the pursuing army might be.

Verse 11 indicates what the four kings did following their victory over the rebellious rulers.

"The four kings seized all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food; then they went away." Genesis 14:11

Notice, it does not say what, if anything, the victorious kings did to the other three city-states of Admah, Zeboiim and Bela/Zoar. These five kingdoms were all in a very small area. It stands to reason that the plundering would be carried out there as well. This, however, could not be verified. It is not surprising that the author singles out only Sodom and Gomorrah because they are crucial to the rest of the account he is giving.

Notice also that the author singles out two things that the four kings took from Sodom and Gomorrah:

1. All their goods
2. All their food

Both Sodom and Gomorrah were wealthy, luxurious places. To take away all their goods was an enormous task and provided great bounty. They were a people who ate lavishly. It would be a tremendous loss if all their food were taken away. Though this was a part of the land that produced a great deal of food and good grazing for the animals, to lose all their food would leave them totally destitute. This was an area to which others turned for food when their supply failed. What would these people do when their own supply failed? There would be little if any surplus available from other areas.

Verse 12 sounds like an afterthought. Notice how the author says it,

"They also carried off Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions, since he was living in Sodom." Genesis 14: 12

As you read these chapters, you probably noticed a progression concerning Lot. There were at least four steps in his downfall:

1. 13:10 - He looked **in the direction of** Sodom.
2. 13:12 - He pitched his tents "**near** Sodom."
3. 14:12 - He lived **in** Sodom.
4. 14:12 - He was **carried off** to captivity.

The allure of evil is a deceptive thing. No matter how enticing evil may seem, it always ends up in tragedy. You can not give your attention to it in any way and expect to remain separated from it. Lot learned this the hard way. He was enticed by the prosperity the area

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seemed to offer. At this juncture, however, he lost it all in the very place that seemed most promising to him.

14:13–16 Abraham Rescues Lot

Verse 13 indicates that an escapee brought the news of Lot's capture to Abram. In the previous paragraph, verse 10, it clearly states that some of those who fled the battle fell into the slime pits and the rest fled to the hills. This man was apparently one of those who escaped to the hills.

It is not clear just how much this man told Abram. It seems certain that he told him more than the fact that Lot was captured. The text, also, does not tell us why this escapee came to tell Abram. We can only conjecture concerning this question.

In verse 13 the author indicates that the man came and reported the news to "Abram the Hebrew." This was how he was known. The name "Hebrew" or "Ivri" literally means "across" or "from the other side." Abram had come from Ur and Haran and these places were not only East of the Jordan river, but far to the East of the desert which lay between Canaan and Ur. Abram was known as the one who had come from the other side.

This verse contains a number of pieces of vital information to help us understand who Abram was and who Lot was.

"One who had escaped came and reported this to Abram the Hebrew. Now Abram was living near the great trees of Mamre the Amorite, a brother of Eshcol, and Aner, all of whom were allied with Abram." Genesis 14:13

There is an interesting contrast hidden in the language of this verse. It is clear, from the text, that Abram lived in an area where Amorites were located. It would be difficult to ignore the fact that the author has used two different words to form a contrast. Look at the statement, of the author, in verse 12.

*"They also carried off Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions, since he was **living in Sodom**." Genesis 14:12*

The phrase "living in Sodom" literally means to settle; to become identified with the land. Lot was as "settled" in Sodom as the Sodomite people, in spite of the fact that they were known for the extent of their evil. He had become as one of the native population.

In verse 13, however, the author describes Abram's situation with different words. He said,

"Now Abram was living near the great trees of Mamre the Amorite.. ." Genesis 14:13

The word the author uses here to describe Abram's situation literally means to "dwell", not just to "live near". It means to "rest quietly", but it has no identification with the land itself. The author is saying that Lot had been absorbed into the culture while Abram lived peacefully among other nationalities and worship, but was not absorbed into them.

This is just a little more information which helps piece together just how different the two men were.

There is also some other information about Abram in this verse.

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"One who had escaped came and reported this to Abram the Hebrew. Now Abram was living near the great trees of Mamre the Amorite, a brother of Eshcol and Aner, all of whom were allied with Abram." Genesis 14:13

The author speaks of "Abram the Hebrew." Whatever else this says to us, it identifies the fact that Abram maintained his identity as a worshipper of Jehovah in the midst of a people who did not. He came from the other side; he was not a native.

Talking about these Amorites, the author said, "All of whom were allied with Abram." They were bound together in a covenant with the foreigner who lived in their midst. Think about this for a minute. What kind of person would it take to get along so well with these Amorites that they would bind themselves in a covenant with him for life? There is at least a tremendous level of trust and dependence. Abram is being treated like family. This identifies an outstanding rapport.

Verses 14–16 describe Abram's effort to free his nephew Lot. In verse 14, Abram decides in favor of action.

"When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trained men born in his household and went in pursuit as far as Dan." Genesis 14:14

This verse gives us some indication of the size of Abram's household. If he had 318 trained men, he had at least that many women and children, and probably more. Thus we are looking at a group of people who lived in his household. This would place the general size of his household at nearly a thousand. It would make the moving of such a clan a monumental task.

The passage says that he took the 318 men of his own family. There is conflicting data in spite of this form. Here in verse 14, the author mentions the fact that Abram took 318 men from his own household. On the other hand, in verse 24 Abram refuses to take any of the spoil for himself, but claims the shares of the spoil and food requirements for the men of Aner, Eshcol and Mamre. This is an interesting problem, but we are at a loss to know what happened in this instance. It appears that Abram brought his 318 men while the other

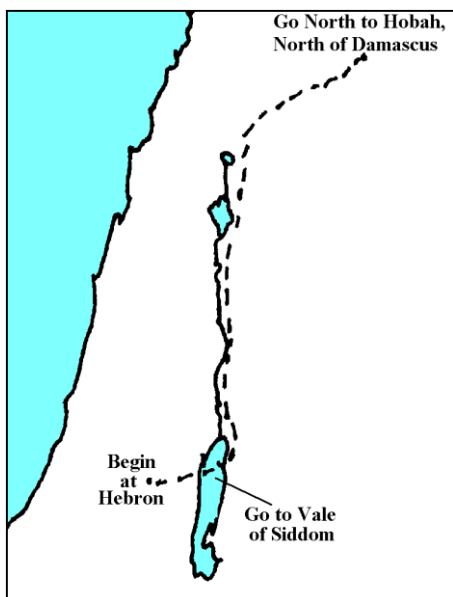
three leaders brought their own men. There is no way to know just how many men took part in the fray, but the number was very small in contrast with the large armies of the kings from the East.

If you look at the following map, you will note that they pursued the armies as far as Dan and beyond. This was a forced march of at least 150 miles.

In verse 15, Abram describes his plan of attack. It reads as follows:

"During the night Abram divided his men to attack them and he routed them, pursuing them as far as Hobah, North of Damascus." Genesis 14:15

We know, from 13:18, that Abram was living in the area of Hebron. This means that he had to travel



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from Hebron to the Valley of Siddim and then pursue the armies in their flight North to the area of Damascus.

In verse 16, the author reports the result of this military journey. He said,

"He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people." Genesis 14:16

The report of the battle is sketchy at best. This is probably because the author's reason for telling the story is to focus on the fact that Lot was rescued rather than to show just how great a strategist Abram was. This gives you some idea of Abram's success.

Notice verse 16 says he "brought back his relative Lot..." The word "relative" literally means "brother." It does not mean that Abram and Lot were blood brothers. It does mean that they were family. The author is describing a personal relationship.

The verse also indicates that Abram brought back "the women." The author does not identify the names of these women. It is thought by some that these were Lot's wives. That can not be verified.

Along with the women, the author also mentioned "the people." It appears that this is a reference to the servants who belonged to Lot. This is surprising because there is no mention of these prior to this time. It gives you some indication of the growing wealth that belonged to Lot.

14:17–24 Melchizedek Blesses Abram

As Abram returned, having freed his nephew and returned the possessions of many, he was met by the king of Sodom. Only at this point does the author describe what happened when Abram caught up with the fleeing kings. The author said,

"After Abram returned from defeating Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the valley of Shevah (that is, the King's Valley)." Genesis 14:17

It was not just that Abram got back the people and the belongings. The word "defeating" is a bit modest. The word literally means "to strike" and carries the idea of devastation. He thoroughly devastated the forces of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him. This is surprising since Abram was working with an army much smaller than those he faced.

The last part of this verse sounds a bit innocuous. It sounds as though the king of Sodom was just part of the reception for Abram upon his victorious return. It is more than that. A king tried never to go out to meet anyone. It would be a sign of subservience. But the king of Sodom owed his life to Abram. Certainly word had been received that Abram had not only defeated the armies of the East, but had confiscated all the goods that had been taken from the kingdoms of the Vale of Siddim. The surviving kings were honor bound to do no less than to come out to meet Abram upon his return. It is interesting that the king of Sodom was the only one of the five kings mentioned here. It is not clear why that was so. It may have been that he was the only king who survived. On the other hand, it is just as possible that the author only mentions him because of his proximity to the lives of Abram and Lot.

For the first time, the king of Salem, Melchizedek, is mentioned. The author said,

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"Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High." Genesis 14:18

Salem is Jerusalem. The identity of Melchizedek is filled with questions. Some of our Jewish friends are convinced that he was Shem. This can not be substantiated by current information. However, an interesting question arises concerning Melchizedek. He did not represent one of the nations who had been involved in the battle. Why, then, was he involved in the reception of Abram following the victory? There are several possibilities. First, this reception took place at the valley of Shevah, which is the King's Valley. It is quite possible that this valley is not far from Jerusalem and that it was a place reserved for the king of that city.

Another possibility, though not substantiated, is that because of the great victory which Abram achieved, the kings of the whole area got together to offer Abram a regency. Ultimately, we can only conjecture.

Notice that the king of Salem offered Abram bread and wine. Abram was not suffering from lack of food. He had just taken everything away from five kings. This was a ceremonial meal offered by a king. Later in history, bread and wine were the fare offered to the travel-weary David in II Samuel 17:27. This ceremony became a tradition to be offered to returning soldiers. It is interesting that this is precisely what Jesus offered His disciples as a celebration of the new covenant in His blood.

Melchizedek was "priest of God Most High." He was thus both priest and king. The epistle to the Hebrews makes it clear that Jesus had a priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, but that He was greater than Melchizedek. Jesus was Prophet, Priest and King.

This priest of the Most High God blessed Abram,

"And he blessed Abram, saying, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, creator of heaven and earth...'" Genesis 14:19

Melchizedek called upon the Most High God to bless Abram for what he had done on their behalf. This was appropriate because Melchizedek was a priest of God. This blessing was in the name of "God Most High." This word is El Elyon. It signifies "the mighty one"; the one supreme over all creation. Melchizedek identified God as the Creator of heaven and earth. This is in keeping with the name for God, El Elyon, which he used.

Melchizedek continued by pronouncing a blessing upon God in these terms,

"And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Genesis 14:20

It was his way of identifying the fact that though Abram was the man on the scene, the victory, nevertheless, belonged to God. It was God who delivered the enemies, not Abram who conquered them. This is a very important understanding; one which too many, of that day and this, fail to comprehend.

Abram's response to Melchizedek's blessing is noteworthy.

"Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything." Genesis 14:20

It is not accidental that Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything that he had brought back. A tenth, of course, is a tithe. It was appropriate because Melchizedek was a priest of God. It was Abram's way of acknowledging that what Melchizedek said in his prayer was right. It was God who had delivered the greater army into his hands. It was tes-

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timony to the power of God, not Abram's military prowess. The book of Hebrews makes a great deal of the fact that Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of the bounty he brought back. Speaking of the greatness of Melchizedek, the author of Hebrews said,

"Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people - that is, their brothers - even though their brothers are descended from Abraham. This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. And without a doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater." Hebrews 7:4-7

The author was identifying the fact that the blessing of Abram by Melchizedek and the giving of the tithe was evidence of the fact that indeed Melchizedek was greater than Abram. That would be hard for a Jewish person to accept, but it was true.

Throughout this account, there is a quiet contrast between the king of Sodom and Melchizedek, king of Salem. Notice when Melchizedek came to greet Abram, he brought the symbolic meal of victors; bread and wine. The king of Sodom came empty handed. Melchizedek came to bestow a blessing upon Abram. The king of Sodom came to hold out his hand. Abram had taken all of these goods in combat - they belonged to him. Notice the offer the king of Sodom made to Abram,

"The king of Sodom said to Abram, 'Give me the people and keep the goods for yourself.'" Genesis 14:21

There was nothing generous about this offer. Abram already owned the people and the goods. The king of Sodom could offer him nothing that Abram did not already own. The only thing the king of Sodom could do was to try to get Abram to give him something that now belonged to Abram. We must remember that Abram had been responsible for saving the life of this king. Now the king is acting as though he was as much a victor as Abram. He did not care about how it looked or sounded as long as he could come away with more than he had before. There is a degree of arrogance in this king that is shocking.

Abram's reply was strong and to the point.

"But Abram said to the king of Sodom, 'I have raised my hand to the Lord, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, and have taken an oath that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the thong of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, 'I made Abram rich.' I will accept nothing but what my men have eaten and the share that belongs to the men who went with me - to Aner, Eshcol and Mamre. Let them have their share.'" Genesis 14:22-24

Obviously there is no love lost here. Abram has reason to be suspicious of what the king of Sodom would do later. Abram was afraid that the king would make false claims about what he had done for Abram when in fact it was the other way around. Abram saw the king of Sodom as a person who required careful watching. He did not dare to touch even a thread that belonged to the king lest he then have grounds for a false claim. The two men were so different that Abram wanted nothing that belonged to the king to be found in his possession. He wanted nothing to do with the man. In this there is a strong contrast between Abram and Lot. Lot was strongly attracted to the city and the people of the city. Abram, however, was so different from them that they had nothing in common.

At the same time, the author of Genesis makes careful note that Abram was diligent to make sure that the friends, Aner, Eshcol and Mamre, who risked their lives to help him, were properly rewarded for their risks and efforts.

The question of the king of Sodom was not taken lightly by Abram. It is more than a statement of fact. There is biting sarcasm in Abram's words. He signified that he had taken an oath before God that he would not accept anything that belonged to this king. The reason that Abram gave was painfully specific. He did not want to give the king any reason to say that he had made Abram wealthy. The king apparently got what he wanted and more, but that is not stated. There was nothing bashful about the king of Sodom.

He knew what he wanted and was not timid about asking for it. It gives you an impression of the kind of man he was.

CHAPTER 15

God Covenants With Abram

There are just two paragraphs in this chapter. They are:

1. 15: 1-11 - God Covenants with Abram Concerning a Son
2. 15:12-21 - God Speaks to Abram in a Dream

15:1-11 God Covenants With Abram Concerning A Son

We need to remember that Abram has just turned down a great store of wealth because of his dependence upon Jehovah and not upon what others might give him or what he might take for himself. Abram had separated himself from the fellowship of evil men and chose the presence of God.

God has spoken to Abram, God has appeared to Abram and now His word comes to Abram in a vision. It is a progression from the lesser to the greater revelation of God to Abram, His servant. Notice God's message to Abram, the victor in battle over imposing enemy armies.

"Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." Genesis 15:1

This seems like a strange message from God. Abram was courageous in battle to save his nephew, even against armies much larger than his own. Now God urges him not to be afraid.

It is one thing to be courageous in battle. This is a situation in his life that he could do something about. On the other hand, there was another area of his life, namely the failure of his and his wife, Sarai, to have a son, over which he had absolutely no control. This would be a great source of fear and frustration to him. The message of God was absolutely appropriate for Abram and his wife. They must have had some intense fear that this condition would continue. There seemed to be no reason to expect it to change.

God promised Abram two things:

First, God was his shield. This suggests that Abram may have had intense fears concerning his own defense against the kings of the lands he conquered, lest they mount an even greater army and seek him out for punishment and revenge. Whatever the case, God had defended him in the previous battle and He would continue to be the defense of Abram and his people.

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Secondly, God is his very great reward. Having turned down the spoils of war which were rightfully his, Abram needed to remember that God would reward him completely for all he had done on behalf of others. God would be his reward for valiant combat.

Verses one through eight are a report of a conversation between God and Abram. In verses two and three, Abram responds to God's promise in a surprising, but understandable way.

"But Abram said, 'O Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?' And Abram said, 'You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.'" Genesis 15:2,3

This is the cry of a broken heart. It is the frustration of an embarrassed and humiliated man who in the rest of his life was respected and honored. This made it all the more embarrassing that though he could conquer nations, he could not bear children. A key to this prayer is found in the names for God which Abram used. The name "Sovereign Lord" is really "Adonai Jehovah." The name "Jehovah" signifies the God of justice who keeps His promises. The name "Adonai" means "master". It is the picture of the all powerful God who even in the judgment of His servant is filled with mercy. Abram was crying to God as though he were saying, "God, don't you know how ridiculous I look when a slave, who is not even one of my own family, but a gentile, is going to inherit everything I own when I die. This in spite of the fact that you have promised that my family would be like the sand of the sea and the stars of the heavens?" These seem like strong, harsh words to present to the Creator of the universe. We must keep in mind, however, that every word appeared to be true to Abram. From what Abram could see, at age 75, there was no alternative unless God directly intervened and despite the promises, this had not happened in many years.

Verses four and five record God's answer to Abram's complaint.

"Then the word of the Lord came to him: 'This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.' He took him outside and said, 'Look up at the heavens and count the stars – if indeed you can count them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.'" Genesis 15:4,5

Read these verses over a few times. Notice the emotional tone of the statement. God does not rebuke Abram. There is something here more forceful than God's previous statement to Abram. There is a certain firmness to His response. First, the statement is direct. "This man will not be your heir" leaves little room for doubt about what God means. Whatever else is going to happen, it is very clear that God has decreed that Eliezer would not be the heir. God mixes mercy with judgment and additional information with His pronouncements. Having said what would not be the case, God now adds further information that tells Abram more clearly what is the case. The word "but" indicates that a contrast is in process. In contrast to what is not going to happen, God now tells Abram what is going to happen. "A son coming from your own body will be your heir." How much plainer could God make it? This further clarifies what God had been trying to tell Abram all along.

There is another piece of information implicit in this statement. If the child is to be from Abram's own body and that child is to be the heir, then it follows that this child will be born and grow to adulthood before the death of Abram in order to be the heir. Yet God

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wants to give Abram still more information in terms that will be even clearer than before. It is difficult for a person in Abram's situation to fully comprehend what God is saying. An illustration would be better than more words. God took Abram out into the night. He instructed him to look up at the sky and count the stars. Obviously, this was impossible. God used this as a parallel to help Abram understand just how numerous He intended Abram's family to be. Isn't that just like God?! When we get testy and impatient, He counters with added explanation and further illustration of what He has in store for us.

Verse six is as shocking as it is abrupt. The author simply said,

"Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness." Genesis 15:6

In spite of his advanced age, Abram believed that Jehovah, the God of justice, would indeed give him a son who would grow to adulthood before Abram passed from the human scene. The author further indicates that God's response to this was that God counted this belief as righteousness. Even the Apostle Paul, writing to the Romans, chapter four, wrote of this specific verse. He said,

"What does the Scripture say? 'Abram believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.'" Romans 4:3

It was not something that Abram did to merit justification, but he believed in God. Abram placed his whole confidence in God. God viewed that faith as righteousness.

God responds, in verse seven, to Abram's expression of confidence in the faithfulness of God. God said to him,

"I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it." Genesis 15:7

God replies to Abram's confidence by describing Himself. God called Himself "Jehovah." This is an emphasis on the nature of God which is completely just. God continues to identify Himself by saying that He was the one who brought Abram out of Ur of the Chaldeans. There is a teaching among Jewish Scholars that Abram had been thrown into a fiery furnace in Ur because of his faith in Jehovah. They believe God rescued him from that dangerous situation. This is the reason, they believe, that God refers to himself as the one who brought Abram out of Ur. It is possible, but to my knowledge it is not substantiated. It is just as possible that it means that God brought Abram and his family from Ur to Haran and on around the fertile crescent to Canaan. God further identifies Himself as the One who had given the land of Canaan to Abram and his lineage after him. God describes Himself, in this verse, as merciful, all powerful, faithful and provident.

Verse eight continues the dialogue between Abram and God. Abram was speaking. He said,

"O Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?" Genesis 15:8

In Hebrew, this is "Adonai Jehovah." In general terms, this means "great God of justice." Adonai is one of the more common names for God and means "master." Jehovah, on the other hand, symbolizes the justice of God. The name Jehovah is made up of four letters. There is a surprise, however. The four letters have the vowels of the name "Elohim" rather than the vowels of the word Jehovah. It is thought by many that this is a way of

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speaking of God as the merciful judge. Despite all the waiting and determined questioning, still Abram calls God "all powerful Master". It is difficult for some to believe that Abram, the man of great faith, had such a difficult time believing that God would give the land to him and his lineage. It is intriguing that God did not have such a difficulty. Abram voiced his struggle and God dealt with it immediately. It is quite interesting that God did not scold him for his struggle to believe. God simply took steps to strengthen the faith of a choice servant.

In verse nine, God gives Abram instructions concerning his struggle for faith. God said to him,

"So the Lord said to him, 'Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.'" Genesis 15:9

We must remember that this sentence is given in response to the question of Abram in verse eight, "How can I know that I will gain possession of it?" If, in fact, God is answering the question directly, then He is saying you will know by the sacrifices. The problem is that we do not know if that is the case.

There is question in the minds of some scholars whether the author quotes God as saying "Bring me three heifers" or saying "Bring me a heifer three years old." Personally, I prefer to translate this in terms of the age of the animal rather than the number of them. That choice is not verifiable.

Notice the kinds of animals God instructed Abram to bring. Each of these animals was chosen for specific sacrifices later on in the history of Israel. Their sacrificial significance is as follows:

1. Heifer - Yom Kippur - Day of Atonement
2. Goat - Yom Kippur, and on Festivals
3. Ram or lamb - Guilt, Sin Offering
4. Dove - Purification

Each of these sacrifices was in anticipation of the sacrifices which were commanded of the people of Israel at a later time. Each sacrifice had to do with cleansing in one way or another.

This might seem like a strange request that God made of Abram. Actually, it was not. When two people were making a covenant between them, one way to solemnize that decision was to cut animals in two parts and the two persons pass between the two parts of the sacrificed animals. This was a way to invite Abram to share in covenant with God.

Whatever the reason, in verse ten, Abram did exactly as God commanded. There was no protest that this seemed a bit strange. God said it and Abram did it. It is reasonable to assume that Abram understood about the invitation to covenant. It was a common expression of that day.

Did you ever wonder why the author included the part of the story concerning the birds of prey trying to feed upon the sacrifices? This has to do with the purpose of the slaying of these animals. They were not killed just to put them to death. They were killed as a visual symbol of a covenant between Abram and God. It was more than an agreement that both would be faithful to their word. The fact that the animals used in this visual sign were all animals which were part of the sacrificial system indicates that the commitment to covenant was important, but that the idea of personal cleansing was just as important. The way

a person keeps his or her word is as important as that person's faithfulness to the covenant itself.

15:12-21 God Speaks To Abram In A Dream

This brief paragraph is of special significance. Notice, in verse 12, that night has not yet fallen. This means that the whole sacrificial experience was carried out within one day. The description of the weather conditions is in keeping with the content of the dream. This is a picture of dread and sorrow.

In the midst of this dark picture, verses 12 - 16, God spoke to Abram. He said to him,

"Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure." Genesis 15:13-16

There are at least nine specific pieces of new information that God gave to Abram. They are as follows:

1. Your descendants will live in a strange country.
2. They will be slaves.
3. They will be mistreated for 400 years.
4. God will punish their captors.
5. Your descendants will leave with great wealth.
6. Abram will die in peace.
7. He will live to very old age.
8. In the fourth generation your people will return to this place.
9. The incomplete sin of the Amorites is the reason.

Imagine what your feelings would be if God told you this about your children. It would be difficult for you to accept.

In the third item above, God said that they would be mistreated for 400 years. Many people assume that this means that they would be in Egypt that long. In fact, that was not the case. Israel suffered for about 190 years from the birth of Isaac until going into Egypt. They were suffering in the land of Egypt for about 210 years. Together these figures add up to 400 years.

Think about what God said. God was talking about Abram's descendants. Abram did not have any children. Imagine what this did for Abram when he heard it and knew that he had been embarrassingly childless for decades.

In verse 17, it is already dark. As far as we can tell, the vision of Abram is still in process. God apparently is showing him, in the vision, a covenant that He will ratify with Abram.

The fire passed between the two rows of piled sacrifices. It is interesting that God chose this figure to symbolize what God was going to do in relationship to Abram. It is interesting because the smoke and fire were the two symbols of divine presence with Israel later, during the Exodus.

As this was in progress, God made a covenant with Abram in these words,

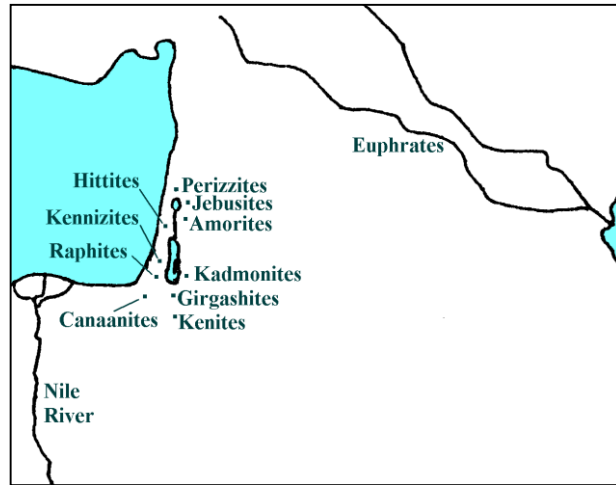
LESSON 8

"To your descendants I give this land from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates – the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Raphaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Gergashites and Jebusites." Genesis 15:18–19

This is another in a series of repetitions of the covenant God made with Abram in which He set aside the land for the use of His people. We are quite familiar with the land involved in the covenant. We need to take a look at a marked map to help us see just what God was promising to Abram.

The map which follows will give some indication of just how large the gift of land from Jehovah to His people Israel was to be.

These chapters give a lot of information about Abram, Lot, ten kings and several battles. They tell us mostly, however, about the greatness of God. It pictures God as patient with an impatient, irritable servant; protective of the servant He loved; so faithful He would enter into an eternal covenant with a very human servant and friend. Think about it. There is much more!



Reflecting about Abraham and his experience of God's faithfulness can be a source of great encouragement. Every one of us have had times when God enabled us to be strong, but we have also had our moments when we understood Abraham's weakness only too well. What is it in your experience that seems insurmountable? Just where have you felt taken advantage of as Abraham must have felt when Lot chose all the good land for himself? God was faithful to Abraham and God never changes! What do you need to trust God to do when it seems so absolutely impossible?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 9

GENESIS 16:1 – 17:27

1. There are seven paragraphs in these two chapters. Read each paragraph carefully. On the chart which follows, write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

16: 1–6	
16: 7–14	
16:15–16	
17: 1–8	
17: 9–14	
17: 15–21	
17:22–27	

2. Look at 16:1–6 again. What significance can you attach to the use of "now" at the beginning of the paragraph?
3. We tend to understand a passage better if we can put ourselves into the story. Put yourself into the place of Hagar. How would you feel? Put yourself into the place of Sarai. How would you feel? Why would Sarai give her servant to Abram? Why would Hagar respond as she did when she knew she was pregnant?
4. In 16:7-14, place yourself in the situation of Hagar. How would you feel when the angel gave you the message from God? Why?
5. Where did this encounter take place?
6. The angel told Hagar to name the child "Ishmael". What reason can you find that Abram was the one who named the infant?
7. In 16:26, the author gives the current age of Abram. Why would he do that at this juncture?
8. In 17:1-8, God appeared to Abram. What name for God is used in this paragraph? What difference does this make?
9. God, in 17:4-8, identified the terms of the covenant. What responses did God ask from Abram? What did God promise as His response? How did Abram respond?
10. In 17:9–14, God identifies the seal of the covenant. What is it? What is the penalty of not accepting the seal? Where were they when this was given?
11. God makes special promises concerning Sarai in 17:15-21. What are these promises? What do they mean? What was Abraham's response to these promises?

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12. Compare the actions of Abraham in 17:3 and 17:17. What is the difference between them? How do you account for Abraham's laughter? How did God respond to this reaction? Why did God make promises concerning Ishmael?
13. Compare and contrast Abraham's actions in 17:17 and 17:23 and following. What sense do they make? What hindrances do you find in this situation? Why would God include the servants of Abraham's household?
14. Review these chapters again. What did you discover about God?
15. In view of what you have learned in these chapters, what changes will you ask God to help you make in your own life?

LESSON 9: GENESIS 16:1 – 17:27

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Hagar Conceives

Chapter 16 is an apparent parenthesis in the story of Abram. This does not mean that the information is insignificant, but it does represent an apparent deviation from the movement of the story. In fact, it is a vital chapter in the story, although it does not appear so at first.

16:1-6 Hagar Conceives

Notice that this paragraph begins with the word "now." This is significant in that it usually indicates a shift in the story being presented which is clearly the case in this instance.

The spotlight has been focused on Abram. Suddenly it shifts and the author focuses our attention on Sarai. Notice the way the author speaks of a severe disappointment in her inability to bear a child.

"Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar..." Genesis 16:1

There is no way to explain to a modern American person just how devastating this piece of information was for the people of that day. Everything about this scenario would be repulsive to people of our time. Today, the fact that a woman could not conceive would not be considered nearly as traumatic as it is presented in this chapter. If a woman is unable to conceive, most husbands would be disappointed, but probably not devastated. Not so in that time and culture. It was the woman's place to bear children. If she failed to do so, she failed to fulfill her task as a wife. If a woman failed to bear a child she would be rejected by the other women in the community. They would not talk with her. They would not allow her to come to the well and join in their talking sessions as other women could. This was not just a way to be mean. They felt that barrenness was a judgment from God for some hidden sin and they did not want to be associated with anyone in such a dilemma. The husband of such a woman, no matter how successful he may be, would be considered to be judged by God and he would not be welcomed in the gate – the place where decisions were made for the whole community. Other men would have nothing to do with him in terms of his wisdom or trade. For all intents and purposes, this couple would be shunned by the entire community.

It was clear to the people of that day that Sarai had no hope of fulfilling her "responsibilities" as a wife to Abram. Her words revealed what she considered her only hope,

"Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar:" Genesis 16:1

This is the part that would be so offensive to people today. There was an understanding in that culture which is also contrary to our understanding today. If a woman could not bear children, she could give her maidservant to her husband, as a wife or concubine, and

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the child of the maidservant would be considered the child of the wife, not that of the maidservant.

Notice what Sarai said to Abram,

"The Lord has kept me from having children. Go sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her." Genesis 16:2

There is no way that a person from our culture would understand such a request, but it was accepted in that time and place. It did not shock Abram nor was he offended by it. Notice his response.

"...Abram agreed to what Sarai said." Genesis 16:2

It was supremely important that a man have an heir. They felt compelled to do whatever necessary in order to bring that to pass.

Verse three contains a piece of information that could go unnoticed. Observe what the author said,

"So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. He slept with Hagar, and she conceived." Genesis 16:3,4a

The Jewish people had what they called a Halachah, an unwritten law based upon the oral interpretation of the Scripture, which said that if a man was married to his wife for ten years and she bore him no children, he was required to remarry someone else who might bear him a child. We should hasten to remind you that this did not mean that the husband add that he had not divorced his barren wife. He simply took a different wife to fulfill the task his first wife was unable to accomplish.

Notice in the previous quote that this took place after they had been in the land of promise for ten years. In other words, when all other available avenues were exhausted, Sarai did the only thing she had left to do to meet her responsibility as a wife.

Put yourself in Sarai's shoes for a moment. The thing that every Jewish woman dreaded had happened to her. She had tried to carry out her responsibility, but only failure came of her efforts. With nowhere else to turn, she gave her Egyptian handmaid to her husband in order to accomplish the very thing she failed to do. Just how would you feel if your name were Sarai? This was the lowest day of her entire life. Certainly she felt like a complete failure.

Notice what Sarai did. She gave her maidservant to her husband. That would be a great sacrifice for any woman. Sarai, in order to do what she thought was proper by her husband, relinquished her unique relationship to Abram and opened it up to another woman who was also her servant. It should be noted that Hagar would not cease to be Sarai's servant in this new relationship. Sarai had her faults, but this was a great sacrifice she made on behalf of her husband.

Over against this sacrifice, notice the response of the servant Hagar.

"When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress." Genesis 16:4b

This sentence is tragic, but understandable. Servants were often mistreated. Now the wife and the maidservant, the abuser and the mistreated one, for the first time, had equal

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status. That was a humiliation to the wife, to say the least. Add to this, the fact that the servant had accomplished something that the owner was not able to accomplish. If the servant can present Abram with a child and Sarai was unable to do the same, who would the servant assume to be pleasing Abram the most? It would be reasonable for her to expect that she had replaced Sarai in the graces of their husband. This was a situation that sooner or later would have to be resolved. There was no hope that it would resolve itself. It could only get worse, much worse.

Verse five is a cry of great pain and bitterness. People tend to fault Sarai totally for its content. Look at it carefully.

"Then Sarai said to Abram, 'You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the Lord judge between you and me.'" Genesis 16:5

The common assumptions are that Sarai took the initiative and gave her servant, Hagar, to Abram as a wife and then blamed Abram for the results which followed. At first glance, these common assumptions appear to be correct. More careful study reveals that there may be more to the story than this.

It is only a hint, but look at verse six. Abram is speaking,

"'Your servant is in your hands,' Abram said, 'Do with her whatever you think best.' Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her." Genesis 16:6

The implication here is that Abram had stayed out of the struggle. He rightly thought of Hagar as Sarai's servant and left her discipline to Sarai. Again, I repeat, this is only an implication from the fact that Abram told Sarai that she had control over her servant and could deal with her as she felt appropriate. It is saying that Abram felt Sarai did not need his input to control the situation. It is entirely possible that Sarai was upset with Abram because he did not come to her defense when Hagar got out of line. Sarai's response may have been abrupt and harsh, but there is no doubt that she felt that she had done right and was now being challenged for it. She apparently felt that her husband could have dealt with this situation if he had taken the care to do it.

Whatever the feelings within the family, Sarai took Abram's advice and dealt with her own servant, Hagar. Sarai took care of the situation by dealing harshly with her. One gets the impression that this was new in their household. It appears that Abram was gentle and understanding with his servants. There was definitely a sense of loyalty to him by his servants. That was unusual in that day. The actions of Sarai were different. Apparently she took every opportunity to make life impossible for Hagar. It was so bad that Hagar felt that she needed to flee. This was severe. The penalty for a slave fleeing was death. Hagar knew that if she were caught, and she probably would be, she could be put to death. Add to that the high probability of being lost in the desert and dying from lack of food and water. Apparently she felt it would be better to die than to put up with the abuse of Sarai.

16:7-14 God Sent Hagar Back to Abram

This paragraph describes an encounter between the fleeing servant, Hagar, and an angel of the Lord. This is startling because Hagar was an Egyptian. Some of her forefathers had worshipped Jehovah, but by this time the Egyptians had their own gods and probably

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knew little or nothing of Jehovah. This is important because it probably tells us something about how Abram's worship of God affected his slaves.

One of the shocking details about this story is implied, but not mentioned. There is no mention of Abram going after the run-away slave. Throughout history, slave owners have felt that it was incumbent upon them to find and punish runaway slaves in order to provide a lesson to other slaves about what happens when a slave escapes. This was usually a ghastly sight to behold. This gives us one more piece of information about the kind of person Abram was.

In verse seven, the text says,

"The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur." Genesis 16:7

The text sounds as though Hagar was lost and the angel found her. That is not the sense of the word. It rather suggests that the angel of the Lord, knowing where she was, revealed himself to her at an appropriate time. Scripture often speaks in anthropomorphic terms. It speaks of the hand of God, but God is a spirit. Here also, it speaks of the angel carrying on a conversation with Hagar. The indication from the text is that Hagar could hear the angel and apparently could see him. Whatever the case, it did not appear to be strange to her because she talked with him at length. To begin the conversation with Hagar, the angel asked her some questions. He said,

*"Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?"
Genesis 16:8*

The angel identifies Hagar as Sarai's servant. It is said in such a way that it provides something of her identity. She is not just Hagar; she is Hagar, who is Sarai's servant. Try to think like Hagar for a moment. She is a runaway slave. The last thing she would want to be reminded of was the fact that she was Sarai's servant, in spite of the fact that she had run away. How would you feel?

The angel asked where she was coming from and where she was going. Our assumption is that the angel knew both answers before the question was asked. It was simply a way to get her to talk. Notice that Hagar answered the first question, but did not answer the second. It may be that she did not know where she was going, but was quite certain of the place from which she had come. Her answer was honest and forthright.

"I'm running away from my mistress Sarai," she answered." Genesis 16:7

Notice, also, that Hagar still considered Sarai her mistress. No matter what happened, a slave was a slave for life. Only death could release them from their bondage. Hagar's attitude was probably an outgrowth of the way in which Sarai "mistreated her."

The last named place in this part of the Genesis story was the area around Jerusalem. Suddenly the author identifies this location as "a spring that is beside the road to Shur." Shur is located near the River of Egypt which is usually thought of as the Nile River (see map below). To get there would be a trip of nearly 150 miles. Hagar, not knowing where to go, was probably headed in the general direction of the area from which she had originally come in Egypt.

In verse nine, the angel of the Lord gave Hagar some instructions. He said,

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"Go back to your mistress and submit to her... I will increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count." Genesis 16:9,10

Think, for a moment, about how this might strike Hagar. She had just fled for her life, now she is being instructed to go back to the place where her life was in jeopardy. She would certainly expect to receive even worse treatment upon her return than before she ran away.

16:15–16 The Birth of Ishmael

The exact location of Ishmael's place of birth is not identified. It is reasonable to assume that Hagar returned to Abram's household, as God instructed, before the birth of her child. There is no hint of what happened when she returned.

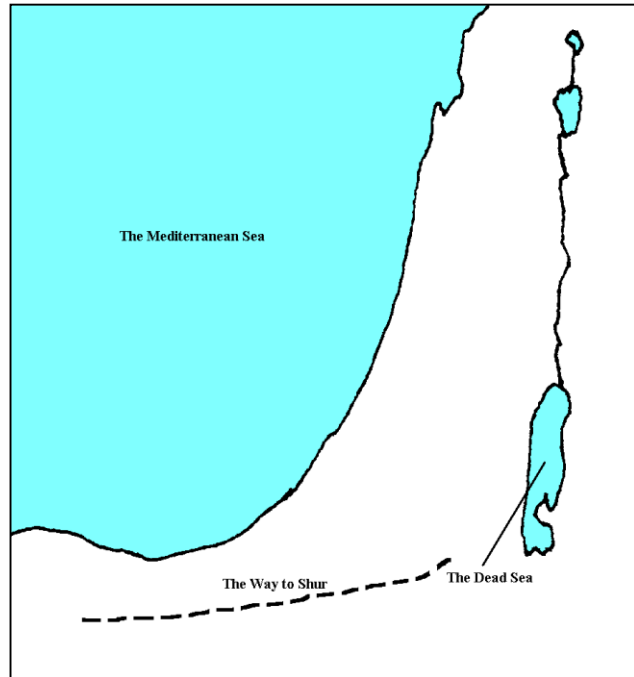
Notice how Abram deals with the birth of his son by Hagar. The text says,

"So Hagar bare Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne." Genesis 16:15

The angel of the Lord had told Hagar to name the child Ishmael. The name "Ishmael" means "God will hear." At the time of birth, however, it was Abram who named the child "Ishmael". The text is clear that the angelic announcement was important to Hagar. One wonders why she did not give the child this name as instructed. In almost every instance, the father gave the name to his child. This was demonstrated in the naming of John the Baptist. Zechariah could not speak, but the child was not named until he had written the name down for them. One must remember, however, that it was Elizabeth who stopped them from naming her son after her husband, Zechariah. It was Joseph to whom the angel spoke and gave the name for the baby that Mary was to bear. There are instances, in Scripture, where a mother named her child. In this instance, it could be that because she was a slave it did not seem appropriate for her to name Abram's son. Again, it is possible that Hagar told Abram what the angel had said. It is also possible that God revealed this information to Abram. The truth is, all of these are conjectures.

In verse 16, the author gives the age of Abram at the time of Ishmael's birth. This was a significant gesture. On several previous occasions, the author had given hints that let us determine the age of Abram at that particular time. There are, however, only four times in this entire story where the author gives the age of Abram:

1. 12:4 - age 75 - Abram left Haran
2. 16:16 - age 86 - The birth of Ishmael
3. 17:1 - age 99 - God promised a son
4. 25:8 - age 175 - Abraham died



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In each instance, it signaled an outstanding event in Abram's life. In 16:16, the birth of Ishmael was a very significant event in the life of Abram.

First, the fact that Abram had a son, even though it was by his wife's maidservant, removed the onus of evil from Abram in the minds of his neighbors. This was extremely important in their thinking.

Secondly, we must consider what became of the maidservant's son. Ishmael became the father of the Arab people. You will remember the prophetic words God's messenger spoke to Hagar,

"He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers." Genesis 16:12

Hagar may well have had other children. Nevertheless, Ishmael was a warlike person and did not have peace with other members of his family. Before Abraham's death, he sent his children, born by other wives, off to the East in an attempt to forestall battle between them and Isaac. As we know, Ishmael is the ancestor of the Arab nations and Isaac is the ancestor of the Jews. These two groups of people have never known real peace throughout history. In the Middle East, as we write, the message of the angel is coming to pass. The Arab is standing against most of the rest of the world.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Abraham And Sarah

17:1-8 Abram Changed to Abraham

Nothing is recorded of the events that took place between 16:16 and 17:1. At the end of chapter 16, Abram was 86 years of age. At the beginning of chapter 17, Abram was 99 years old. One can only conjecture concerning this 13 year period of silence. Certainly the tensions between Sarai and Hagar did not diminish. There is little doubt that Abram's tension concerning the promise of a son necessarily grew during this lengthy period of waiting.

In 17:1, God identifies Himself. The names of God in the Scriptures are more than personal identifiers. In almost every instance, God identifies Himself in such a way that it is meaningful to the current context. This is certainly true in this instance. The name for God used here is "Elshaddai", "God Almighty." Some scholars might translate this name as "God who is sufficient for every creature". It is possible to translate this name "God the self sufficient one." This is significant because the message God brings to Abram requires a God who is all- powerful and sufficient for the needs of every person. The message that the Almighty God brings to Abram comes in the form of a covenant.

There are two parts to this covenant – one describes the responsibilities of God and the other describes the responsibilities of Abram. God asked these responses from Abram:

1. Walk before God
2. Be perfect

The first requirement should not be thought of in terms of taking an actual walk. Instead, it means placing one's trust completely in Jehovah. It involves living one's lifestyle so as to be pleasing to God; to walk and keep on walking before God.

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God also called upon Abram to "be perfect." This grabs our attention immediately. We know just how impossible it is to be perfect. Nevertheless, there are several places in the Old Testament where God calls upon His people to be perfect. In this instance, one might better translate "perfect" as "wholeheartedly." This describes a level of total dedication; a way of living one's life as an attempt to emulate; to practice God's ways after Him. It is to seek an ever increasing level of purity in one's attempt to live God's character after Him.

God committed Himself to the covenant in these terms:

1. God will make a covenant with Abram.
2. God will make Abram the father of many nations.
3. God will change his name from Abram to Abraham.
4. Abraham will be very fruitful.
5. Kings shall come from Abraham.
6. God will be God to Abraham and to his seed after him.
7. This will be an everlasting covenant to be their God.
8. God will give to him, and his seed following him, the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession.
9. Jehovah will be their God.

We must remember that at this point Abram did not have any family to multiply because God had said that his seed would not be counted through Ishmael. God is assuring Abram that this would come to pass. There is strong significance in the fact that God agreed to covenant with Abram. The Divine covenant is not like the communiqué issued following the meeting of two heads of state where each says something nice about the other. This covenant binds God and His people together, without cancellation, for life. God is promising that He will always be bound to these people.

To this day, the people of Israel lay claim to the land of Canaan because God promised Abram that this would be their possession.

Imagine how Abram would feel. He had a son by a slave girl, but that was not satisfactory to him, and God had declared that Ishmael would not be Abram's heir. He had wanted a son, by his wife, for decades. God had promised him a son, but no baby was born. Now God was saying that his seed would be prolific and that kings would be born in his family. That would be almost too good to be true.

Jehovah promised that He would be God to Abram. God would provide their needs, defend them against oppression and surround them with His care. Abram and his family knew that the idols of their neighbors were powerless statues. Their neighbors did not consider their idols to be powerful outside the confines of their own land. Jehovah, however, was the God of all creation and there was no limit to His power, no boundary to His presence. This Almighty God chose to be their God. That is awesome to say the least!

Abram's response was not surprising. Notice the way the author describes it:

"Abram fell facedown." Genesis 17:3

It was a frightening thing to see God. No one had seen God and lived. Abram was so impressed with the majesty of God that he was afraid to look upon Him. The only position that had any semblance of safety was to be face down. It was a symbol of subservience and humility on the part of Abram. It was a symbolic response to what he understood to be

the great majesty and power of God. Abram was showing that he thought of God as far greater than any king.

Reading this paragraph produces the sensation of eavesdropping on royal conversation. You are party to privileged discussion. The author then identifies what God said after Abram fell on his face. In the midst of the promises of the covenant, God said to Abram,

"Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham for the father of a multitude have I made thee." Genesis 17:5

As previously indicated, names were important in the minds of these people. They thought that the name which a person bore had something to do with what would happen in that person's life. It was a common thing to change a person's name when there was some rise in their personal stature. It was an indication that the person has grown so much that the old name is no longer capable of expressing the person's identity. God said that he would no longer be called "Abram". Abram means "exalted father." This could be true of a great host of other people. His name from now on would be called "Abraham." Abraham means "father of a multitude." This could not be said of that many people. Imagine a man who had been childless through a long life now being promised that he would be the father of a multitude. Imagine yourself as being 99 years of age, and being told that you were going to be the father of a boy and of many nations!

As impossible as it may have seemed to Abraham, history has demonstrated that all of these miracles did come to pass. Several times in Scripture God accomplished the impossible, even to the surprise of His people.

17:9-14 Circumcision Commanded

In this paragraph, God said that the sign of the everlasting covenant is to be the circumcision of every male in the household, both family members and servants. As you read this, there is a great temptation to think that this is no big thing. But we need to remember where they were when this took place. They were within the land that God promised would be theirs. The frightening part of this was that many of their powerful enemies were also in the land at that time. If every male was to be circumcised, then Israel would be without defenses for a period of time while this very painful wound was healing. If this information got out, it is quite certain that their enemies would attack and Israel would be absolutely vulnerable.

There were many commands of God that Israel did not take seriously. This particular one, however, they did. Today they still think of the seal of their covenant with God as the circumcision of their newborn sons.

The command of circumcision was to be carried out for family members, servants and foreigners who were also a part of the household. We need to clarify each of these three designations.

1. A family member refers to the man's sons.
2. A servant is a slave who is bought to be a servant or the child of such a servant. This designation more often refers to servants from the land of Israel.
3. A foreigner is not a traveler who happens to accept one's hospitality, but a Gentile, whom a Hebrew man had bought, or had taken as a captive in war, to be a slave in his home.

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The question "why?" is appropriate. Why should servants and foreign slaves receive this sign of the Divine covenant with Israel? The text does not give an answer to this question.

Circumcision was a means of sanctifying a person; a way to identify a person as set apart as God's own. Everything and everyone owned by the people of God were considered as part of that person's household and must be set apart for God much as the nation was set apart as the people of God.

Verse 14 is a crucial warning. Notice what the author says,

"And the uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant." Genesis 17:14

There were several reasons why a person might not participate in the rite of circumcision. First among these is the excruciating pain involved. There are those who insist that the text is calling for each man to perform this rite upon himself. A second reason is that this intense pain would render the man unable to defend himself against an enemy for an extended period of time. This was a great hazard in the area where they were presently located. Again, some of the people were not that excited about following the commands of God in anything, much less such a painful command.

At first glance, the threat in verse 14 may not seem all that frightening. On closer observation, it is a devastating pronouncement. Note what God said,

"That soul shall be cut off from his people." Genesis 17:14

This is not just a manner of speech. It describes something very specific. To be "cut off from his people" is just another way of saying that two things will happen:

1. He will die an unnatural death - he will be killed.
2. He will be childless.

One of the things which any Jewish family prized most was that they would have a son, or grandson, so that the name would live on. To die childless was far worse than just to die. It would mean that the person would perish from the memory of his people. His good name would die with him. God was not asking them if they wanted to take part in this covenant, He was telling them that they had no choice!

Lest we be too critical of the Divine announcement, notice the reason that God offers for such a strong punishment.

"He has broken my covenant." Genesis 17:14

No human being has the power to destroy God's covenant. The individual does have the power, however, to act in such a way that it becomes impossible for the covenant of God to be operative in his life. This is a devastating and tragic act.

It should be noted that there is information in the Hebrew text which usually escapes our attention in the English. In the story of Abram, prior to this announcement, God has identified Himself as Jehovah, a name that emphasizes the Justice of God. At this specific juncture, His name is changed to "Elohim", which stresses the mercy of God. This is not accidental.

17:15-21 Sarai Changed to Sarah

It is a beautiful thing to observe that God did not restrict His blessing to giving Abram a new name. Sarai was also honored in the same way. Her name was to be changed from Sarai to Sarah. There are differences concerning the meaning of Sarai. Some assert that the name may mean "contentious." Still others affirm that it means "my princess." We can not, with integrity, be more specific than this. On the other hand, the name Sarah means "princess" or "princess of the nations." The important consideration here is not just that her name was changed but that God blessed both Abram and his wife and entered into an unchangeable covenant that they would have a son by Sarai, now 89 years of age.

God continues by indicating just what the future of this child would be. This child was to be the origin of nations. This says at least two things:

1. That there will be a number of offspring.
2. These will be people of power; they will form nations on their own.

Abraham responded to this announcement in a predictable way. As in verse three, Abraham fell on his face before God. Notice, however, that there is a change. The author said,

"Then Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?" Genesis 17: 17

Up until this point, the coming of a son was just a promise from God. Now God is demonstrating His seriousness by instituting the rite of circumcision. It is clear that Abraham had some serious reservations concerning the possibility of the Divine promise.

Abraham asks two questions. The obvious answer to each question is a strong "no!" The questions are these:

1. Will a 100 year old man have a son?
2. Will a 90 year old woman bear a child?

The questions were in fact strong statements by Abraham. He was saying, "God is not going to give a son to a man 100 years of age. Surely, God is not going to bring about a pregnancy for a woman who is 90 years old, is He?" I like that kind of honesty. Even though Abraham was incapable of affirming the Divine promise, everyone knows exactly what Abraham was thinking.

The next phrase is riddled with emotion. Abraham said, in deep anguish:

"If only Ishmael might live under your blessing." Genesis 17:18

This is a way of saying, "we are not really going to have a child - Ishmael is my son. Why not let him be the fulfillment of that promise. There can be no other." It is just one more instance where Abraham and Sarah tried to help God out, to intervene in order to keep God from appearing to violate His promise of a son. They were so very human!

God was not interested in Abraham's offer of help. At this point God spoke in very specific terms. He said,

"Then God said, 'Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.'" Genesis 17:19

LESSON 9

First, a better translation for the word "yes" would be "surely" or "certainly." It is a word of strong affirmation.

Secondly, God was saying that despite the presence of Ishmael, He would establish the covenant with Isaac and no one else. God clearly states that this child would come from Sarah by Abraham. For the first time, God identifies that the child is to be named Isaac, which means laughter/mockery. Clearly this is because Abraham laughed when God made the announcement. But God was not laughing. He meant every word of it.

Not only did God announce that they would have Isaac, He further announced that He would establish the covenant with Abraham as an everlasting covenant. It was a way of saying, again, that God would through this boy continue the covenant He had made with him. To say that He would establish the covenant through Isaac was a way for God to say that He would not, under any circumstances, establish His everlasting covenant through Ishmael.

Thirdly, God was saying that this covenant would continue in effect with every ensuing generation of the lineage of Isaac.

God had promised Hagar that He would not forget Ishmael. Here He keeps that promise. God said,

"And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him, I will make him fruitful, and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year." Genesis 17:20–22

The twelve rulers mentioned in 17:20-22, will be identified later in the study. God was gentle, but firm. He would remember to bless Ishmael, but Isaac alone could be the channel of the covenant God had made with Abraham. This quotation contains the most specific statement God had made concerning the birth of Isaac: Expect it next year at this time. One might wonder why God was going to wait a full year. Remember, Abraham was not yet circumcised. That healing process would take a long time.

All of chapter 17 took place when God appeared to Abraham. Imagine how emotionally drained you would be if God appeared to you. Imagine how much more tension would be added if God said to you the things He had said to Abraham.

I suspect that Abraham was exhausted and that the following words represented a great relief to him,

"When he had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him." Genesis 17:21

17:22-27 Abraham Circumcised His Household

Abraham was so human. First he did not really believe that God would give him a son. Then Abraham, on the same day that God appeared to him, circumcised every male in his household as God commanded. This meant that Ishmael was included in that agreement. Abraham was circumcised at age 99 and Ishmael was circumcised at age 13. We too easily fault Abraham. When all was said and done, he obeyed God and did exactly as He had commanded him, despite the great difficulty to believe the wonderful promises God had made.

GLIMPSES OF GOD - I

As you look back over the chapters in this lesson, you will notice that God performed a miracle that, to our knowledge, has never happened since. If we can only bring ourselves to trust God to keep His word, we will be so much better off. One of the major teachings of this lesson is that people of God get into deep trouble when they feel the necessity to help God out. Abraham finally believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness.

As you reflect on these chapters, put yourself into Abraham's place. What would you have done differently? In view of what you have learned about God in these chapters, what will be different about your life from now on?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 10

GENESIS 18:1 – 19:38

1. There are nine paragraphs in these two chapters of Genesis. They are as follows:

- | | | |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| a. 18:1–8 | d. 18:22–33 | g. 19:23–28 |
| b. 18:9–15 | e. 19:1–11 | h. 19:29 |
| c. 18:16–21 | f. 19:12–22 | i. 19:30–38 |

Read each paragraph carefully. Write a summary of seven words or less for each paragraph in the table prepared below.

18:1–8	
18:9–15	
18:16–21	
18:22–33	
19:1–11	
19:12–22	
19:23–28	
19:29	
19:30–38	

- In the first two paragraphs of chapter 18, the author tells the story of the announcement by three men, perhaps angels, of the birth of Isaac. Put yourself in the place of Abraham and Sarah. Now read the paragraphs again. What would you feel when you heard these words?
- 18:16–19:38 deals with the destruction of Sodom. Read these paragraphs carefully. Write down everything you can find concerning the nature of God. What does this tell you about God?
- Take a sheet of paper and divide it down the middle from top to bottom. On the top left side write the name "Abraham". On the top right side write the name "Lot". Now read chapters 18 and 19 again and record the personal qualities you find for each man. Now compare and contrast these two. What did you discover?
- Study 18:22-33 carefully. What does this paragraph tell us about intercession? What does this experience tell us about the mercy of God? Does this paragraph tell us that God can change His mind?
- Read chapter 19 again. What does it tell you about the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah? What does it tell you about Lot? About his family? About His place in the city of Sodom?
- Why did God remove Lot from Sodom?

GLIMPSES OF GOD - I

8. In chapter 19, the author draws a serious contrast between the urgency of the angels to get Lot out of the city and Lot's reluctance to leave. What does this tell you?
9. In 19:23-28, the author describes the destruction of Sodom. As you reflect upon this record, what does it tell you about the mercy of God in relation to the justice of God?
10. In 19:30-38, there is a tragic story. Read the story through three times. What questions come to your mind as you read? What does the account tell you about the people involved?
11. Now review chapters 18 and 19. What has God revealed to you, in these chapters, about Himself?
12. How can you use this information to bring positive change to your own Christian walk?

LESSON 10: GENESIS 18:1 – 19:38

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

God Announces Destruction Of Sodom

In the overall design of the book, chapters 18 and 19 form a brief parenthesis; a short interruption in the story of Abraham. It is important, however, in that it shows what happens when a person, like Lot, looks to his own best interests at the expense of others.

18:1-8 Three Men Visit Abraham

The setting for this part of the story is at the tree of Mamre. This is in the vicinity of Hebron, which is about 25 miles South of Jerusalem and about 20 miles West of the Dead Sea. This is a very hot and desolate area. It is mountainous and travel is most difficult in this area. It would be important for people of the area to extend every possible hospitality to any traveler.

In this desolate area, hospitality must have been as much a treat for the local people as it was for the travelers. Native people were always glad to see someone who happened to be passing through. Notice how the author describes the scene.

"The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day." Genesis 18:1

It is not surprising to find Abraham sitting in the door of his tent in the heat of the day. Because of the heat, there is little else a person can do, in this area, at that time of day. The presence of large trees tells us there had to be an abundant supply of water in the area, though there might not be much elsewhere.

We must remember that this passage immediately follows the circumcision of Abraham and all his household. Some scholars suggest that this was the third day following the painful surgery. Even though the text does not so indicate, it is entirely possible. If that were the case, then "sitting at the entrance to his tent" was about all Abraham would be able to do. They also suggest that this is the most painful time in the entire healing process.

Look at this paragraph to see the things Abraham did:

1. He ran to meet the three men.
2. He bowed down to them.
3. He hurried to get Sarah to prepare bread.
4. He ran to the flock and to get a calf.
5. He brought the food to the men.
6. He stood near them under the tree.

We need to acknowledge that many scholars affirm that these "three men" were indeed angels. This would not be surprising, but the text does not specifically say so. The text treats the three men as men – they ate; they needed hospitality, etc.

Again, if this was the third day, the most painful time, imagine what Abraham went through in order to offer them his hospitality.

GLIMPSES OF GOD - I

Notice how the author describes the approach of the three men:

"Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby." Genesis 18:2

This is a reference to a local custom. A traveler could not just walk up to a tent and ask for hospitality. It was required that the traveler come into the area of the tent and just wait. When the local people saw the traveler's need, they were to invite him to share what was available. The three men followed this custom on these occasions. You will find the same custom described in Judges 19: 15–18.

There are other customs described in this paragraph. Notice what Abraham says,

"If I have found favor in your eyes, my Lord, do not pass your servant by. Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree." Genesis 18:3,4

In those days, the Jew was required to wash his feet before eating a meal. This was necessary because of the great amount of dirt and dust people would get on themselves in normal movement or travel. This rite was to be performed by the lowest servant in the household. It is described here as something the three men were to do for themselves. You see this custom again in the upper room when Jesus washed the feet of each disciple. John 13:5 ff.

Abraham also said,

"Let me get you something to eat so you can be refreshed and then go on your way." Genesis 18:5

It was a capital offense to send someone away without food in this desolate area. This was due to the fact that if a person were refused hospitality, they could die of exposure or lack of food and water. The response of the three men indicates that they accepted his hospitality.

The provision of food had to be adequate. The activity of Abraham indicates that this was more than provided in his hospitality. Abraham did everything possible to give his guests an excellent meal. The author suggests,

"So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. 'Quick,' he said, 'get three seahs of fine flour and knead it and bake some bread.'" Genesis 18:6

The text mentions a measure of fine flour called a "seah." The "seah" was equal to about one third of an ephah, or roughly two and one half gallons. It was appropriate for Abraham to make such a request of Sarah. Take note, however, that there is no hint of the bread was ever being presented to the men. An explanation of this might well be that the bread was given to them, along with the meat, because the bread served as their knife and fork for the meal. It should also be pointed out that this was a special bread and unlike their regular fare. It was made of "fine flour". That was not true of the bread they regularly ate.

The author also said,

"Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it." Genesis 18:7

LESSON 10

It was not required that they lavish a feast upon their guests, but it was required that they give their guests sufficient food to sustain them in their journey. Abraham went beyond the requirement to show his guests how much he wanted to please them.

In the Hebrew text, it says that Abraham gave the calf to "the youth." It more literally describes a male, possibly a servant, between the age of weaning and the accepted age of marriage. It is entirely possible that the food was given to a servant who was young. It is just as possible that it was given to Ishmael in an attempt to train him in the provision of hospitality to strangers in the desert. The text is not clear about this.

The author indicates that Abraham prepared a feast for the three men. The Hebrew text describes these three guests as "ishim" – the manliness of man as opposed to the word "adam" which describes man as the crown of God's creation with no emphasis on manliness. There are a number of scholars who contend that these "men" were in fact angels. The fact that they knew Sarah's name might suggest that they were angels, but that is not a necessary understanding. There is no corroboration for the idea that these men could be angels, though it is entirely possible, and perhaps probable.

Abraham probably brought the feast he had prepared for the men. The text says,

"He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree." Genesis 18:8

The "curds and milk" describe daily fare for people who herd sheep and goats. The preparation of the calf is far more than the usual provision.

Note that Abraham "stood near them under a tree." This suggests that Abraham, though a wealthy man, assumed the position of a servant in order to make sure that every need was properly provided. It was the custom of servants to stand while others ate. Abraham assumed that position on behalf of his guests.

19:9–15 Sarah Laughed

When the meal was completed, the men asked about the location of Sarah. Notice how the author said it,

"Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him." Genesis 18:9.

It was appropriate for all three to ask concerning the host's wife. Abraham might have been suspicious if only one had made inquiry. One should assume that the three men knew where Sarah was at that time. She was where anyone of that day would expect her to be under these conditions and in that culture. Abraham answered clearly that Sarah was in the tent. We need to remember that when the meal was ended, there was a ceremonial cup of wine that was to be shared. The men may well have been asking about Sarah in order to share this important blessing with her. Again, they may have been inquiring concerning Sarah so that she could hear the announcement they had come to make. We honestly do not know.

In verse 10, the angel makes promises to Abraham and Sarah. He said,

"Then the Lord said, 'I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.'" Genesis 18:10

GLIMPSES OF GOD - I

First the author said that the angel spoke. Then the author quoted the Lord as speaking in the same instance. Which one spoke? It appears that the angel spoke. In the Hebrew text, it does not say, "... the Lord said,..." but "then he said...". The angel made two promises:

1. He would return one year later.
2. Sarah would have a son at that time.

Imagine yourself in the position of Abraham. There had been several promises to this effect, but no baby was born. If you assume his age and that of his wife, as well as the number of times these promises had been made before without a son being born, it would have been most difficult to take the promise of the Lord seriously.

In verse 10, the author indicated that Sarah was listening to this conversation despite the fact she was not visually present. Sarah, sitting near the tent door, was as close to this conversation as she could and still be in the tent where local custom required her to be.

Verse 11 is an attempt by the author to describe the conditions surrounding this conversation in order to help us grasp just how it sounded to Abraham and Sarah. The author said,

"Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing." Genesis 18: 11

Whatever is said at this point must be viewed with the age and conditions of Abraham and Sarah in mind. The author has described an impossible situation. Abraham is clearly well beyond the age of potentially fathering a child. In even clearer terms, the necessary conditions for Sarah to conceive a child had ceased long before this time. With these facts in mind, it is not difficult to see why this announcement would be absurd to say the least.

In verse 12, Sarah responds involuntarily to what she overheard. Notice how carefully the author speaks,

"So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, 'After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?'" Genesis 18:12

Sarah should not have been listening. In that culture, men took care of all contacts with the outside world. If she had laughed out loud, the men would have heard her and known that she was listening to their conversation. Were it not for the fact that the angel said it, this promise would evoke laughter in most anyone. It is the fact that the promise came from that gives it credence. The ridiculous becomes plausible when God speaks.

Imagine what Abraham must have felt when the angel spoke to him, in verse 13, and said,

"Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?'" Genesis 18:13

Put yourself in Abraham's situation for a moment. He heard nothing because Sarah neither laughed out loud nor spoke audibly. Notice that in 18:12 it says, "...she thought...". In 18:13, however, the angel said, "...Why did Sarah laugh and say..." Nevertheless, the angel asked Abraham why she said this. One can imagine the confusion and consternation which must have gripped his mind. Certainly he would have protested that he had heard neither laughter nor words. It might be appropriate to translate 18:13, "Why did Sarah laugh and **think to herself...**"

The angel continued,

LESSON 10

"Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son." Genesis 18:14

The basis of the angel's challenge was not whether or not Sarah was too old, but the fact that God had said it and therefore nothing could keep it from becoming reality.

In verse 15, Sarah either came out of the tent or was summoned from the tent. The text says that she was frightened. Imagine someone quoting her thoughts! These men were no ordinary human beings. It is no wonder that she was frightened. In her terror she lied to the angel and said,

"I did not laugh." Genesis 18:15

This was a half truth. Sarah did not laugh out loud. That, however, is not what she said. She said that she did not laugh at all. This was clearly false, but a very human response to being found out.

The mercy of God is expressed repeatedly in the Old Testament. Sarah could have been judged for lying to the angel. That was a dangerous action. God overlooked her failure in a very special way.

"But he said, 'Yes, you did laugh.'" Genesis 18:15

The mercy of God is discovered here in that God did not punish her lying. On the other hand, God made it clear that He knew of her dishonesty. Sometimes the firm reminder that you know that the offender did lie is more effective than destructive retribution.

18:16-21 God Announces Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

In this paragraph, the focus of attention changes sharply from the promise of a son to the promised destruction of a great city.

In accordance with the custom of the day, when guests prepared to leave, they did two things:

1. They would get up from their comfortable position.
2. They would face in the direction they were preparing to go.

This was the signal that the required hospitality had ended. Abraham responded appropriately. He walked with them "to see them on their way". It would be the same as our going to the door with a guest. We would not think of allowing them to "let themselves out". The same was true for Abraham.

In the midst of these social amenities, God chose to share information with Abraham concerning Sodom. In verses 17 through 19, God gives the reasons why He should share this information with Abraham. The reasons were these:

1. Abraham will become great and mighty nation.
2. All nations will be blessed in him.
3. God had deep affection for Abraham - the word translated "chosen", in the text, might better be translated "known." It is the word used to describe the most intimate acquaintance.
4. Abraham will direct his house to keep God's ways in righteousness.
5. Through this righteous household, God would be enabled to keep His promise to Abraham.

GLIMPSES OF GOD - I

Verses 20 and 21 describe the Divine basis for His concern over Sodom. There are two parts to that concern:

1. "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great..." The inference here is that life was so tragic in these cities that the abused people cried to the Lord and the direness of their situation reached His compassion. It is not just that Sodom sinned in horrible ways. It is that in their sinning, they did harm and violence to the entire community to the extent that the oppressed cried out and God heard them.
2. The nature of their sinning was very grievous. God was not establishing a hierarchy of the levels of evil. All sin is grievous. It is not less sinful to speak falsely than to covet. All sin is an affront to the holiness of God. God was simply saying that the nature of their evil was hideous beyond belief. The damage that it did was so outrageous that the outcry of the abused drew the active attention of God.

In verse 21, God verbalizes the decision to investigate just how rebellious and disobedient the city had become. God said,

"...I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know." Genesis 18:21

This is a figure of speech. God did not need to come down in order to see what Sodom had done. It is what we call an anthropomorphism – a way to speak of God in human terms in order to convey understanding. God was saying that the outcry was almost too difficult to believe. He was checking for Himself in order to know beyond the shadow of a doubt.

18:22-33 Abraham Intercedes For Sodom

The meaning of verse 22 leaves us with many questions. Notice what the text says,

"The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the Lord." Genesis 18:22

There is common agreement that "the men" is a reference to angels or divine emissaries who had come to Abraham on behalf of God. The last part of the sentence is not as clear. What does it mean for Abraham to "stand before the Lord"? The final answer is that we do not know. Some suggest that earlier God had appeared to Abraham, when the men came to him, and had remained during the time the three men were with Abraham. If this be the case then it simply means that Abraham went back to present himself again before the Lord.

Another suggestion is that this was the third man or angel. You will note that there were three men who came to Abraham. Later on in our text, however, only two men entered the city of Sodom. It is possible that the third man/angel is the one before whom Abraham stood. We honestly do not know.

In 18:23-33 we have an opportunity to share in one of the most delicate times of intimate prayer recorded in Scripture. Put yourself in Abraham's shoes. God had decided to destroy the city and it was clear that this was an appropriate judgment. You then attempt to talk with God to see if there is some way to appeal to that decision. That is an awesome task.

LESSON 10

Abraham, through his approach, indicates an intimate knowledge of God. It would not be helpful to challenge God's wisdom in this decision. That would lead to certain destruction. Abraham rather appealed to the mercy of God. "God, would you destroy the righteous with the wicked just because they are in the same city?" Abraham then illustrates just what he meant. "If, for instance, I found fifty righteous people in the city, would you destroy them with the evil ones?" This question appeals to the great justice and mercy of God. One can not deal with this verse without looking at the motive of Abraham. There are several possibilities.

First, Abraham could be appealing to the mercy of God because he is concerned that these pagan people see just how merciful God really is.

Secondly, Abraham could also be motivated by the hope that in appealing to the mercy of God he might be able to protect Lot's family.

Thirdly, It is also possible that it is both a concern for the reputation of God and a concern for the safety of his nephew, Lot.

Notice that Abraham followed this question with an assertion concerning what he understood to be the nature of God. Abraham said,

"Far be it from you to do such a thing— to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Genesis 18:25

Abraham is appealing to the character of God in order to ask God to have mercy on the innocent in the city. God can not be less than merciful and just.

Naturally, God's answer to that question was that He would not destroy the righteous with the unrighteous. It would be contradictory to the nature of God. God showed the Divine character to be as generous as He had always been, when He said,

"If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake." Genesis 18:26

Notice, God did not say He would spare the righteous. God said He would spare the whole city for the sake of the righteous. That is the mercy of God in action.

The faith and confidence of Abraham, as shown in this paragraph, are beautiful to behold. He dares to plead the case even further. He said,

And Abraham answered and said, "Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord, although I am but dust and ashes. "Suppose the fifty righteous are lacking five, wilt Thou destroy the whole city because of five?" And He said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there." Genesis 18:27-28

It is clear that Abraham is aware that this is a very delicate situation. It is not a light thing to ask questions about the justice of God. Yet, Abraham dared to speak to God in boldness. The question deals with whether there are limits to the mercy of God. Can the mercy of God expand to include this situation? This is real boldness. Abraham was not certain that there were 45 righteous people in this wicked city. Nevertheless, he dared to intercede on their behalf.

God's answer is consistent with His previous statement,

"If I find forty-five there," He said, "I will not destroy it." Genesis 18:28

GLIMPSES OF GOD - I

Notice again the generosity of God. In the presence of pernicious evil, God not only promises to save the forty-five, but will spare the entire city on their behalf.

When you come to verse 29, notice that the pace quickens. The question and the answer are contained in a single verse.

"Once again he spoke to him, 'What if only forty are found there?' He said, 'For the sake of forty, I will not do it.'" Genesis 18:29

Again, one is struck with the Divine extravagance. God will not only save the forty righteous, which would be more than fair, but will also save the whole city on their behalf. This is mercy without reserve.

Abraham is still uncomfortable. Note that the reason for this discomfort must be due to the condition of his family rather than the available mercy of God. Abraham speaks again,

"May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak. What if only thirty can be found there?" He answered, 'I will not do it if I find thirty there.'" Genesis 18:30

There is an apparent tension in the words of Abraham as he finds it necessary to seek further clarification from God. This is the first time Abraham said, "May the Lord not be angry...". He has to be feeling that his requests are bordering on the impertinent. Nevertheless, he entreats the Lord on behalf of the righteous who may be in the city. Again, it is shocking that God will not only have mercy if He finds 30 righteous persons in the city; He will spare the entire city on their behalf. People claim to see all judgment and no mercy in the Old Testament, but here is a passage they have apparently overlooked.

It appears that Abraham himself is not certain there are 30 righteous in the city, but from whatever motivation, he continues when He says,

"Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, what if only twenty can be found there?" He said, 'For the sake of twenty, I will not destroy it.'" Genesis 18:31

There is a risky tenacity in the intercession of Abraham. It appears that God is not offended by this confident intercession. It is that confidence in the nature of God that enables Abraham to make his appeal. The picture of God described in this verse is breathtaking. He would be justified in destroying the entire city. Nevertheless He is willing to save not only the possible 20 righteous, but the entire city on their behalf. This gives you a picture of just how important the righteous can be in a given community.

Abraham dares to speak again, but it is clear that the tension is rising. Notice his words,

"May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?" He answered, 'For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it.'" Genesis 18:31

God was ready to completely destroy the city. Now God is prepared to spare not only the ten righteous, but to spare the entire city on their behalf. What greater example of the mercy of God could one seek? If God would spare the entire decadent city on behalf of only 10 righteous individuals, then why do we draw back from interceding on behalf of the needy and desperate?

Verse 33 is a summary statement. One wonders, however, that if God would respond to intercession from 50 to 10, would He have gone as far as one? No one knows the an-

LESSON 10

swer. We can only stand in amazement of the mercy of God shown here with Abraham. The requests of Abraham become more and more cautious as the number comes nearer to ten. We wonder why he stopped at ten. Had he already overstepped what he felt was appropriate in view of the sin of the cities? We do not know.

There is no statement about how Abraham felt about this experience. It is abruptly dropped. It appears that the author did not focus on Abraham's feelings, but rather on this dazzling display of the mercy of God.

This is breathtaking. God is glimpsed extending mercy even beyond the preposterous request of the servant He loved.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Destruction Of Sodom

19:1–11 Angels Visit Lot

The scene changes as we begin chapter 19. We are now in the city of Sodom. Notice that where there had been three angels who came to visit with Abraham, only two are present in Sodom. You will remember that this was mentioned in the study of 18:2.

The author gives us additional information about the place and position of Lot in the city of Sodom. He said,

"The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city. When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground." Genesis 19:1

The fact that Lot was sitting in the Gateway is significant. It was not a place to idle away time. The Gate was the place where all civil and legal matters were concluded. It is where Abraham went to buy the land for a burial place for his wife. The fact that Lot was there suggests that he had become one of the leaders of the city. One has to earn the right to be a leader of a city, a judge of the people who live there, and Lot must have done so.

It is interesting that Lot was sitting at the gate in the evening. It appears that He was there alone. It would not have been unusual for the elders to be sitting there in the evening. It was cool then; they would solve the civic problems and keep an eye on who was going out and coming into their city.

Some scholars have suggested that this incident infers that Lot was looking for travelers in order to offer them hospitality. This might sound a bit strange to us, but guests were an unusual pleasure to the people of the desert regions. Ultimately, we do not know the reason for his being there on that occasion. We do know, however, that when Lot saw the two men, he was quick to offer them his best hospitality.

Notice how Lot spoke to the two men,

"My Lords", he said, "Please turn aside to your servant's house. You can wash your feet and spend the night and then go on your way early in the morning." Genesis 19:2

Lot was offering them every kindness a traveler might need. By calling them "Lords", he was making himself available to them as a servant. He was doing everything possible to make these men feel right at home.

GLIMPSES OF GOD - I

The response of the men often takes people by surprise. Notice what they said,

"No,' they answered, "we will spend the night in the square." Genesis 19:2

It would be the greatest possible insult to refuse the hospitality that has been offered by a person from the desert. It was unthinkable for a person to prefer to spend the night in the village square. There is a cultural reason behind this statement. Look at the report of Abraham's purchase of the cave of Machpelah as an illustration of this kind of social amenity which was required of a gentleman in that area. (Genesis 23:3-20) Abraham went to the gate of the city and talked with the city fathers. One did not just go to them as one might go to a store and ask for an ice cream cone today. There was protocol to be observed. Notice the process through which they went.

1. Abraham asked them to sell him the property.
2. The city fathers flattered Abraham and told him to bury his dead.
3. Abraham asked the fathers to intercede for him with the owner, Ephron (who was sitting right there), to get him to sell the land to Abraham for the full price.
4. Ephron was magnanimous and offered to give the field to Abraham.
5. Abraham knew this was part of the bargaining process, so he again offered to buy the land.
6. Next, Ephron identifies the price and quickly says that is nothing, bury your dead.
7. Abraham knew that now the bargaining was over and he agreed to the terms suggested and weighed out the money in the presence of the city fathers.
8. The land was deeded over to Abraham.

It should be noted that despite what Abraham said, in the end he would have to pay what he called "the full price." By the same token, Ephron knew exactly what he wanted for the land and had absolutely no intention of giving the land to Abraham. When it was clear that the amenities were covered, Ephron stated the price and Abraham agreed. It was possible for them to haggle, but this was their process.

Custom required that the men initially refuse to accept Lot's hospitality. They did not really mean they were refusing the hospitality and Lot did not accept it as such.

The amenities of the day required that Lot now insist that they be his guest. Lot obliged as the author says,

"But he insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house." Genesis 19:3

When the men entered Lot's house, he became responsible not only for their physical comforts – food and lodging, but also for their safety as long as they stayed under his roof. Verse 3 indicates that Lot cared for the food and lodging in an excellent fashion.

Verse four identifies a tragic turn of events. The author said,

"Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom – both young and old – surrounded the house. They called to Lot, 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them.'" Genesis 19:4,5

These verses give you an impression of what life was like in Sodom. Note that these men came from every part of the city. It was not a localized problem. The text states that "all of the men" came. Homosexuality had apparently pervaded every home in the city.

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This tragic evil had affected every age group in Sodom. It was not just the young who were involved. It was community-wide. This was not something that was practiced in secret. It was so blatant that they felt no qualms about making a public spectacle of their misspent lust. The satisfaction of the mob was important. The lives of others had no importance at all.

Lot was obviously in a difficult position. He had received these two men under his roof and he was responsible for their safety even at the cost of his life and of all his property. On the other hand, these men outside his house were his friends and he could see no way that the shameless desires of the mob could be postponed. He had to do something quickly. That is what the author was talking about when he said,

"Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him and said, 'No, my friends, Don't do this wicked thing. Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don't do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof.'" Genesis 19:6-8

First, notice that these are Lot's friends. That tells you something about Lot. He had come so low in his morals, that he chose the sexually perverted as his friends. In spite of this fact, he knew that their intended agenda was "a wicked thing." It appears however, that he is referring to their determination to do violence to his guests rather than the evil of their homosexual activities.

Lot's suggestion concerning his daughters seems at best preposterous. This does not tell us so much about Lot as it does about the terror of the situation. Remember that we said that he had to protect his guests at the risk of his life and everything that he owned. The law of the land dictated this. The mob was angry, and he had to do something to placate them as quickly as possible. One has to wonder why Lot offered his two daughters rather than his wife. It was not uncommon for a man to offer his guests the companionship of his wife or one of his daughters for the night. The suggestion of his daughters tells you something more about the people among whom Lot lived. Their sexual appetites included both adultery as well as homosexual activity.

The response of the men of Sodom was characteristic of the moral character of the community. Notice how the author put it,

"'Get out of our way', they replied. And they said, 'This fellow came here as an alien, and now he wants to play the judge! We'll treat you worse than them.' They kept bringing pressure on Lot and moved forward to break down the door." Genesis 19:9

This mob was not willing to listen to reason. They were driven by their lust and anger. They were used to satisfying their fleshly desires. Lot was standing in the way of that satisfaction and they were more than angry about it. Remember, Lot called them his friends. They were upset because Lot stood in their way. The sound of the words in this verse is threatening and dangerous. Suddenly they turned on Lot as well. They reminded themselves that he was not a native. Lot had earned the right to be a leader in the community, but because he stood in the way of their satisfaction, they were removing him from power and threatening his life. It is a way of saying their pleasure was more important than any

other consideration. They would break down the door; they would do anything to satisfy their misguided sensual desires.

The men inside the house, the two travelers, the angels, now took action. There was nothing else Lot could do on their behalf. At this point, his own life was in danger. Note what the author said,

"But the men inside reached out and pulled Lot back into the house and shut the door. Then they struck the men who were at the door of the house, young and old, with blindness so that they could not find the door." Genesis 19:10,11

It was clear that Lot had done all that he was capable of doing in order to protect them "under his roof". The two guests then took action on their own. They did two things:

1. They pulled Lot inside the house. They took action to protect him.
2. They struck the men outside with blindness so that They men could not even find the door. They acted to stop the evil designs of the men of Sodom.

Verses 10 and 11 make it clear that this was a desperate situation. Again, it should be noted that this was not just young men behaving foolishly. Though the Hebrew text says "small and great", our text deals with essentially the same idea when it translates the words "young and old." This tragic condition crossed all cultural and age boundaries. It was a condition of the city, not just a few people.

19:12-22 God Removes Lot's Family From Sodom

Verses 12 and 13 give clear indication of what the two angels were intent upon doing. Notice what the author records,

"The two men said to Lot, 'Do you have anyone else here - sons-in-law, sons or daughters, or anyone else in the city who belongs to you? Get them out of here, because we are going to destroy this place. The outcry to the Lord against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it.'" Genesis 19:12-13

The announced decision was that the city was to be destroyed. In spite of this decision, Lot and his family were to be spared. It could not be because of their righteousness, because they were very much a part of the city and its corrupt way of life. It could only be because of Abraham that God chose to spare them.

The angels gave a reason for this destruction – "The outcry to the Lord". One must assume that the evil of the city took a devastating toll on the lives of the innocent who cried to the Lord. On the other hand, it is also possible that the "cry to the Lord" was simply the extreme situation of evil which was ultimately offensive to the Lord and required that He destroy the city. In fact, we do not know which the text suggests, but our preference would be the former.

These verses suggest something of the extent of the pain which evil causes God. It also suggests some of the ends to which God will go to blot it out.

Verse 14 pictures Lot's attempt to do as the angels instructed him. He went to his sons-in-law. Notice how the author deals with this situation,

"So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were pledged to marry his daughters. He said, 'Hurry and get out of this place, because the Lord is about to destroy the city!' But his sons-in-law thought he was joking." Genesis 19:14

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Lot did exactly as he was told to do. Some might wonder how these men could be both Lot's "sons-in-law" and at the same time "pledged to marry his daughters." This arrangement was common in that part of the world. When a person was betrothed, or pledged, they were treated as married. This is the same situation you find in Luke 2:5 when Joseph took Mary, "his espoused wife" with him to be registered for the census.

Lot's instructions to the men, who were pledged to his daughters, were clear and precise. The problem was that the men thought that Lot was joking. They did not take his instructions seriously. This probably suggests something of the spiritual condition of the young men. They did not believe that God was going to destroy the city. Lot had no way to convince them that his warning was serious. There was nothing else that Lot could do.

The warning of the angels, in verse 15, was urgent.

"Hurry! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away when the city is punished." Genesis 19:15

The message of the angels was specific – take your family out of Sodom or they will be destroyed. There is a strong contrast in verses 15 and 16. The angels are in a hurry. Notice, however, that Lot appears to be in no hurry to leave in spite of the treatment he had received from his neighbors. Observe what the author said about him,

"When he hesitated, the men grasped his hands and the hands of his wife and of his two daughters and led them safely out of the city, for the Lord was merciful to them. As soon as they had brought them out, one of them said, 'Flee for your lives! Don't look back, and don't stop anywhere in the plain! Flee to the mountains or you will be swept away.'" Genesis 19:16–17

Again, the author stresses the contrast between the urgency of the angels and the hesitancy of Lot and his family. It should be noted that the angel makes it clear that Lot was not spared because of his righteousness, but because of the mercy of God. One must ask, if Lot was spared because of the mercy of God, why was Lot spared and the other people of Sodom not? One can not speak in final terms, but it is appropriate to remember that this whole process of mercy was started because Abraham was concerned. It appears that the mercy of God was demonstrated out of regard for Abraham's righteousness, not that of Lot, as verse 29, later on, will indicate.

The instructions of the angel are interesting. He told them to do four things:

1. Flee for your lives.
2. Do not look back.
3. Do not stop anywhere on the plain.
4. Flee to the mountains.

The text does not give reasons for these instructions except of the pending destruction to which they might expose themselves. One wonders how looking back might subject them to destruction. One can only conjecture concerning this.

It seems strange, but Lot was less than excited about the instructions for escaping the destruction of Sodom. Notice what he said,

"No, my Lords, please! Your servant has found favor in your eyes and you have shown great kindness to me in sparing my life. But I can't flee to the mountains; this disaster will overtake me, and I'll die. Look, here is a town near enough to run

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to, and it is small. Let me flee to it - it is very small, isn't it? Then my life will be spared." Genesis 19:18–20

Lot, for some reason, does not want to go to the mountains. The reason he gives does not seem to make sense. He has been delivered from the disaster, but he fears the disaster will overtake him if he flees to the mountains and he does not want to get too far from Sodom. Perhaps these two factors are involved in his resistance:

1. Abraham was in the mountains. Lot had done Abraham wrongly by taking the best land and leaving him, his benefactor, with the worst possible land from which to gain a living. He probably did not want to face his uncle!
2. Is it possible that Lot wanted to escape from the destruction, but did not want to get too far away from Sodom because of his involvement in the lifestyle of the people there?

In verses 21, and 22, the angel reluctantly grants Lot's unusual request. Though the text does not say so, Zoar was probably only about four miles South of the city of Sodom. Observe the words of the angel,

"Very well, I will grant this request too; I will not overthrow the town you speak of." Genesis 19:21

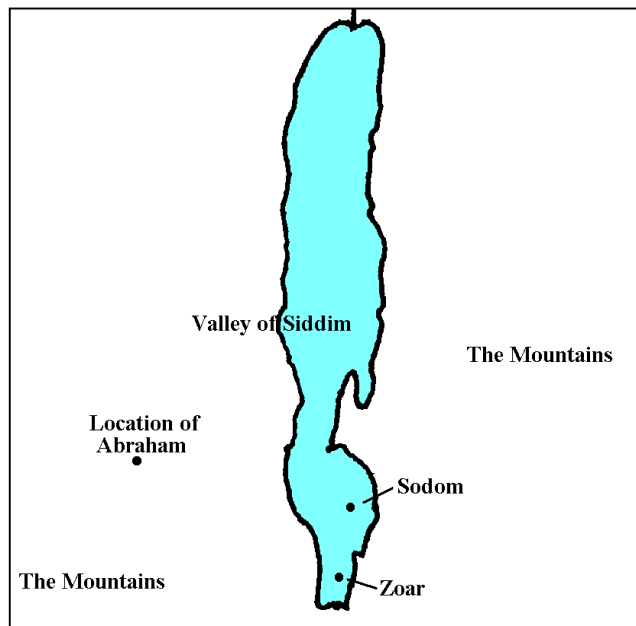
This map should give you some impression of the relative location of Lot in relation to Abraham. The two were less than ten miles apart, but the types of land were as different as day and night. Note on this map, that Sodom was located in what is now the Southern part of the Dead Sea. There were mountains both to the East and West of the city. The "little village" to which Lot fled was probably Zoar.

In granting the additional request of Lot, the angel would not destroy the village of Zoar. The inference here is that Zoar was also scheduled to be destroyed because of its sinful ways. This inference is not conclusive, but it suggests some unfortunate things about the lifestyle and values of Lot.

Again, in verse 22, the angel urges Lot to flee to Zoar quickly so that the destruction of Sodom can be carried out. Sodom deserves to be destroyed and Lot does not appear to be vastly different from the people there. Nevertheless, God shows mercy by delivering Lot and by delaying the destruction of Sodom until Lot had arrived in a safe place.

19:23–28 Sodom is Destroyed

It is interesting that the author begins this paragraph by carefully identifying the time of day in which Lot arrived in Zoar and the destruction of Sodom took place. The author said,



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"By the time Lot reached Zoar, the sun had risen over the land." Genesis 19:23

The text does not clarify the issue, but it should be remembered that the people of Sodom worshipped both the sun and the moon. It does not seem accidental that the destruction of this city of sin took place specifically at a time when both the sun and the moon may have been visible in the morning sky. This observation would not have been wasted on the people of that area. They would understand that this was evidence that Jehovah was greater than both the sun and the moon which He had created. This possibility can not be confirmed.

Verse 24 describes the destruction of Sodom in these words,

"Then the Lord rained down burning sulphur on Sodom and Gomorrah –from the Lord out of heaven. Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, including all those living in the cities - and also the vegetation in the land." Genesis 19:24,25

As you know, the whole area of these cities of the plain is under the Dead Sea today. Nothing lives in the Dead Sea. There are not even weeds growing around the Dead Sea. In the time of Abraham and Lot, this had been some of the best grazing land in all of Canaan. The destruction was thorough.

Verse 24 indicates that burning sulphur rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah. We do not understand this information. Certainly the burning sulphur would defoliate the land as it is today, but why sulphur? We do not know. We also do not know why it mentions only Sodom and Gomorrah by name when there were at least four cities – Sodom, Gomorrah, Zeboiim and Admah - that were completely destroyed.

Verse 26 mentions that Lot's wife looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt. There is much conjecture about this verse, but little information. It might have been that God did not want them to view such traumatic devastation. It might also be that God was commanding them not to look longingly on the lavish, evil town in which they had lived. In other words, it was not that God forbade them to look North, but instructed them to stop longing for the evil past. That truth is shrouded in mystery.

One wonders why Lot's wife dared to look back when the angel specifically told them not to do so. It is possible that she was preoccupied with what they had left behind and wondered just how much of it would have survived the terrible devastation. We probably will never know the answer.

In verses 27 and 28, the scene changes. The focus of attention returns to Abraham. He was keenly aware of what was in progress in Sodom. He had pleaded that there might be some way for his relatives to be spared. Abraham quickly looked in the direction of Sodom to see what was happening. The author indicates that Abraham could see smoke rising from the land much like one would see it rise from a furnace. It was clear to Abraham that something had already happened, but he did not know what it was.

19:29 Summary – God Delivered Lot

In verse 29, the author gives a summary of the events. Tucked away in this summary statement is some important information. After the author records that God had destroyed the cities of the plain, he then said,

"He (God) remembered Abraham, and he brought Lot out of the catastrophe that overthrew the cities where Lot had lived." Genesis 19:29

What has been assumed previously has now been stated. God spared Lot because of Abraham. God remembered Abraham, not Lot.

19:30–38 Lot's Daughters Become Pregnant

Something strange happened. In 19:20, Lot urged the angel to let him settle in Zoar rather than flee to the mountains. Now, in 19:30, Lot leaves Zoar and goes to the mountains he wanted to avoid before. The author says,

"Lot and his two daughters left Zoar and settled in the mountains, for he was afraid to stay in Zoar. He and his two daughters lived in a cave." Genesis 19:30

It is not clear why Lot and his daughters were afraid to live in Zoar. Before, They had felt it a safe place to be. Now, they were afraid to live there and went to the mountains to which they had previously been unwilling to go.

Ultimately, Lot was now worse off for trying to avoid the flight to the mountains. Having chosen the lavish plains, it is ironic that he was now forced to live in a cave in the very mountains he had been avoiding.

In verses 31 and 32, the older daughter shared her plan with her younger sister. She said,

"Our father is old, and there is no man around here to lie with us, as is the custom all over the earth. Let's get our father to drink wine and then lie with him and preserve our family line through our father." Genesis 19:31–32

This statement leaves one with a number of questions:

1. Why did they find it necessary to live in a mountain cave away from other people?
2. Granted they may have been away from other people, but was it really true that there were no other men available?
3. Why did she think it was necessary to get her father drunk in order to accomplish this if the situation was as dire as she presented it? Would he not understand and have the same concern she had?
4. Where did they get the wine?
5. Was her motive really a desire to preserve seed for her father's name?
6. Think about Lot. Would he not realize that their behavior was different when they were trying to get him to drink more wine? Wouldn't he wonder why they were doing this?

Unfortunately, the text gives us few hints concerning the motives of the unusual actions of Lot's daughters. At this point, my own feeling is that their motives may not have been as clear as one might first suspect. It seems that they had been in the debauched culture of Sodom a bit too long and began to accept the unthinkable as normal. There are some reasons for this that we will identify as we continue.

We must remember that the last indication, in the text, concerning the sexual condition of these two young ladies was that they were virgins: that's rather remarkable isn't it; con-

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sidering the moral state of Sodom? Now, in verse 33, they got their father to drink enough wine that he was apparently unaware of the fact that his daughter had had sexual relations with him. The author said,

"That night they got their father to drink wine, and the older daughter went in and lay with him. He was not aware of it when she lay down or when she got up." Genesis 19:33

This is not impossible. But one might call it a bit unusual, to say the least.

In verse 34, the daughters continue with their plot to preserve seed by their father. The elder of the two said to her younger sister,

"The next day the older daughter said to the younger, 'Last night I lay with my father. Let's get him to drink wine again tonight, and you go in and lie with him so we can preserve our family line through our father.'" Genesis 19:34

It might have been possible for them to say this prior to the elder girl having sexual relations with her father. At this point, however, that was no longer an issue. The older girl had slept with her father and it was reasonable to assume that she was pregnant. It appears that one must look elsewhere for a reason for this abominable conduct of Lot's daughter. The text does not say so in so many words, but it seems that her motive was something other than the need to preserve the lineage of Lot. Perhaps it was sexual gratification.

Whatever the motive, the author indicates that they carried out their scheme, again. The author says,

"So they got their father to drink wine that night also, and the younger daughter went and lay with him. Again he was not aware of it when she lay down or when she got up." Genesis 19:35

This situation would again raise the same questions as before. One must ask why these things were true. A sixth question one must ask concerning this situation is that if the older daughter had sexual relations with her father in order to preserve his seed, then why would both daughters need to do it? Wouldn't one be enough?

Verse 36 is a very brief sentence, but it carries a tremendous impact. It says, in effect, this family is guilty of premeditated incest, a crime punishable by death at that time. The author said,

"So both of Lot's daughters became pregnant by their father." Genesis 19:36

Between verses 36 and 37, nearly a year has passed, when the author says,

"The older daughter had a son, and she named him Moab; he is the father of the Moabites today." Genesis 19:37

This sounds straight forward enough. When you look at the Hebrew, however, the name Moab literally means "from the father." In other words, the older daughter was unashamedly telling the world that her own father was the father of her son. Her son was the product of an incestuous relationship. If the purpose of these incestuous relationships was for sexual gratification rather than to preserve Lot's lineage, then one needs to ask some serious questions about the announced motives of the two girls. Incidentally, these same people, the Moabites, were later a thorn in the side of the people of Israel. See I Samuel 12:9; Judges 3:14.

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Verse 38 tells of the birth of the younger daughter's child. The author said,

"The younger daughter also had a son, and she named him Ben-ammi; he is the father of the Ammonites of today." Genesis 19:38

It is interesting that though the older daughter, whose idea this scheme was, called her son "from the father," the younger daughter was more reserved, and called her son Ben-ammi which means "son of my people."

Again, the son of the younger daughter became the father of the Ammonites. These people were also to become a real problem for Israel as they sought to enter into the land of Canaan. See Judges 10:7; I Kings 11:7.

The whole story of Lot presents us with a problem. Our study has observed at length the actions and possible motives of Lot and his family in this situation. We have just seen a situation in which his two daughters, whom he trained, make a rather weak claim at noble purpose and then participate in incest with their father. This brought about one of Israel's most destructive enemies.

Nevertheless, Peter said,

and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men⁸ for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day with their lawless deeds, 2 Peter 2:7-8

In these verses, Peter made the following claims for Lot:

- a. Lot was righteous.
- b. Lot was "oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men."
- c. Lot lived among them, but "felt his righteous soul tormented day after day with their lawless deeds."
- d. it appears that Peter inferred that God rescued Lot because of his righteousness rather than because of Abraham.

The New Testament word translated "righteous," which Peter used twice, is "dikaios" (δικαιος). It means "righteous." It is "the quality of character of being right or just." It is "actions or choices that are right, as opposed to those that are unjust." This is the way Peter described Lot.

This obviously presents us with a dilemma. The question is, how does one match the statements of Peter with the report in Genesis 19?

First, it is necessary to view both Genesis 19 and II Peter 2:7, 8, as inspired through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Then, one cannot, with integrity, say that any portion of Scripture is in error. On the other hand, a person of integrity must at least contend that there are some recorded situations in Lot's experience that at least appear to be questionable, if not completely inappropriate for the faithful servant of God. Among these, one could list the following:

- a. Lot chose the best land, leaving questionable areas for his uncle who had cared for him and gave him a start and every advantage in life. This is selfishness.
- b. Sodom was known for a vile lifestyle of the worst sort. Instead of distancing himself from this vile lifestyle, he moved toward it and eventually into it.
- c. His "friends" in the city were those practitioners of this unfortunate lifestyle.
- d. He was reluctant to leave the evil city though he knew destruction was imminent.

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- e. Would Lot not have wondered why he got drunk two nights in a row. The text does not reveal what happened when it became known that his daughters were pregnant.

One wonders, did Peter have access to information that we do not have at this point? Is Peter saying that Lot was righteous throughout these recorded experiences? It would seem so.

This author cannot untangle this problem, satisfactorily. Like some other Biblical situations that we cannot adequately explain, we shall hopefully understand more fully "when we shall know as we are known."

As we come to the close of this parenthesis in the study of Genesis, we need to reflect upon what we have discovered. What has God revealed about His character? What have you discovered about the nature of sin? About the human personality?

This parenthesis is part of an apparent strong contrast between godly Abraham and rebellious Lot. It points out, vividly, just how far people can fall, morally, when they choose to reject what they know of God's goodness. Again, God's benevolence shows up vividly against a backdrop of mankind's blatant rebellion.

God has shown how He blesses and honors those who obey Him. On the other hand, God has also shown how inevitable His judgment is when people choose a course of rebellion and other evil ways.

We live in a world where both righteousness and evil are present. The consequences of both choices are also clearly visible. If we take God's response to Abraham and Lot seriously, then we will need to make some hard choices about how we will live our lives. In a business world where dishonesty is considered a business necessity rather than a moral dilemma, this passage gives some important direction to our choices. In a culture that deceives itself into thinking there are no moral absolutes, this passage points out the inevitable destruction such thinking produces. We must face these choices courageously to be pleasing to God.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 11

Genesis 20:1 – 21:34

1. There are five paragraphs in chapters 20 and 21. In the chart below, please summarize the content of each paragraph in six or seven words.

20:1–7	
20:8–18	
21:1–7	
21:8–21	
21:22–35	

2. In 20:17-18, Abimelech apparently had done nothing wrong. Put yourself in King Abimelech's place. What would you think? What would you do?
3. In 21:1-7, Isaac is born. In 21:1, the author twice points to the fact that God did exactly what He said He would do. How does this repetition affect your understanding of the verse?
4. If you were the 100 year-old Abraham, what would you feel when your son was born?
5. In 21:1–7, Hagar and Ishmael were sent out into the desert. If you were Hagar, how would you feel? How would you handle this rejection? In what way does this increase your knowledge about her?
6. When you know the details of the story, how could God encourage this kind of rejection? What does this tell you about God?
7. How could God encourage Abraham to heed Sarah's requests knowing that her attitude was wrong? What have you discovered about God?
8. In 21:22-34, study the treaty Abimelech wanted Abraham to make with him. In what way do you better understand Abimelech?
9. Study Abraham's response. What does it tell you about Abraham? Why does the author include the verses in which Abraham complains about the well? What do these verses add to your understanding of the relationship between Abraham and Abimelech? In what ways does this information change your understandings about Abraham?
10. In this paragraph, Abimelech brought Phicol with him. Who was Phicol? Why did Abimelech bring Phicol with him to request the treaty when previously he had dealt personally with Abraham? What difference does Phicol's presence make on these deliberations?

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11. In 21:28-30, Abraham brought sheep and oxen plus seven ewe lambs as gifts to Abimelech. What were the purposes of Abraham's two gifts to Abimelech?
12. What has the author told you about God in these chapters?
13. Having read these chapters, you will never be the same again. Specifically, in what ways will you be different?

LESSON 11: GENESIS 20:1 – 21:34

GENESIS CHAPTER TWENTY

Abraham Deceives Abimelech

20:1–7 "She Is My Sister"

As we begin the study of chapter 20, the scene changes. In chapter 19, the spotlight was on Lot and the location was the cities of the Eastern plain around Sodom. Now, in chapter 20, the author is focusing on Abraham and an area several miles to the west.

The author says,

"Now Abraham moved on from there into the region of the Negev and lived between Kadesh and Shur. For a while he stayed in Gerar..." Genesis 20:1

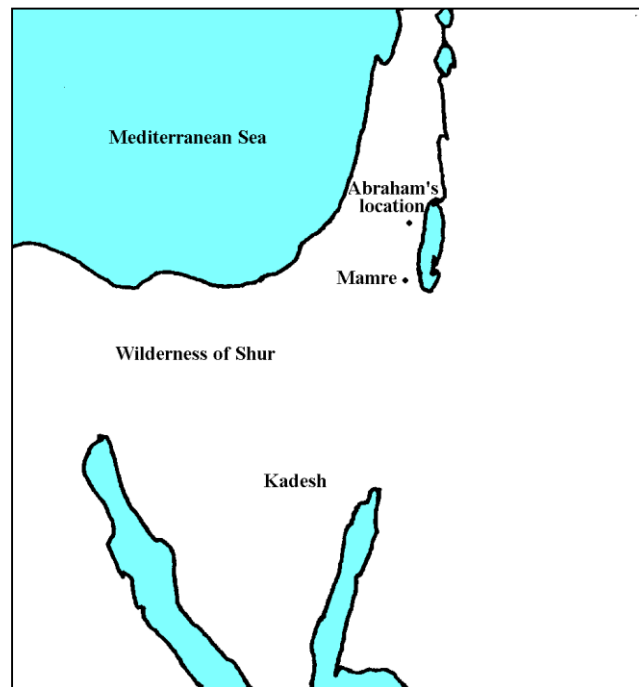
One must first discover what the author meant when he referred to "there." If you look back in the text, you will find that the last location of Abraham was mentioned in 18:1. In that verse, he speaks of Abraham being located at "Mamre". This site is located approximately 18 miles South and a little West of Jerusalem. It is an oasis in the midst of a barren wilderness type area.

The trip from Mamre to the area of Kadesh is approximately 85 miles. It was a difficult trip at best. We should note that "Gerar was on the boarder between Israel and Egypt. It is often referred to as a Philistine city because many of the people of the area were of Philistine background, as was their king.

The author begins the story with an interesting statement. He says,

"And there Abraham said of his wife Sarah, 'She is my sister.' Then Abimelech king of Gerar sent for Sarah and took her." Genesis 20:2

It seems as though Abraham's statement was not preplanned in any way. Studies later in this lesson will question that impression. But that is the appearance at this juncture. The last half of the verse sounds as though Abimelech just took Sarah out of Abraham's household. The text does not confirm it, but that should not happen. The taking of a wife for the king should be the result of careful negotiations concerning the dowry and other important considerations. These negotiations could take several days. After all of this was cared for, the representative of the king would take the bride into the harem.



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Verse three begins with the word "but". This indicates that a strong contrast exists between the material that preceded the word and that which follows and that is precisely the case here. Preceding the word "but" was Abraham's deception of "she is my sister." Immediately following the word "but" is God's announcement to Abimelech concerning the true marital status of Sarah.

The author says,

"But God came to Abimelech in a dream one night and said to him, 'You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman.'" Genesis 20:3

Notice that the text says that God came to Abimelech in a dream "one night." This suggests that it did not happen immediately. There is no indication as to just how much later it was, and it could have been after an extensive period of time. It was not uncommon for a king to have a very large harem. A substantial time period could have elapsed before a proposed marriage was consummated.

Notice that God says,

"You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman." Genesis 20:3

This gives us an impression of just how terrible it was, in the sight of God, for a person to take the wife of another man. Abimelech was about to suffer severely for his actions.

Verse four begins with the word "now". This usually indicates that further information and explanations are about to be given. The information which followed was in two parts:

1. The author explained that Abimelech had not touched Sarah.
3. Abimelech was going to defend himself. Notice Abimelech's defense before God,

Now Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, "Lord, wilt Thou slay a nation, even though blameless? "Did he not himself say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my brother.' In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this." Genesis 20:4-5

Abimelech presented a clear case of innocence if indeed all the statements were true. We must keep in mind, however, that this takes place in a dream.

The response of God makes it clear that God agreed with Abimelech and pronounced him innocent. As a result of this divine knowledge, God prevented Abimelech from committing the sin of adultery. God's awareness of Abimelech's intention was sufficient to cause Him to intervene in the life of the king in order to prevent an immoral involvement.

As the dream continues, God gives Abimelech instructions concerning the solution of the problem. God said,

"Now return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not return her, you may be sure that you and all yours will die." Genesis 20:7

This is the first use of the word "prophet" in the Old Testament. The word "prophet" means "to play or speak by inspiration". It is not necessarily one who foretells the future,

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but one who declares the word, the communication of God. One who speaks to and on behalf of God.

There are questions about this verse. One might wonder why God told Abimelech to have Abraham pray for him when Abraham was the one who did the wrong. We will deal with this question a bit later.

There is to be no delay in the return of Abraham's wife. Abimelech is to act upon these instructions immediately.

Having given the positive command and promise for obedience, God then gives the consequences should the command not be obeyed. Both Abimelech and all he has will die. This jeopardizes at least his whole family, if not his nation as well. By this God indicated just how severe the punishment would be should anyone disregard His instructions concerning adultery.

This paragraph is a very difficult passage. At least three major problems confront us in its interpretation.

1. In view of Abraham's conduct, why would God tell Abimelech to have Abraham pray for him?
2. Abraham clearly told a half truth. Why then does God speak of him as a prophet?
3. Why is it that Abraham did the wrong, but Abimelech faces the punishment?

There are 4 steps which may be helpful in researching these problems:

1. Make observations
 - a. Make observations about the text, that is, make a list of the information found in the text.
 - b. Make a list of the information, about specific persons, found in this text.
 2. Interpret the information gained through the observations. Look at the information you have discovered to see what it means.
 3. Consider any alternative understandings.
 4. Draw appropriate conclusions from observations and interpretation.
- Let me explain how I did it, and what I learned from it.

1. Make Observations About 20:1-7

- a. Abraham traveled from Mamre to the area of Kadesh.
- b. Abraham told Abimelech that Sarah was his sister -this is a half truth.
- c. Abimelech took Sarah into his harem.
- d. God spoke to Abimelech in a dream
 - 1) God told him he faced death because he took Sarah.
 - 2) God told him she was a man's wife.
- e. Abimelech had not touched Sarah.
- f. Abimelech responded to God.
 - 1) He knew God well enough to talk with Him.
 - 2) Abimelech knew God to be just.
 - 3) Abimelech questioned God – "Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation?"
 - 4) He called God Lord - Adonai which means - Lord, Master, Mighty One.
 - 5) Abimelech counted on God's justice.
 - 6) Abimelech reasoned with God.
 - a) Verified – Abraham said, " she is my sister."
 - b) Verified - Sarah said, "he is my brother."

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- c) Natural conclusion by Abimelech - I did this innocently.
- g. God spoke with Abimelech in a dream.
 - 1) God assured Abimelech - I know you did this innocently.
 - 2) I, God, kept you from sinning.
 - 3) I, God, kept you from touching her.
 - 4) Divine instructions to Abimelech
 - a) If you restore the man's wife:
 - (1) The man is a prophet.
 - (2) The man will pray for you.
 - (3) You will live.
 - b) If you do not restore her:
 - (1) You will surely die.
 - (2) All of yours will die.

2. Interpret The Information Observed in 20:1-7

- a. Both Abraham and Abimelech knew God.
- b. It is obvious that Abraham deceived Abimelech.
- c. God said Abimelech had a clear conscience.
- d. We know of no wrong that Abimelech did.
- e. It is possible that Abimelech did some wrong which is not indicated in the text. He may have known that Sarah was Abraham's wife despite the disclaimers.
- f. God showed mercy to Abimelech. God kept him from committing adultery.
- g. God said Abraham would pray for Abimelech. Elsewhere in Scripture this indicates that the person may not be able to pray for themselves because God would not hear them. See Job 42:8.

3. Possible Alternative Understandings of 20:1-7

- a. It is possible that Abimelech was told that Sarah was Abraham's sister, but was also told that she was his wife and still took her into his harem. In this case, it would be understandable why God would tell Abimelech to ask Abraham to pray for him. Abimelech would not have been the innocent victim of the deception as he appears to be in the text.
- b. Both Abraham and Abimelech were the recipients of the mercy of God. It is possible that this is an outstanding picture of the mercy of God. God could use Abraham, the sinner, as a prophet and intercessor. He could keep Abimelech from committing adultery though he had already committed a sin by taking another man's wife into his harem.
- c. It is possible that God asked Abraham to pray for Abimelech in order to show those who observed this whole scenario that Abimelech had indeed not touched Sarah. Otherwise, Abraham might not have been willing to pray for Abimelech's forgiveness and healing.

4. Conclusions Concerning The Issues in 20:1-7

Now, look at the questions again.

- a. In view of Abraham's conduct, why will God hear his prayer, but will not hear Abimelech's prayer?

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- 1) Ultimately, we can not speak with conviction on these issues. The evidence is not conclusive.
 - 2) Though God made Abraham a prophet, God did not remove his humanity as he served in that capacity. Every person of God is called to a holy task. He/ she serves in limitation and weakness, but never in flawlessness.

God would hear the prayer of his erring servant Abraham because God is merciful. He loves us and uses our lives in spite of our flaws.

God would not hear Abimelech's prayer because he had another man's wife and needed to correct that error. Abraham's error was already exposed.
 - 3) On the basis of the information in the text, I tend to believe that this is an outstanding picture of the mercy of God.
- b. Abraham clearly told a half-truth. Why then, when we think of God's messengers as spiritually perfect, does God speak of him as a prophet?
- 1) We tend to think of the prophets as flawless/sinless individuals. This was not true of any of the prophets. Essentially, being a prophet was dependent upon two things: The call of God and the willingness of the person to be God's messenger.
 - 2) One can not comprehend any expression of the endless mercy of God. The mercy of God to Abraham is the testimony of every child of God. Nevertheless, what we can not comprehend, we are free to rejoice in eternally.
- c. Why is it that Abraham did the wrong, but Abimelech faces the punishment?
- 1) It may not seem like it, but there is at least a measure of punishment for Abraham when his falsehood was uncovered. Even in the New Testament, being found out was part of the punishment.
 - 2) It is possible that Abimelech may not be as clear of wrong as it appears. God affirmed Abimelech's claim of innocence. It is possible, however, that this refers to the idea that Abimelech did not have any intimate encounter with Sarah. It does not rule out the idea that he may have known of her marriage, but took her into his harem anyway.
 - 3) Part of the answer is in the fact that unless something happened to halt the process, Abimelech was headed for a direct violation of God's law. Though the 10 commandments had not been formally announced, they were clearly known to these people in this instance.

Whatever else needs to be said concerning this passage, it is one of the most beautiful pictures of the mercy of God to be found in the Old Testament. Abraham did wrong, but God, in His holiness and mercy, could still hear his prayer; could still use him as a prophet.

20:8-18 Abimelech Confronts Abraham

In this paragraph, the spotlight shifts from Abraham to Abimelech. In the previous paragraph, God instructed Abimelech to return Sarah to Abraham. Notice how the author begins the paragraph.

"Early the next morning Abimelech summoned all his officials, and when he told them all that had happened, they were very much afraid." Genesis 20:8

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Abimelech not only did what God commanded, he did it immediately. We do not know how Abimelech came to know God, but it is clear that he is being obedient to the instructions God gave him the day before.

Abimelech made no attempt to hide what had happened. It would be easy for others to misunderstand; nevertheless, Abimelech told his officials all that had happened. There is no doubt that the officials took him seriously. The verse ends with "they were very much afraid."

Having told the officials of his court, Abimelech then turned to confront Abraham with his error. Verses nine and ten are probably only a summary of the questions that he asked Abraham.

"Then Abimelech called Abraham in and said, 'What have you done to us? How have I wronged you that you have brought such great guilt upon me and my kingdom? You have done things to me that should not be done.' And Abimelech asked Abraham, 'What was your reason for doing this?'" Genesis 20:9,10

These are strong words. Abraham was in a very compromised position because the king had absolute power over his life. Put yourself in the place of Abimelech as he asked these probing questions. How and what would you feel? What would your thoughts be? It sounds as though Abimelech speaks out of uncontrolled frustration and disbelief. They had let Abraham live in the land unharmed, and now he had almost caused the death of the king and his entire kingdom. Though only three questions are listed, there were probably many more that were asked. The questions deal with two basic inquiries:

1. What did you do?
2. Why did you do it?

The latter question is by far the most penetrating. It was not because Abimelech had done something to him. No one had not harmed him in any way at all!

Now, put yourself in Abraham's position. You have told a half-truth and were caught. You are standing before a powerful man who could require your life for your error. How would you defend yourself? What would you say?

Notice Abraham's response.

"Abraham replied, 'I said to myself, There is surely no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.' Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not of my mother; and she became my wife. And when God had me wander from my father's household, I said to her, 'This is how you can show your love to me: everywhere we go, say of me, 'He is my brother.'"
Genesis 20:11-13

To a certain extent, one's understanding of the verses hinges upon the meaning of Abraham's words "in this place." Does he mean the city of Gerar or does he mean anywhere outside Canaan? Abraham is probably talking about the local scene.

As you look at these verses, remember that Abimelech conversed with God. God acknowledged, in verse 6, that Abimelech had acted in the integrity of his heart. In view of these facts, Abraham's words are suspect at least.

There appears to be a contradiction in Abraham's statement to Abimelech. Notice, in verse 11 Abraham infers that he claimed his wife as his sister because of the fact that he thought there was no fear of God in the place. In verse 13 his words appear to have been a

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report of something he said to Sarah when they left Canaan. In my own mind, I tend to think that Abraham was on the spot. He might well have first tried to justify his actions, but then admitted that he had said this when they had left Canaan. We must remember, however, that this had been a deliberate deception.

Verses 14 through 18 are unusual at best. Abraham had spoken of this area as a place in which there was no fear of God. Abraham not only thought, but did wrong. Nevertheless, Abimelech gave Abraham gifts – sheep, oxen, men– servants, maid–servants, and in the end restored Sarah to him. This does not strike one as the actions of a king of a godless people. He would have been required to do none of these things. Notice also that there is no hint of retribution in the words of Abimelech. He restored Sarah to Abraham, he gave gifts to Abraham and, in verse 15, he invited Abraham to live anywhere in the land he might choose! Why did he do that?

Abimelech also gave gifts to Sarah. It was the king's way of making it clear that nothing compromising had been done to Sarah. And in Abimelech's conversation with Sarah we learn that he also gave Abraham one thousand pieces of silver. Abimelech was concerned that no one get the wrong impression of Sarah or of what he might have done to her.

Verses 17 and 18 are a source of consternation. Abraham had done wrong, but God insisted that Abraham be the one who pray for Abimelech and Abraham did. The result of this prayer was that Abimelech was healed, and his wife and his maid servants were again able to bear children.

GENESIS CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

The Birth Of Isaac

21:1-7 The Birth Of Isaac

There is more in this paragraph than the report of the birth of a son. Notice the way the author writes,

"And Jehovah visited Sarah as he had said, and Jehovah did unto Sarah as he had spoken." Genesis 21:1

Notice that twice, in this single verse, the author points to the fact that God did just as He said He would. The fact of the birth of Isaac is reported, but there is an overriding emphasis on the faithfulness of Jehovah to His word. One of the strongest pictures of God, in Genesis, is the fact that He keeps His word. God is faithful. This is particularly dramatic in view of the unusual thing God had said He would do in giving Abraham a son through Sarah at their advanced ages.

As the author describes the faithfulness of God, there is an additional picture that is inserted into the story. Notice what the author says,

"And Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him." Genesis 21:2

In spite of the fact that God exists beyond time, He is deeply concerned about the time-liness of events in human experience. It was important that Sarah conceived a son.

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God was just as concerned that this birth take place at the specific time that He had said it would. This is just one more picture of what God is like. In order to be like Him, one must be vitally concerned about timeliness.

The author takes great care to emphasize that Abraham is indeed the father and Sarah is the mother of this child. Notice how the author writes,

"Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him." Genesis 21:3

The statement is even more emphatic in the Hebrew text. It could be translated, "Abraham named his son who was borne to him, whom Sarah had borne him, Isaac." There can be no room for conjecture about other possibilities for the birth of Isaac. Despite their ages, Abraham must be seen as the father and Sarah must be viewed as the mother of Isaac. This is important because it points to qualities of God which are involved in that miracle. The faithful, timely God is omnipotent. The statement in 21:2 is powerful because it stands in contrast to what had happened years before when Sarah gave her servant Hagar to Abraham so that Sarah could gain a child through her. No more. This child was born to Sarah, not her servant.

The fact that Abraham gave the child a name was a statement to the community that the child belonged to him. He named the child Isaac. We should remember that he was instructed, in Genesis 17:19, to call his son "Isaac." The name "Isaac" literally means "he laughs." "He laughs" might seem like a strange name for one so miraculously born. God instructed Abraham and Sarah to name the child Isaac apparently as a reminder of the fact that the announcement of the coming birth seemed so incredible to Sarah that she laughed within herself when she heard the promise. Even when the child was born, the whole idea seemed so incredible that they had difficulty viewing the experience as anything but a miracle from God.

In verses four and five, Abraham remembered to obey the instructions of God concerning his son Isaac. When Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him. This was more than simple obedience. The circumcision was a sign that this child, as all the others of Israel, belonged to God. He was sanctified, set apart for God.

Again and again in the story, the author reminds us that Abraham is 100 years old at the time of the birth of Isaac. There are at least two specific reasons for this strong emphasis:

1. It highlights the miracle of this event. People did not always live to be 100 much less bear children at that age.
2. It stresses the fact that God said Abraham would become a father at 100 and as impossible as that seemed, it is exactly what happened.

21:6 is a play on words in the Hebrew. The name of Sarah's newborn son was Isaac – "He laughs." Then Sarah is quoted as saying,

"God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." Genesis 21:6

Remember, the name was chosen because Sarah laughed when the men told Abraham that Sarah would have a son? Now, in effect, Sarah is saying, "God has brought me Isaac..." to remind me of the incident.

A birth was a time of great joy, particularly if the child was a boy. Add to this the fact that the mother and father were 90 and 100 years old respectively.

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It seems almost too miraculous for Sarah to believe, in spite of the fact she could actually see her son. Look at what Sarah said,

"Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age." Genesis 21:7

It is as though her eyes were deceiving her. She was afraid to believe what she knew and could now see. It was too wonderful for words.

Notice, also, that the text says, "that Sarah would nurse children." This sounds like a plural form and indeed it was. Was this intentional? Apparently it was. It could mean that Sarah had other children, but if that was true, their names were never recorded. It is also possible that the plural form was to heighten the sense of amazement with which she spoke on this occasion. We honestly do not know.

21:8-21 Hagar And Ishmael Sent Away

The author makes an issue of the fact that Isaac was not only born in the advanced age of his parents, but Sarah was able to nurse him adequately until the time of weaning. This was usually between the ages of two and three years. It was not uncommon for the time of weaning to be celebrated with a feast. In this instance the author speaks of a "great feast." In the Hebrew it was described as a "wine feast." This feast was a very special celebration. It was a step above other celebrations which were festive, but not wine feasts. Every child came to the time of weaning, but not every child was born when his father was 100 and his mother was 90. This was a celebration no one would want to miss.

Verse nine sounds as though it happened immediately following verse eight, which it probably didn't. We really have no idea just how long afterward it took place.

Why is it that the times of great joy in our lives are so soon followed by times of equal tragedy? Notice the way the author records it,

"But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking..." Genesis 21:9

The author identifies Ishmael in a special way. He is "the son of Hagar the Egyptian" rather than the son of Abraham. Under any other circumstances a boy was identified as the son of his father. That was not true here. Indeed, Ishmael will not be identified as Abraham's son again in the book. It indicates something of the depth of feeling with which Sarah dealt with this pain. It seems certain that she reminded herself that this was a situation which she had caused by the cultural requirement that she offer her servant, Hagar, to Abraham for the purpose of bearing a child which Sarah might then claim as her own. From the moment that Hagar realized she was pregnant, it proved to be a most unfortunate course of action for her. We have no record that Sarah ever claimed the child as her own. Abraham, on the other hand, obviously claimed the boy as his.

Sarah observed Ishmael "mocking." This word comes from the same root as the name Isaac. As you remember, Isaac was named because Sarah apparently thought it so bazaar for anyone to think she would bear a child at her age that she made fun of the idea through mockery. It appears that this is what Ishmael was doing to Isaac. It is interesting that the Apostle Paul describes this situation in different terms,

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*"At that time the son born in the ordinary way **persecuted** the son born by the power of the Spirit." Galatians 4:29*

The Greek word Paul used, "ediokae," means to put to flight, to drive away or to badger. It is also used to describe the pursuit of another. It is interesting that the word is used in I Peter. 3:11 to describe the pursuit of peace, as a dog pursues its prey. It is also the word used in Psalm 34:14 in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, from which Peter apparently quoted.

The depth of Sarah's contempt can not be overestimated. Notice how she spoke,

"Get rid of that slave woman and her son for that slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac." Genesis 21:10

It is more forcefully put in the Hebrew. It speaks of dismissing or driving out. This is the way the people of that day described what a man did when he divorced his wife. You will remember that when Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham, she opened to her the relationship of wife. Now she is demanding that this be terminated. In essence, it is the same as insisting that Hagar be divorced. Sarah is interested in two things:

1. She wants Hagar to be driven away.
2. She wants Ishmael to be driven out also and be removed from consideration of the inheritance with her own son Isaac.

Sarah states this in the form of a command, as though it was Abraham's decision, not hers.

We must remember that Abraham did not share Sarah's hatred of Hagar and Ishmael. There are no hints of how he felt about Hagar, but Abraham loved Ishmael. In our translation the text reads,

"The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son." Genesis 21:11

A better translation might be "the matter was very evil..." It was more than unfortunate. In Abraham's eyes it was wrong. It does not appear that Abraham was oblivious to what Ishmael had done. Certainly Abraham was aware of the mockery. The sense of wrong had to do with the fact that he was Abraham's son and the boy was about to be expelled from the family!

In verses 12 and 13 there is a conversation between Abraham and God. God instructed Abraham to accede to Sarah's wishes. If you look at Abraham's involvement in this experience, you see a man committed to doing the right. As far as he could see, Abraham was doing and seeking the right. Notice what God said to him,

"Do not be so distressed about the boy and your maidservant. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. I will make the son of the maidservant into a nation also, because he is your offspring." Genesis 21:12-13

Nowhere in this conversation did God say that Sarah was right in her demand. God did urge Abraham to comply. God gave Abraham two reasons why he should comply:

1. Abraham's seed will be identified through Isaac.

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2. God is going to make a nation of the seed of Ishmael anyway. God does this, not because of the merit of Hagar or Ishmael, but because he is the seed of Abraham. God loved Abraham greatly.

Abraham's response was immediate. The author said,

"Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the desert of Beersheba." Genesis 21:14

As happens so often, the author records the events, but we are left to imagine just how devastating this was to the person. On the basis of what the text has already said about Abraham's feelings, it appears that his heart was not really in what he had to do, but he did it just the same.

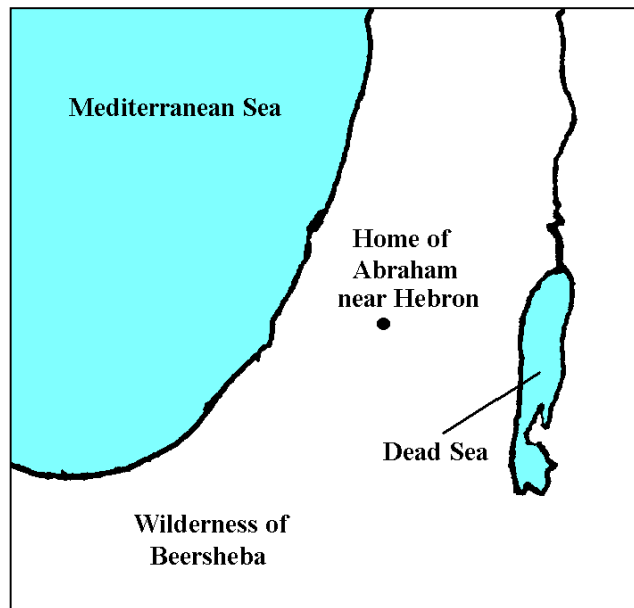
You will notice, from the map, that this is not the best place in the world for a woman and her son to be wandering. It is barren desert in every direction. On the basis of the text we have studied, the approximate location of her wandering was in the area marked on the map. The chances of her finding food, water and survival are almost nil.

The author dealt with the inevitable. The water finally ran out. This is how the author describes the situation,

"When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. Then she went off and sat down nearby, about a bowshot away, for she thought, 'I cannot watch the boy die.' And as she sat there nearby, she began to sob." Genesis 21:15-16

A skin of water is not very much. It is about all she could carry for any great distance, but it would not last long. People conjure up a picture of Hagar placing her baby boy under the bush. We should remember that by this time Ishmael was at least 16 years of age. In that culture, a boy became a man at age 13. This information sheds a completely different light on the scene. One explanation for Hagar placing her son under the bush is that by this time he was too weak to seek refuge from the sun by himself. The word often translated "bush" is really the word "tree" in the Hebrew.

Verse 16 indicates that Hagar was sobbing. Verse 17 indicates that Ishmael was crying. What a tragic scene! No reason is given for the fact that God heard Ishmael's cry, but not Hagar's sob. One could make the case for the idea that this was because Ishmael was Abraham's son. The only thing we know is that God heard the cry and sent an angel to intervene. It is interesting that God heard Ishmael's cry, but sent an angel to speak to Hagar. This is particularly true in view of the fact that Ishmael was already 13 and considered an adult. We can not explain this fact.



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If you read the angel's question out loud, it sounds a bit like a rebuke. Notice the words of the angel,

"What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation." Genesis 21:17-18

The question of the angel is certainly rhetorical, a way of initiating conversation. Clearly the angel knew the problem, but as far as Hagar was concerned, there was no help available for the two of them. However, God heard even the cry of Ishmael who had done wrong by mocking Isaac without reason. It is not just that God allowed Hagar and Ishmael to be sent away. But God encouraged Abraham to send Hagar away, because Abraham did not feel that it was necessary. Apparently, Ishmael's wrong was severe. Nevertheless, God heard his cry and sent an angel to minister to his needs. This, too, is mercy.

God encouraged Hagar not to be afraid. That is asking a lot. To be all alone in the desert without water or direction is frightening, to say the least. The angel indicates that God had heard Ishmael's cry. The angel does not say so, but the impression that he leaves is that because God had heard the cry, He will answer the need. It is a glimpse of who God is. He is the God who by His nature is moved to compassion just because He is aware of the need.

It is one thing for the angel to say God knows your need. It is quite another to say God is going to meet the need in order to fulfill His purpose in the life of the young man and that is exactly what the angel said to Hagar.

To "lift the boy up" does not necessarily mean that she should pick him up in her arms. She was probably not capable of doing that. It is a way of telling Hagar not to abandon her son, but to stay with Ishmael. God is going to take care of his needs. God is going to not only enable him to survive, but He will also make him into a great nation. Talk about rags to riches! Now Ishmael does not even have food and water to survive, but God is going to make him the father of a great nation.

The text does not say that God made a well in the desert, but that God opened Hagar's eyes so that she could see a well that was already there. Just as Hagar had more strength than Ishmael when she put him under the tree, now she is the one who went to the well to get water for her ailing son. She filled the skin with water and gave some to Ishmael.

The author says something important about Ishmael in spite of who he was and what he had done.

"God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer." Genesis 21:20

Very often when the Scriptures speak of the fact that God "was with him", it is a way of saying that God enabled him to become great in terms of wealth and power. It was certainly the case in this instance. Not only was Ishmael to become great and wealthy, but all those who surrounded him in his household were to share in that bounty.

When the author speaks of Ishmael being an archer, it might be thought that he, like his forefather Esau, was a hunter. This may well have been so. The most important significance of his name, however, was that it suggests that he was a great hunter or military person. In all probability he became a robber of travelers in the desert.

Verse 21 speaks of an unusual event. Ishmael had no father to arrange for his wedding. In that case, his mother went back to her people in Egypt, to get a wife of her own people for her son. The author also gives us the location in which Ishmael lived in those days. It was the Desert of Paran. The accompanying map gives a general impression of this location.

21:22-34 Abraham Makes A Treaty With Abimelech

Suddenly the scene changes. Ishmael will not be mentioned again for several chapters. The focus of the book returns to Abimelech with whom Abraham had only recently had unfortunate relationships. Abimelech, as you may remember, was the king of Gerar. This king, in chapter 20, had taken Sarah into his harem and thus God rendered the women of his kingdom incapable of conceiving children. This was corrected when Sarah was restored to Abraham, her husband.

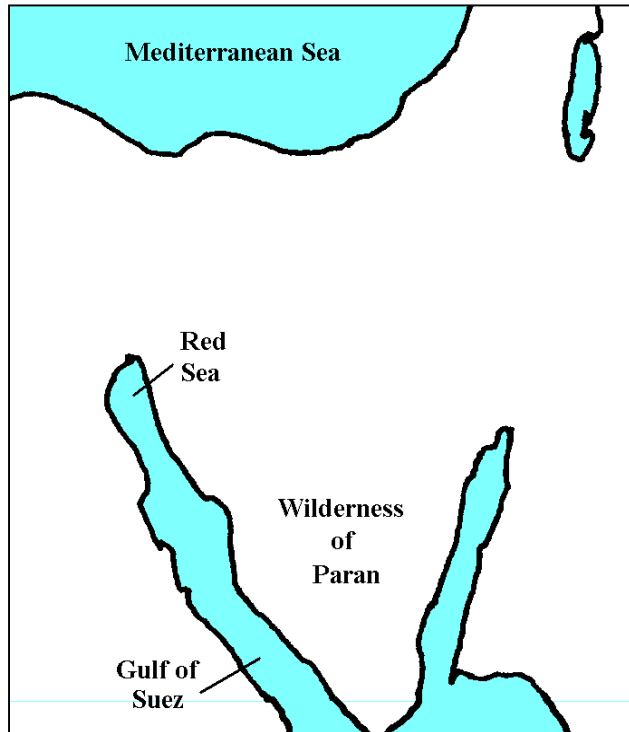
Abimelech is the royal title for Philistine kings, not the personal name of this specific king. We will find another king called Abimelech in the time of Isaac.

In the opening verse of this paragraph, Abimelech and his army commander, Phicol, come prepared to make a treaty with Abraham. Did you ever wonder why Abimelech brought Phicol with him for this conference? Abimelech could have made this treaty all by himself. Indeed, he had dealt personally with Abraham on a previous occasion. Notice that Phicol was the commander of Abimelech's forces. It was a subtle but obvious reference to the fact that Abimelech had an army that he would not be reluctant to use. Abimelech announces the purpose of his request in these words,

"God is with you in everything you do. Now swear to me here before God that you will not deal falsely with me or my children or my descendants. Show to me and the country where you are living as an alien the same kindness I have shown to you." Genesis 21:22-23

It is clear that the tables are turned. There was a time when Abraham was at the mercy of Abimelech, but that situation has now been reversed. Abimelech now feels threatened, in his own country, by the presence of Abraham. The evident presence and activity of God in the life of Abraham made an impression on this king. Abraham's life made it clear that God was with him in everything that he did. What a witness! Abimelech was seeking protection, security in the presence of the great power of Abraham.

One of the interesting things about this scene is the fact that Abimelech was a Philistine king. The Philistine kings were known for their ruthlessness in battle. They were



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afraid of nothing. Now this Philistine king was filled with fear by the presence of a Jewish man who dwelt in his country by invitation.

Notice that Abimelech has a certain trust level for God. He wants Abraham to swear before God that he will do certain things. Abimelech apparently believes that God is dependable, for he is willing to use God as the guarantor, the one who guarantees the covenant they make together. There are several suggestions of what Abimelech believed about Jehovah because of his previous encounters with Him:

1. God was dependable.
2. He had an aversion to falsehood and was capable of none Himself.
3. He was powerful. It would be dangerous for Abraham to go against a covenant made in Jehovah's presence.
4. God was fair. Jehovah would not deal underhandedly with Abimelech even though he was a Philistine.

Abimelech was not asking outrageous things. Notice his request,

"Show me and the country where you are living as an alien the same kindness I have shown you." Genesis 21:23

He is not asking for special treatment, just equal treatment. This was quite appropriate because he had treated Abraham very well, in most things, and wanted to be so treated himself. It gives some impression of Abimelech's view of his own level of danger in relation to what God had done on behalf of Abraham.

Things were bad enough that Abimelech felt great urgency to make a treaty with Abraham. There was good reason for Abimelech's request as we will see shortly. All was not well between the two groups.

Though the text, on many occasions, seems oblivious to time, **it** appears that Abraham responded immediately to this important request. Abraham had as much to gain from the treaty as Abimelech did, but Abimelech was not sensitive to that.

Abraham's response appears to be immediate and unequivocal. He simply replied, "I swear it." It is possible that the text infers **it**, but there is no direct reference to the fact that Abimelech was taking the same oath. The opposite appears to be the case. The request of Abimelech says, "...swear **to** me" rather than "swear **with** me". It should also be mentioned that the statement of the request was for Abraham to make such an oath, but it was expected that it would be binding on his offspring as well. Whatever the ramifications, Abraham acceded to Abimelech's wishes. This was an obvious expression of faith on Abraham's part. It is clear that Abraham and his people were not being well treated by the people of Abimelech. The very next sentence, in the text, is a complaint that Abraham has about the water supply.

Having made the oath, notice Abraham's way of introducing the problem into their conversation.

"Then Abraham complained to Abimelech about a well of water that Abimelech's servants had seized." Genesis 21:25

Abimelech is very concerned about making sure that Abraham did not do harm to the people of Gerar, but at the same time Abimelech's servants were taking advantage of Abraham and his servants. However, Abraham was not reluctant to bring this to the king's attention.

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This took place in the area of Beersheba, a place where water is quite scarce. Abraham and his servants had dug a well and it was good. The servants of Abimelech took this well away from Abraham because the land was not his. Abraham was a sojourner here. He had no personal rights in this land. There was nothing he could do about this abuse. He was being treated like the alien he was. Amid these circumstances, Abimelech asked to be properly treated by Abraham as he had previously treated Abraham and Abraham was very diplomatic about the abuse.

Abimelech was master of the near-eastern way of wording problems in such a way that the fault was not his. Notice what he said,

"But Abimelech said, 'I don't know who has done this. You did not tell me. And I heard about it only today.'" Genesis 21:26

Rather than accepting the responsibility for what his servants had done, Abimelech placed the responsibility on Abraham for not telling him about it. Abimelech spoke in such a way that it was not only Abraham's fault, but Abimelech could not comment about it because it had not been brought to his attention. He was thus completely off the hook.

Abraham was not about to let this happen so easily. Notice how he took care of the problem.

"So Abraham brought sheep and cattle and gave them to Abimelech, and the two men made a treaty." Genesis 21:27

Abraham treated the covenant as though there were no problems. This forced a level of treatment upon Abimelech that had had no teeth in the past. Abraham, however, had a surprise for Abimelech. The sheep and cattle accompanying the agreement were customary. Everyone would expect this to be done. Abraham went a step farther. Notice the way the author describes that.

"Abraham set apart seven ewe lambs from the flock, and Abimelech asked Abraham 'What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs you have set apart by themselves?'" Genesis 21:28,29

Abimelech was either unprepared for the symbol Abraham was about to set in place, or he was uninformed about the meaning of such a symbol.

Abraham took advantage of the situation in excellent form.

"He replied, 'Accept these seven lambs from my hand as a witness that I dug this well.'" Genesis 21:30

Abimelech was in a bind. He could not refuse to accept the gift from Abraham without shaming Abraham's honor and giving immediate cause for armed conflict. On the other hand, if he accepted the gift, then forever the well would be the unchallenged property of Abraham in spite of the fact that he did not own a foot of land in this country. Put yourself in the place of Abraham. You are in a strange land where you have no judicial rights. You dig a well and the native people take it away from you. If you go elsewhere and again perform the tedious and dangerous task of digging a well they would probably take that one away from you as well. For Abraham, it was either set up this diplomatic maneuver or accept a life of ongoing abuse. The text does not say, but it appears that Abimelech accepted the seven ewe lambs and Abraham now held undisputed claim to the well he had dug.

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Verse 31 sounds as though this was being written to people who either did not know the history of Israel or did not know the Jewish language. Notice what the author wrote,

*"So the place was called Beersheba, because the two men swore an oath there."
Genesis 21:31*

The word "beer" means a well. It means the well of the seven (sheba) or the well of the oath (shebua).

The actions of both Abimelech and Abraham reflect their response to the events of that day. Notice what they did.

"After the treaty had been made at Beersheba, Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his forces returned to the land of the Philistines. Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there he called upon the name of the Lord, the Eternal God." Genesis 21:32-33

Abimelech and Phicol left because they had gotten what they wanted. Abraham was not satisfied with the events of the day and for good reason. He needed as many symbols of these events as he could gain. He had already made a symbol to which He and his servants, Abimelech and Phicol were witnesses. Abraham wanted yet another symbol, this one in nature. He planted a tree where the treaty had been signed. It is possible that it was a tamarisk tree as several texts suggest, but that is not certain. The tamarisk is a large bush type tree which holds its leaves a long time and offers a lot of shade. The tree, which has beautiful yellowish flowers in Spring, has a long life expectancy. It makes an excellent symbol/reminder of the event they had celebrated in this place.

Beyond the legal symbols of their treaty, Abraham had need for one other symbol. Notice that the text says,

"And there he called upon the name of the Lord, the eternal God." Genesis 21:33

It is one thing to make promises with other men; it is another to live with those covenants in the presence of God. Abraham was willing to covenant with Abimelech, but he also felt the need to commune with God concerning this important treaty. It focuses upon what Abraham felt was the center of his life, which was God.

Focus your attention on the names for God which the author uses at this point:

1. Lord - Jehovah - the changeless, eternal God
2. God - el - the mighty one
3. The Eternal – Olam, from 21:33, means everlasting, perpetual, something hidden in the vast future.

In the quick-changing, volatile events of everyday life, Abraham turned to the all powerful, everlasting God, who does not change, as the source of his strength and confidence. He placed his confidence in God and not in human treaties.

The Philistines were a people unto themselves. They had no need to be good neighbors to anyone. They were warlike and focused on conquering rather than compromising. In spite of this, Abraham remained in their land a long time. This is testimony both to the durability of their treaty and the strength of the men. Abraham was able to trust in God to sustain him when all the indicators pointed to serious trouble.

Abraham was a lot like Peter in the New Testament. He was a great man, but he also had feet of clay. We can identify with him just as we identify with Peter. We have all had

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our difficult times; times when it is most difficult to be faithful; times when we are not as strong as we would like to be. As you reflect on where Abraham turned and why he did, what difference will this make in the choices you make? How will it affect the way you treat other people? How will it affect your attitude when others behave in an unfortunate fashion? What guidelines will this study establish as you seek to live a life of faithfulness?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 12

GENESIS 22:1 – 23:20

1. There are five paragraphs in this passage. Read each paragraph carefully and write a title of seven words or less in the chart below.

22:1–8	
22:9–19	
22:20–24	
23:1–16	
23:17–20	

2. Read 22:1-8 again. Put yourself into Abraham's position. List the things that would go through your mind when God gave you these startling instructions.
3. In the lengthy trip from the area of Beersheba to Mt. Moriah, what thoughts would occupy your mind?
4. Put yourself into 22:1-8. How would you explain this confusing experience to your son? How would you explain it to your servants?
5. Read 22:6–7. If you were a servant of Abraham, what would you think? If you were Isaac, what would you think?
6. Read 22:1–8. Ask every question you can in order to help you understand the passage. Try to answer these questions.
7. Put yourself into Isaac's position. What would you think? What would you want to do? How would you feel about Abraham?
8. If you were Abraham, what would you think about God making such a requirement?
9. What does this paragraph tell you about the nature of God?
10. What do you think went through Abraham's mind as he prepared to thrust the knife into the body of his only son? If you were Abraham, what would you think when the angel interrupted this proving of your faith?
11. What do you think Abraham and Isaac talked about as they returned to the place where the servants waited?
12. In 22:13-18, God spoke again to Abraham. How would you feel if God said these things to you?

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13. 22:20-24 seems like a monumental let down after the great drama of 22:1-19. why do you think the author paused to list the family tree of Nahor sandwiched between the sacrifice of Isaac and the death of Sarah?
14. Read 23:1–16. Put yourself into Abraham’s position as he negotiates to buy the burial plot for Sarah. What would you think? How would you feel?
15. Put yourself into the position of Ephron. What would you think in this situation?
16. What new information do you find in 23:17-20? Why does the author write these sentences.
17. How does God reveal Himself to you in these chapters?
18. What spiritual growth will take place in your life because of this study?

LESSON 12: GENESIS 22:1 – 23:20

CHAPTER TWENTY TWO

The Sacrifice Of Isaac

22:1-8 God Proves Abraham - Sacrifice Of Isaac

It appears that this paragraph immediately follows the feast Abraham prepared when Isaac was weaned. This is probably not the case. Though some time certainly elapsed, we do not know exactly how long after the weaning celebration that God called Abraham to sacrifice Isaac.

This paragraph begins by identifying God through the use of the name "Elohim", which stresses the Divine characteristic of mercy. That, of course, is being tested to the fullest in this encounter.

The author announces that God is going to "prove" Abraham. The word "prove" means "to test, tempt", or "to try". The use of the word will show more precisely how it was used in this instance. The exact meaning of the word is wrapped up in the purpose of the activity. A temptation is intended to destroy one's position or faith. A test, on the other hand, is intended to identify for the participant and/or the world, the strength of the person's position or faith. This, though very painful to the person, is quite beneficial to spiritual growth. We will speak to the precise identification of this experience later in the discussion of this paragraph.

It is interesting that God spoke to Abraham by name. This identification is a reminder of the meaning of the name, "Father of a Multitude." It is intriguing to note that God spoke by the use of this name in view of the other things God is saying at this time.

Note that Abraham responded immediately to the call of God. Abraham reacted as anyone would in that day. We will see this often in the remainder of Genesis. Abraham said, "Here am I." It was not so much an identification of place as it was an announcement that he was attendant to the call of God.

God said to Abraham,

"Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." Genesis 22:2

The intensity of the approaching pain is abundantly evident in the very first words God spoke to Abraham. Notice how God spoke,

*"Take now thy son, **thine only son, whom thou lovest...**" Genesis 22:2*

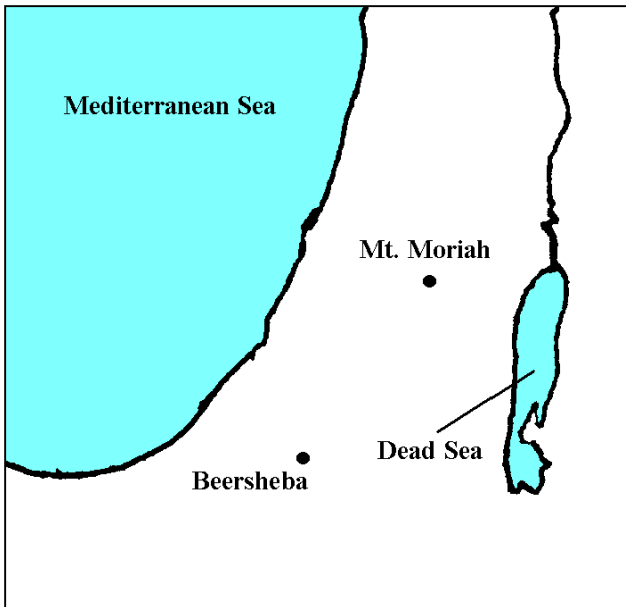
There is no way to understand adequately just how Abraham felt without actually being in his situation. He was at least 113 years of age and probably more. He apparently had only one son and God said I want you to sacrifice your son, your most treasured possession. What does one say at such a time? What does one do? The trauma of this experience had to be beyond his ability to grasp.

Abraham's response was as complete as it was immediate. Notice the way the author describes the response of Abraham to God's unbelievable request.

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"And Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he clave the wood for the burnt-offering and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him." Genesis 22:3

There apparently was no discussion; no attempt to modify God's request. Abraham simply got up and went to obey the command of God. The author makes a point of the fact that Abraham split the wood and saddled his ass. These were chores that would be performed by servants in a household the size of Abraham's. This is a way of describing the deliberateness of Abraham's actions. It is just possible that Abraham did the manual work to give himself time to grapple with this devastating command of God. The fact that he did these things himself suggests the intentional way in which Abraham carried out what God had told him to do. This boggles my mind! There is no way in which Abraham could understand that God really wanted what He had commanded. This command seems contrary to everything that God had done and promised in Abraham's life. God had called him Abraham - Father of a Multitude – and if there was going to be any multitude, it would have to come through this boy whom God was commanding him to sacrifice. Abraham could not have thought that this was an excellent idea. He was preparing to make the sacrifice, even though the personal pain was almost beyond his ability to bear. If there was ever a test of commitment, this is it.



The author describes something of what a journey this was. Remember, Abraham, Isaac and the two servants started out on this journey from the area of Beersheba. They are going to the area of Mount Moriah. You can trace the journey on the map which follows. It is a trip of about 50 miles through a very mountainous region.

It is not surprising that the author wrote,

"On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance." Genesis 22:4

It would take at least three or four days to travel over this kind of terrain.

Put yourself into this experience. Think of yourself as Abraham. You have been traveling for three days, and all day, every day, all you can think of is the fact that the son of your exceedingly old age is going to die and leave you no grand-child. You remember that God gave you a new name – Father of a Multitude – and it seems like a mockery now. God had not only promised that you would be the father of a multitude, but that this would be accomplished through Isaac, whom God was now asking you to sacrifice. You think of how God has kept His promises up until now, but it appears that it is all going for nothing in this one experience. How are you going to explain this to Sarah who had wanted a child all her life and now in her exceeding old age she will be bereft of the son in whom she delighted. How do you continue the journey, much less find consolation for your unbearable sor-

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row? How could you possibly go on this trip knowing that all your dreams about Isaac would be totally shattered?

Think of yourself as Isaac for a moment. Your father suddenly tells you that you are going to take a long trip to make a sacrifice. You ask yourself, "why do we have to go so far; why go through such difficult territory? If we are going to make a sacrifice, how come we have everything except the sacrifice itself?"

Now put yourself into the place of the slaves. Your master suddenly tells you that you are going to take a trip through the mountains. These people did not like to travel in the mountains. It was more than a little dangerous. It is clear that the master has in mind to make a sacrifice, but you have everything except the sacrifice itself. This is strange, unheard of! Do you dare to mention the fact that there has been an oversight? Normally that would not be healthy. Certainly, the one thing going through your mind would be, "Why are we doing this?" These feelings, for everyone, grow stronger and stronger as each day passed.

Note what Abraham said to his servants when he saw Mt. Moriah in the far distance.

"He said to his servants, 'Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.'" Genesis 22:5

This would be appropriate for Abraham because the servants were certainly not of his people and as such would not be included in his times of worship. We can not be certain about why Abraham left the servants and went on with Isaac alone. It may have been because of their nationality; it might just as well have been because he did not want anyone to interfere as he attempted this nearly impossible task of obedience to God.

Notice also how verse five concludes,

"...we will worship and then we will return to you." Genesis 22:5

Abraham had heard God tell him to sacrifice Isaac. Certainly Abraham did not misunderstand. He knew exactly what God was saying. How then could he possibly say to the servants, "... we will return to you"? Two possibilities come to mind:

1. He could have been trying to keep them from discovering exactly what he was about to do, lest they intervene.
2. Abraham had a total awe of God. He had seen God in action; he knew of the way God punished disobedience, but at the same time he had experienced numerous examples of God's mercy.
3. He could have been speaking from faith that God would somehow, miraculously, enable Isaac to return with him. This is in keeping with the possibility that Abraham meant this when he said, in verse eight, "God himself will provide the lamb for the sacrifice, my son." We can not know for sure, but I tend to believe the latter.

Put yourself into Isaac's shoes as the story continues. Bizarre is probably a mild description of how it must have seemed to him.

"Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father, Abraham, 'Father?' 'Yes, my son?' Abraham replied. 'The fire and wood are here,' Isaac said, 'But where is the lamb for the burnt offering?'" Genesis 22:6-7

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It must have been far more than confusing to Isaac. It must have looked as though his aged father behaved in a very strange manner. He must have wondered if his father had become senile. When Isaac could stand it no longer, he spoke up and confronted his father in a respectful, but direct manner.

If Isaac was concerned before, he was even more concerned by his father's reply.

"Abraham answered, 'God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.' And the two of them went on together." Genesis 22:8

The words of Abraham seem almost prophetic. Was this just Abraham's way of avoiding the issue? Was Abraham expressing his faith that God would provide another sacrifice, at the last minute, so that his only son would be spared? We honestly do not know. Certainly it took almost super-human ability for Abraham to do as God commanded. It took almost as much for Isaac to go along with his father's decision. This was especially true of Isaac because he had even less information than Abraham. As far as we can tell, all Isaac knew was that his father had decided to go and make a sacrifice. From what he could see, there was something wrong; something was missing and it was obvious. Nevertheless, Isaac went with his father. The silence must have been deafening as they climbed the mountain together.

22:9–19 Abraham Demonstrates Willingness To Sacrifice Isaac

Put yourself into this scene again,

"When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son." Genesis 22:9–10

It is almost impossible to imagine the excruciating pain that hammered the heart of Abraham as he piled up the stones to make the altar. Remember, he was an old man, and the work of piling up the stones might have been almost too much for him physically. Add to this the intolerable pain which tore at his heart as he worked on the altar. He must have felt like a traitor, for he had not told his son what was going to happen. He had to feel defeated and destroyed as he took Isaac in his grasp to tie him up. He must have felt intolerable guilt as he made his son helpless as he tied him up for the sacrifice. The grief Abraham felt must have been beyond description as he feebly struggled to lift Isaac up onto the altar. He must have averted the gaze of his only son as he finished the preparations for the final moment of sacrifice. If only he could understand why God wanted him to do this. Why would God now destroy everything He had done to fulfill His repeated promise to Abraham concerning a lineage like "the stars of the heavens and the sands of the sea". It all seemed in vain.

Now put yourself in the place of Isaac. Your father had told you that he was going to make a sacrifice, but you had everything for the offering except the sacrifice itself. Still, Abraham was going along with this as though all the ingredients were already in hand. You help your father pile up the stones and put the wood in place on top of the altar. You feel more and more foolish because this whole experience makes less and less sense as you move toward the time of the sacrifice itself. Suddenly Abraham takes you by the arm and

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starts to tie you up. You struggle from confusion and fear at the same time. What in the world is father doing? You do not want to be disrespectful, but this is going too far. Suddenly it occurs to you. There is a reason why Abraham did not bring a sacrifice. I am the sacrifice! He no doubt remembered that the people in the area had done this to their children, but this had never happened in the household of Abraham. The driving fear of realizing that you are going to be slain as a sacrifice to God by your own father almost drives you into delirium. Isaac had to be stronger than Abraham at this juncture. Why do you suppose Isaac allowed himself to be tied up and prepared for sacrifice when he could very well have defended himself? In part, it may have been that he remembered his father saying, "we will return... God will provide a sacrifice." Suddenly you see your father reach for the huge knife he had placed in his sash in preparation for the time of sacrifice. It is now clear that you are going to die at the hand of your own father. You feel so helpless, so absolutely devastated. To think that you will die before you have a chance to live, that you will now die at the hands of your own father who seemed to love you so much all your life. There is hardly room or time for all the emotions that cram their way into your mind all at once. You helplessly feel the presence of death. Your eyes say much more than the explosion of sound and words that dashes from your lips. Obviously, this is much less than actually went through the mind of Isaac as he realized that he had become the sacrifice.

The shock of the divine intervention is as strong as the horror of the attempted sacrifice. Notice how the author describes it,

"But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, 'Abraham! Abraham!' 'Here I am,' he replied. 'Do not lay a hand on the boy,' he said. 'Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.'" Genesis 22:11-12

Notice that the angel is identified as the angel of the Lord, which means Jehovah Himself. This is important because Jehovah is the Divine name which emphasizes His eternal justice. It stresses just how great God is in spite of what some appearances might be.

The angel said,

"... I know that you fear God..." Genesis 22:12

The name for God here is "Elohim". This name stresses God's mercy. Abraham was not counting on God's mercy to ease away from the hard command, but certain that God meant what He commanded. Abraham "feared" God; he held Him in deep awe and reverence.

The tension and drama of this experience are almost unbearable. Notice that the angel called out "Abraham!" twice. It indicates both intense concern and great love for Abraham. Observe that in the hammering tension of this tragic moment, Abraham's response to the call of God was exactly what it had been when that dreadful announcement was first made. He simply said, "Here I am."

People have read this passage and said this must be a mistake in the text. God could not ask a man to sacrifice his son. We must remember that God did not follow through with the command. He simply asked Abraham to make the sacrifice in order to demonstrate the depth of his commitment. God had no intention of allowing Abraham to do any harm whatsoever to Isaac.

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At the outset, we mentioned that we would later discuss the meaning of the word "prove." Remember, we said it can mean to "test, prove, tempt or try". We also said that the difference between "prove" or "try" and "tempt" was that temptation was intended to destroy the person while "prove" or "trial" is intended to demonstrate to the person and the world the depth of the person's commitment which will result in spiritual growth. The words of verses 11 and 12 indicate clearly that God's intent was to help Abraham and others to see just how completely devoted to God Abraham really was. This was a trial, not a temptation.

We stand in silent awe of such an experience. I am the father of an only son. When I think of what Abraham did, I cringe and struggle. What would I have done when confronted by this command? Would I have been willing to place my only son on the altar because God said to do it? Would my son have been willing for me to do such a thing to him? We should ask ourselves whether or not God is so important in our lives that we would be willing to do even what appears to be ridiculous and incredible simply because God commanded us? Would we even have been able to hear when God requested such a thing? How would we have been sure that it was God who was asking us to do this?

I am humbled yet devastated. I am humbled that such a great God cares so deeply about me; deeply devastated at the difference between the phenomenal faith of a man like Abraham and the meager faith which I from time to time display.

The passage which deals with God's command to sacrifice Isaac has sparked great controversy among those who interpret Scripture. God spoke to Abraham as though God learned something He had not previously known. That was not the case. This is one more instance where God speaks in human terms so that people can understand. God knew from the beginning what Abraham would do. The problem was that Abraham did not know what he would do. Could this be another situation such as we find in Job where God said,

"Then the Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.'" Job 1:8

Only eternity will reveal the reasoning behind God's command. Whatever the cause, God made the ultimate request and Abraham risked everything that he held dear in order to obey the command of God. Christians can not read these verses without asking some penetrating questions about the extent of their own faith and obedience.

In the aftershock of this trauma, Abraham looked around him.

"Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place 'The Lord will provide.' And to this day it is said, 'On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.'" Genesis 22:13-14

Our friends who see only the judgment of God in the Old Testament need to read these verses. This is neither brutality nor judgment. It is the providence of a merciful God who is more interested in obedience than in sacrifice. This is one of the major pictures of the substitutional sacrifice in the Old Testament. In this experience, many Christians see a foreshadowing of the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf.

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Abraham called the name of that place "the Lord will provide." In Hebrew, the words are "Jehovah-Jireh." It is a beautiful name for our God. Abraham understood that it was not accidental that the ram was caught in that specific place, and at that particular time. God had provided a substitute sacrifice in the form of a ram. This is interesting because the ram was used in several of the sacrifices, as seen in Numbers 15:5.

What a reunion must have taken place between Abraham and Isaac. ! Abraham was a truly "macho man," but we can be certain he cried for joy!

Did you ever wonder what Abraham and Isaac talked about on the long walk back down the mountain to where the servants were waiting? Surely they did not just drop the subject and forget about it. One might assume that Abraham explained why he had come to Mt. Moriah and why he had tied up Isaac and placed him on the altar; how he felt about God – the many times God had shown undeserved mercy before – how God had never broken a promise before and still had not – how he could count on God's word to be all that God had promised it to be. It is quite possible that Isaac expressed some of the intense fear, confusion and perhaps anger that had filled his heart. We will never know.

By the same token, have you ever wondered about the questions that filled the minds of the servants who had not been present for the sacrifice? Abraham and Isaac had left with fire and wood, but came back without them. Had a sacrifice taken place? Just what did happen? What did it all mean? Where did they get an animal for the sacrifice?

The angel of God spoke on behalf of God a second time.

Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. "And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." Genesis 22:15-18

The angel spoke on behalf of God. The angelic message used the name "Jehovah" which stresses God's justice and the fact that He is eternal. The oath God took here is irrevocable; it cannot be changed. The oath is as dependable as the name of God itself, and He gives these reasons for the divine oath:

1. Because Abraham had done this – obeyed God and came to make the sacrifice
2. Because Abraham had not withheld his only son, Isaac. In other words, God took the oath because to Abraham it was more important to obey God than even his greatest desires.

The Scriptures indicate that God blesses His people for at least two reasons:

1. Because they have done something in obedience to His command - There is a cause and effect relationship between the believer's obedience and the blessing of God.
2. Simply because His mercy reaches out to his people – It has nothing to do with our being deserving.

In response to the faithfulness of Abraham, the angel made these promises:

1. God will bless Abraham.
2. God will make Abraham's descendants as numerous as the stars of the sky.
3. God will make Abraham's descendants as numerous as the sands of the seashore.

GLIMPSES OF GOD - I

4. God will enable Abraham's descendants to take possessions of the cities that until now had belonged to their enemies.
5. Through Abraham's offspring, God will bless all the nations of the earth. No matter what may happen, no matter what appearances may be, no matter how much time may elapse, these promises must eventually come true because God made an irrevocable oath to His servant Abraham promising that it would be so. There is no other alternative. This is particularly significant concerning events in the Persian Gulf today.

At the end of verse 18, the angel repeats, again, the reasons for these blessings. He said,

"Because you have obeyed me." Genesis 22:18

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The author finishes the dramatic paragraph with what might seem to be two uneventful sentences. However, they are the ultimate understatement. Abraham and Isaac returned to the servants and started back to Beersheba, but there was more to it. There had to be thoughts and emotions in the hearts of all four that would fill a book. The author also said,

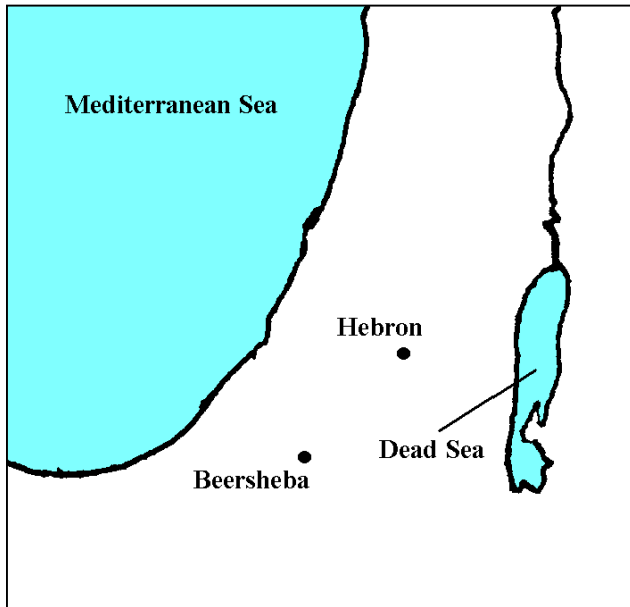
"...And Abraham stayed in Beersheba." Genesis 22:19b

Abraham had lived in and around Beersheba more than once in his life, and on this occasion, when he went to Mount Moriah, he left from Beersheba. This is significant because this was alien territory for him. God had promised that the area would belong to him and his descendants, but at this particular time it was in the hands of the Philistines, a strong sea people who originated in Caphtor or Crete. These occupants were adventurers and some of the most vicious fighters in the world. In spite of this, Abraham was able to dwell in the land with them in relative peace.

Having gone to make the sacrifice, he returned to Beersheba. The author makes a point to indicate that Abraham now stayed in the area of Beersheba. It is a way of saying that though the foreigners were occupying the land now, Abraham and his large following were still holding on to the land and claiming it as their own. Even in our day, it is the policy of the Jewish people to continue to claim this land for their own possession, no matter what world leaders may say about their actions and/or attitudes.

22:20-24 Nahor's Family Tree

At this point in the chapter, there is an abrupt shift in the focus. Having dealt with the dramatic turn of events when God told Abraham to sacrifice his only son Isaac, the author now points our attention toward the lineage of other members of Abraham's family. He gives no particular reason for this shift. It may seem a bit like reading the phone book, but it is not. The verses of this paragraph give a capsule view of the paternal family of Abra-



This map gives us some interesting information:

1. Sarah lived inside the promised land.
2. Sarah's death apparently was not immediately following the return of Abraham and Isaac from the experience on Mount Moriah, for the text says, "Abraham stayed in Beersheba."
3. The length of time, following the trip to Mount Moriah, is not clear.

The author felt the need to indicate that Hebron was also called Kiriath Arba. This was quite appropriate. The city had been known by at least three names: Kiriath Arba Mamre and Hebron.

The writer is just trying to clarify the name of the city for those who might not be too familiar with its history.

In verse 2, we learn that Abraham might not have been in Hebron at the time of Sarah's death. Notice what the author said,

"...and Abraham went to mourn for Sarah and to weep over her." Genesis 23:2

There are at least two possible understandings of this statement:

1. Abraham may have still been in Beersheba at the time that Sarah died.
2. Abraham might actually have been in Hebron, but following the death he went to the place where mourning was to take place.

One can not be certain, but I personally lean toward the idea that Abraham was not in Hebron at the time of Sarah's death. He might have been in a number of places, but Beersheba seems most likely. Ultimately, we do not know for certain.

Whatever his location, Abraham went to "mourn" and "weep" for Sarah. "Mourn" and "weep" do not have the same meaning. Both are forms of grief, but weeping is a far more intense form of grief than "mourning", which means "to lament". Life had not been smooth for Abraham and Sarah. The depth of their personal relationship is impossible to identify with certainty. Lamenting came first, but then the intense sorrow of weeping followed. We must leave it at that.

It is clear that in Hebron, Abraham is again living in the presence of a pagan nation.

"Then Abraham rose from beside his dead wife and spoke to the Hittites." Genesis 23:3

Apparently the Hittites were living in the area of Hebron. This was the area in which Abraham and Sarah lived on other occasions. Notice how he broached the subject with the Hittite leaders. Abraham said,

"I am an alien and a stranger among you. Sell me some property for a burial site here so I can bury my dead." Genesis 23:4

LESSON 12

One must remember that aliens were not permitted to own property in a land not their own. Abraham was clearly in a bind. He was not allowed to dispose of the body and yet he did not have a place to bury it. At the same time, he could not purchase such land. He was appealing to the Hittite leaders to make an exception because of his unfortunate circumstances.

In the Near East, life was and is filled with necessary ceremonies. Abraham could not just go to the owner of the land which he wanted to buy. He had to go to the leaders and ask them to intercede on his behalf. Notice how the author describes this unusual ceremony,

"Then Abraham rose and bowed down before the people of the land, the Hittites. He said to them, 'If you be willing to let me bury my dead, then listen to me and intercede with Ephron son of Zohar on my behalf so he will sell me the cave of Machpelah, which belongs to him and is in the end of his field. Ask him to sell it to me for the full price as a burial site among you.'" Genesis 23:7-9

Abraham bowed down before the leaders, in the gate, as a gesture of respect and deference. This is a matter of decor which is observed to this day.

Notice also that Abraham knew who owned the land and was familiar with the owner's family situation. He was not just Ephron, but Ephron the son of Zohar.

Abraham petitioned the council to intercede on his behalf. It was not because he could not speak for himself. His request required not only the consent of the owner, but also an exception to the rule of not allowing foreigners to own land. It was a way of asking the council to grant their blessing to his ownership of the property in order that negotiations could begin concerning the price of the land. It is a bit like the kind of negotiations that prospective buyers must now pursue if they want to have the zoning assignment changed before completing the purchase of a piece of property.

Abraham was an excellent negotiator. Even as he pleads his case before the council, he lays the groundwork with which he can pursue a decrease in the price of the land. Notice how he did it.

"...so he will sell me the cave of Machpelah, which belongs to him and is in the end of his field." Genesis 23:9a

When Abraham reminded them that the cave was in the end of the field, he was making at least two important points. His purchase of that part of the property would not deny the owner, Ephron, of any valuable property. It was land that he could not otherwise use. Abraham's purchase of the property would in no way diminish Ephron's useful land or his access to it. That being the case, he would feel deserving to request a lowering of the price.

We need to be reminded that the process of negotiation was a social and business requirement which necessitated the use of words which otherwise would not be considered truthful, but they were not looked upon as falsehood. Notice how Abraham expressed himself.

"Ask him to sell it to me for the full price as a burial site among you." Genesis 23:9b

Stipulating the full price was Abraham's way of tickling the interest of the council to get them to go along with his request. There is no reason to believe that Abraham had any

intention whatsoever of paying the full price for the land. It was simply a starting place for them to talk, to negotiate. They all knew that this statement should not be taken at face value.

It should also be noted that Abraham stipulated that the property would be used exclusively for purposes of a burial site and for nothing else. This was always a concern when considering the possibility of allowing a foreigner to have property.

We should be aware that these people had a law against selling property to an alien. Abraham dealt with this by suggesting that the owner give the land to him and in return Abraham would give to him the full price of the property. There apparently was no law against the gift of land to an alien. This was the means Abraham used to get around that restriction.

The fact that this cave was on the edge of the field meant that it would not be necessary for him to intrude on any of the rest of the field in order to properly use the cave as a burial place. This, too, was an important consideration for the owner of the property.

Verse 10 indicates that Ephron, the owner of the property, was sitting among the people present at this discussion with the council. Remember, we are still dealing with two important considerations:

1. The impossibility of selling land to an alien.
2. The bargaining system that custom required them to carefully observe.

It was the owner's turn to respond to the offer Abraham had made. Again, remember that this takes place in the presence of the village council. This makes all their decisions binding. The owner of the property responded to Abraham's request in these terms:

"No, my lord," he said. "Listen to me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. I give it to you in the presence of my people. Bury your dead." Genesis 23:11

Again, Ephron had absolutely no intention of parting with the land without receiving the value of it in return. This was a necessary part of the negotiations. It would seem like dishonesty to us, but they did not look upon it in those terms. It was a social necessity. It was the way that Ephron, the owner, conveyed his willingness to allow the property to come into the hands of Abraham. This step was necessary before they could begin talking about the actual cost of the land.

The responsibility was now upon Abraham to respond to the offer of Ephron. Much of this process was a way of saving face, of conveying the proper interpretation concerning their offers and counter-offers. Abraham did several things:

1. He bowed himself down before the council. This was a socially necessary expression of humility and gratitude on Abraham's part. It tells the council that he sees this delicate matter in the proper perspective.
2. He responded to Ephron's offer. He said,

"Listen to me, if you will. I will pay the price of the field. Accept it from me so I can bury my dead there." Genesis 23:13

Abraham pretends not to hear the offer of Ephron. He is volunteering to pay the full purchase price of the land in order to have a place to bury his dead. Again, it does not appear to me that Abraham had any intention of paying the full price for the land if at all possible.

LESSON 12

Ephron must now respond to Abraham's plea. He continued the apparent generosity, but in it found a way to identify his selling price for the field. Notice what he said,

"Ephron answered Abraham, 'Listen to me, my lord; the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver, but what is that between me and you? Bury your dead.'" Genesis 23:15

Whether intentional or accidental, this response was astute. He found a way to appear generous, but at the same time give Abraham the exorbitant price he wanted for the field. To say the land is worth 400 shekels is highly inflated in terms of other indications in Scripture. King David went to buy a threshing floor, which was highly prized at that time. The land in questions here was of no other value. There are two interesting things in the account of Abraham's attempt to purchase burial land.

1. The negotiating process was substantially the same as the one described here in Abraham's situation.
2. The price was substantially less than what Ephron asked of Abraham.

"So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen and paid fifty shekels of silver for them." II Sam. 24:24

It appears that the amount of land was approximately the same. It also appears that the cost of the land, in Genesis 23, was many times more than what David paid in approximately the same region, and David's cost included the oxen! It would not have been surprising to Abraham, however, that he, an alien, would be treated in this fashion. His words and demeanor to the contrary, Ephron was offering Abraham no bargain.

There is another consideration in terms of what Ephron was asking for this land. The shekel was not a fixed commodity. There were at least two different shekels. One shekel was very small, but the other was worth 100 times more than the smaller one. If, as some scholars believe, Ephron demanded the larger shekel, then the price Ephron required for the land was one of the greatest swindles in human history.

Abraham certainly would not have been deceived by the smooth negotiations of Ephron. Abraham had to be as skilled a negotiator as his opponent. He knew he had to pay the price in order to be sure that the arrangements were not changed later by the current owner. Notice how the author described Abraham's response,

"Abraham agreed to Ephron's terms and weighed out for him the price he had named in the hearing of the Hittites: four hundred shekels of silver, according to the weight current among the merchants." Genesis 23:16

Under other circumstances, the negotiating would have been different. Offers and counter offers would have followed. Abraham knew that he was the alien and as such in a weaker position than a citizen of the land might be. He also knew that it was not considered acceptable to haggle over the price of land intended for the burial of the dead. It would be considered an insult to the deceased, not to the owner of the land.

23:17-20 Announcement Of The Purchase

Verses 17 and 18 give some indication of the content of the deed which was drawn up for Abraham. He was to receive the field, the cave in the field, and even the trees within the borders of the field.

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When the legal details were completed, Abraham could then bury Sarah in his newly acquired burial plot. This cave was located near Hebron, or Mamre as it was called in other times, inside the land of Canaan.

Verse 20 sounds redundant, but it is not. Notice what it says,

"So the field and the cave in it were deeded to Abraham by the Hittites as a burial site." Genesis 23:20

This, again, is a way of emphasizing a message.

Repetition was their strongest form of emphasis. The author is stressing the fact that the negotiations were finished; the new ownership determined; the burial had already taken place; the location was clear.

These two chapters describe two of the most emotional experiences of Abraham's life: the sacrifice of his son and the death of his wife. This is very significant because it is in the traumas of life that our faith and commitment are most obvious. Look at these chapters again. God revealed Himself as the all powerful God who will judge when people move in evil directions. He revealed Himself as intent upon ultimate commitment of His people to Himself. He showed us a picture of Himself as ultimately merciful, even in the midst of His justice.

If God would ask Abraham to sacrifice the only rightful son of his old age, what will He ask of me that will demonstrate just how important He is in my priorities? If God sustained Abraham through such a terrifying experience, how can I face the problems, great and small, that come into my life on a daily basis that have caused me so much stress? What does this expression of the mercy and changelessness of God have to say to me about the way I face problems?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 13

GENESIS 24:1–67

1. There are five paragraphs in this segment of Scripture. Read each paragraph carefully and write a title, of seven words or less, for each paragraph on the chart below.

24:1–9	
24:10–27	
24:28–49	
24:50–60	
24:61–67	

2. In 24:2c, Abraham instructed his trusted servant, Eliezer, to "put your hand under my thigh. I want you to swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth..." What difference does this make? Why did Abraham insist on this?
3. In 24:2-4, Abraham instructed his servant to take an oath that he would not secure a wife for Isaac from the Canaanite neighbors. Why would Abraham feel so strongly about this?
4. In 24:6-7, Abraham instructed his servant to "make sure that you do not take my son back there (Mesopotamia)." Why was this so important to Abraham?
5. 24:10-27 is the story of the servant finding Rebekah in his search for a wife for Isaac. Read the paragraph carefully. What does this paragraph tell you about the servant? What does the paragraph tell you about Abraham?
6. In 24:10-27, Abraham's servant, Eliezer, attaches real significance to the idea that the woman would volunteer to not only give him a drink, but to water his camels also. Why would he feel so strongly about this? What difference did it make that the woman came while he was still praying?
7. What is the significance of the nose ring and the bracelets that the servant gave to Rebekah?
8. In 24:26-27, the servant prayed. Study his prayer. What does it tell you about his understanding of God? What does it tell you about the servant?
9. Can you think, of any reason why Rebekah's brother Laban, came out to meet the servant rather than the father, Bethuel? What does this mean?
10. In 24:28-49, Laban invited the servant to accept their hospitality. What does this tell you about the household of Bethuel?
11. As the servant speaks with Laban, he talks about God a great deal. Why would he do this?

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12. In 24:36–38, the servant tells of the belated birth of Isaac. Why would this be important to Abraham's Eastern relatives?
13. Compare the actual story, 24:12-27, with Eliezer's recounting of the story to Laban, in 24:42-48. In what ways are the accounts similar? In what ways, if any, are the accounts dissimilar? What does this say to you?
14. In 24:50-60, the author tells of the betrothal of Rebekah. Study the negotiations carefully. How does the servant approach this experience? Look at the response of Laban and Bethuel, in 24:50–51. How can we account for their reply? In 24:54, the author tells us that Eliezer and the other servants ate and drank and spent the night with Laban. Why was this important?
15. In this passage, the servant asked Laban to "send me on my way." What was the significance of this?
16. Again in 24:50-60,, Laban asked Rebekah if she would go with Eliezer when he and Bethuel had already agreed that she would be the wife of Isaac. What did Laban mean by this question?
17. The writer indicates, in 24:63, that Isaac had gone out into the field to meditate. Why was it important to include this information?
18. The author tells us that when Rebekah spotted Isaac, she put on her veil and dismounted from the camel. Why would she do this?
19. In 24:67, the writer specifically states that Isaac brought Rebekah into the tent of Sarah. What information does this add to our understanding of the story?
20. You can see who God is and what He is like in these chapters. In what light do you see Him there?
21. Reflect upon Genesis 24:1-67. In what way can you apply the lessons contained in this passage to your life every day?

LESSON 13: GENESIS 24:1 – 67

Rebekah - Isaac's Wife

24:1-9 Abraham Sends Servant To Get Isaac A Wife

With the death of his wife Sarah, Abraham began thinking of his own demise. If you compare 23:1 with 25:20 you will discover that Isaac was 40 years old when he married Rebekah. That means that Abraham was 140 years old at this time. Sarah died when Abraham was 137. Simple deduction indicates that three years passed between the death of Sarah and the marriage of Isaac. Abraham was wealthy and God had blessed him in every possible way. It was now time for Isaac to be married. The fact that Abraham did not send Isaac on this mission clearly means that he did not want his son to leave Canaan. He wanted Isaac to stay in the promised land. One servant, Eliezer, was the most powerful in Abraham's household. Abraham called him to instruct him to go and arrange a marriage for Isaac. The patriarch was determined that his only son was not going to marry a woman from the Canaanites among whom they lived. Because of his age, Abraham apparently did not think he could stand the long trip and did not know if he would still be alive when the servant returned with the wife. In order to satisfy himself that his wishes would be carried out, Abraham demanded that his trusted servant take an oath.

"Put your hand under my thigh. I want you to swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac." Genesis 24:2c-4

There is considerable controversy about the meaning of Abraham's instructions. Throughout the East, it was common for a master to demand that his servant take an oath by placing his hand under the master's thigh. This practice is still observed in some parts of the East. Whatever the significance, however it got started, we can say that at the least, placing the hand under the thigh is a symbol of one's promise to be faithful to his word. At the most, it can also signify that the servant takes an unchangeable oath that he will be faithful to the wishes of his master and to his children who proceed from these loins. Whatever the meaning, it always signifies an oath which is binding eternally, and can not be revoked for any reason whatsoever.

The fact that this was an unchangeable oath was a point of considerable concern to the servant who had to make such a vow. Notice the concern of the servant in verse five.

"The servant asked him, 'What if the woman is unwilling to come back with me to this land? Shall I then take your son back to the country you come from?'" Genesis 24:5

The servant was asking what would happen if the family insisted that the wedding take place at the home of the bride rather than in the home of Abraham. The servant knew that it was possible that even with his very best intentions he might not be able to keep his oath. He was asking what he should do in such a situation. The option of just not carrying out the oath was not part of his consideration at all, even if his master had died. Everyone understood that having taken this oath, the servant was bound to the death to carry it out.

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Abraham understood the concern of the servant regarding the possibility that the bride might not cooperate. Abraham dealt with that possibility in clear, definite terms, when he said,

"Make sure that you do not take my son back there," Abraham said. 'The Lord, the God of heaven, who brought me out of my father's household and my native land and who spoke to me and promised me on oath,' saying 'To your offspring I will give this land' - he will send his angel before you so that you can get a wife for my son from there.'" Genesis 24:6-7

Abraham had several concerns, but they were in priority order. Whether Isaac received a wife or not, under no circumstances was the servant to take Isaac out of Canaan. The reason Abraham offered was that God had promised to give this land to his offspring. Abraham believed that promise and he was not going to let his son get out of the land under any circumstances. Isaac was going to stay where God could keep that promise, and Abraham knew the promise would be kept.

Abraham was aware of the seriousness of the servant's situation and so he dealt with the contingencies he might encounter. He said,

"If the woman is unwilling to come back with you, then you will be released from this oath of mine, Only do not take my son back there." Genesis 24:8

Again you have the repetition of the demand that the servant not take Isaac into Mesopotamia for any reason. It is possible that Abraham was concerned for Isaac's safety in Mesopotamia. It could also be that he did not want Isaac exposed to the idolatry prevalent among his own family members there.

Abraham set his servant's mind at rest. If the woman would not return with him, then he would be released from the oath. This gives us a glimpse into the character of Abraham. There were many slave owners at that time, who would not have been so generous under these circumstances. If confronted with the servant's question, they would have insisted that the servant make sure that the bride would be willing to return. They would have left the oath intact so that there was no release for the faithful servant. But Abraham was different. He had many faults, but there are a number of beautiful qualities in the man. He trusted his servant with a great deal of money and his own freedom. He demanded less of his servants than law or custom permitted. He allowed members of his family to take part in making decisions, as seen when Sarah was given freedom to deal with Hagar. He was reasonable with his servants, for he gave Eliezer an escape from his oath if the bride refused to come with him.

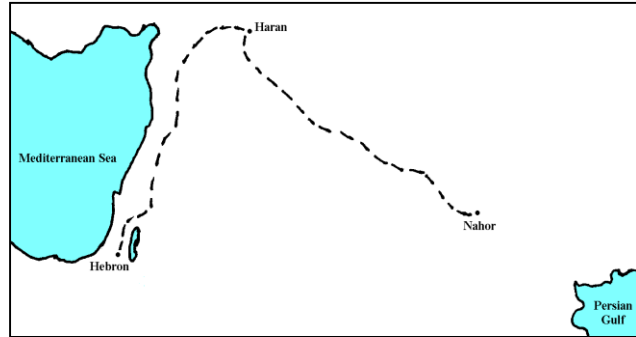
24:10-27 The Servant Asks Jehovah for Guidance

Eliezer took the other servants and camels he needed for the trip and left for Mesopotamia, the former home of Abraham and Sarah. He took costly gifts to give to the bride and her family because he was determined to bring back a bride for Isaac. He went to the city of Nahor. In the text it sounds like he took a short trip. Notice on the map just how far he had to go.

LESSON 13

Depending on how one travels, this is a trip of between 800 and 1,000 miles each way. This would be anywhere from a 50 to 70 days walk each way if you covered 15 miles per day. On the return trip they would have to go even slower because of the presence of the bride and her servants. Therefore Eliezer and those with him would be gone for nearly five months altogether.

The text says that they went to the city of Nahor. There is difference of opinion concerning the location of Nahor. Some scholars identify it as the former name for Haran. More scholars place it at the site of Ur of the Chaldeas. The latter is my preference. Nahor is the brother of Abraham and half brother of Sarah. This was all that was left of Abraham's family since his



other brother, Haron, had died some time before. We must also keep in mind that "Nahor" was also the name of Abraham's grandfather.

We must assume that Abraham's servant was of pagan background. In the course of his living in the household of Abraham, this man had learned to pray to Jehovah. He believed that it made a difference; that God heard and answered prayer. Notice how he proceeded when he had arrived in the city.

"He had the camels to kneel down near the well outside the town; it was toward evening, the time the women go out to draw water." Genesis 24:11

There is great spiritual insight here. The man apparently knew that he would not be able to do this on his own. Before he did anything else, he prayed. He asked God for help. It is not surprising that God answered his prayer, because the servant believed in God and was convinced God would help him make wise choices when others might seek to deceive or take advantage of him because he was a servant.

The prayer of Eliezer is an important one to observe.

"Then he prayed, 'O Lord, God of my master Abraham, give me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. See I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the towns people are coming out to draw water. May it be that when I say to a girl, 'please let down your jar that I may have a drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too' – let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master." Genesis 24:12–14

Note first, that Eliezer prayed "O Lord God". In Hebrew, this identifies "Jehovah" and "Elohae". These names have special significance. The name "Jehovah" stresses the justice of God. The name "Elohae" stresses God's dauntless power while Elohim stresses the mercy of God. "Elohae" also stresses the personal nature of God. He is "our God". Eliezer was appealing to the power and mercy of God to meet his great need at this time.

Eliezer believed that God would help him, that God was a God of mercy, and that a person can experience the mercy of God. Thus, he prayed.

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The servant asked God to not only answer his prayer, but to do so in a specific way. Eliezer asked that when he spoke to the young girl she would answer by offering him and the camels a drink. This was a difficult request. It was unusual for any foreigner to approach an unmarried girl, much less speak to her. It was also unusual for the girl to speak to anyone outside her own family. Add to this the fact that the servant was obviously a foreigner and you have a near impossible request. It is a demonstration of great faith in God on the part of Eliezer. Look at the prayer again. His petition is concerned with his master Abraham and his son Isaac. There is absolutely no request for himself! This is the picture of a very devoted, selfless servant. He must have truly loved Abraham!

The text stresses the fact that before Eliezer finished his prayer Rebekah came to the well. The purpose of this emphasis appears to be the author's desire to demonstrate how God answers prayer. This is exactly the same picture that we have when God spoke to Isaiah. He said,

"Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear." Isaiah 65:24

In Eliezer's situation God did as he had requested, and He did it instantly. That is the kind of God in which Eliezer believed.

The author also carefully identifies who this young woman at the well is. Notice how he describes her ancestry.

"She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, who was the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor." Genesis 24:15

This young woman completely fulfilled the family requirements as laid down by Abraham for his servant. She was Abraham's brother's grand-daughter and Abraham's grandniece. Note that the author specifically identifies the fact that she was the daughter of Bethuel who was the son of Nahor by his wife Milcah. If you look back to Genesis 22:20–24, the author identifies the fact that Nahor had children by his wife Milcah, but he also fathered children by his concubine Reumah. It was important to stress the fact that Rebekah came from the wife and not the concubine.

The author described Rebekah's physical appearance.

"The girl was very beautiful, a virgin; no man had ever lain with her." Genesis 24:16

This description may seem a bit unusual for us, but it would have been understood in that day. It was not strange for a young girl to be married to an old man. In such a situation, the girl would probably be widowed though still in her very early teens. The author is making it clear that this was not the case with Rebekah.

Family members each had their own particular tasks to perform regularly. It was common to relegate the task of drawing water to one of the younger girls, but one old enough to carry the water without too much effort.

The author describes the response of Rebekah in refreshing terms.

"Drink, my lord,' she said, and quickly lowered the jar to her hands to give him a drink." Genesis 24:18

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The way in which she addressed Eliezer was not wasted on him. He was a servant, but she addressed him as "lord." This was a courtesy he had probably never received before in his life. The information in this chapter leads one to believe that Rebekah came from a family of some means. Such families had several servants and would usually relegate the task of getting water to one of the servants. There were some wealthy families, however, who believed that their daughters must learn to do the work of a household despite their comfortable situation. It appears that Nahor was one of those. Though she came from a wealthy family, she served a servant with grace and courtesy. Her manner and response give one the impression that she was a willing worker. This was noteworthy.

The author was very carefully describing the kind of person Rebekah was while he told the events of the story. He says,

"After she had given him a drink, she said, 'I'll draw water for your camels too, until they have finished drinking.'" Genesis 24:19

This doesn't sound like much to us. It isn't much if you just turn the tap and let the water run. But when you carry the water some distance and carry enough to water ten camels and ten men, you have carried many gallons of water. Just think how much one camel can drink, let alone ten! Rebekah did it as though it were nothing. By this the author is telling us that she was a willing worker, never easing away from additional effort.

The author has more to tell us about Rebekah as he describes the rest of the story. He says,

"So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, ran back to the well to draw more water, and drew enough for all his camels." Genesis 24:20

Along with the information of the story, the author is telling us that Rebekah was a hard worker. She did not just get water for all these men and camels, she ran to do it. This would be considered an excellent quality in a wife for Isaac. This was an unusual quality for the daughter of a wealthy man. It must have made a good impression on Eliezer.

The author also included some information concerning their culture. He said,

"Without saying a word, the man watched her closely to learn whether or not the Lord had made his journey successful." Genesis 24:21

This is stated in quite matter-of-fact terms. The picture here is clear. There are ten men and ten camels standing around watching as one very young girl draws water for all of them. This would be considered in extremely poor taste in our culture, but not in Mesopotamia. Carrying water was some of the work women did. If a man did this, he would be laughed at. You may remember that in the story of the preparation for the Last Supper, Jesus said,

"Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him." Mark 14:13b

This sight was so unusual that Jesus used it as a way to identify directions to the place where the Passover was to be held.

Did you notice what the author said about Eliezer, in verse 21? In verse 14, he had asked God to make it so that the person whom he would ask for a drink, would give him

and the camels water and would be the person he had come to find. Now in verse 21, having experienced exactly what he had asked, the text says of him,

"Without saying a word, the man watched her closely to learn whether or not the Lord had made his journey successful." Genesis 24:21

It looks a bit as though having received from God exactly what he asked, Eliezer was still not convinced. That is not the case. It is one thing for a girl to offer a man a drink. It is quite another for her to volunteer to water all his thirsty animals as well. It is the evidence of an ambitious person. In that part of the world, ambition is absolutely essential. This is multiplied evidence that this indeed is the woman for whom he had come.

There is some question about the order of events in verse 22. We will deal with this question at the appropriate time. The servant observed the proper etiquette of the day. The author describes it in these terms,

"When the camels had finished drinking, the man took out a gold nose ring weighing a beka and two gold bracelets weighing ten shekels." Genesis 24:22

It was customary for a groom to offer his intended bride costly gifts. There was no prescribed gift for the groom to give to the bride, but it usually took the form of a nose ring and bracelets. We should note that several versions have "ear ring" instead of "nose ring." Our best Hebrew texts have "nose ring." Rings for the finger were not used as much at this early date. The nose ring was described as weighing a beka, which would be approximately one fifth of an ounce in our measurement of weights. The ring and two bracelets were gifts of great value, and it was clear that she had received gifts of unusual worth. The servant was careful to give these gifts to the bride and not to the father of the bride, which meant that the gift to the bride was an expression of kindness, not payment for her services, nor a down payment for her dowry.

Still there is one piece of information that Eliezer needed in order to be absolutely certain that she met all the criteria given him by Abraham. The author now tells of the way in which the servant gained this final piece of information. The author wrote,

"Then he asked, 'Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night?'" Genesis 24:23

Eliezer asked two quite different questions.

1. One had to do with her heritage.
2. The other had to do with their hospitality.

Abraham sent Eliezer to his family in Mesopotamia. Up until this point Eliezer had not discovered whether he had located those family members or not. It is possible that he learned this information from others on the way, but it is not clear in the text.

Ever since Rebekah offered to give his camels water, Eliezer had been acting as though he were confident that she was the right person. In this part of the text, he appears to give her the gifts from the groom even before he had discovered who she was. Now he asked if they could stay the night. He apparently had not discovered previously if she belonged to Abraham's family or not. We can account for this only by understanding that his faith was strong and he believed that God had heard his prayer and had acted on the basis of his faith.

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Whatever the reason, Eliezer finally asked about her family. He then asked if they could stay for the night. Normally, it was the custom to wait for the host to invite you to stay. However, Eliezer was the one to ask. Again, it could be that he was completely certain that he was in the right place. Whether he had asked or not, he certainly would have been invited to spend the night with them. This was the law of the desert.

Rebekah answered Eliezer's questions in the order they were asked. Notice the way she described her family background.

"I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son that Milcah bore to Nahor." Genesis 24:24

Rebekah accurately identified her lineage. She did not report it in the way that was acceptable in that culture. It was appropriate for a person, male or female, to identify their father first and their mother second if necessary. She identified her father properly, but she reported her grand parents in reverse order. This is understandable because the children of Milcah would want to emphasize the fact that they were children of the wife, Milcah, rather than the concubine, Reumah. This certainly is what she was emphasizing, rather than embarrassing her father as she appears to be doing here. This had great social and financial implications for the children of the wife. If a person was the son or daughter of the wife, then they were considered immediate family. They would figure in the inheritance and have a say in the direction of the family estate. If, on the other hand, they were a son or daughter of the concubine, then they were thought of as an appendage to the family, but definitely not part of the immediate family. This was the understanding out of which Sarah spoke so forcefully when she said that Ishmael would not inherit as a son in the family. There was a definite social structure in the family. It involved levels of respect and honor which were afforded to children of the wife, but denied to the children of the concubine. In a royal household, the sons of the wife would have their place in the line of ascension to the throne. This would not be true for the sons of the concubine. We will encounter this issue again within this chapter.

The second question that Eliezer asked Rebekah was also answered. She said,

"We have plenty of straw and fodder, as well as room for you to spend the night." Genesis 24:25

The fact that she could say, on the spot, that there was not only room for his animals, but food for them as well speaks well of the financial situation of the family. Their tents were spacious, but to be able to accommodate 10 extra people was no small task. On the other hand, we need to remember that they did not sleep as we do today. The space that we use for one bedroom would sleep seven to ten people in their tents. Rebekah's offer to have them stay the night also included providing food for them. To feed ten people was no small expenditure. The provision of hospitality was not only the law of the desert, but also the delight of this family. She did not have to go and ask if this would be permissible. It was clear that they could do it and wanted to do so.

Eliezer responded to her offer of hospitality in beautiful terms. This response tells you something about the character of the man. Notice what he did.

"Then the man bowed down and worshipped the Lord, saying, 'Praise be to the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness to my master. As for me, the Lord has led me on the journey to the house of my master's relatives.'" Genesis 24:26–27

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Eliezer responded to her invitation by praying to God. Notice the names of God that he used. In our text it speaks of "The Lord, the God of my master Abraham..." In the Hebrew the word "Lord" is "Jehovah". The Hebrew name for "God" is "Elohae". These people did not use the names for God casually. They used different names to convey different ideas about God. The use of the name "Jehovah" stresses the justice of God. Eliezer is mindful of the fact that God is responsible for the excellent way in which he has been able to carry out his oath to his master, Abraham. The use of the Divine name "el" stresses the limitless power of God. When he could have gone in a thousand wrong directions, God directed him throughout the thousand mile trip so that he came to the exact place where Abraham's family lived and answered his prayer to find the specific woman God had in mind for Isaac, and the great power of God was demonstrated in the fact that they had traveled this far without incident of harm or danger.

Eliezer gave praise to God, for his mercy extended to him on behalf of Abraham. To the servant it was clear that this was Abraham's God. In his prayer, Eliezer had lauded the kindness and faithfulness of God to Abraham, but Eliezer was a slave. People did not think that the gods were concerned about slaves, only about important people. Nevertheless, Eliezer believed in God and reflected a personal relationship with Jehovah, the God of his master. He attributed the success of his journey to the fact that Jehovah had guided him to the home of his master's family.

This prayer tells us a great deal about both Abraham and Eliezer. Abraham had to be an unusual man in order for his slaves to also believe in his God. Not only did Abraham faithfully serve God, but he did so in such a way that his slaves understood who God was and what He would do, even for them. In this prayer you can see the influence of Abraham upon the spiritual life of his slave. He saw Jehovah as being active in every experience of his life. This was also a testimony to the faith of Eliezer as well. It is one thing for him to practice the religious beliefs of his master when he is in the master's presence. It is quite another to practice these beliefs when the master can not see him.

The prayer of petition indicates that Eliezer believed that he could call upon God for help and expect an answer. The prayer of thanksgiving indicates that Eliezer was accustomed to giving thanks to God for all that He did for him and for his master, Abraham.

24:28–49 The Servant Tells Bethuel of His Mission

At this point, Rebekah went to tell the family about these events. Notice what the author wrote,

"The girl ran and told her mother's household about these things." Genesis 24:28

Rebekah ran because it was required of the host that they not submit their guests to unnecessary delays. They tried to be sensitive to the tiredness that all travelers experienced. She ran to her "mother's household", meaning her mother's tent. It does not say that she ran to tell her mother, for at least two reasons:

1. The mother did not take care of important events such as this. That was the father's responsibility.
2. It is possible that her mother was no longer living. There were occasions when gifts were given to the family, on behalf of the deceased mother, at the time of the marriage of a daughter. We will say more about this when we come to 24:53. Young

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boys below a certain age and all young girls stayed with the mother in her tent. All of Rebekah's activities centered around this tent. Whenever something happened, she would be expected to report such things to the mother's tent, but the report would go to her older brother in the absence of her mother. The mother's tent is where food would be prepared and these would be the people who would make sleeping arrangements for the guests. This, however, was all that could be done from the mother's tent, so far as guests were concerned.

Nevertheless, there were still other amenities that had to be extended. The author introduces these by identifying a brother who was also there.

"Now Rebekah had a brother named Laban, and he hurried out to the man at the spring. As soon as he had seen the nose ring, and the bracelets on his sister's arms, and had heard Rebekah tell what the man said to her, he went out to the man and found him standing by the camels near the spring. 'Come, you who are blessed by the Lord', he said. 'Why are you standing out here? I have prepared the house and a place for the camels.'" Genesis 24:29–31

This was a duty that only a man of the house could perform. Observe that he, too, shows haste to display hospitality to the strangers. Notice that he identified Eliezer as one blessed by the Lord. It is clear, elsewhere in Genesis, that Laban did not believe in the God of Abraham. One wonders, why did Laban speak of Eliezer as "you who are blessed by the Lord?" Truthfully, we do not know. It may have been in jest or sarcasm. It may have been an attempt to be generous toward what Laban considered the unfortunate worship by his uncle. The things that Laban had noticed reveal his interest. First, he saw the nose ring and the two bracelets. Then he heard what the man had said to Rebekah. Eliezer had told her two things:

1. He and his master worshipped Jehovah - he prayed before trying to find the right woman for his master's son.
2. He had come to find a wife for his master's son among the members of his master's family.

This was an important concern in any household. Finding a husband for his daughters was a great concern for any father. If he did not find a suitable husband, then the daughter would be his responsibility as long as he lived. Following his death, the daughter would be the responsibility of the eldest son who then took control of his father's affairs. We do not know for sure, but the fact that both Laban and his father, Bethuel, agreed to the marriage of Rebekah to Isaac suggests that he may well have been the eldest son of Bethuel and heir of the household.

In this instance, Laban acts as the host and goes to invite the strangers to share their hospitality. Notice what he said to Eliezer,

*"Why are you standing here? I have prepared the house and a place for the camels."
Genesis 24:31*

Laban knew why Eliezer was standing there. He stood there because that was all he could do. He was waiting courteously for an invitation to spend the night. Laban knew that. His question appears to us to be bordering on falsehood. It was not considered a falsehood by these people. It was part of their custom of showing hospitality. Laban makes it sound as though he is surprised that Eliezer waited to be invited. It is as though he ex-

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pected the servant to come to the tent without invitation. Eliezer knew better than to do such a thing. It would be in extremely poor taste. Pretending that he should have come without an invitation was just one way that they could appear to be more than hospitable to their guests.

Laban said that he had prepared the house. First, they did not live in houses, but in tents. I doubt if Laban did anything at all. He probably gave instructions for the women to arrange their stuff so that there would be room for several men to stay in the tent of Bethuel. Laban also said that arrangements had been made for the camels. This meant that they had an enclosure where the camels could be placed for the night. Without this, the animals might stray away and not be found for days.

The amenities being concluded, Eliezer and the other servants were allowed to go to the tent.

*"So the man went to the house, and the camels were unloaded. Straw and fodder were brought for the camels, and water for him and his men to wash their feet."
Genesis 24:32*

Hospitality was in effect when the guest was invited to receive it, when he had come into the tent and a family member or servant had washed the feet of their guest. The hospitality of Bethuel was now in effect.

During the stay of Eliezer and his companions, the whole household of Bethuel was at their disposal as though it were their own. They treated Eliezer, the servant, as if he were their relative, Abraham. This was because he represented Abraham to them. Help was given to unload the camels, which was not an unusual courtesy. The servants in Bethuel's household then washed the feet of the travelers. They were now being treated with the best hospitality Bethuel could provide. Now that this task was completed, they could eat together.

"Then food was set before him, but he said, 'I will not eat until I have told you what I have to say.'" Genesis 24:33

It was important to feed guests just as soon as possible after they arrived, and that for two reasons:

1. The guests had been traveling and probably had not eaten much if anything that day.
2. It was important for the head of the house to eat food with his guests to make sure that they were on friendly terms. The eating of food together was the way they indicated that they could trust each other; that nothing untoward was going to come to the house because of the guests.

As the text indicates, Abraham's servant was not as interested in this amenity as Laban was. Eliezer was determined to deal with his business before he ate a bite of Laban's food. There is a hint of urgency in Laban's words when he said, "then tell us." He wanted the purpose of his mission to be established just as soon as possible.

The way was now open for Eliezer to give the message he had been sent to report.

"I am Abraham's servant. The Lord has blessed my master abundantly, and he has become wealthy. He has given him sheep and cattle, silver and gold, menservants and maidservants, and camels and donkeys." Genesis 24:34–36

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Notice that Eliezer identified himself as Abraham's servant. The purposes of this identification may be numerous. However, it is a proper identification of who Eliezer is – a servant. It may also serve to inform the family that he, along with Abraham, are servants of Jehovah and as such might not be able to eat all the things that pagan family members are accustomed to eating. The listing of Abraham's holdings may sound a bit boastful, but it was not. First, what Eliezer said was true. Abraham was very wealthy. Again, we must remember that Abraham's family did not share his commitment to Jehovah. It would be important for them to realize that as a servant of Jehovah, Abraham was one of the wealthiest men in that part of the world. The negotiations for a wedding were both personal and financial. They would want to know what the family was like, how they lived and treated others. Especially in cases where the groom lived a great distance away, the family of the bride would want to make sure that they were placing their daughter in a situation which would be as financially stable as possible. They would want to know of the financial situation of the groom's family so that they could negotiate as good a gift from the groom's family as possible. It would be a bit like showing a potential business partner your financial statement before entering into such an arrangement. The negotiation of a wedding for the daughter was also a safety factor. A part of such negotiations would also be a mutual agreement not to harm each other since you would be dealing with grand children.

Note that the servant did not attribute any of this wealth to Abraham's skill. He early affirmed that this was an act of God. You may have noticed that God was mentioned by Eliezer repeatedly. He prayed to God before Rebekah came, he watched to see if God had made his journey successful; he gave God thanks when he discovered that Rebekah was of Abraham's family. Now he attributes Abraham's wealth to God also. We must remember that the members of Abraham's Mesopotamian family were heathen. They did not worship Jehovah as Abraham did. As we will see later in our study of Genesis, this is determined by the fact that Laban's daughter stole his idols when she left with Jacob. All of these references to Jehovah were excellent witnesses to His power, whether they were intended to be so or not.

Having established Abraham's financial situation, Eliezer proceeded to the business that had brought him all this distance. He said,

"My master's wife Sarah has borne him a son in her old age, and he has given him everything he owns. And my master made me swear an oath and said, 'You must not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live, but go to my father's family and to my own clan, and get a wife for my son.'"
Genesis 24:36–38

Eliezer mentioned Sarah because he was talking to her nephew. Abraham and Sarah were Laban's great-aunt and-uncle, half-sister and brother to his grandfather Nahor.

Did you ever wonder why Abraham was so determined that Eliezer would not take a wife for Isaac from among the Canaanites, but he was to go to Abraham's family to get the wife? There are several possibilities. People often say that Abraham sent his servant back to his family because he did not want his son to have a pagan wife. That does not answer the question at all. We know that Laban had idols just as the Canaanites had. Besides, when the wife came into Abraham's home the use of idols could easily be forbidden and it would never be a problem.

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Another possibility is that he wanted the daughter of his only son to have a good heritage. With his own family he could be sure of this. We know that this is still a practice among many Arab families today. During the years before Abraham and Sarah left Ur, she had not been able to bear children. During that time, the people of the community, in this instance family, probably made life difficult both for Abraham and for Sarah over this fact. Eliezer would want the family to know that their insults were unjustified. Indeed, this may have been one of the primary reasons Abraham wanted his servant to get a wife for Isaac from his own family. If this was the case, Abraham might have been acting out of several motives. He would want to let them know that they did not have the last word. It may also have been a great desire of Abraham to let them know that Jehovah had honored His promise to Abraham even though it was belated. The Eastern family members might have thought that God never honored that promise. Whatever else may be said of Abraham, he had a great desire to honor Jehovah and to demonstrate His power in the world.

Discovering that Abraham had become very wealthy and that he and Sarah did have a baby might be humbling for the family. They had humiliated Abraham and Sarah over her barrenness. Now the family has received a request that their daughter be the wife of the child of the one they humiliated as barren.

Ultimately we do not know the motive. These are viable options, however. Whatever the motive, Abraham was adamant – there would be no Canaanite wife for his son.

Eliezer continued with his review of what happened when Abraham sent him to find a wife for Isaac. He said,

"Then I asked my master, 'What if the woman will not come back with me?' He replied, 'The Lord, before whom I have walked, will send his angel with you and make your journey a success, so that you can get a wife for my son from my own clan and from my father's family. Then when you go to my clan, you will be released from my oath even if they refuse to give her to you - you will be released from my oath.'" Genesis 24:39–41

It is one thing for Eliezer to review the fact that he had taken an oath concerning the wife he would secure for Isaac. It is yet another to give every detail including the possibility that the woman would not go with him. What reason would he have for this presentation? There might be a number of facets to this situation. One possibility is that it is quite reasonable for Bethuel to want to attend the wedding of his daughter. He might be tempted to insist that Isaac come to marry his bride in Mesopotamia. The way Eliezer presented this information made it very clear that if that happened, he was released from his vow and the possibility of the marriage was ended. Thus it would be unusual for Bethuel to make the location of the wedding a threat to the negotiations. If this is the motive, it gives us an impression of just how strongly Abraham felt that his son was not to leave Canaan.

Eliezer continued,

"When I came to the spring today, I said, 'O Lord God of my master Abraham, if you will, please grant success to the journey on which I have come. See, I am standing beside this spring; if a maiden comes out to draw water and I say to her, 'Please let me drink a little water from your jar,' and if she says to me, 'Drink, and I'll draw water for your camels too,' let her be the one the Lord has chosen for my master's son.'" Genesis 24:42–44

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Eliezer has presented this in such a way that it is clear that his choice of Rebekah was not just a whim or random selection. He attributes the choice to Jehovah. He could not be certain that the family would be concerned about Jehovah's choosing their daughter because they did not worship Jehovah. Nevertheless, it would be clear to them that this was not just chance choice. The scenario that Eliezer described was followed precisely. Whether or not the family would recognize it, it was a way of honoring their daughter. Eliezer was saying that of all the eligible women God had chosen their daughter to be Isaac's wife. This was also a witness, to the relatives, of just how faithful both Abraham and his servant Eliezer were to God.

Eliezer, was surprised in at least two ways. First, he prayed and God answered his prayer in every detail. Secondly, God answered the prayer immediately. Notice what the author says,

"Before I finished praying in my heart, Rebekah came out, with her jar on her shoulder. She went down to the spring and drew water, and I said to her, 'Please give me a drink.' She quickly lowered her jar from her shoulder and said, 'Drink and I'll water your camels too.' So I drank, and she watered the camels also." Genesis 24:45,46

He wanted the family to understand that the quickness of the response was as miraculous as the answer itself. Many people would interpret an immediate answer to prayer in this way. Eliezer emphasizes the fact that he was still speaking in prayer when Rebekah came to draw water. He is dispelling the thought of coincidence. Everything that he requested happened immediately.

Eliezer continued with his rehearsal, before Bethuel and his son Laban, of the events of that day. He said,

"I asked her, 'Whose daughter are you?' She said, 'The daughter of Bethuel son of Nahor, whom Milcah bore to him.' Then I put a ring in her nose and the bracelets on her arms, and I bowed down and worshiped the Lord. I praised the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me on the right way to get the granddaughter of my master's brother for his son." Genesis 24:47-48

The nose ring and the bracelets were wedding gifts from the groom to the bride. You may have noticed a distinct change in the series of events recorded in this chapter. This will be dealt with in a chart which follows.

It is impressive to see how Eliezer, in the midst of his retelling of the series of events, witnesses to the pagan relatives of Abraham concerning the God of Abraham. He affirms that God was the one who lead him to find the woman for whom his master, Abraham, had sent him. This also impresses upon the family the fact that God had made this choice and not Eliezer or Abraham.

Eliezer responds to what God had done. First he reported that he bowed down and worshipped the Lord. To bow down is a sign of subservience. The people of that day would bow to greatness and power. Bowing down was an expression of respect and awe. The author also used the word "worshipped". This word, in Hebrew, means to "prostrate." This is a different idea completely from bowing. To prostrate oneself was to place yourself at the disposal of the one before whom you were prostrated. It is to signify one's willingness to be servant to such greatness. It is to consider oneself as nothing. It is what took

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place when a conquering general placed his foot upon the neck of the defeated leader of the conquered army.

In Hebrew the word translated "Lord" is Jehovah. It is a reference to the justice of God toward His people. Eliezer bowed down and prostrated himself before the God of justice and power whom Abraham served.

Eliezer also said that he "praised the Lord." This, too, is a reference to the Divine name of Jehovah. The word "praise" might better be translated "blessed". People shy away from the idea of blessing God because they think of a blessing as a gift, material or affirmative, to someone. What can a mere human being give to God? That is not the intent of the word. To "bless" God carries more the idea of affirming or acknowledging His greatness and goodness. It does not imply a gift of any kind. The author rightly said that Eliezer "blessed" the Lord. The servant, Eliezer, was affirming how wonderfully Jehovah had guided him to the right place and people. He was affirming how Jehovah had dealt with him in mercy and kindness.

Having reported the events and conversations of the day, Eliezer now comes to the time of decision. His message to Bethuel and Laban was courteous, but straightforward. He said,

"Now if you will show kindness and faithfulness to my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so I may know which way to turn." Genesis 24:49

Again, Eliezer displays his mastery of negotiation. He asked for a decision from the men, but he did so in such a way that they could only consider themselves kind and faithful to Abraham if they allowed Rebekah to become the wife of Isaac. It appears that this is exactly what Eliezer wanted them to feel. This was quite intentional because it was for this purpose that Eliezer was sent to Mesopotamia in the first place.

There is another picture of the negotiating skills of Eliezer in this verse. There are two more things that Eliezer wants from Bethuel and Laban.

1. He wants a straight answer, now.
2. He wants them to know that he is not in a bind for their answer. He still has other options open to him.

Eliezer accomplishes these goals by the way he put his statement. In the Hebrew, it might better be translated,

"If you are to do kindness and truth with my master, tell me; if not, tell me: so that I can turn to the right or to the left." Genesis 24:29

If, indeed, that was his desire, Eliezer accomplished it with great skill.

You may have noticed that there appear to be some differences between the events, as recorded in 24:12–27 and the rehearsal, as recorded in 24:34–49. The charts which follow are intended to give some insight into these possible differences.

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THE EVENT – 24:12-27	THE REHEARSAL - 24:34-49
1. Prayer: "O Lord, God of my master Abraham, give me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. See, I am standing beside this spring and the daughters of the towns people are coming out to draw water. May it be that when I say to a girl, please let down your jar that I may have a drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too'– let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master." 24:12–14	1. Prayer: "O Lord, God of my master Abraham, if you will, please grant success to the journey on which I have come. See I am standing beside this spring; if a maiden comes out to draw water and I say to her, 'Please let me drink a little water from your jar. and if she say to me, 'Drink, and I'll draw water for your camels too,' let her be the one the Lord has chosen for my master's son." 24:42–44

The statement of the events essentially repeated, in order, in the rehearsal.

2. "Before he had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder." 24: 15	2. "Before I finished praying in my heart, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder." 24:45
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Here again, the essence of the event is reflected in rehearsal.

3. "The servant hurried to meet her and said, 'Please give me a little water from your jar.'" 24:17	3. "I said to her, 'Please give me a drink'" 24:45
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The words are not exactly the same, but the essence is the same.

4. "Drink my Lord," she said and quickly lowered the jar to her hands and gave him a drink. After she had given him a drink she said, 'I'll draw water for your camels too, until they have finished drinking.' So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, ran back to the well to draw more water, and drew enough for his camels." 24:18–20	4. "She quickly lowered her jar from her shoulder and said, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too.' So I drank, and she watered the camels also." 24:46
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Here again, the event and the rehearsal are remarkably the same.

5. "When the camels had finished drinking, the man took out a gold nose ring weighing a beka and two gold bracelets weighing ten shekels. Then he asked, 'Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night?'" 24:22–23	5. "I asked her "whose daughter are you? She said, 'The daughter of Bethuel son of Nahor, whom Milcah bore to him'" Then I put the ring in her nose and the bracelets on her arms," 24:47
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Notice that there are changes in the sequence. In the event, Eliezer placed the ring in her nose and bracelets on her hands and then asked her name. In the rehearsal he asked her name and then placed the ring and bracelets. In the rehearsal he did not ask the question about whether or not there was room for them to stay the night.

This was a crucial situation. If Eliezer had reported, in the rehearsal, that he placed the ring first and then asked the name, then Bethuel and Laban would have understood that the

gifts were for her kindness in providing water for him and the camels. If he asked the name first and then gave the gifts, it would be understood that this was a gift from the groom to the bride. Eliezer knew this and clarified the problem in his rehearsal for Bethuel and Laban. This appears to be further evidence that he did not ask first because he was certain God had brought him to the right place.

6. She answered, 'I am the daughter of Bethuel the son that Milcah bare to Nahor.'" 24:24	6. "She said, 'The daughter of Bethuel son of Nahor, whom Milcah bore to him.'" 24:47
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In the event itself, Rebekah identified her mother before identifying her father. This was a breach of custom. It seems certain that she did this to remind the servant that she was the daughter of the wife and not the concubine. Eliezer, however, when he gave the rehearsal corrected the impropriety and listed the father first and then the mother. He was required to do this because it would be considered an affront to mention the wife before mentioning the husband. This was particularly true when speaking to the husband.

24:50-60 Rebekah Betrothed and Leaves For Canaan

This is a difficult paragraph for people from our culture. Our distress comes from the fact that it was the father, Bethuel, and the brother, Laban, who made the decision about whether or not Rebekah would become the bride of Isaac. We need to be reminded that in a large portion of the world this procedure is still practiced. Also, we should note that the ratio of their marriages that last appears to be substantially higher than in our own culture. Do not misunderstand, I would not have wanted my father to make that decision for me, nor would I have wanted to make that decision for my children.

Notice how the answer came,

"Laban and Bethuel answered, 'This is from the Lord; we can say nothing to you one way or the other. Here is Rebekah; take her and go and let her become the wife of your master's son, as the Lord has directed.'" Genesis 24:50-51

These two verses contain a surprise. It is not surprising that the two men agreed to let Rebekah become Isaac's bride. The surprise is that they ascribed this idea to Jehovah on two occasions in these two verses. We must remember that they did not believe in Jehovah, a deity they could neither see nor handle. They believed in idols of wood, metal and stone. Nevertheless, they ascribed the choice of Rebekah, as Isaac's wife, to Jehovah. The two men also made another confession. In the way they spoke, they were in effect saying that they were helpless in Jehovah's presence. We do not understand all the details of this announcement. There is no reason to believe that this represents a turning point in their belief system. We know for certain that they continued to believe in idols. In Genesis 31:19 Jacob's wife – Rachel – stole her father's household gods when they were about to leave town. It may have been that Laban and Bethuel were trying to be generous with their guest by not challenging his religious beliefs. Whatever it was, they ascribed the choice to Jehovah and talked as though it was so certain that they could not comment on the choice one way or the other. Strangely, however, they then proceeded to suggest a number of choices concerning this issue.

From the text, it appears that Bethuel and Laban answered immediately. That was probably not the case. They may, indeed, have known what they were going to say, but the

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customs of their time and culture would not allow this. It would be seen as an embarrassment to Rebekah if they were to answer immediately. They probably knew what their answer would be, but went through the motions of negotiations for appearances' sake. It would not be surprising if they indeed engaged in some negotiations concerning the dowry that was to be given. This was a usual procedure. This is precisely the kind of negotiations that Abraham was involved in when he negotiated for the burial ground for his wife Sarah.

The father and brother speak as though there was no consideration of the dowry which was to be paid for the bride of Isaac. They said, "Take her and go..." That, of course, was not the case and would have been a severe violation of local custom. Everyone knew that a gift would be given. In order to sound generous, the father and brother made gestures which sounded as though the dowry was not a consideration. Fortunately, Eliezer knew better and did not try to leave without observing this amenity.

Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, was deeply moved by their announcement. His reaction to the announcement tells you something about the man. Notice what he did,

"When Abraham's servant heard what they said, he bowed down to the "Ground before the Lord." Genesis 24:52

The decision was made and announced by Bethuel and Laban. When the servant heard the announcement, however, he did not bow before them, but bowed before the Lord. It was a way of affirming that this was something that God had done and not the members of the family. Eliezer saw God as being in control of his life and that of his master. He was so sure of this, that he worshipped God when the father and brother made the announcement. Bowing before the Lord was a way of affirming the great power and mercy of God toward him as Abraham's servant. We need to remember that Eliezer took considerable risk in doing this in the presence of people who believed in idols and not in Jehovah. Nevertheless, he affirmed his faith for what God had done.

The servant Eliezer knew exactly what he was supposed to do. Notice what he did when the negotiations were over.

"Then the servant brought out gold and silver jewelry and articles of clothing and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave costly gifts to her brother and to her mother." Genesis 24:53

It was the custom of the people of that day to give the young woman a gift when the negotiations were complete to indicate that she was to be the bride. The servant did exactly as custom dictated.

Observe that Eliezer also gave gifts to the mother and brother. There is considerable question as to the reason that the gifts were given to Laban and not to Bethuel. It is possible that the gifts were given to Laban because Bethuel may have died in the interim and Laban was now acting as head of the house. It is also possible that Laban accepted the gifts because Bethuel would not accept a gift from a slave and the gift had to be received. Ultimately we do not know the precise reason. There are several reasons why the son would accept the gift on behalf of the father.

The giving of a gift to the mother was a kindly gesture, but not required in that culture. It probably indicates something of the kindness and generosity of Abraham.

Notice that 25:43 states that Eliezer gave "costly gifts to her brother and to her mother." You may also remember that previously, in this study, we mentioned the possibility

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that the mother was deceased. It was common for parents, particularly the mothers, to die before their children were married. In some instances, customs surrounding the marriage of a daughter were carried out as if the mother was still present. We do not know for certain if that occurred here or not. It was only after the careful negotiations were complete that the servant, Eliezer, would accept the hospitality of Bethuel.

*"Then he and the men who were with Him ate and drank and spent the night there."
Genesis 24:54*

There is another possible reason for Eliezer's "work first attitude. In these times of festivities, alcohol was often profusely offered. His attitude made certain that he could complete the work without the possibility of trying to negotiate when under the influence of alcohol. It is also possible that he deferred because it would delay his return to Abraham just that much longer. In view of Abraham's advanced age, it is understandable that Eliezer wanted to return just as soon as possible.

Whatever the reason, the negotiations were complete and they ate together. This was important. When negotiations were brought to a satisfactory conclusion, the participants would always eat together. It was a way of showing that despite the hard bargaining, there was still harmony and if necessary, forgiveness.

There was a custom in that place and time which is not readily understood among us today. When one has received the hospitality of the host, it is necessary to request that you be sent away. This is what Eliezer was doing when he said,

"When they got up the next morning, He said, 'Send me on my way to my master.'" Genesis 24:54b

It is a way of asking permission to be on your way. To leave without this amenity could be very dangerous. It would cause the host to feel that his hospitality had not been appreciated, and violence would be the natural result.

The servant not only requested to be sent away, but clearly indicated the location to which he wanted to be sent. This was an important part of their custom.

It was not uncommon for a host, in such a situation, to delay sending his guest away. It was an attempt to show just how pleased he was to have this person as a guest. Judges 19 is an obvious illustration of this situation. In most instances the host and the guest both knew that when the words were over, the guest would leave, but the formalities had to be observed.

We have no way to know just how much time had elapsed since Eliezer first arrived at the well. We can be certain that there was more than what appears in the text. Naturally Abraham's servant wanted to be on his way to give the good news to Abraham and Isaac. At the same time, it is not surprising that the family would like to delay the departure for a while. Notice how the author expresses this situation.

"But her brother and her mother replied, 'Let the girl remain with us ten days or so; then you may go.'" Genesis 24:55

On the face of it, this would not seem like a great inconvenience to comply with the wishes of the mother and brother. The word that is used for days, however, can also mean months. If they are talking about letting Rebekah stay an additional 10 months, that is a completely different thing. She could not travel unescorted. In such a case, Eliezer must

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either stay with them for the ten months or travel nearly 1,000 miles back to where Abraham lived only to make the same trip a few months later. The request of the brother and mother was a serious inconvenience. This placed the servant on the spot. He did not want to appear inconsiderate, but he also did not want to be faced with such a long wait or the possibility of a second lengthy trip. The desire of the servant was in direct opposition to the desire of the mother and brother, Laban. In both instances, their feelings were very strong. At this point both the servant and Laban were in a very delicate situation so far as custom was concerned. The servant did not want to be thought of as ungrateful for their hospitality or the granting of his request of Rebekah as a wife for Isaac. On the other hand, Laban did not want to be thought of as an uncongenial host. This was very awkward for both.

Eliezer knew that he had to be on his way home, but he needed to be granted leave of his host in order to do that.

"But he said to them, 'Do not detain me, now that the Lord has granted success to my journey. Send me on my way so I may go to my master.'" Genesis 24:56

The servant decided to take a stand which he knew was contrary to the wishes of his host, but which was exactly what he felt he should do. This was a brilliant move by Eliezer. In this decision, he placed Laban in an impossible situation. Laban did not want to be an unkind host. At the same time, he had to consider the wishes of the family which were very obviously opposed to the decision of Eliezer.

Laban would lose whichever way he turned. He made an astute decision. Laban decided to let Rebekah make the choice.

"Then they said, 'Let's call the girl and ask her about it.' So they called Rebekah and asked her, 'Will you go with this man?' 'I will go,' she said." Genesis 24:57–58

By placing the decision on Rebekah, Laban avoided the alternatives of making his guest unhappy on the one hand or losing face by having to back down, on the other. The family did not get what they wanted, but Laban managed to get out of two difficult situations.

One needs to be clear about what Laban was asking his sister. He was not asking her if she wanted to become the bride of the son of Eliezer's master. That was a decision that Laban and his father, Bethuel, had already made and announced to Eliezer. Laban was asking Rebekah if she was willing to go with Eliezer now and forego the year long preparation for her marriage which was common.

In the end, Laban and his mother did exactly as Eliezer wanted them to do.

"So they sent their sister Rebekah on her way, along with her nurse and Abraham's servant and his men." Genesis 24:59

To "send away" involved much more than simply granting permission for someone to leave. In the East, if a person invites a traveler into his home to receive his hospitality, it was an event for the whole community. The next day when the traveler was "sent on his way," the whole community would turn out for the farewell. That was the case with Eliezer. The entire enclave was there to give the farewell. Notice how the text identifies the "sending away."

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"So they sent their sister Rebekah on her way..." Genesis 24:59a

First note that it was in the plural. It may mean that Laban and his mother sent her away. In all probability it means that the entire clan turned out for the farewell. This would be a large number of people as we will soon see.

Note also that it says that they sent Rebekah away with her nurse. That is true, but in this situation it would appear that there were other servants sent along who were not mentioned in the text. There is little doubt that this is true.

This text also says that they sent Rebekah away and then mentions that the nurse and Eliezer and his men were also with her. It does not specifically say that they sent Eliezer and his men away. One can not be certain, but in cases like this it often means that there was some discomfort and hurt feelings and this was a way to indicate just how unhappy the host was with his guest, while doing nothing overt for which the guest might take offense. I am inclined to believe that this is what happened.

There are many beautiful customs of the eastern peoples. The following is a picture of one of them.

"And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, 'Our sister, may you increase to thousands upon thousands; may your offspring possess the gates of their enemies.'" Genesis 24:60

The pronouncement of the blessing of marriage required the presence of "minyan" – ten native men who took part in the blessing. It was customary, among Jews, for worship in any form, not to be conducted without the presence of at least ten men. This picture gives you an indication of just how large a company was present for the send off when Rebekah left to go to become Isaac's wife.

Notice how they blessed Rebekah. Their blessing was in two parts:

1. May she have many children and grand children.
2. May this lineage have power over their enemies– ("possess the gates of their enemies.")

It should be noted that these are the things that God promised Abraham when he was willing to part with his "only son" simply because God had commanded it. It is doubtful if this good fortune was coincidental. This was as generous as one could ask in those times. These negotiations sound like a very brief ceremony. That is not true. It was very lengthy and probably took all day. For one thing, it required that the negotiating parties have a meal together which was a way of insuring that they were leaving in good relationship with each other. It was also a way of insuring that there were no unforgiven wrongs being held by either party. This meal was one of the most important parts of their farewell. Laban knew how to conduct such negotiations and he did it well.

To the well-wishing of the entire clan, Rebekah was about to take her leave. Think of this as a picture of all the relatives gathered to pronounce the blessing and wave good-bye. Rather than just being her immediate family, this was a gathering of literally hundreds of people.

24:61-67 The Marriage Of Isaac And Rebekah

Again "sending away" involved much more than merely saying it was alright for them to leave. This was a big event and everyone who knew about it would be present. Picture

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the crowds of people gathered at the home of Bethuel. The author summarizes the scene in these words.

"Then Rebekah and her maids got ready and mounted their camels and went back with the man. So the servant took Rebekah and left." Genesis 24:60

After the blessing, the caravan would be escorted out of the community by the large family and lead well on their way toward their destination.

I experienced something of this nature while visiting friends. They lived in a large city and the interstate maze was difficult for people who were not familiar with it.

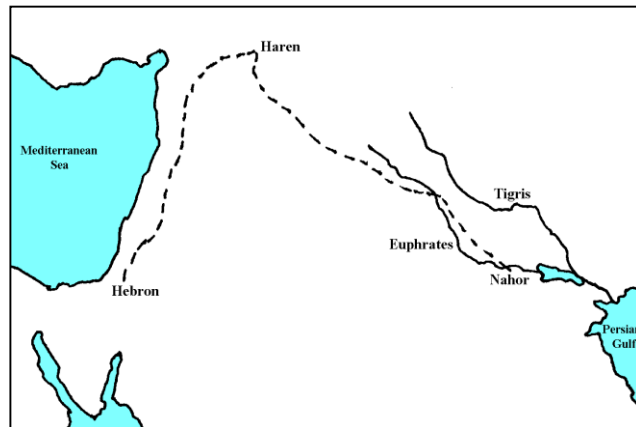
When we had said our good-byes, my host got into his car and lead me through the difficult series of turns and got me safely onto the part of the interstate where I needed to be. At that point, he took his leave and I went on my way home. This is the kind of thing a family would do when "sending away" their guest. It would be particularly true when their daughter was going away to her wedding.

Nothing is said of the long trip North around the Fertile Crescent and then South to the home of Abraham.

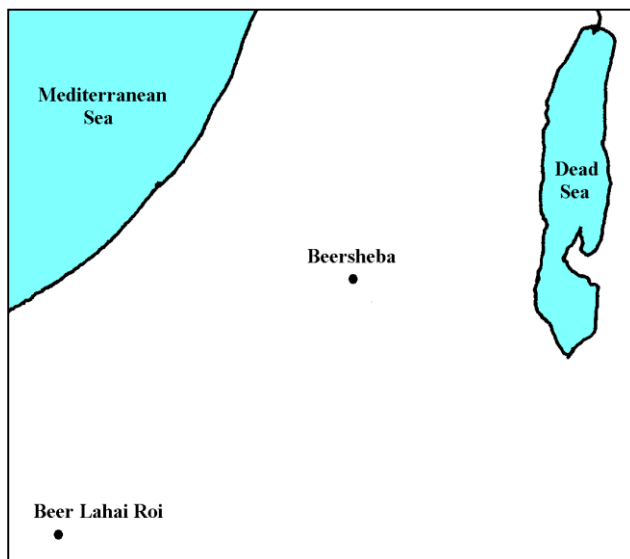
This thousand-mile trip probably took them several months. It is not passed over because it was of no import. It is omitted because the focus is on Rebekah and Isaac rather than on the details of the trip.

As we come to verse 62, the trip is ending and the caravan is approaching Abraham's place of residence. The author takes the time to explain the location of Isaac while this was happening.

"Now Isaac had come from Beer Lahai Roi, for he was living in the Negev." Genesis 24:62



In 21:34, the author stated that Abraham stayed in Beersheba for a long time. In 23:2



the author indicates that Sarah had died in Hebron. We now know that Isaac was not living in either of these places. The following map gives some indication of the proximity of these three locations. It was a trip of at least 65 miles and would require about four days if Isaac did not bring all his belongings and his animals.

It is not clear from the text just why Isaac had come home. He may have come home to live near or with his father, Abraham. It is just as possible that he had come home for his wedding at Abraham's home. This

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would be customary for these people. It is also possible that a servant was sent ahead to announce to all concerned that the wedding party was approaching. The truth concerning his reason for coming is uncertain at this point.

In describing the meeting of Isaac and Rebekah, the author tells us some interesting information about Isaac.

"He went out to the field one evening to meditate, and as he looked up, he saw camels approaching." Genesis 24:63

The origin of morning and evening meditations is obscured in history, but it did not originate with Isaac. It was of long standing and continued even until the time of our Lord. In Jesus' day, devout Jews were expected to spend time in the morning and in the evening meditating upon the law and in prayer.

As Isaac meditated, he became aware of the approach of the camels. Though this was probably a quiet place, he would have no trouble noticing their approach.

Rebekah was very much a young lady of her day. She knew how to present herself when in the presence of a man. Notice how the author describes her actions.

"Rebekah also looked up and saw Isaac. She got down from her camel and asked the servant, 'Who is that man in the field coming to meet us?' 'He is my master,' the servant answered, so she took her veil and covered herself." Genesis 24:64-65

It was not appropriate for a woman to meet her husband while seated on a camel. It would not be considered appropriately modest. It was also not fitting for a woman to meet a man with her face uncovered. For this reason, women in that part of the world, even today, wear a covering over their head. One might wonder why she could ride in the presence of ten servants of Abraham with her face uncovered, but could not allow her intended husband to see her face. She had never met nor seen Isaac, and must present herself and at the same time present proper modesty in his presence. The other men, however, were servants of her intended and thus considered part of the family.

You will remember that Eliezer had taken a solemn oath with Abraham that he would go to Abraham's family, in Mesopotamia and get a wife for Isaac. He was solemnly responsible to his master, Abraham, to carry out the oath and to report its successful completion to him. Because Abraham had made Isaac heir of all that he had, Eliezer treated Isaac in the same manner he would treat Abraham. Notice how the author describes the picture.

"Then the servant told Isaac all he had done." Genesis 24:66

Only after giving this report was the oath of Eliezer considered complete. He retold the entire story to Isaac so that he would know what God had done on his behalf. It was more than a report. He witnessed to the way he had asked Jehovah to show him which woman was to be the bride. It was evidence of the care and mercy of God.

In the closing verse of this chapter, the author tells of the wedding of Isaac and Rebekah as though it all took place in one evening. The author said it this way.

"Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. So she became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death." Genesis 24:67

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It sounds as though the wedding took place immediately. This was probably not the case. Isaac and the rest of the family did not know when Eliezer and Rebekah would arrive. It would not be possible for them to make the necessary preparations for an elaborate wedding in such a short time.

There was also the matter of lengthy ceremonies which, though beautiful, were very time consuming. What appeared to be a series of events on a single afternoon, in all probability took place over several days.

Isaac brought his bride into his mother's tent. This tells us several things. First, though mother had been dead for some months, her tent was still intact and still thought of as belonging to her. It gives some indication of the high regard in which Isaac held his mother. This is apparently the author's way of telling us that Rebekah was now taking the place of Sarah in Isaac's life. She was the recipient of his love. She was the source of his comfort in the absence of his mother. She took the place which had been reserved for his mother all through his life.

Now reflect on chapter 24, again. Notice how God has revealed Himself. There are several glimpses of God, in this chapter, but the picture of God as the faithful guide is preeminent. Think of how God guided them. Think of what a tribute to God's faithfulness is described as the promised son now comes to his wedding day and takes control in his father's household.

God presents Himself as the guide, the helper of the helpless, the one who exalts the downtrodden. God will be in our lives just as He was to Abraham and his servant.

Most of us can identify with Eliezer. We face problems and situations and do not know which way to turn. Eliezer turned to God and was not disappointed. God is changeless. He is as responsive to our need for direction as He was to Eliezer. If God is such an available source of help, what will you do in those situations when you do not know where to turn or which way to go?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 14

GENESIS 25:1–34

1. There are four paragraphs in this chapter. Read each one carefully and write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph in the chart below.

25:1–11	
25:12–18	
25:19–26	
25:27–34	

2. 25:1–11 tells of Isaac and Ishmael burying their father. Put yourself in the place of Isaac. What would you think and feel? Put yourself in the place of Ishmael. What would you think and feel? How do you suppose Ishmael happened to be present when Abraham died?
3. Read 25:1-4. Why would it be important to include this information in the text?
4. In 25:5, the author states that Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac. He goes on to say, "But while he was still living, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them away from his son Isaac to the land of the east." If Abraham gave everything he had to Isaac, where did he get the gifts he gave to the sons of the concubines? 25:6 begins with the words, "But while he was still living,..." What does this infer about the timing of the gift of everything to Isaac? Why would he want to give the concubine's sons gifts and send them away from Isaac?
5. What would cause the author to take care to report the content of 25:11 as he did?
6. Read 25:12-18 again. How does the content of this paragraph relate to the previous paragraph?
7. As you read this paragraph you get a distinct impression of what the people are like. What are they like? Describe them.
8. In 25:13–15, there is a list of the names of Ishmael's sons. What does this add to the message of the chapter?
9. In 25:18, the author said, "...And they lived in hostility toward all their brothers." Think about this statement. What does it mean?
10. What significance is there, if any, in the fact that Ishmael lived to be 137 years of age and Isaac (35:28) lived to be 180 years of age?
11. Scan chapter 25 specifically to discover information about Isaac's spiritual life. What did you learn?

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12. Read 25:21 carefully. What does this verse say about God? What does it say about prayer?
13. In 25:23, God is speaking to Rebekah. He said "Two nations are in your womb." Why did God not say two children?
14. Write God's message to Rebekah, in 25:23, in your own words. What is God saying about the twins?
15. In 25:27-34, the author carefully describes the contrast between Isaac and Esau. What does God say about each? What did you learn about the two men?
16. Compare the meaning of the name "Jacob" with the events of 25:27-34. What do you learn about Jacob? What do you learn about Esau?
17. Why would Jacob be so intent on possessing the birthright? What difference would that make?
18. What is a birthright? What does it mean to the owner?
19. Put yourself in the place of Esau in this paragraph:
What would you have felt? What would have been your attitude toward the birthright? Why? In what way did Esau, in 25:34, "despise his birthright"?
20. What pictures of God do you see in chapter 25?
21. Record the ways in which the understandings of this passage will have a changing effect on your life?

LESSON 14: GENESIS 25:1 – 34

THE DEATH OF ABRAHAM

25:1-11 Abraham Takes A Second Wife

The scene shifts abruptly as we begin chapter 25. In chapter 24, the text deals with the marriage of Isaac. In 25:1, we immediately begin dealing with a picture from the life of Abraham. This is an effort to bring closure to the picture of the life of Abraham, but he lived several years after the marriage of Isaac. In 23:1, at the death of Sarah, Abraham was 137 years of age. In 25:7, Abraham was 175 when he died. 38 years elapsed between the death of Sarah and the death of Abraham. This passage sheds some light on those years.

Most people think it was a miraculous thing that Abraham could father a child at the age of 100 and his wife at 90. There is far more in this passage.

"Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah." Genesis 25:1,2

Why is it that we are astonished at Abraham becoming a father at age 100, but do not go on to show even greater surprise that he became the father of six more sons, and probably some daughters as well, when he was at least 137 years of age? This is precisely what happened.

There is much speculation concerning the identity of Keturah. There are some scholars who believe that Keturah is a different name for Hagar. They point out that verse one might better be translated "Abraham took again a wife". The word "again", when used in Isaiah 8:5, suggested the resumption of something that had been in existence before. If this is true, then the author may be referring to Abraham taking Hagar as his wife again. When did Abraham take this wife? The textual announcement comes in the narrative after the death of Sarah. But in 25:1 it does not say that Abraham took a wife after the death of Sarah.

Still other scholars believe that Abraham's second wife was a Canaanitish woman. It would be interesting if Keturah was a Canaanite since Abraham was so adamant that his son not be married to a Canaanite. Whether Abraham took this wife prior to the death of Sarah or afterwards, the astounding thing is that she bore him six more sons.

The author goes on to identify some of the sons born to Keturah's sons. He wrote,

"Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan; The descendants of Dedan were the Asshurites, the Letushites and the Leummites. The sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoah, Abida and Eldaah. All these were descendants of Keturah." Genesis 25:3,4

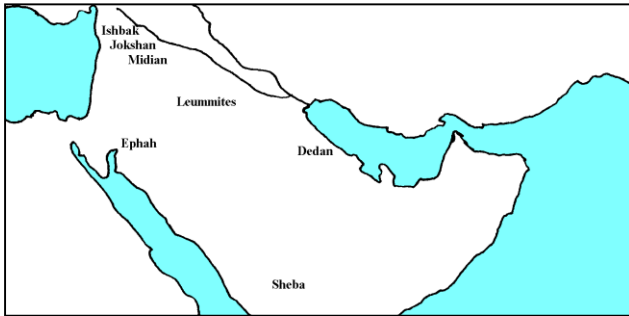
Of the twelve men mentioned here, only seven can be traced. It is interesting that all seven settled to the East of where Abraham lived. They all lived in one section or another of Arabia. This will be important information at a later time.

At least this information is available to us:

1. Jokshan - His family lived in Arabia
2. Midian - Lived in Northern Arabia. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, may have been one of this clan.

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3. Ishbak - His family lived in Northern Arabia
4. Sheba - Lived in Southern Arabia
5. Dedan - probably intermarried with the Cushites and settled on the Persian Gulf
6. Leummites- Settled in Central Arabia
7. Ephah - His family became a desert tribe and settled on the East Coast, the Gulf of Elan.



Notice that the text mentions that "these were the descendants of Keturah." First, Ishmael is not included in this list. This is one consideration when deciding whether or not Keturah and Hagar are the same person. In our study of chapter 16, we mentioned the fact that Hagar was given to Abraham, by Sarah, as a wife. It

was possible for a man to have more than one wife and a number of concubines. There were two designations which we might call "wives" or "secondary wives" that were recognized in that day. One form came with a written agreement concerning a wedding gift and dowry. The other form held a special place in the family, but had no written contract concerning wedding gift and dowry. One must keep in mind that if this person was Hagar, the fact that Ishmael was born to her while she held the position of "wife", and if these six sons were possibly born under a different arrangement of "wife", this could account for the apparent discrepancy. Normally, a man was spoken of as a son of his father, not his mother. This, however, was not always the case when you are dealing with a situation where there are at least two wives or a wife and a concubine. Though the text, either in 16:3 or 25:1, does not speak clearly to the issue, I believe that Hagar was originally the "wife" without a written agreement concerning a dowry and gift. If Hagar and Keturah are the same person, then Abraham simply took Hagar back into the arrangement that they had when she bore him Ishmael.

It was clear to Abraham that he did not have long to live. It was also clear that there would be difficulties between his son Isaac and the sons of the "concubines." He made arrangements in an attempt to offset this possibility.

"Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac. But while he was still living, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them away from his son Isaac to the land of the East." Genesis 25:5-6

In 25:5 it is possible for one to assume that there might be a contradiction in the text. First the author said that Abraham gave everything he owned to Isaac. Then he wrote that Abraham gave gifts to the sons of his concubines. It would be appropriate to ask the question: if Abraham gave everything he owned to Isaac, then where did he get the gifts to give to the sons of his concubines and/or the sons of Keturah? There are a number of possible answers. It should be assumed, I believe, that Isaac received his inheritance some time before Abraham died. This would be to forestall the possibility of a fight over the estate. Abraham apparently lived a number of years after giving his estate to Isaac. It is possible that he took the gifts for the sons of his concubines from the estate he collected following

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the death of Sarah and during the time when Keturah was his wife. This must be conjecture. The text gives no clear-cut answer.

You will note that these verses end with the statement that Abraham sent the sons of his concubines "to the land of the east." It is interesting that the six sons of Keturah that we can locate, all lived to the east of where Abraham lived. All six lived in one part of Arabia or another. This is part of the evidence that convinced some scholars that Keturah was really Hagar returned to her place as concubine without contract. The text clearly states that Keturah was Abraham's wife, but there was more than one category called "wife." There was the wife of contract, which in this instance was Sarah. Hagar was also given the position of "wife", but her place was not exactly the same as that of Sarah.

Verses seven through eleven deal with the death and burial of Abraham. In the simple statement of the closure of Abraham's life, the author gives us a lot of information.

"Altogether, Abraham lived a hundred and seventy-five years." Genesis 25:7

In 16:16 we are told that Abraham was 86 when Ishmael was born. That means that Ishmael was 89 when Abraham died. It is safe to assume that Abraham had seen his grandchildren and perhaps great-grandchildren born to Ishmael. 23:1 tells us that Sarah died at age 127. That means Abraham was 137 when she died. He lived 48 years following her death. Verse 26 of this chapter indicates that Isaac was 60 years of age when Rebekah gave birth to the twins - Jacob and Esau. This means that Abraham saw his two grandsons grow to manhood before his death. The twins were 15 years of age when Abraham died.

The author's announcement of the death of Abraham was characteristic of such a description in that time.

"Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people." Genesis 25:8

The author wrote of the advanced age of Abraham in three ways in this sentence.

1. He "died at a good old age."
2. He was an "old man "
3. He was "full of years."

Hebrew people stressed an idea by repetition. The more ways something could be said, the more skillful the writer and the greater the emphasis upon the single, simple message.

The author spoke of Abraham being "gathered to his people." This does not mean that he was transported to the East where his family lived. This was a cultural description. Twice in this chapter and many times throughout the Old Testament, this phrase was used to describe the burial of a person. In 50:25, which is discussed in volume II, Joseph gave instructions to the "sons of Israel." He said,

"And Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath and said, 'God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place.'" Genesis 50:25

Jewish burial practices were different from ours. We embalm the dead, as the Egyptians did; the Jews did not. When a person died, the family placed him/her on a slab of stone within a tomb. The area under the slab had been hollowed out as a vault. The dead person was placed on the slab. When the decomposition process was complete, only the bones would be left. These were deposited in the vault beneath the slab. When the next member of the family died the process was repeated. Eventually their bones were placed in

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the vault with those of the former family member who had died. They thought of this as mingling with their ancestors. Joseph demanded that his family take the oath so that he could be sure that his bones would be taken back to the land of promise to be "gathered to his people".

Verse nine comes with a certain degree of shock to most people.

"His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite, the field Abraham had bought from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried with his wife Sarah." Genesis 25:9–10

It should be noticed that Isaac is mentioned here before Ishmael. If Ishmael was considered the firstborn, then his name would always be mentioned first. That is obviously not the case.

Even when Isaac was a small boy, there was trouble between Ishmael and Isaac as there was also between their mothers, Sarah and Hagar. Now, decades later, the two men perhaps do the only thing that they ever did together; they buried their father. Put yourself into the place of each son. Think of yourself as Isaac. Here is his half-brother, a man who had caused no end of trouble for you as an impressionable young boy. The source of trouble inevitably was whether or not he was the eldest son. Now he has come to help bury your father. How would you feel?

Now think of yourself as Ishmael. You know you were born first. Yet, because your mother was a slave given as a wife and not the man's wife with contract, you are denied the birthright which every boy coveted. Isaac's mother made trouble for you and perhaps he did as well. Just how would you feel as the two of you worked together to bury your father?

We do not know precisely where Ishmael lived, though we know that he had lived not too far from this area many years before. He was accustomed to the desert. One has to ask, just how did he know to be back when Abraham died? Was Keturah really Hagar and thus there was contact between the two families? We need to remember that things were not the same as they are now. Today, if a parent dies, the family can be called and everyone arrive in time for the funeral even if some may be in different countries. That was not the case in Abraham's time. The Egyptians embalmed their dead, but the Jews did not. People were buried just as soon as they died. That being the case, was Ishmael informed that his father was failing and he hurried to the place where Abraham lived? Did Ishmael just happen to be in the area? It is possible that he was called because Abraham was failing. Even though there had been a great deal of difficulty between Sarah and Hagar over Ishmael, Abraham did not share those feelings. He had a special place in his heart for both Hagar and Ishmael.

It is also possible that Ishmael happened to be going through the area, but less likely. Again, we simply can not be sure.

Abraham was buried with his wife Sarah. There is no mention of where Hagar was buried. It is clear, however, that she was not buried with Abraham as Sarah was. This is just one more piece of evidence that Hagar did not have the same place in the family that Sarah had. By the same token, the text does not tell us where Keturah was buried. It is certain, however, that she was not buried with Abraham either, as Sarah was. God gave Abraham the entire land of Canaan as his inheritance. Nevertheless, Abraham had to buy a piece of property in Canaan in order to have a burial place for himself and his wife, Sarah.

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He bought the property because he was absolutely certain that this would be the land of his people some day, as God had declared.

Even within this paragraph, the spotlight shifts from Abraham to Isaac.

"After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac, who then lived near Beer Lahai Roi." Genesis 25:11

There was good reason to report that God blessed Isaac following the death of Abraham. During the lifetime of Abraham it could be said that God blessed Isaac because of Abraham. This is the first time it is very clear that God extends His blessing to Isaac on his own behalf. God had promised that through Isaac all the nations of the world would be blessed. Now God extends that blessing to Isaac on his own account.

All our best translations of verse 11 indicate that Isaac lived "near" or "by" Beer Lahai Roi. There is good reason for this. Beer Lahai Roi was not a city. Had it been, the text would have stated that Isaac settled in Beer Lahai Roi. The place called Beer Lahai Roi was a well rather than a city. Isaac lived in the vicinity of that well. That is the reason for the designation in the text.

25:12-18 The Death Of Ishmael

Abruptly, the focus turns away from Isaac and toward his half brother, Ishmael.

"This is the account of Abraham's son Ishmael, whom Sarah's maidservant, Hagar the Egyptian, bore to Abraham." Genesis 25:12

The text emphasizes a number of things about Ishmael's heritage. First, he is definitely the son of Abraham. He is not Sarah's son. He is the son of Hagar, an Egyptian. Even at this time there was little love lost between the people of Abraham's family and the Egyptians. You have two forms of hostility within the family. There was the national animosity which existed between the Egyptians, the people of the South, and the people of Abraham's clan. There was also the family animosity because of the rejection of Hagar and Ishmael by Sarah. These tensions are very apparent in this description.

The author identifies the lineage of Ishmael.

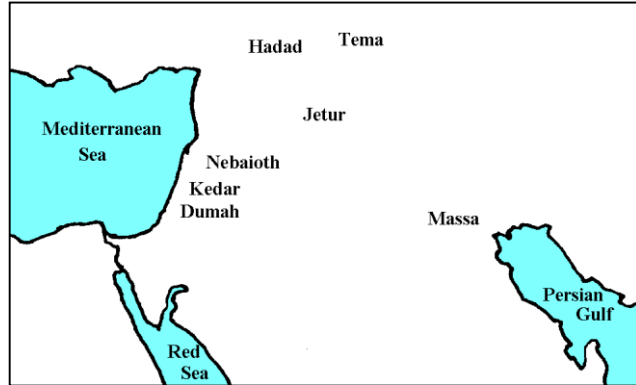
"These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, listed in the order of their birth: Nebaioth the firstborn of Ishmael, Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish and Kedemah." Genesis 25:13-15

These men became chiefs or heads of their tribes. Our information concerning them is sketchy. We know the general location in which seven of the twelve sons settled. The map which follows should be helpful in locating at least the seven.

1. Nebaioth - Head of an Arabian pastoral tribe.
2. Kedar - (mighty) Nomadic tribe that traveled as far as the Gulf of Elan
3. Adbeel - Little known
4. Mibsam - Little known
5. Mishma - (Hearing) little known
6. Dumah (Silence) Father of an Arabian tribe
7. Massa - (Burden) Probably lived in Eastern Arabia near Babylon
8. Hadad - (Sharp) Little known

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9. Tema – Settled in an area in Northern Arabia between Damascus and Mecca
10. Jetur - He lived on the eastern side of the Northern Jordan, in mountains around Damascus
11. Naphish - Little known
12. Kedemah- (Eastward) Head of Arab tribe named after him.
13. The Persian Gulf
14. The Red Sea
15. The Mediterranean Sea



The author, as is commonly done, summarizes the list and emphasizes the information by restatement.

"These were the sons of Ishmael, and these are the names of the twelve tribal rulers according to their settlements and camps." Genesis 25:16

The author is saying that these men are not merely sons of Ishmael, but they became heads of Arab tribes in areas that were named after them.

In verses 17 and 18, the author summarizes the life of Ishmael.

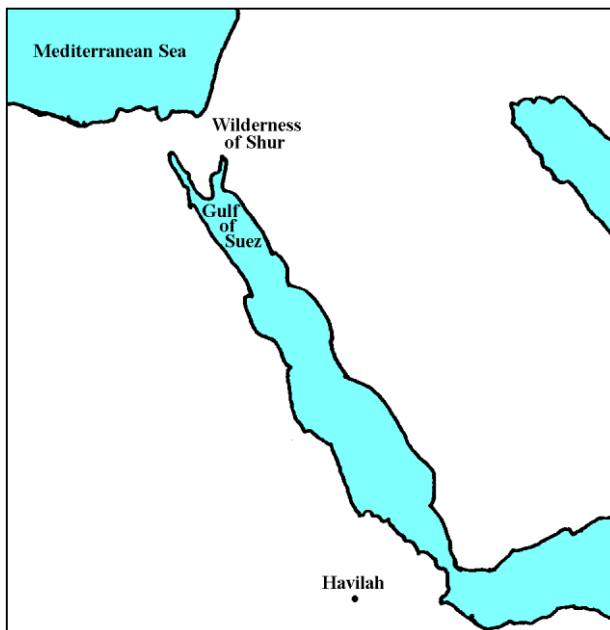
"Altogether, Ishmael lived a hundred and thirty–seven years. He breathed his last and died, and he was gathered to his people. His descendants settled in the area from Havilah to Shur, near the border of Egypt, as you go toward Asshur. And they lived in hostility toward all their brothers." Genesis 25:17–18

According to 16:16, Abraham was 86 years of age when Ishmael was born. This means that Ishmael was 89 years of age when Abraham died. If Ishmael lived to be 137 years of age, then he lived some 48 years after Abraham died. This suggests that he lived to see not only his children, but his grand children grow to maturity and probably lived to see some of his great-grandchildren as well.

Notice the text describes his burial as it did that of Abraham. "He was gathered unto his people." The author speaks of death and burial as a state which people shared with their ancestors. It is as though he had gone to join his ancestors.

If you look at the map which follows, you will note that the distance from the Wilderness of Shur to Havilah is at least 1500 miles. This nomadic people probably crisscrossed this entire route covering a path at least 50 miles wide for the entire 1,500 miles.

Verse 18 ends with a terse statement



that could go unnoticed.

"... And they lived in hostility toward all their brothers." Genesis 25:18b

The way this sentence is worded in the Hebrew sounds as though this man, who lived peacefully during the lifetime of his father Abraham, became violent and intruded upon his family members who held property near him. This is not surprising since the character of his life is described in 26:12.

"And he shall be like a wild ass among men; his hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell over against all his brethren." Genesis 16:12

This certainly fits what actually happened in Scripture as well as events historically.

25:19-26 **Jacob And Esau Born To Isaac**

In this paragraph, the author is laying the groundwork for the life of Isaac. This abbreviated account moves quickly to the marriage of Isaac.

"This is the account of Abraham's son Isaac. Abraham became the father of Isaac, and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram and sister of Laban the Aramean." Genesis 25:19-20

Again, notice that Rebekah is identified as the daughter of her father Bethuel. At this time, Isaac's father, Abraham, was 140 years of age. You will note the careful identification of the family of Rebekah.

The review quickly moves to the problem they faced.

"Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was barren." Genesis 25:21a

There were many parallel situations between the life of Abraham and the life of his son Isaac. Abraham had a promise from God that He would make his seed like the sand of the sea shore. The problem, however, was that his wife, Sarah, was barren. God repeated the promise again and again. God specifically told Abraham that the promise was to be realized through Isaac. Like Sarah, Rebekah was barren. Now Isaac has the same promise that Abraham had –his wife Rebekah was barren.

Isaac prayed to Jehovah and pleaded with Him on behalf of his barren wife. It does not show up in the English translations, but the Hebrew text reads as though both Isaac and Rebekah were pleading with God on behalf of this need. This is the way it is approached.

"Isaac entreated the Lord opposite (facing) his wife, because she was barren." Genesis 25:21

The idea of praying "facing" a person or thing was significant to the Jews. The Jews did not pray facing the East because it was required. They prayed facing Jerusalem because they were praying about Jerusalem. The experience of Daniel was a good example.

*"Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room **where the windows opened toward Jerusalem**. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God..." Daniel 6:10*

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Whether Isaac prayed or both Isaac and Rebekah prayed, the message is the same – "God, restore my barren wife".

Notice the sequence of the author's report.

"Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was barren. The Lord answered his prayer and his wife Rebekah became pregnant." Genesis 25:21

The way this is written makes it clear that it was Isaac's wife, Rebekah, who became pregnant and not a concubine on her behalf. This verse is stated as a cause– effect relationship. He prayed. God answered. Rebekah became pregnant. Prayer was the initiating cause of the answer. The author wanted it to be understood that when people pray, God hears and answers.

There is a bit of irony in the way God answered. The author writes it so carefully that it could be easily missed.

"The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, 'Why is this happening to me?' So she went to inquire of the Lord." Genesis 25:22

Isaac and Rebekah were praying that she would conceive and bear a child. God heard the prayer and answered. She not only conceived one child, but two. Here again is another picture of what God is like. God answers in abundance. He gives us all that we need and more.

Rebekah went to inquire of the Lord concerning the problem with her pregnancy. We can not speak with certainty of these matters, because the text is silent concerning them.

God's answer to Rebekah had to be a great surprise.

"The Lord said to her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; One people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger." Genesis 25:23

She would have been grateful if God would have enabled her to become pregnant. God not only did the miraculous, He also went beyond their request and she conceived twins. It is interesting that in 25:21 the author indicates that God answered "his prayer." This text, however, says that Isaac prayed, but that God answered Rebekah. There could be a number of reasons for this fact. Certainly, she would be the one most intimately affected by this answer to prayer.

Aside from the announcement that she was carrying twins, there is another shocking announcement. God indicated that there were two nations ("goim" the Hebrew word commonly used to describe Gentiles) in her womb. God did not say two babies, but two nations. He dealt with what they would become, and these two nations were to be very different. There is a prophetic word here.

While still in the womb, these two babies are separated from each other. The basis of their separation is in the characteristics of the children. One will follow Jehovah, the other will not. This is a fundamental separation and it affects their relationships in every other area. They were very strong, but one stronger than the other. These two nations would not fit the usual mold. The older child should be the one in control when the father is no longer able to carry on the family business. Despite local custom, in this case the younger would be the one in control and the older child would serve the younger. Though these are still

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babies, they will eventually become nations and will behave then as they do even now in the womb. Their prenatal activities were indicative of what their lives will be like.

The author continues with the story,

*"When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb."
Genesis 25:24*

It was not a surprise to Rebekah, for God had told her that there were two nations struggling within her womb. It was apparently a surprise to others.

The author describes the arrival of each child.

"The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau." Genesis 25:25

The use of the word "red" could refer to the color of the hair. It could also refer to the redness of the skin.

The next statement, in this sentence, is a bit confusing because of the word "hairy". It is always used, in Scripture, to speak of a human, not an animal situation. It is possible that the author intended to convey the idea that he was more masculine in appearance. Whatever the intent, it was the cause for naming the child Esau. The word "Esau" in general terms means "rough", the opposite of "smooth" or "gentle to the touch". It seems to be a description of the appearance of the child rather than the parents' hope for his future.

The author then turns his attention to the birth of the second child.

"After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them." Genesis 25:26

Apparently, the Jews felt that events or situations which occurred at or before birth had a significant impact on the character of the child. The fact that the second child was born holding on to the foot of his older brother caused the parents to name the child "Jacob". "Jacob" means "supplanter". It came to have the meaning of "heel grabber" because of this situation at the birth of the twins. It is noteworthy that this same attribute characterized the major portion of Jacob's life until his encounter with God at Bethel.

The author reminds us that Jacob was 60 years old when the twins were born. This means that their grandfather Abraham was 160 years old at the time of their birth.

25:27–34 Esau Sells Birthright

As we said earlier, Genesis is not only spiritual history, it is selective secular history. Notice how the author deals with the early life of the two boys.

"The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents." Genesis 25:27

In one brief sentence, the entire childhood and early lives of Jacob and Esau were summarized. No details are given; no incidents reported. Their childhood was not important in what the author was trying to convey.

There is also a picture of the great contrast between the two boys in this sentence. Esau became a skillful hunter. Jacob probably never hunted and did not enjoy doing it. Esau is

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portrayed as a rough, self sufficient, strong person. Jacob, on the other hand, is portrayed as a weak, secluded and dependant individual.

This was not the extent of their differences. The author gives us a glimpse into the inner-workings of the family.

*"Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob."
Genesis 25:28*

This sentence gives us a glimpse into the family life of Jacob and Esau. First, it was motivated by selfishness. Isaac liked wild game, and used his formative influences upon Esau to satisfy that desire. Later information will demonstrate the same picture of Rebekah in relationship to Jacob.

There was division between the parents over their relationship to the boys. This had to be most unfortunate, and the sentence tells us something of the effect of this rupture in family relationships. It encouraged Esau to become the macho type, father's kind of boy, It also encouraged Jacob to be a mommy's boy. The text portrays Jacob as a passive, less than masculine type of individual.

It is possible that Rebekah favored Jacob because of the prophecy concerning his superiority and Isaac favored Esau because he was the first-born and therefore the heir. I suspect that these are less likely than the reasons previously mentioned.

In this kind of setting, both boys grew up with a lopsided self awareness. The balance of the story grows out of the foundation laid out in these verses.

The author, having sufficiently described the individuals, resumes the story.

"Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. He said to Jacob, 'Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished! (that is why he was also called Edom.)'" Genesis 25:29-30

The picture of both sons, in this episode, is true to the image established in the previous paragraph of the text. Jacob was cooking, which usually was work assigned to the women. Esau came in from the open country. Shepherding and hunting were the occupations of men.

This lentil stew was understood to be the mourner's meal. Jacob prepared the meal for his father as was the custom of that day. Jacob may well have been involved in the required time and activities of mourning the death of his father. Esau, on the other hand, was off following his usual activities in the desert. The mourning did not appear to be any of his concern at the time.

There would be nothing wrong with Esau asking for something to eat. On this occasion, however, the mourner's meal would probably be prepared for the time of Isaac's mourning over his father and the twins' grandfather Abraham.

The parenthesis is included to explain why Esau was given his name. The name "Edom" means red or ruddy. It is a way of saying that there were two reasons for the two names given to Isaac's first son, Esau. The name "Esau" was given because of his reddish appearance at the time of his birth. The name "Edom" was later maintained because he liked the reddish mourners' lentil stew. This name was later used to identify the area in Southeastern Palestine where Esau's descendants lived.

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This whole story sounds quite instantaneous. That may not have been the case. Though the text does not so stipulate, it is highly possible that Jacob had been planning his attempt to gain the birthright for some time. Notice his response.

"Jacob replied, 'First sell me your birthright. '" Genesis 25:31

Whatever else may have been his motive, it is clear that Jacob had his brother in a tight situation. Esau is starved and Jacob will not give him any food unless he agrees to give his birthright to his younger brother. This birthright certainly must have been a source of tension across the years because the oldest son would receive a double portion of the estate when in effect he was only a minute or two older than his brother Jacob.

There is great meaning in the idea of a birthright. For whatever reason, we are acutely aware of the fact that the first-born received a double portion of the estate. Because of this we often then think of it as two-thirds, which is not totally accurate. That would be the case if there are only two sons in the family. In the case of a family with eight sons, however, the first born would receive two-eighths of the estate and the other seven would divide up the remaining six-eighths.

Being the firstborn of the family provided a man with a special spiritual relationship. First, being the first-born was to be a reminder of the great gift of God when He spared the first born of Israel during the plagues in Egypt, a living reminder of what God had done centuries before on behalf of His people, Israel. Secondly, The firstborn was to be sanctified, set apart for God. In a very special way the firstborn belonged to God. That was a unique privilege. In Unger's Bible Dictionary, the author speaks in these terms,

"The firstborn was the priest of the whole family."

Being the priest of the family was not so much an honor as it was a privileged responsibility. He was responsible for the spiritual life of his family, and he would urge them to keep their obligation before God.

The firstborn was the head of the family. He would be responsible to provide for his mother and the members of his family who could not care for themselves, including his unmarried sisters. At the same time he held authority over all the members of the family, as his father had held before him.

Jacob demanded that Esau relinquish to him all of these privileges and responsibilities. This was a phenomenal loss to sustain.

The pottage was usually assumed to be the price Jacob paid for the birthright. That is not necessarily true. Notice how the text is put.

"And Jacob said, 'Sell me first thy birthright. '" Genesis 25:31

Jacob did not say he would exchange the food for the birthright. He said, sell me the birthright first and then I will give you some food. Jacob, the passive Mommy's boy, suddenly shows some signs of strength he had not shown before.

Esau was confronted with a dilemma which he probably had not faced before. He was certainly used to getting his own way. He was the oldest, and this required respect. He was stronger and this always commanded respect from the rest of the family. Put the two together and you have an even stronger position for getting your own way in the family.

¹ Merrill F. Unger, Unger's Bible Dictionary, Chicago, Moody Press, 1957, P.367

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Esau, however, did not handle this situation as though he were accustomed to handling power and position—threatening decisions on behalf of the family. He may have been at the point of physical and mental exhaustion.

"Look, I am about to die,' Esau said, 'what good is the birthright to me.'" Genesis 25:32

Esau was actually saying that his birthright didn't mean a thing if he died of hunger and in giving up his birthright he forfeited the privileged position, the priestly function and the representative relationship with God all together. Esau's failure was that he viewed the birthright as secondary in importance. This meant that he was casting aspersions on the quality of God's presence and relationship with His chosen firstborn.

Notice, Esau said,

"What good is the birthright to me?" Genesis 25:32b

Esau was dealing with his relationship with God from a purely selfish, self-serving point of view. Satisfying his hunger was more important than being priest of the family.

Regardless of what Esau believed, Jacob viewed the entire experience as being very important. For this reason, Jacob firmly required the statement from Esau that the birthright would belong to him before anything else could happen.

Notice how persistent Jacob was.

"But Jacob said, 'Swear to me first.'" Genesis 25:33a

This was Jacob's chance and he was not going to allow anything to interfere. Though it was reprehensible, it is not difficult to understand why he would feel so strongly. Jacob was not merely being stubborn. The swearing that he would sell the birthright to Jacob on that day was a binding legal contract. One of the ways people sealed contracts was to make the agreements and then seal it by eating a meal together. This was thought to make the agreement inseparable. This was simply Jacob's way of saying I want this agreement to be unbreakable in the minds of everyone.

Again, at this point Esau did not see the importance of this as Jacob did.

"So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob." Genesis 25:33

The text speaks of swearing an oath. This was a way of making a statement in such a way that it could not be changed, no matter how costly it became or the damage it might cause. Esau swore an oath that he would sell, that day, his birthright to Jacob. In swearing to Jacob, Esau parted forever with his God-given privilege of being the firstborn in relationship with God Himself.

Jacob had achieved just what he wanted. The text does not say that Jacob was any more excited about being sanctified to God, or being a living reminder of the mercy of God, or being the priest of the family. Why was Jacob so interested in the birthright? One could casually say he was in it for what he could get out of it. That might well be true. It is also possible that he took the idea of the firstborn very seriously and if his brother was not going to carry out that responsibility, then he would do it for him. We can not be certain, but it is a haunting question.

There are many unanswered questions concerning the details of the demands of Jacob, but the actions of Esau are clear.

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Jacob, a participant in this oath, kept his part of the contract.

"Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright." Genesis 25:34

By providing the food that Esau craved, Jacob also sealed the covenant so that it could never be changed. In effect, Esau made Jacob the firstborn of Isaac. At this point, at least Esau clearly preferred the satisfaction of his physical desires to his spiritual opportunities. It is possible that because of tunnel vision Esau did not realize the extent of his actions; that at the moment food and nothing else seemed to matter. There obviously could be an element of this, but the over-arching motive appears to grow out of Esau's basic value system.

Perhaps one of the strongest statements in the book is recorded here. "Esau despised his birthright." The word "despised" means "to hold in contempt", "to disdain something", it is the opposite of honor and respect. It is to take the most precious of gifts and treat it as nothing. In despising his birthright, Esau was despising God and he knew it. Esau's choice was one of the most outrageous expressions of contempt for God to be found in Scripture. Esau was saying, in effect, "my lunch is more important than God in my life".

Unfortunately, it is easy to stand in judgment of Esau. We can talk glibly about his errors. We can point the finger at others in a number of situations. The truth is that there are repeated situations where we are at least as focused on self satisfaction as we are on serving God.

If you reflect on the chapter we have been studying you will notice some important things about human nature. We point to the selfishness of Jacob, but Esau was just as focused on self gratification as Jacob was. It expressed itself in a different way, but it was just as strong. Look at the family of Ishmael and you see some of the most obvious expressions of human bitterness to be found in Scripture. This bitterness did not come into being in order to fulfill the Divine prophecy. Such bitterness is the natural product of Esau's kind of living, thinking and valuing.

On the other hand, in this same passage you see another of the obvious presentations of God as the One who hears and answers the prayer of the desperate and the broken. In the quiet workings of His Spirit, even the minute details of a person's life are not left to chance. God is active in the lives of His people at every moment.

Desperate human struggles seem to permeate this portion of Scripture. Such obvious struggling grew out of at least two factors in the lives of Jacob and Esau: First, both boys had an excessive urge to satisfy their own will and desires. Secondly, there was an equally strong contempt for God's expressed will for their lives.

If you look at the international struggles which have marred this century, you will see much of the thinking of Jacob and Esau. Some of the modern attitude toward business sounds strangely like the thinking of Jacob and Esau. We must be reminded that the results which follow can be expected to be just as similar as those experienced by Jacob and Esau.

Think for a moment about the way you deal with other people in your life. Can you see anything of the cunning of a Jacob or the rebellion of an Esau? Does it startle you that you will probably encounter their kinds of results? Just what impact does the teaching of this passage of Scripture make on the way you make decisions and carry out actions in life?

THE CONCLUSION

The introduction of this study includes a chart which summarized each chapter, of Genesis 1-25, in a few words. We would like to review this chart to point out some of the primary teachings about God which the author stressed in each chapter. We would like to highlight the GLIMPSES OF GOD which the author has shared with us.

Chapter 1 Creation

The author, in his description of creation, lifts up the idea of an all-powerful God. The author dwells, in detail upon the orderliness God employed in the creative process. There is evidence of a moral quality in God which the author highlights as repeatedly he cites God's evaluation of all He had done as "good."

Chapter 2 Formation of Woman

In this chapter the author highlights several Divine qualities. God was concerned about mankind. God created woman because of the need in man. The description of the creation of Eve portrays God as all powerful. Out of the dilemma of man's dire need comes a picture of God as omniscient, all knowing and caring.

Chapter 3 The Fall

As the author carefully describes "the Fall", he gives a vivid picture of God's justice. God does not search for reasons to punish mankind, but He holds them accountable for their disobedience. In the issuance of justice, there is a backdrop of mercy. Mankind was not relegated to ongoing punishment, but a control on suffering was initiated. Adam and Eve were removed from the garden to protect them from 'ever greater damage to themselves.

The exercise of just rewards provides a sharper image of God's holiness. "God does not institute just rewards because He is uncontrollably angry ,but because His holiness can not/will not abide the presence of sin and rebellion.

Chapter 4 Cain and Abel

As the author describes God's dealings with Cain's murder of Able, he deals with the Divine justice, mercy and holiness described in previous chapters. The author also deals with God's changelessness. When Adam and Eve offended God's holiness in rebellion, they were punished. Cain offended God's holiness in the murder of his brother and he was also punished.

Chapter 5 Adam to Noah

The description of the relationship of Enoch with God is presented in sharp contrast with the relationship of Cain with God. This is a picture of the holiness of God. God is pure and relates positively with those who emulate His purity. The picture of the fellow-

ship between God and Enoch gives us a glimpse of the Divine longing for human communion.

Chapter 6 Flood Preparations

In the preparation for the Flood, the author places God's mercy and justice in perspective. Evil and disobedience will be judged, as God said. In the core of that devastating judgment, God revealed the surprising greatness of His mercy. The ark will forever symbolize God's great mercy for the obedient amidst the judgment of the rebel.

Chapter 7 The Flood

Despite the seeming impossibility of God's warning, the rains fell. God is faithful to His word. God is consistent. Wherever there is evil, there is judgment. Wherever there is righteousness, there is blessing. This stands in stark contrast to the fickle decisions that people ascribe to their idols of wood and stone; to the double standard of conduct expected of the common people and that of kings. Surrounding God's justice is the glowing evidence of His mercy. It is always the case.

Chapter 8 The Flood Ends

Human justice tends to eliminate, whereas Divine justice seeks to correct. Noah was not preserved from the flood because he was perfect, but because God saw his potential and did not give up on mankind. The picture of God's control over all the forces of nature is just one more indication of the omnipotence, the all-powerfulness of God. There is a certain precision in the words of God. He said He would flood the whole earth. He did not one bit less.

Chapter 9 The Covenant With Noah

In this "rainbow covenant", that God made with Noah, there is another illustration of the thinking of God. He was not driven by unbridled fury, but in the midst of necessary judgment God displayed a deep desire to give mankind another opportunity to live a meaningful life without the oppressive fear of another flood. The kindness of God is astonishing; the supremacy of His mercy is overwhelming. Because God is changelessly faithful to His word, He is constantly seeking opportunities to bind Himself in covenant which mankind can depend upon God never to break.

Chapter 10 Noah's Lineage: Shem, Ham and Japheth

The patience and longsuffering of God are repeatedly visible in this chapter. How soon Noah's family forgot the blessings they had received, being spared from the "deluge." In human experience, mercy requires a grateful response. God's patience is sustained and intensified even when mercy is met with rejection and denial.

CONCLUSION

Chapter 11 The Tower of Babel

Chapter eleven is crucial to the progression of this part of Genesis. It is the culmination of the evil directions described in chapter ten. It is also a severe contrast to the mercy and kindness of God in chapter nine. Still another contrast exists. The rebellious power-hungry picture of mankind in building the tower is portrayed over against the expression of Divine love which firmly refuses to concede to the rebellion of ungrateful mankind, in order to halt their designs, rather than to annihilate them altogether.

Chapter 12 The Call of Abram

Who can understand God's call of Abram? He was the son of a pagan priest. But God, who saw his potential rather than Abram's circumstances, sought to bind Himself in covenant with this childless man. This chapter also tells the story of Abram. In his deceit and abuse in Egypt, the faithfulness of God was a Divine action which exposed something of God's love rather than a reaction to Abram's expected perfection. God was faithful to Abram because He loved him, not because Abraham was perfect. It is startling what God can do through a person whom no one would ever suspect of becoming a great leader for God.

Chapter 13 Abraham and Lot Separate

There is a Divine gentleness displayed in this chapter. Lot was not only ungrateful for what his uncle had done for him, but also rebelled against Abraham's lifestyle which expressed an obedience to God. God knows what is best for each one, but He holds His control in abeyance in order to allow us to choose to obey or disobey Him. Other than in God, such a gentle spirit is rare.

Chapter 14 Abram Rescues Lot

The great power of God is again demonstrated in the daring rescue of Lot by Abraham. With an army inferior in numbers and training to the enemy nations, Abram still dared to trust God to enable him to rescue his nephew from the pagan neighbors. The passage also portrays the willingness of God to intervene in the affairs of nations to accomplish His will. The nations were defeated and Lot was freed, not because of the power or expertise of Abram, but because of the, intervention of God based on Abram's dependence upon Him.

Chapter 15 God Covenants with Abram

There is a tenderness in the faithfulness of 'God. He repeatedly promised Abram a son, but at age 99, Abraham was struggling to believe the unbelievable. Rather than chastise Abraham's weak faith, God provided a visual reminder, in the sealing of the covenant, that Abraham would not only have a son, but that it would be by his 90 year old wife and not by his servant.

Chapter 16 Hagar and Ishmael

This is yet another picture of justice surrounded by mercy. When Hagar realized that she was pregnant, she began to lord it over Sarai, her mistress. When things became so bad that Hagar could no longer endure them, she fled from Sarai. God did not abandon this Egyptian servant girl. The angel of the Lord gave Hagar hope in what appeared to be so hopeless that she had risked death in the desert rather than face the abuse of Sarai. God promised that her son would be a great nation. In awkward situations, people tend to behave in unfortunate ways. God dealt with this one in kindness and concern.

Chapter 17 The Covenant of Circumcision

Caught up in the mixture of deep longing for a son, for faith in the promise of God and the inability to believe the incredible, Abraham found deep understanding in God. The covenant of circumcision not only became another reminder of God's promise, but an extension of the promise to also give the land and the covenant relationship to Abraham's seed forever.

Chapter 18 The Three Visitors

The courage of Abraham is only surpassed by the compassion of God as Abram intercedes for the city of Sodom. Abraham began his intercession for the city by asking if God would destroy the city if he could find 50, then 45, 40, 30, 20 and finally 10 righteous people there. The miracle of God's patience and his mercy was that if Abraham could find 10 righteous people, God would not only spare them, but the entire, vile city. There weren't even 10 righteous people in the city and God was willing to spare them nonetheless. This is mercy beyond belief.

Chapter 19 Sodom and Gomorrah Destroyed

This chapter is an intermingling of the justice and mercy of God. There is little reason to believe that Lot deserved to be spared the destruction which claimed the city he loved so much but because of His love for Abraham, God spared Lot. At the same time, Sodom and Gomorrah had turned their back on most all forms of decency. God destroyed the cities to the point that they were apparently never rebuilt.

Lot and his family were spared by the mercy of God, but warned not to look longingly at Sodom. Lot's wife looked back and God punished as He had promised.

Chapter 20 Abraham Deceives Abimelech

Few people in history were as great as Abraham, but still he was human. He intentionally deceived the king of Gerar. The patience and long-suffering of God are illustrated again as He protected Abimelech from sinning and kept Abraham from the serious consequences of his selfish deceit. A god of lesser mercy would have let Abraham suffer the full consequences of his choices.

CONCLUSION

Chapter 21 The Birth of Isaac

The power of God is again displayed as He enabled a 90 year old woman and a 100 year old man to have their first child. The faithfulness of God is displayed as the seemingly impossible promise of 15 years became reality.

God was merciful in that as Hagar and Ishmael were driven out because both of them had made life unbearable for Sarah and the family, God provided for them and gave promise that Ishmael also would father a great nation.

Chapter 22 The Sacrifice of Isaac

As God later affirmed, He is a jealous God. As a husband longs for the complete devotion of his wife, God urgently seeks the place of highest priority in the hearts and minds of His people. That is what the sacrifice of Isaac was all about.

God's love is as obvious as His deep desire. His love for Abraham was so intense that He spared him the great pain of the loss of his only son. God takes no delight in the excruciating sacrifices of his people. God provided a sacrifice so that when Abraham had demonstrated the extent of his devotion, the animal sacrifice could be accomplished.

Chapter 23 The Death of Sarah

There is no mention of God in chapter 23. God promised Abraham and Sarah that they would have a son. God faithfully kept His word and allowed them to not only see their son, but see him grow to adulthood and prepared for his wedding.

Chapter 24 The Marriage of Isaac

God is described as the God of heaven. It pictures God as the creator and controller of the heavens and the whole universe of which they are a part.

God is described as faithful and kind. God promised to bring Abraham to Canaan, and He did it. He promised Abraham that he would have a son by his wife and God brought it to pass. Many idols were thought to be abusive and unkind. God, however, was known for His kindness to those who love Him.

God was so loving that He was worthy of the loving worship of His people. This is in contrast to the fearful respect which idols received.

God blessed Abraham in every possible way. He was so dependable that Abraham required his servant, Eliezer, to take an oath in God's name. God is the one who guides the activities of His people when they cry to Him for guidance. It did not matter that Eliezer was a slave, a Gentile. God guided him so that he knew beyond any doubt that he had found God's choice of a wife for Isaac.

Chapter 25 The Death of Abraham

Abram came to the end of his life with the full knowledge that God had kept every promise. When Abraham failed, God forgave and restored him. God was so powerful He could do the impossible. The existence of Isaac and the presence of Abraham in Canaan were evidence of God's faithfulness on their behalf.

GLIMPSES OF GOD - I

The above are chapter summaries of some of the ways God has revealed Himself in this portion of the book of Genesis.

A Summary of Discoveries About God

Throughout these chapters of Genesis, attention is repeatedly focused on the power of God. The God who could create a universe could guide a stranger from a far country to the land of promise; guide him in the details of his living and provide a son in his very old age. This power is portrayed in such a way that it is a picture of sovereignty. He is sovereign in the affairs of nations and in the individual lives of people.

By constant repetition, the author focuses attention on the mercy of God in contrast to the justice of God. It is not surprising that the two most common names for God, in these chapters, are Jehovah and Elohim. Jehovah stresses the powerful justice of God. On the other hand, Elohim stresses the mercy of God.

God is sovereign. The question is, will we allow Him to be sovereign in our lives?

God is just. We must decide whether or not we will take that justice seriously or simply assume that God is not as He has portrayed Himself in the Scriptures.

God is merciful. In those painful moments when our humanity is all too evident, we must decide whether we will accept His mercy or languish in our guilt.

There is a strong emphasis on the sovereignty, justice and mercy of God in these chapters. God has revealed these qualities of His character because He never changes. All that He was to Adam and Abraham, God is for us! Believe it, for it is true!

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