÷**00 Isaac**

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÷00i Introduction

Having already sought to weigh the history of Abraham, I desire to consider what Scripture gives us to learn of Isaac. It is true that much less is said of him than of Abraham on the one hand or of Jacob on the other; even less than of Joseph among the many sons of Jacob. Yet there is not a little, in the spiritual account of him who came between the two chief fathers, distinguished by his own equable, retired, and peaceful way, and indicative of great principles in God's Word and ways, not in the Old Testament only but also in the New.

Isaac was the pattern of sonship, the child of promise, and as Abraham was its depository, elect, called out, blessed, and to be a blessing universally for the earth at the end, though himself looking higher by faith. Sovereign grace wrought as to both father and son. "For the promise that he should be heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through law, but through the righteousness of faith." Thus only could it be, as it was, according to grace; that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of Abraham's faith, who is father of us all, before the God whom he believed, who quickens the dead and calls the things which are not as though they were.

But the progress of revelation as to this is as interesting as instructive. It was when Lot's choice of the well-watered plain of Jordan severed him from the one to whom all the land was promised that Jehovah renewed the assurance of it all not only to Abraham but to his seed (*Gen 12:7*;*Gen 13:15*). Still had the patriarch to wait; and when, after his disinterestedness on the occasion of his victory, he lays his childlessness before Jehovah, the word came that not Eliezer, his steward, should be his heir, but he that should come forth out of his own bowels, seed numerous as the stars (Genesis 15). Then after the episode of Hagar in Genesis 16 comes the revelation of God Almighty, El-Shaddai, in Genesis 17, and under the outward rite of circumcision, death to the flesh imposed on him and his seed, with a new name to his wife as well as himself; for she too has the promise of the son, whose name was given. Thus however great and fruitful He would make Ishmael, His covenant was to be established in Isaac, whose birth had a time set for it.

The exceptional interest Jehovah took in the birth of Isaac has a still more striking witness inGenesis 18. There in the guise of man He Himself appeared with two angels (compare *Gen 19:1*) to Abraham, and deigned to partake of the meal he prepared and set before them under the tree in Mamre. Thus and then He specified the precise certainty of the time when Sarah should have a son. For the difficulty lay, humanly speaking, yet more in the wife than in the husband, and her unbelief was reproved. But Abraham as the "friend" of God, heard not of his son's birth only, but of the world's judgment, which drew out his soul in intercession for his righteous kinsman and his house in ungodly and lawless Sodom. If his advocacy stopped short, "God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the overthrow."

After another failure in Genesis 20 (more guilty than the first occasion in Genesis 12), Jehovah visited Sarah as He had said, and Jehovah did to Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son that was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac. Him on the eighth day Abraham circumcised; and Sarah's laughter was now of overflowing joy and gratitude. But the great feast on the child's weaning drew out Ishmael's mockery, and the expulsion of the bondmaid and her son on Sarah's remonstrance, an allegory to which Galatians 4 gives us the key.

The great change is then adumbrated. For instead of Abimelech reproving Abraham justly, Abraham now reproved the Gentile king; who with the chief captain of his host, owns God with him in all that he does. Yet Abraham swears to show him kindness; and they make a covenant. And as the well of the oath was not without significance, so neither was the grove planted there, or the calling on the name of Jehovah, the everlasting God. The day was anticipated when "in the wilderness shall waters break out," and "the glory of Lebanon shall be given to it." The blessedness of the coming age for the earth is thus typified.

After these things, and quite distinct from them, God tried Abraham. What is not here for God as well as man! It is the picture, which blind unbelief alone fails to see, of the Only-begotten Son given, of the Lamb which God would provide Himself for a Burnt Offering. Here Isaac gave himself up to die, as Abraham was ready at God's word to sacrifice his beloved son: the sign of a far better thing.

But Jehovah arrests his hand when his heart was proved, and confirms to the son raised from the dead in a figure, that in Christ, the Antitype, should all the nations of the earth be blessed, as the apostle reasons in Galatians 3.

Then after the passing away of Sarah (the covenanted mother of the child of promise), we have the call of the bride for the bridegroom and heir of all. Next are given certain details of Isaac's history, as we shall examine in due time after this preliminary notice. Yet we may notice here the "moderation" of Isaac made known to all men in the question of the wells his servants found (Genesis 26); and the crisis of his ways when his foot had well nigh slipped in the matter of his two sons (Genesis 27). Grace here overruled; and he was saved yet so as by fire. How striking it is that such a scene should be singled out to his praise in *Heb 11:20*! "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau even concerning things to come." Isaac lived many years after this; but Scripture records only his death and burial.

÷01 His Antecedents

Genesis 12-20

Isaac stands in marked contrast with Abraham, though he and Jacob were "the fellow-heirs of the same promise." But Abraham comes before us the unexpected object of sovereign grace. The tales, so plentiful among Jews and Muslims, of preternatural ability and attainments of wisdom and goodness antecedent to his call, are altogether fabulous and excluded by Scripture. All the more therefore did he suit divine election. No prophetic word hailed his birth like Noah's, whose father said, This same shall comfort us for our work and for the toil of our hands, because of the ground which Jehovah hath cursed. Yet no man was given to hold a place as "father of those that believe," like Abraham, a headship of higher character than Adams's. But Isaac has the peculiarity of his own, however personally and in place overshadowed by his honoured father, in that he was gradually introduced before his birth more frequently and signally than any, save that Son of Abraham, and Son of David who was also Son of God as no one else could be, Isaac's great Antitype.

It may be of interest to draw out the evidence of this. In *Gen 12:7* "Jehovah appeared to Abram and said, To thy seed I will give this land; and there built he an altar to Jehovah who appeared to him." Long before in Ur of the Chaldees had Jehovah said to Abraham, "Get thee (or, Go) out of thy country, and from thy kindred and from thy father's house, to the land that I will show thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (*Gen 12:1-3*). Therein Abram at first failed, not quitting his father but following him to Haran, from which he did not emerge till his father's death (*Act 7:4*).

Then and not before "Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had acquired and the souls that they had got in Haran, and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came." Obedience now had its perfect work, and its result accordingly. The renewed appearing of Jehovah was not only a call to separation, but to the walk of faith, a pilgrim and a sojourner in the land of promise as in [a land] not his own, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob the fellow-heirs of the same promise; for he awaited the city that hath the foundations, whose designer and master-builder is God" (*Heb 11:9-10*). What was the possession of an earthly seat compared with this in heaven which dawned on his faith? Now he learns that Jehovah would give it to his "seed." He worships and was content to be a stranger; and as he moved his tent elsewhere in the land, he built an altar to Jehovah and called on His name (*Gen 12:8*).

Still "seed" was vague, as it is explained in *Rom 9:7* and so appears also in *Joh 8:33-39*. But the time was not yet come. Abram failed in his new place, swerving from the revelation which had so happily wrought in his walk and worship. He goes down into Egypt for help under the strain of a famine in the land; and there is not a word of altar or tent. There he denies his wife, who was taken into the home of this world's prince, and got rich by it to his shame. Jehovah failed not, but plagued Pharaoh and extricated Sarai. This was not "all families of the earth blessed" in him: how could it be other than a curse when the depository of the blessing had left his true place with Jehovah and compromised his wife? Delivered by overruling mercy, he returns to the south or Negeb, and thence as far as Bethel, "to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai; to the place of the altar that he had made there at the first; and there Abram called on the name of Jehovah" (

*Gen 13:3-4*). The humiliation before was blessed to one, whose first wrong step led to worse; but his heart turned to Him who had rescued them, and he again regains his privilege without a fresh appearing to him. But in the strife between their respective herdsmen that followed, Abram is as disinterested as his nephew betrays his worldly wisdom. And "Jehovah said to Abram, after that Lot had separated himself from him, Lift up now thine eyes and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land that thou seest will I give to thee and to thy seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth," etc. (vv. 14-18). Lot has no title here. A fuller view of the land was given to him who looked above: it was secured forever to him and his. Again Abraham moves to Hebron and built there an altar to Jehovah. His worship rises afresh.

Next, after the wondrous episode of Abram's victory over the earthly potentates, who had punished their vassal kings and carried off Lot, and after the still more wondrous scene of the mysterious King-priest of the Most High God, we have (in a new series of Abram's history) the word of Jehovah coming in a vision, to assure him that not Eliezer, but "he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir," and like the unnumbered stars, "so shall thy seed be." And he believed Jehovah, who reckoned it to him as righteousness; of which the New Testament makes fruitful use. So it must be for the earthly seed, as well as the heavenly: flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. It is the earthly which is in view here; as this was what Abram sought, and God bound Himself by covenant based on death of victims, with prophecy and the limits of the land defined according to the Gentile races in present possession.

But if the son and heir was now defined to be Abram's, not so yet the mother. For in Genesis 16 Sarah manifests the haste which is not of faith but the device of nature, to gain the blessing in its way to the sorrow of all and especially her own. This the apostle applies allegorically to Israel under law. In Genesis 17 Jehovah reveals Himself (not His gifts only) by the new name of El-Shaddai (God Almighty), not His word in a vision, but God talking with him who has His covenant and the enlarged promise to be father of a multitude of nations, and kings to come out of him. Circumcision, death not of victims but of flesh, is imposed; and as Abram's name was now widened, so Sarai's was raised: Abram's son God would give of her. "And thou shalt call his name Isaac, and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant to his seed after him" (v. 19). Ishmael was not to be forgotten of God; but His covenant should be with Isaac, whom Sarah was to bear at this set time in the next year. Thus was the case made increasingly full and clear.

These preparative notices are crowned in Genesis 18 where Jehovah appeared to Abraham by the terebinths of Mamre, and with two angels, who in human guise deigned to honour him as his guests. He thus emphasizes the importance to be attached to Isaac's birth, which even then Sarah laughs at as too wonderful. But the son and heir will surely come at the appointed time, and Jehovah personally announces it for the last time before it is accomplished. And we may note the proof He gives that He made Abraham His friend by telling him, not only the detail of what so intimately concerned himself and Sarah, but the judgment He was sending the angels to execute on the guilty cities of the plain. This draws out Abraham, not now to ask for himself, but to intercede, and Jehovah answered beyond his faith.

Yet Abraham failed once more after so signal a favour. How often it is so! Flesh is puffed up, not judged: we are off our guard, instead of watching to prayer. No flesh shall glory, but as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. The unbelief of the believer led to deceit; and the sin of Abraham was worse now with Abimelech than long before with Pharaoh. He denied his wife's relationship, after Jehovah let him know the soon coming birth of the promised son by her. Yet though inexcusable and reproved by the Philistine king, God does not forget but maintains Abraham's relationship and makes Abimelech seek his prayers.

÷02 The Son and Heir Born

*Gen 21:1-7*

The set time was now come. The child of promise was at hand. Many and various had been the premonitions on the one side, and checks on the other; but at length in the face of weakness and drawbacks, of unfaithfulness with gracious overruling, the divine word is proved to be, as it is, unfailing and worthy of all trust.

"And Jehovah visited Sarah as he had said, and Jehovah did to Sarah as he had spoken. And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son that was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. And Abraham was a hundred years old when Isaac was born to him. And Sarah said, God hath made me laugh: everyone that heareth will laugh with me. And she said, Who would have said to Abraham, Sarah will give children suck? for I have borne a son in his old age" (vv. 1-7).

Here the usage of the divine designations comes before us remarkably. To impute the difference to distinct authors is the despairing or malevolent resource of unbelieving ignorance. First of all "Jehovah" occurs with emphatic repetition (v. 1). Governmental relationship was in question; and as Jehovah had promised, so also did He show Himself faithful to perform. But it was of no less moment in the next place to indicate that He who thus spoke was God in the supremacy of His nature (v. 2). Hence "Elohim" is employed, and throughout the chapter, till verse 33 where relative dealings properly demand the name of "Jehovah Elohim," as will be shown in due course.

But beyond controversy it was the birth of one who here typifies the Son of *Psa 2:7*; *Psa 2:12*. This explains why there should have been so many prophetic intimations to prepare the way. This accounts for the serious consequences which followed for such as despised Him when come. So the prophet was given to say, more than seven centuries before the event (*Isa 9:6* and following): "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder. And they shall call his name Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of eternity, Prince of peace." The prediction, glowing and glorious as it is, has nothing to do with His being Firstborn from the dead, Head of the body, the church, who is the beginning. It belongs to His other Headship, as born into the world, the Firstborn of all creation. For in all things He must have the supreme place.

Hence we can see that Calvin only expresses the prevalent confusion of these two relationships, when he says that in this chapter God has set before us a lively picture of His church.

Not so. It is not "the mystery" which is here foreshown, but the new covenant; it is the mother,\* and not the bride. Consequently the Christian has already new covenant blessing in the death of the saviour; but the Scripture which most fully explains it to us (2 Corinthians 3) points to its being in spirit rather than in letter; it will be formally with both houses of Israel in the day which fast approaches, and for ever. But Israel, however richly blessed in that day, will not have the union with Christ as His body, which is ours even now with Him who is Head over all things. And this involves the most important differences, as widely apart as heaven is from earth, of which this is not the place to speak more particularly. The distinction however, cannot well be overestimated.

\*It may be noticed here that the error in question gave rise to the spurious reading πάυτωυ at the end of *Gal 4:26*, and to the no less unfounded misinterpretation of "Israel of God" inGalatians 6:16, as if the phrase meant all the saints, though two classes are here distinguished.

Next in verse 3 Abraham called his new-born son Isaac. So he was now, whatever had gone before, whatever might come after. Any laughter of doubt had given place to the joy of grace. And Abraham certainly looked on with joy to wide, deep, and enduring results; he rejoiced that he should see Christ's day, and he saw it and was glad. How blessed will it be for Israel and the earth and all the nations and every creature of God! How different from the day of Massah and Meribah in the wilderness; when man hardened his heart and Jehovah was grieved long years with a generation that erred in their heart and knew not His ways! In that day what singing aloud to Jehovah, what shouting for joy to the rock of salvation, and coming before His face with thanksgiving and psalms! Yea, the heavens shall rejoice and the earth be glad; the sea shall roar and the fullness thereof; the field shall exult and all that is therein. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before Jehovah, for He cometh  -  for He cometh to judge the earth: He will judge the world with righteousness, and the people in His faithfulness (Psalms 96). Isaiah bears the same witness at intervals from his first chapter to his last, notably in Isaiah 11; Isaiah 12; Isaiah 24-27; Isaiah 30;Isaiah 32; Isaiah 35; Isaiah 40-45; Isaiah 49-55; Isaiah 60-62; and Isaiah 65. So we may say in general have all the prophets spoken. So much the more lamentable is the unbelief which merges all in the church's blessings, only to lose its heavenly bridal place to no end obscured by that groundless confusion.

But the joy of Abraham in no way weakened his duty of subjecting his son to the sign of death for the flesh. He circumcised Isaac duly when he was eight days old, "as God had commanded him" (v. 4). The eighth day points to resurrection in contrast with nature. Circumcision was instituted, not when Ishmael was born, but in view of Isaac, the seal of the covenant. The principle was God's righteousness. Man was judged as evil and flesh mortified.

It is notified in verse 5 that Abraham was a hundred years of age when Isaac was born. Faith had indeed to wait, but was in no way disappointed: God is faithful. "And Sarah said, God hath made me laugh; every one that heareth will laugh with me" (v. 6). She had laughed at first when Jehovah announced the set time for her to be a mother, and she added the shame of untruth when taxed with it (Genesis 18). But all is here changed by grace. God, she owns, made her laugh now. It was no longer within herself, but of Him; and others who heard would share her joy. "And she said, Who would have said to Abraham, Sarah will give children suck? For I have borne a son in his old age" (v. 7). Sarah is thenceforth, old as she was, become a child of wisdom; and wisdom is justified of all her children.

÷03 Isaac Abiding Hagar and Ishmael Dismissed

*Gen 21:8-21*

God knows how to rectify the false position that springs from unbelief. We may therefore look to Him and His Word, and have only to obey. But if this ever costs the flesh not a little, blessing surely follows self-denying submission to His will.

"And the child grew and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. And Sarah saw Hagar the Egyptian's son, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking. And she said to Abraham, Cast out this maid-servant and her son; for this maid-servant's son shall not be heir with my son, with Isaac. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son. And God said to Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy maid- servant: [in] all that Sarah saith to thee, hearken to her voice; for in Isaac shall a seed be called to thee. But also the maid-servant's son will I make a nation, because he is thy seed. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread and a leathern bottle of water and gave [it] to Hagar, putting [it] on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away; and she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. And the water from the bottle was exhausted; and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And she went and sat down over against [him] about a bowshot; for she said, I will not look on the death of the child. And she sat over against [him,] and lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard the lad's voice; and God's angel called to Hagar out of the heaven, and said to her, What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not; for God hath heard the lad's voice there where he is. Arise, take the lad, and hold him in thy hand, for a great nation will I make him. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water, and she went and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. And God was with the lad; and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness, and became as he grew up an archer. And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt" (vv. 8-21).

As the child born and the son given typified the Son of the Highest, it was meet that the occasion should be marked by consequences of the gravest. What can distinguish inspiration more than the lesson the apostle in *Gal 4:22-26* draws from that which seems on the surface a mere domestic occurrence? "For it is written that Abraham had two sons; one of the maid-servant, and one of the free-woman. But he that was of the maid-servant was born according to flesh, and he that was of the free-woman through the promise. Which things have an allegorical sense; for these [women] are two covenants: one from Mount Sinai, gendering unto bondage, which is Hagar. For Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answers to the present Jerusalem; for she is in bondage with her children; but the Jerusalem above is free, which is our mother."

This was God's purpose, though none apprehend it save those who have Christ's mind. Hence the unbelieving Jews fill the place, not of Isaac, but of Ishmael. They are as far as possible from suspecting that they are only born according to flesh, and persecute him that is born according to Spirit. Yet they cannot deny that their mother is the Sinai covenant, and that they are cast out by God. They have the law's curse as transgressors; they have not a shred of the promise to cover their nakedness. Their own prophets declare that they are not God's people, and if without a false god without the True, as they have plainly neither land nor prince; and this because they rejected, first Jehovah, next His Christ.

But the apostle goes a great deal farther; and though he does not confound the believing Gentiles with Israel, like the theologians of Christendom, he shows that all who take their stand on law come under the curse (*Gal 3:10*). Thus the principle applies in all its force, indeed emphatically, to Gentiles, who have not the excuse of inveterate Jewish prejudices. It is to fall from grace, through which alone can souls be saved. Law cannot save but condemn sinners; and if grace be mixed with law, the mixture is unavailing: grace only can save the guilty and lost. The Galatians who were bewitched to tack law on to grace, he solemnly warns of utter ruin, so sure that as many as are of works of law (i.e., on this principle) are under curse. After having begun in Spirit, how senseless for them to seek perfection in flesh! The law itself, in the tale of Abraham's two sons, convicts of folly those who thus abuse the law. Its lawful application (*1Ti 1:9*) is not to a righteous person, but to lawless and insubordinate, to impious and sinful, to unholy and profane, to whatever in short is opposed to the healthful doctrine Paul taught.

Hence the peremptory tone of the apostle to the endangered Galatians. He will have this "leaven" extirpated, whatever it cost. It was a deeper peril than the "leaven" which he enjoins the Corinthians to purge out. Not even a moral man could defend the gross inconsistency with Christ and His sacrifice of having the wicked man in their midst. But the fair show in flesh set up in the Galatians churches was subtler, and a denial of the grace which the gospel proclaims, when law had been proved to be simply a ministry of death and condemnation. What then "saith the scripture? Cast out the maid-servant and her son; for the son of the maid-servant shall in no wise be heir with the son of the free- woman." The Judaizing Gentile is even more blamable than the Jew. Alas! the ritualism of the day is incomparably worse still and growingly apostate; for not content with the legal forms of Israel, it incorporates the idolatries of the heathen also, as in the adoration of the sacramental elements, etc.

Yet is it affecting to know God's goodness to Abraham's seed according to flesh. When the mother yielded to despair, and laid her son down to die at a distance from her, "God heard the lad's voice"; and His angel bids Hagar hold him in her hand. Had not Jehovah called his name Ishmael, because He had heard her affliction? And as she was then by a fountain called Beer-la-hai-roi, Well of the living who was seen (or, seeth me), from the name of Him that spoke to her (Genesis 16), so now God opened her eyes to see a well of water whence she gave the lad drink. If she forgot the divine assurance of a numberless multitude in general to spring from her, and that Ishmael should dwell in the presence of all his brethren, God remembered him and declares that He will make him a great nation. So it has been. There they are with the same characteristics to this day.

÷04 Jehovah, God Everlasting

*Gen 21:22-34*

Though the name of Isaac does not occur in this section, it is in no way a digression, but in strict pursuance of the divine ways on the occasion of his birth, the dismissal of Hagar and her son, and the recognition of Sarah's son as the sole heir of Abraham.

"And it came to pass at that time that Abimelech, and Phichol the captain of his host, spoke to Abraham, saying, God [is] with thee in all that thou doest. And now swear to me here by God that thou wilt not [literally, if thou shalt] deal falsely with me nor with my offspring nor with my son's son. According to the kindness that I have done to thee, thou shalt do to me and to the land in which thou hast sojourned. And Abraham said, I will swear. And Abraham reproved Abimelech because of a well of water which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away. And Abimelech said, I know not who hath done this, and also thou didst not tell me, and also I heard not but today. And Abraham took sheep and oxen, and gave [them] to Abimelech; and both of them made a covenant. And Abraham set seven ewe-lambs of the block by themselves. And Abimelech said unto Abraham, what [mean] here these seven ewe-lambs which thou hast set by themselves? And he said, For seven ewe-lambs shalt thou take, that they may be a witness to me that I dug this well. Wherefore he called that place Beersheba, because they had sworn, both of them. And they made a covenant at Beersheba; and Abimelech rose up and Phichol chief of his host, and returned into the Philistines' land. And [Abraham] planted a tamarisk (or, a grove) in Beersheba, and called there on the name of Jehovah God everlasting. And Abraham sojourned in the Philistines' land many days" (vv. 22-34).

It was not only that due order of the household was now secured by the expulsion of the Egyptian and her mocking son, and that the child of promise abode without a rival; but an outward event follows of such significance that the Holy Spirit gives it here an imperishable place. The marked blessing that resulted drew the Gentile's heart, and the Philistine with due formality (for the commander-in-chief accompanied him) seeks the pledged friendship of Abraham. So it will be in days to come when the promises are accomplished in the Messiah; and thus far Isaac typifies Him. It was far otherwise when the Lord came the first time, and even the Jew rejected Him in dark unbelief and in bitter hatred that the grace which they refused should be preached to the nations. Unhappy and unholy, they please not God and are contrary to all men; and the wrath is come on them to the uttermost. But the day hastens when they judging themselves shall welcome by faith Him in whom the promises are Yea and Amen unto the glory of God. Then shall Gentile kings be Zion's nursing fathers, and queens her nursing mothers (

Isaiah 49); then shall ten men take hold, out of all the languages of the nations, shall even take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you (Zechariah 8).

Nor does Abraham at all repel the Gentiles. The Seed of promise received and honoured leads to a new state of things for the earth. To the king Abraham assents, and forms a covenant on oath and other solemnities. In the Seed are the Gentiles to be blessed. Woe to those that curse in that day! A witness of the change to ensue on the largest scale is here given by Abraham's reproving Abimelech. Now only does he speak of the wrong done by Abimelech's servants who had violently possessed themselves of a well dug by Abraham. And Abimelech bows meekly. Righteousness will reign in that day, and princes shall rule in judgment; yea, judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. For the Spirit will then be poured on Israel from on high; and He holds the inflexible sceptre over all the earth, the Righteous Servant and Atoning Sufferer, who in that day shall be seen exalted, and lifted up, and very high. And Israel's seed shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which Jehovah hath blessed (Isaiah 61). The limper shall no longer halt, but the first dominion be even to the daughter of Jerusalem.

The Well-of-the-Oath is the name Abraham gives as the permanent sign of the covenant made then and there. Typically it is a total change from strangership to possession, as it will be really in the days of the coming Kingdom. Nor do we hear of a tent now, though Abraham's calling on the name of Jehovah implies a fresh altar here. Only it is not now as the One who appeared to him in the far off land, and led him at length, separated to Him, into Canaan; nor is it the altar he built at Bethel anymore than at Shechem, nor yet at Hebron. Here only is the striking change, which inspiration alone can account for, to "God everlasting." For so it will be when the displayed Kingdom comes in power and glory. Fallen and fading things will then give place to permanence and peace and blessing. For "Thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee" (Psalms 102).

In unison with all this is the planting of a grove on Abraham's part. Here only do we read of such an act, the beautiful prefiguration of "that day" when the parched land shall blossom abundantly, and all the trees of the wood shall sing for joy.

÷05 Isaac Dead and Risen in Figure

*Gen 22:1-14*

Here begins an entirely new section of the book, which we may regard as stretching over the death of Abraham in Genesis 25, though more than once verses seem appended to complete the history rather than higher views. No more profound principle can there be than that which is introduced as the basis in our chapter; for it is death and resurrection in the person of a beloved son, an only-begotten. Such a type is unmistakable save to the blind. The very details are full of living force: what then is the Antitype? All is impressive, lovely, and instructive in the highest degree. As the figure of Abraham looms most in the scene, and as this has been years ago before us in treating of him, it remains to speak here of Isaac.

"And it came to pass after these things that God tried Abraham and said to him, Abraham; and he said, Behold me. And He said, Take now thy son, thine only [one] whom thou lovest, Isaac, and get thee into the Moriah land, and offer him there for a burnt-offering on one of the mountains which I shall tell thee of. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he crave wood for burnt-offering, and rose up and went to the place of which God told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said to his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship (or, bow down), and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood for burnt-offering, and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and knife; and they went both of them together; and they came to the place which God told him of; and there did Abraham build the altar and pile the wood; and he bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And Jehovah's angel called to him from the heavens, and said, Abraham, Abraham; and he said, Behold me. And he said, Stretch not forth thy hand against the lad, nor do thou anything to him; for now I know that thou fearest God and hast not withheld thy son, thine only [one] from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold a ram behind caught in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for burnt-offering, instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh; as it is said this day, On Jehovah's mount it will be provided" (vv. 1-14).

We must bear in mind that "the lad" had at least reached his majority, as we say; Josephus (Antiquities 1:13, 2) makes him 25 years old. His entire submissiveness to his father indeed, but also to the will of God, is exactly in keeping with his piety. If it was beautiful in the type, how much more in that which it shadowed! For it was unsought and infinite love in both Father and Son.

Here it was not merely a test of the strongest claim ever made on the heart of man, indefinitely increased by the promise so long waited for and so singularly accomplished, and by the full persuasion of world-wide blessing which centred in that very son, and yet seemed to be made impossible by the intensely painful act to which he was called. What was suffered to the full and unsparingly, that God might be glorified, that sin might be condemned in a sacrifice of blessing to sinners without bound or end, that good might surpass where evil abounded, that love might overcome where enmity had wrought its worst, that Satan might be vanquished where he had been a prince and a god, that man might be brought, no longer a child of wrath but of God, out of all iniquity, intense misery, and everlasting judgment to peace and righteousness before God now and to heavenly glory with Christ in the presence of the Father forever?

The father and son brought before us so strikingly here furnished an unrivalled occasion to show in a figure or "parable," as it is called in *Heb 9:17-19*, the real death and as real resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The interpretation given, as it has been believed by all saints of New Testament times, rests on no probability however strong, on no tradition of men, however ancient. He that disputes will have to give account of his inexcusable incredulity to the Lord Himself when we are manifested before His judgment seat. Very beautiful is the minute accuracy of this New Testament comment. "By faith Abraham when tried hath offered up Isaac; and he that took up to himself the promises was offering up the only-begotten, in respect of whom it was spoken, In Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that even from the dead God is able to raise; whence also he received him in a parable." We may not in English easily express the perfect in the first instance of the offering; but the force is evident and points to the subsisting or fixed result of that act. Morally it was done; and the effect abides. The second use of the word in the imperfect corrects all possible misuse of that; for it states that literally Abraham was in the act of offering his only son when arrested as Genesis tells us by Jehovah's angel. The spiritual test was complete, though the act was not completed. So had divine wisdom ordered and accomplished.

Nor is this new thing, though only in parable, an isolated and transient fact, but is connected in the declarations and the events that follow with consequences of the utmost importance, as will be shown in due time. This is the most powerful and conclusive proof that the Scripture is in the fullest sense inspired of God. It is not only that a moral pinnacle is here reached as never before; but that the death

and resurrection of Christ prefigured by it reflects on what follows a light which shows that what is related stands in perfect keeping with that infinite event, and is a shadow of what we find in the new Testament could only follow it, as it did according to God's counsels and in the development of His ways.

The answer of the father to the son (vv. 7, 8) was from above and in a wisdom wholly above man's; God's providing Himself the lamb for a burnt-offering is the basis of the new and only justifying righteousness, God's righteousness. In the infinite reality it was the Son become man and on behalf of men yet to God's glory, after proving Himself the righteous Servant, made sin for us, that we who believe might become God's righteousness in Him. Thus was love maintained as fully as holiness, and that new righteousness, God's righteousness which can justify absolutely him that believes on the Lord Jesus, instead of condemning the sinner as he deserves. It was the Father's will, the Son's work, and Holy Spirit's witness, as indeed we read in Hebrews 10.

Viewed merely on the historical side, what admirable devotedness to God's authority testing the heart to the uttermost! What unhesitating trust in God and His word, that the giving up of what is dearest in possession and hope would result in unimpaired re-establishment of all! And so it truly was in the issue, and beyond all expectation of man as he is.

÷06 Isaac: The Numerous Seed, and the One Seed

*Gen 22:15-24*

Consequent on the wondrous type of the far more wondrous sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, we have Jehovah's angel announcing to Abraham His solemn oath on that which deeply concerned both Jews and Gentiles, and we may add God Himself most nearly, and His title to bless not only in His righteous government but in sovereign grace according to His nature.

"And Jehovah's angel called to Abraham a second time from the heavens, and said, By myself I swear, saith Jehovah, that because thou hast done this and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thy seed as stars of the heavens, and as sand that is on the sea's shore; and thy seed shall possess his enemies' gate; and in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast harkened to my voice. And Abraham returned to his young men; and they rose up and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.

"And it came to pass after these things that it was told Abraham, saying, Behold, Milcah, she also hath borne children to thy brother Nahor: Uz his firstborn, and Buz his brother, and Kemuel father of Aram, and Chesed, and Hazo and Pildash and Jidlaph and Bethuel (and Bethuel begot Rebekah). These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother. And his concubine named Reumah, she also bore Tebah and Gaham and Tahash and Maacah" (vv. 15-24).

Because of Jehovah's appreciation of Abraham's unreserved surrender to Him of what was most precious to his heart, first comes the assurance of rich blessing and great multiplication of his seed according to flesh. It should be for multitude as stars of the heavens and as sand of the seashore. Nor this only, but with power over their adversaries, as befits the earthly people of His choice. Beyond just question Israel is thus in view (v. 17).

But there follows in verse 18 a promise intentionally severed, and couched in such terms as point to the True Seed in whom should all the nations of the earth be blessed. And here not a hint was uttered of a numerous posterity; as indeed the evident aim was to indicate the One on whom alone depended blessing of a far higher order, and this for "all the nations of the earth." Here we are recalled to the original promise made to the patriarch and recorded in the last half ofGenesis 12:3: "And in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." There, as here, it follows the national blessing of the earthly people. It was therefore left open and goes out in unlimited grace as in the gospel. He only could thus speak who knew the end from the beginning.

Of this the apostle in the power of the Holy Spirit avails himself in writing to the Galatians (Galatians 3), beguiled as they then were into that judaizing of heavenly truth which has been and is the sore bane of Christendom. Works of law are a ruinous principle for sinful men; the promise is by faith, whereby alone believers are blessed with the faithful Abraham. For as many as are of law- works are under curse; not merely such as violate the law, but all that take the ground of law before God. As surely as they do, they being sinful fall under curse. Therefore Deuteronomy 27 is cited, wherein the Holy Ghost passes by all account of the blessings of the six tribes on Mount Gerizim, and only gives in detail the curses of the other six on Mount Ebal. These alone were effective. The blessings cannot be for guilty man on that ground. It is by faith, says the prophet, the just shall live; and redemption from curse is needed for those under law, that the blessing of Abraham might come to the nations in Christ Jesus, as the gospel declares. Nor is this all. For the Seed is arrived, and the covenant is confirmed, as it was typically in Isaac, dead and risen parabolically. Hence the apostle proceeds, "But to Abraham were addressed the promises, and to his seed" — to the father inGenesis 12, and to his son in Genesis 22. "He saith not, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to thy seed' [where allusion to stars and sand, as well as 'greatly multiplying,' are quite dropped], which is Christ."

The reasoning of the apostle, here as elsewhere, only appears weak to presumptuous men, who are unbelieving and so must fail to understand God's mind in it. Where souls accept the divine authority, not only of the Epistle to the Galatians, but of Genesis which the Epistle assumes, all is seen to be bright, profoundly true, and of living interest. It is no question of mere grammar, but of context; which, in the promise that distinctly contemplates Israel, makes much of numbers; whereas in that which introduces the Gentiles for blessing, it says not a word about anything of the kind, but only of one, "thy seed." It was a covenant confirmed beforehand by God; and the law, which came after four hundred and thirty years, does not annul it, so as to make the promise of no effect. Nor does the law clash with the promise: each has its own object; the one, a ministry of death and condemnation; the other, of blessing by faith. Mixing the two does the mischief; and this is exactly to what man is prone, and what Scripture ever explicitly sets aside.

In the light of New Testament facts, how the types of Genesis come out! The woman's Seed is surely man, yet more than man, bruised to bruise utterly and forever the old serpent the devil, fallen angel as he is. Abraham's Seed, foreshown in Isaac dead and risen in figure, portrays the Deliverer in the wholly new condition of man beyond death, able to bless Gentiles in sovereign grace no less than Jews, and unite them to Himself in heavenly glory. And this is just what the gospel now reveals to faith.

The closing verses of the chapter bring before us a brief sketch of Nahor's line (Abraham's brother), whose son Bethuel was father of Rebekah through Milcah the wife, not through Reumah the concubine. How closely this connects itself with Isaac's future we shall have before us in due time, carrying out the purpose of God.

÷07 Sarah Dead and Buried

Genesis 23

Here is given the decease of Sarah with her burial, to which inspiration devotes a considerable place. Is there no instruction beyond the affecting moral that is before all eyes? Where in all the Old Testament is there such a picture of a husband's sorrow in providing a burial place for the departed wife? Where of a father's care and faith in the call of a bride for his son, as in the chapter that follows? We have looked into the deep typical lessons of the chapter that precedes, and we hope to weigh that which is hardly less to be questioned in that which is now to occupy us. Is it to be assumed that our chapter is altogether devoid of similar truth below the surface? Let us at least seek to learn of God through His Word.

"And the life of Sarah was a hundred and twenty-seven years — the years of Sarah's life. And Sarah died in Kirjath-Arba, that [is] Hebron in the land of Canaan. And Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. And Abraham rose up from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying, I [am] a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a sepulchre with you, that I may bury my dead before me. And the sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him, Hear us, my lord: thou [art] a prince of God among us; in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead: none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre for burying thy dead. And Abraham rose up and bowed himself to the people of the land, to the sons of Heth, and spoke to them, saying, If it be your will that I should bury my dead from before me, hear me, and entreat for me Ephron son of Zohar, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which is his, which [is] at the end of his field; for the full price let him give it to me among you for a possession of a sepulchre. And Ephron was sitting among the sons of Heth. And Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the ears of the sons of Heth, of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying, No, my lord; hear me. The field give I thee; and the cave that [is] in it, to thee I give it; before the eyes of the sons of my people I give it thee: bury thy dead. And Abraham bowed himself before the people of the land; and he spoke to Ephron in the ears of the people of the land, saying, But if only thou wouldst listen to me, I give the price of the field: take [it] of me, and I will bury my dead there. And Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, My lord, hearken to me. A field of four hundred shekels of silver, what [is] that between me and thee? bury therefore thy dead. And Abraham hearkened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the price that he had named in the ears of the sons of Heth  -  four hundred shekels of silver current with the merchant. So the field of Ephron which [was] at Machpelah, which [was] before Mamre, the field and the cave that [was] in it, and all the trees that [were] in the field, that [were] in all its borders round about, were assured to Abraham for a possession before the eyes of the sons of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city. And after this Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field at Machpelah, opposite to Mamre, that [is] Hebron in the land of Canaan. And the field and the cave that was in it were assured to Abraham for a possession of a sepulchre by the sons of Heth" (vv. 1-20).

The sketch is so simple and so graphic as to need few words. Abraham's grief lives before us, as does his noble bearing in such circumstances with the sons of Heth for a cave wherein to bury his dead. It was a delicate affair. For the Hittites were touched, courteous, and friendly; while Abraham, resolute to plead for such, as in *Gen 14:24*, was no less resolute to appropriate nothing now as then for himself. Even in the presence of death would he preserve the place of pilgrim and stranger in their midst. He would pay in full for a possession, not of a mansion nor of an estate, but of a sepulchre. Ephron, oriental-like, set his price abundantly high for those days; and Abraham weighed it in presence of all, the then mode of lawful and sure conveyance with a curious anticipation of modern particularity. Otherwise the patriarch had no inheritance in the promised land, no, not so much as to set his foot on, whatever argument the late Bishop of Lincoln set up to the contrary. Even for a grave he would not be unequally yoked with unbelievers; for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion has light with darkness? Abraham would be separate and touch no unclean thing. Is this scorn or pride? Not so, but subjection to God, and maintenance of His honour by His children, however weak and unworthy, as some are, but all ought to be, quite willing to allow.

Typically viewed, Sarah was the free mother of the child of promise, in contrast with the bondmaid and her son cast out already, according to the doctrine of Galatians 4. Now that the Son is seen dead and risen, even that covenant, which Sarah represents, passes away, in order to bring in a yet higher counsel of the Father who would call a bride for His Son in the heavenlies. As surely as Sarah dies, she will rise again; and only then will that covenant of promise and liberty be valid for Israel, who meanwhile are blinded by unbelief and find their pattern in Hagar and her son. Thus did the Jews lose for this long season their privileges; for they were sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with Abraham. But rejecting the one true Seed, their own Messiah, through whom alone any and all could be blessed, they have stamped upon them more deeply than ever Lo-Ammi. Yes, Sarah is dead; and as the next development of rising purposes, we shall see Rebekah called from a far land and conducted across the desert to be the spouse of Isaac in Canaan.

÷08 The Bride Called for Isaac

*Gen 24:1-9*

Genesis 22 gave us the new and unique position of the son and heir, dead and risen, the figure of the infinite reality where the Antitype was also the Lamb that God would provide Himself for a burnt-offering; Genesis 23 the passing away, at this point of God's ways, of Sarah, the mother of the child of promise. For those who ought to have received the dead and risen Messiah stumbled at the stumbling-stone, and by their blind insubjection put off for the present the application of a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. As regards the ancient people, it was dead through their unbelief, though grace would not permit it to fail for a godly remnant and for those of the nations who believe the gospel. That blood, which the Jews imprecated as a curse on themselves and on their children (*Mat 26:28*), is to Christians the cup of blessing which they bless, Christ's blood of the new covenant that was shed for many unto remission of sins. Its literal terms and full extent for the earth await the chosen nation to whom it is pledged by Him who will infallibly accomplish it another day. Not more surely shall Sarah rise again than the covenant of grace shall be made good to Israel, notwithstanding all that they have done, when they shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in Jehovah's name. Then will he execute judgment and righteousness in the land, and Jehovah shall be King over all the earth, in that day there shall be one Jehovah and His name one.

But it is a wholly different prospect here, the no less distinct figure of the new and heavenly relationship which grace forms, while the Jew abides in unbelief and therefore postpones the magnificent scenes of predicted glory for Israel and all the Gentiles in that day. It is the call of a bride for Isaac out of that world from which Abraham had been called. The trusty servant, described in terms quite exceptional, "The eldest of his house, who ruled over all that he had," is charged with the delicate mission of finding her out according to God, and of guiding her across the desert to the bridegroom.

And Abraham was old, advanced in age; and Jehovah had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said to his servant, the eldest in his house, that ruled over all that he had, "Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and I will make thee swear by Jehovah, the God of the heavens and the God of the earth, that thou take not a wife for my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; but thou shalt go to my land and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac. And the servant said to him, Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land: must I, then, bring thy son again anywise to the land from which thou camest out? And Abraham said to him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again. Jehovah, the God of the heavens, who took me out of my father's house and out of the land of my nativity, and who spake to me and who swore to me, saying, To thy seed will I give this land; even he will send his angel before thee; and thou shalt take a wife thence for my son. And if the woman be not willing to follow thee, then shalt thou be clear from this mine oath: only bring not my son thither again. And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter" (vv. 1-9).

No one denies that in the letter the aged father was devising in a grave and pious spirit to help his son Isaac in the most important step of a life, not merely momentous to the Jewish seed which had earthly blessing divinely promised, and in the highest degree, but yet more bound up with still better blessing in his own seed to all the families of the earth. Nor was Abraham content with the long proved fidelity of him who had from earlier days earned and deserved his confidence. Here and now only he exacts of Eliezer an oath of peculiar solemnity, that the bride taken should be, not from the accursed race of Canaan, but out of that land from which he himself had been called, and of his kindred. But he who weighs the typical meaning which the New Testament authoritatively gives to the previous history, as we have seen, will not be disposed to deny it here; where the exceeding fullness and character of the narrative suggest a deeper import, which is itself the certain truth of God, and fits it here, as nowhere else, precisely answering to the new history, but of more exalted application and of the nearest interest to the Christian reader.

"I will make thee swear by Jehovah, the God of the heavens and the God of the earth, that thou take not for my son a wife of the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell; but to my country and to my kindred thou shalt go and take a wife for my son Isaac." It is well to remark that here the divine title is most noteworthy, besides proving the groundlessness of Astruc's conjecture which has exercised so powerful a spell over rationalist minds. The nearest to it in the book of Genesis, (both without parallel in the Pentateuch) is found in Genesis 14. There "God Most High" is in conjunction with "Possessor of the heavens and earth"; and the evidence points to the days of the kingdom as yet future, when it will not be merely the "order" in contrast with Aaron's, but the true Melchizedek will exercise His priesthood in blessing the victors at the end of the age, and the heavens and earth shall be united instead of severed as they are still.

In Genesis 24 before us "the God of the heavens and the God of the earth" presents the universal rights of the only true God, revealed fully and only when the Son of God is come, and He dead and risen brings out all the truth distinctly in connection with the call of the church, the bride of Christ. Hence, in Ephesians 3, the apostle speaks of the mystery or secret hid in God who created all things (v. 9) and the Father from whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named (v. 14), one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in us (or, you) all (*Eph 4:6*). Thus it is not only life and incorruption which are now brought to light in Christ Jesus, but the highest and widest rights of God in His universal supremacy, universal providence, and yet the truest intimacy of relationship with His children, and them all. Now if God intended to communicate this as far as a type (only intelligible with the Antitype), where could it be fittingly introduced but here)? Truly God's ways are as marvellous as blessed; and His Word as here is the revelation of them, as also of His counsels and nature. Of this rationalism is profoundly ignorant, and necessarily so because it is rationalism, and not faith.

The answer of the servant and the reply confirm the force of another and connected truth. "Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land: must I then bring thy son again to the land whence thou camest out? And Abraham said to him, Beware thou, that thou bring not again my son thither." Here we see the utmost stress (and it is reiterated once more) laid on Isaac's abiding in Canaan. There only must he be found; and he only of all the patriarchs. For as his father came out of Mesopotamia, so did he for a time go down into Egypt; and again his son Jacob returned to Mesopotamia, and also went down into Egypt, and died there. But Isaac alone must and did never leave the land of Canaan. In this he most strikingly represents Christ after He died, rose, and ascended; in which condition He becomes Head of the church, and the Bridegroom. He is emphatically the heavenly (δ επουράυιος). God makes Christians "heavenly," not yet as a displayed fact (for we still bear the image of the man of dust), but as a spiritual title and reality, on which we are called to walk while in the world, but not of it as He was not. Compare *Eph 1:3-20*;*Eph 2:6*; *Eph 3:10*; *Eph 4:8-16*; *Eph 5:25-32*; *Eph 6:12*; also *1Co 15:48-49*.

Hence Abraham continues, "Jehovah, the God of the heavens, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my kindred, and who spoke to me and who swore to me, saying, To thy seed will I give this land; he will send his angel before thee; and thou shalt take thence a wife to my son. And if the woman be not willing to follow thee, then shalt thou be clear from this mine oath: only my son bring not again thither." And so the servant swore. The Head given to the church remains heavenly in the most exclusive terms and according to the most distinct and persistent purpose. And such is the clear and sure doctrine, which the apostle was the inspired vessel to communicate. It was a secret revealed (*Eph 3:6*) to the holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; but Paul became minister of the church (*Col 1:25*) according to the stewardship given him to complete the Word of God in this respect; as in fact no other writes of the church as he does. Christ is glorified in heaven to be the church's Head; and He is there only while the body is formed in the power of the Holy Spirit sent for this end. "As He is, so are we in this world." The Christian, the church, is called to manifest the mind of heaven on earth. But the ground of this is that we are already joined to the Lord, one spirit with Him who is on high. Thus it is that we characteristically know Him; no mote according to flesh, but dead, risen, and ascended (2 Corinthians 5).

Here the shortcoming of Christendom through unbelief is all but universal, though in varying shape. Some are so dark as not to comprehend what answers to Hagar and her child expelled from the house of Abraham. The bondmaid covenant of Sinai is still their rule of life, though they deny not the birth of the true son and heir. Others advance no farther than the covenant of promise in Sarah and Isaac, though they see that the son of the bondmaid cannot be heir with the son of the free-woman. They believe in the atonement; but they have no right apprehension of the new place of the Son as dead, risen, and associated only with heaven. Yet this alone, as we have seen in the figure, gives the proper blessedness of the Christian in union with Christ, by virtue of the Holy Spirit given to us on the ground of His sacrificial death, where He is, being Himself on high till He comes to take us to the Father's house. Hence as the heavenly relationship of the church is unknown as Christ's body and bride, as the truth of having died with Christ and being risen with Him and seated in Him in the heavenlies, is utterly vague and uninfluential, the door lies open to the rudiments of the world, as well as philosophy and the vain deceit of rationalism; hence the baptized set their mind like Jews or Gentiles on the things upon the earth instead of those above, where Christ sits at God's right hand. They are so ignorant of the power of Christ's resurrection and ascension, that they cannot read its wondrous fore- shadowing in the first book of the Old Testament. Thank God, they do not deny His death adumbrated in the sentence on Isaac, though only effected and forever efficacious in the cross of Christ. But they wholly fail to appropriate the new standing prefigured in Isaac risen and never quitting Canaan, while the bride is being called from the world to join him there.

Let us recall the beautiful conformity of the Acts of the Apostles, and of God's ways in this connection. After Christ went to heaven, Peter preached to the Jews in Solomon's porch, as recorded in Acts 3, and pointed out how the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob glorified His Servant Jesus whom they denied and slew. Yet did he assure them that, on their repentance and conversion, not only should their sins be blotted out but God would send Jesus who was fore-appointed for them, in order to bring in times of restoring all things as His prophets had ever declared. But the Jews sealed their unbelief; and thus the new covenant lapsed as far as the people were concerned; and an apostle was called by the Lord in heaven to preach to the Gentiles and reveal the full heavenly place of the church, one with Christ above. This it is which is called "the mystery," or secret hidden of old when God gave promises and prophecies. In the Epistles of Paul we have the mystery revealed as to Christ and as to the church.

*Gen 24:10-21*

In the early verses we have the most specific directions laid down by the father for his son's bride. Now we learn how faithful was "his servant, the elder of his house who ruled over all that he had," in giving effect to his will. It is he who becomes the most prominent throughout the chapter till the bride joins the bridegroom. This is unmistakable typically. As surely as we behold the Father seeking a bride, the church of God for Christ His Son, all the while and only in the heavenlies, so do we recognize the sending and action of the Holy Spirit in this signally honoured and trusty servant. In fact his unstinted and unwavering subjection, so far from being a difficulty or objection, is what the type required. For just as the Son became bondman to do the Father's will and secure His glory, so does the Holy Spirit subserve the Son as well as the Father. Thus we read in John 14-16 and other Scriptures. Take this one: "He shall not speak from himself; but whatsoever things he shall hear he will speak; and he will report to you things that are to come. He will glorify me: for he shall receive of mine and will report to you. All things that the Father hath are mine," etc. For the Christian, for the church, we need and have the Holy Spirit as well as the Word. The Spirit given is our distinctive privilege and power.

"And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master and departed (now all the treasure of his master was under his hand); and he rose and went to Aram-naharaim [High land of the two rivers], to the city of Nahor. And he made the camels kneel down outside the city by a well of water, at evening time, at the time that women go out to draw [water]. And he said, Jehovah, God of my master Abraham, meet me, I pray thee, this day, and do kindness to my master Abraham. Behold, I stand by the fountain of water; and daughters of men of the city come out to draw water. And let it come to pass [that] the maiden, to whom I shall say, Let down, I pray thee, thy pitcher, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also, [be] she whom thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and hereby shall I know that thou hast done kindly to my master. And it came to pass before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah wife of Nahor, brother of Abraham, and her pitcher [she had] upon her shoulder. And the maiden was very fair to look on, a virgin, and no man had known her; and she went down to the fountain, and filled her pitcher, and came up. And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me sip, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher. And she said, Drink, my lord; and she hasted, and let down her pitcher on her hand, and gave him drink. And when she had done giving him drink, she said, Also for thy camels I will draw, until they have done drinking. And she hasted, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw, and drew for all his camels. And the man wondered at her, holding his peace to know whether Jehovah prospered his way or not" (vv. 10-21).

How simply beautiful is the picture here presented of the walk by faith, not by sight or appearance, to which the church is called, and those who individually compose it! In no other part of Genesis, nay of the Old Testament, can one recall a scene so capable of foreshadowing it as what we have now before us. Dependent and confiding prayer characterizes it. So we find repeatedly in the Acts of the Apostles; even when not exactly "praying in the Holy Spirit," we are encouraged in every thing to make our requests known to God. Compare Ananias in *Act 9:10-17*, and Paul in *Act 22:17-21*; and that "free address," which is the exact import of the word translated "prayer" in *1Ti 4:5*. Christ come, and His work, bring us into the reality of what becomes us before God. Even if we were not so weak and ignorant as we have learned ourselves to be, how blessed to have God near and faithful in fully proved love, so that we may bring before Him "every thing" great or small! How dishonouring Him to trust in our wisdom or common sense! See too how the servant keeps before him and puts forward the promises to Abraham, the special relationship grace had already formed as a place for present need, and especially in what had been pressed as of the profoundest moment. Guidance of the Spirit is precious but guaranteed. As many as are led by God's Spirit, these are sons of God. It was not a mere sign he asked as Gideon in Judges 6, 7, but the very bridal person herself of whom he was in quest, not for himself, but for his master's son. The honour and love of faith filled his heart.

Nor had he long to wait. "Before he had done speaking," the maiden comes. Freely he had asked, boldly and minutely had he ventured to prescribe. But this reckoning on Himself is most pleasing to God, if unbelief dares to deny it as presumptuous. It was really prayer of rare simplicity, of striking suitability, of entire confidence; and the immediateness of the answer anticipated the day when righteousness shall reign, and Jehovah will hear while His people are yet speaking. So it is now through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, when we have the new covenant in spirit if not in letter, and the Messiah not present, it is true in earthly power and glory, but known on high in a yet surpassing glory.

Accepting the answer, "the servant ran to meet" Rebekah. There was no hesitation but alacrity; for he knew whom he had believed, and laid before her what he had already asked of Abraham's God, Jehovah. And Rebekah with no less alacrity responded graciously to his request uttered to her, and to that which he had said only to God in caring for "all his camels." No wonder that he wondered at her, silently waiting for full assurance (as he was but the type of a greater Servant), whether Jehovah prospered his way or not. Even our Lord expressed fully His appreciation of the Syro-Phoenician woman's faith, and wondered at the Gentile centurion's, though it was His own grace which produced faith in both. The servant could and would not disguise from his heart that God had acted according to his heart's desire for his master and his master's son; and he looks for yet more to His own glory.

*Gen 24:22-29*

There was astonishment in the servant's mind at the immediate and punctual answer to his prayer. To call it unbelief is unwarranted. It is the picture of the Holy Spirit's working in man, which never wrought so fully as since redemption, and never will work so again while he is on the earth. But if the servant rightly felt the gravity of the oath taken of him by his master, and the delicacy of the task for his master's son, he was deeply and believingly impressed with the speedy fulfilment of all he had laid before Jehovah, his master's God. The first sight of her could not but impress him. Still more was he struck, when, running to meet her, and asking as he had been led, she simply and completely responded to his petition just spread before God. Even our Lord, perfect man as He alone was, "wondered" at the Gentile centurion's faith. If this expressed His delight, where not a particle of unbelief could be, we need not disparage the servant's "wondering" at her, when he received so marked and ready a token of favour on his mission, "remaining silent to know whether Jehovah made his journey prosperous or not." His action that follows is the best proof of his faith. "He that believeth shall not make haste"; and this absence of the haste, into which flesh rushes, is what really comes out in one content to take a single step at a time, as becomes man however blessed.

"And it came to pass, when the camels had done drinking, that the man took a gold ring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets of ten [shekels] of gold, and said, Whose daughter [art] thou? tell me, I pray thee. Is there in thy father's house room for us to lodge in? And she said to him, I [am] daughter of Bethuel, son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor. And she said to him, [There is] both straw and much provender with us, and room to lodge in. And the man bowed down and paid worship to Jehovah, and said, Blessed [be] Jehovah, God of my master Abraham, who hath not withdrawn his mercy and his truth from my master; I [being] in the way, Jehovah hath led me to the house of my master's brethren" (vv. 22-29).

What a testimony to "the riches of grace" we have here from the outset! Where in all the Bible do we find anything to compare with those precious gifts on such an occasion or at so early a stage of it? The Christian reader can read the counterpart in Ephesians 1. There as here we have purpose in the early verses, followed up by the boon of redemption in verse 7 — the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of God's grace, before the proper privileges of union with Christ are spoken of, or those peculiar gifts which He gave as ascended on high, the type of which we shall not fail to see later on. So, anticipating the gospel of God's grace, our Lord shows how the Father receives the returning prodigal: the best robe, a ring on his hand, shoes on his feet, and a feast of joy greater far to Him than to the son thus wondrously received or to any that shared the feast. The gospel accompanies but precedes the church; and the call of grace is marked variously in both. Can any with open or intelligent mind fail to trace in our chapter the divine design, which is the constant and unmistakable witness of inspired Scripture, and which makes it differ from every other book?

But in the history before us, how confirmatory was the maiden's reply to the enquiry of the servant! Truly dependent on God, he tries even the brightest concurrence of circumstances by the word which guided his way and defined his aim. This does not suit the self-confidence of man; but is it not the one path, the inalienable duty, of the saint? For we walk by faith, not by sight. The Holy Spirit, as He thus led the Lord Jesus always and perfectly while here below, deigns now to conduct us after the same blessed pattern. What Rebekah said fell altogether and distinctly within the requirements of Abraham in the bride he sought for his son Isaac. No doubt her character even in this brief interview shone out in love and lowliness, in unaffected respect and readiest service, a meet daughter-in-law for Abraham, a pure and gentle wife for Isaac. Yet this was not everything that the servant sought, true to the interests of the son and to the words laid down by the father. "Whose daughter art thou?" Was she of Abraham's kindred? Her answer was just what he sought, and she assures him and his retinue of a suitable reception.

This draws out another characteristic in the account. For the man bowed down and paid worship to Jehovah. Worship, worship in spirit and truth, distinguishes the Christian and the church. So the Lord told the Samaritan woman. The hour for it is come and now is. The true worshippers worship the Father in spirit and truth, in contrast with Jerusalem no less than the mountain of Gerizim. A people in the flesh, a worldly sanctuary, earthly priests, material sacrifices and offerings, are unacceptable. The Father seeks and has children. They are sons, not distant bondmen nor yet infants; but redeemed and with the Spirit of adoption they cry, Abba, Father. Nor is it less true of the church than of the individual; as we read in 1 Corinthians 14 where the Lord enjoins that all be with the spirit and with the understanding also, prayer, and singing, and blessing, and giving of thanks. For not literal circumcision is now of account; but we, Christians, are the circumcision, who worship by God's Spirit, and boast in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence or trust in flesh. Forms avail not, nothing but Christ, our life.

And the man said, for it is intelligent worship, "Blessed be Jehovah, God of my master Abraham, who hath not withdrawn from my master his mercy and his truth; I in the way, he hath led me to the house of my master's brethren." It is confiding and adoring acknowledgement of His faithful goodness. So in our case the Son of God is come and has given us an understanding to know Him that is True; and we are in Him that is True, in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life; without which, and the Holy Spirit given now that He is gone, we could in no way rise to such worship. But what a wondrous prefiguration of it is the scene before us! It is just where it should be; nor is there a scene like it elsewhere.

*Gen 24:28-33*

Hitherto we have seen the lovely prefiguration of the Father's purpose in calling out of the world a bride for His Son. In this point how sedulously and solemnly the Son is kept from all direct relation with the world. He is seen in a heavenly position exclusively. Nor is less clear the place which is given to the chief servant of the house in executing this charge of entire devotedness, distinct dependence in the prayer of faith, and in ready attitude of worship. These are exactly the qualities looked for in, and suited to the operation of, the Spirit in Christ's body and bride. As Rebekah at once and signally met this purpose from the first, we are now to learn how all that follows was furthered by grace to the same end.

"And the maiden ran and told her mother's house according to these words. And Rebekah had a brother, and his name [was] Laban; and Laban ran out to the man to the well. And it came to pass when he saw the ring and bracelets on his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, Thus spoke the man to me, that he came to the man, and behold, he was standing by the camels at the well. And he said, Come in, blessed of Jehovah: why standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for camels. And the man came into the house, and ungirded the camels; and he gave the camels straw and provender, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him. And there was set before him to eat; but he said, I will not eat until I have told my business. And he said, Speak on" (vv. 28-33).

The simple-hearted alacrity of Rebekah is here as apparent as her thoughtful courtesy and kindness before. Such should be the church, and the Christian now. Blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ, are we not individually and collectively bound to reflect the grace of Him to whom we belong in His sovereign goodness? Freely we received; freely should we give. Far from us should be the proud forbidding independence of a Jew, the ever craving unsatisfied covetousness of a Gentile. Yet was the maiden quick to discern the signs of the crisis for her, and ran to tell "her mother's house." This was in keeping with propriety, even if her father were not throughout singularly in the background: so much so, that some have ventured to think that the name after Laban's (v. 50) may have been a younger brother rather than the father. Certain it is that Laban is the active leading man of the house from first to last. Here he ran out to the man by the well or fountain.

Nor is it a casual circumstance that we read of Laban's ready proffer of hospitality when he saw the ring and the bracelets upon his sister's hands, and when he heard her report of what Abraham's envoy said to her. Forthwith he came to the man still standing by the camels at the fountain, and gave him a welcome in terms no less cordial than pious, as such characters are apt to say when sure of honour and advantage accruing. The history shows subsequently that Laban was an overreaching man and an idolater. We are compelled therefore to infer from the language here employed that the sight of the jewels given to his sister, and the man's words about his master, powerfully acted on one whose motives were far from unselfish. His salutation was winning however: "Come in, blessed of Jehovah: why standest thou without? for I have prepared the house and room for the camels. "

The remarkable procedure of Abraham's servant is what we have to notice for our edification. He came into the house, ungirded the camels, and had straw and provender given, with water to wash the feet of himself and those with him. But when meat was set before him, he refused to eat till he told his story. This is not at all in accordance with the usual way, especially in the East, and after so long a journey. His errand is all-absorbing. He would not allow his own ease, or the customs of men, to come first or make the way for what he had at heart. He was there for his master's sake. Word and oath bound him, as well as honour and love for his master's son. He would not even seem to let their interests be secondary. "I will not eat until I have told my business."

So it is most exclusively and in a way altogether worthy of the Father and the Son, that the Holy Spirit devotes Himself to His quest and care of the Bride. We know that all things work together for good to those that love God, to those that are called according to purpose, as the apostle says inRomans 8. But what should be our confidence when we also know the divine Person of the Paraclete sent by the Father in the Son's name to teach us all things, and remind us of all that Christ said, the words that are spirit and are life, and many other things which could not be borne before redemption? What new and heavenly relationships, as of Christ's body and bride! What light of His heavenly glory! What announcement of the things to come! If the Saviour's meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him and to finish His work, the blessed Spirit of God is no less sedulous in speaking, not from Himself, but all that whatsoever He should hear; for He it is who here and now glorifies the Son.

*Gen 24:34-49*

This portion is entirely devoted to his intervention whom the father sent to fetch a suited bride for the son and heir.

"And he said, I 1am] Abraham's servant. And Jehovah hath blessed my master greatly, and he is become great; and he hath given him sheep and cattle, and silver and gold, and bondmen and bondwomen, and camels and asses. And Sarah, my master's wife, bore a son to my master after she had grown old, and to him hath he given all that he hath. And my master made me swear, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife for my son of the daughters of a Canaanite, in whose land I am dwelling; but thou shalt by all means go to my father's house and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son. And I said to my master, Perhaps the woman will not follow me. And he said to me, Jehovah before whom I have walked will send his angel with thee, and prosper thy way, that thou mayest take a wife for my son of my kindred and out of my father's house. Then shalt thou be quit of mine oath, when thou shalt be come to my kindred; and if they give thee not, thou shalt be quit of mine oath. And I came this day to the fountain, and said, Jehovah, God of my master Abraham, if now thou wilt prosper my way on which I go, behold, I stand by the fountain of water, and let it come to pass that the damsel who cometh forth to draw, and to whom I shall say, Give me I pray, a little water out of thy pitcher to drink, and she shall say to me, Both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels — that she [shall] be the woman whom Jehovah hath appointed for my master's son. Before I ended speaking in my heart, behold, Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder, and went down to the fountain, and drew; and I said to her, Give me, I pray thee to drink. And she hasted and let down her pitcher from her, and said, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also. And I drank; and she gave the camels drink also. And I asked her and said, Whose daughter [art] thou? And she said, Bethuel's daughter (Nahor's son) whom Milcah bore to him. And I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her hands. And I bowed down and worshipped Jehovah, and blessed Jehovah, God of my master Abraham, who led me in a way of truth to take my master's brother's daughter for his son. And now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me; and I will turn to the right hand or to the left" (vv. 34-49).

Is it not well to notice the immense place which Scripture gives to him who was sent from the father and the son to make good the purpose of finding and bringing back the chosen bride? Various types present the bride in Old Testament Scriptures. In the last book of Scripture (Revelation 19) the New Testament discloses her in her heavenly place before the millennium as the Lamb's wife and in the eternal state (*Rev 21:2*), no less than as the holy Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God in her millennial relation to the nations and the kings of the earth (v. 9). We have the type of Eve with her admirable characteristics as Adam's counterpart at the beginning of this book, and at the end we have the wife Pharaoh gave to Joseph when exalted to administer the kingdom in his rejection by and separation from his brethren according to the flesh. So we see also in Moses (Exodus 2) before the time came for their deliverance from the king and land of Egypt. Jacob goes off himself and marries in a way wholly distinct in Haran, and through Laban's craft has another palmed on him before he received the Rachel of his heart, who in no way prefigures the church but Israel, Rachel weeping for her children, but with hope for her latter end. Sarah too not at all sets forth the calling of the bride, but the mother of the child of promise. Ruth again is a special figure, but not of the church any more than is the object of the king's love in the Song of Songs, the Psalms, or the Prophets.

Here is the unique figure of a bride not only called from a distant land in marked contrast with any woman of Canaanitish race, but by the extraordinary mission of the father's servant, the eldest of his house who ruled over all that he had, and with a most solemn pledge and charge, quite unexampled in any other case. And we have already drawn attention to the place it fills, for which no other marriage in Scripture could furnish such a type as this. For it follows the death and resurrection of the son in the "parable" of Genesis 22 as well as the death of Sarah, the figure of the covenant of promise and liberty in contrast with her who is in bondage with her children. Yet even she, the free-woman, disappears to leave room for the bride who is here called.

Again, how striking is the fullness of interest which converges on the trusty servant, and his absorption in caring for the father and the son! We have the whole ground traversed again before the bride's family, and bringing out purpose in the father for the son as nowhere else in this book or anywhere else of old, and devotedness most marked and exclusive on the part of him who was sent to effectuate it! Where is there an approach in another type of God's Word to that personal presence and action of the Holy Spirit which distinguishes the church? The time, the place, the action, the personal interest, the grace in giving, the prominence assigned to prayer and worship, the absolute carrying out of the word or charge, are all in perfect keeping with that which it pleased God to represent here, and here only in the same fullness. Is this all, is any part of it, casual?

Examine the entire range of types (and there are not a few which bring out the object of Christ's love for heaven); but where is one which so fully and distinctively presents her calling, as Rebekah does? Again, where, save here, have we closely connected with the bride the living representative of that other Advocate, who identifies Himself with the honour and the interests of the Father and the Son, in effectively gaining the bride, then in guiding and guarding through the many trials and the imminent dangers of the desert, safely to join the Bridegroom? How admirably he pleads for those absent, whose envoy he was! As he lost not a moment in engaging the damsel's heart for his master's son, so he hears of no delay in telling his errand to those who might naturally detain, if they did not deny. No picture in other Scriptures is comparable with this if divinely intended, as we assuredly believe, to set forth, not merely efficient operation, but personal presence and care in the highest degree. And in no part of the Old Testament was this so requisite and significant as in the scene graphically put before us here.

*Gen 24:50-53*

We may observe how Eliezer acts with the decision given by a single eye. Not only have we prayer in the Spirit, and worship; but there is a walk singularly devoted to the will and word of his master who sent him on this mission for his son. On this he is exclusively set. It was quite outside the world and its objects. Eliezer will not swerve from his errand; he allows no need of the body to interfere with its being the first object before him: to it all other claims must bend.

"And Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from Jehovah: we cannot speak to thee bad or good. Behold, Rebekah [is] before thee: take [her], and go away; and let her be wife of thy master's son, as Jehovah hath said. And it came to pass, when Abraham's servant heard their words, that he bowed down to the earth before Jehovah. And the servant brought forth vessels of silver and vessels of gold, and clothing, and gave [them] to Rebekah; he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things" (vv. 50-53).

It is just so for the church and the Christians. The Holy Spirit given and indwelling acts by the Father's will for the glory of Christ whose bride is the church, whose member is every Christian. He is a Spirit not of cowardice nor of indifference, but of power and of love and of a sound mind; above all He is given to be with us forever and in us to glorify Him who glorified the Father.

Is it objected that this is to confound the Holy Spirit with the church and the Christian? It is really scriptural truth, not confusion. The objection flows from failure to discern that it is of the essence of the Spirit's action to merge Himself as it were in the object He employs or abides in. Hence every good fruit, of which He is the source and power, is set to the object's account. Indeed the case is equally true of those possessed by evil spirits. Thus the two demoniacs in *Mat 8:29* cried out, saying, "What have we to do with thee, Son of God? Didst thou come here before the season to torment us?" Still clearer is this quasi-identification expressed in *Mar 5:2*, where, when asked his name, the chief of the two answers, "Legion is my name, because we are many." No less plainly does it appear in *Luk 8:28-29*, where the possessed said, "I beseech thee torment me not"; and the evangelist continues: "For He had commanded the unclean spirit to go out from the man." Hence we see how profoundly correct it is in the history that Eliezer, typifying the Holy Spirit's action, should represent the church and the Christian also.

We can scarce fail to note too how God controls hearts as well as circumstances in pursuance of the design in hand. It is not that difficulties or dangers were lacking. They were many and manifold, to exercise faith in Himself who in the face of contrary appearances knows all beforehand, and works all things according to the counsel of His own will. We have no reason to accredit the zeal of Laban and Bethuel for the divine glory; yet they fell in at once with what was set before them, confessing that the thing was of Jehovah which left them without a word to oppose. Their yielding at once, their recognition that Abraham's word was Jehovah's doing, drew out the fresh adoration of Eliezer.

Then follows the bestowal of proper bridal gifts of silver and of gold, with clothing, for Rebekah, as well as precious things for those connected with her. It will be found by those who investigate symbolic usage in Scripture (for example in the tabernacle's construction), that, as silver answers to divine grace, so does gold to divine righteousness. This certainly is plain in the Antitype of

Ephesians 4 where to each one of us, it is said, was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men . . . And he gave some, apostles, and some, prophets, and some, evangelists, and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints unto (or with a view to) work of ministering, unto edifying the body of Christ." Could any type be more appropriate in this place? Here only, where it was so needful to complete the picture, it is given with marked care. Never were given gifts so distinctly flowing from the grace of God in Christ, and based on God's righteousness.

The power of Christ's victory will be fully and in many other ways manifested in heaven and earth another day. Meanwhile these gifts are the witness of His love to the Christian and to the church, delivered already from the enemy's power. He, the ascended Man, gave them to men; and this in virtue of His previous descent in humiliation the human victims of Satan's malice and of their own folly and sin. All is for the perfecting of the saints unto ministerial work and unto edifying Christ's body; all looks on to the bright future when Christ will present to Himself the church glorious, having no spot, wrinkle, or any of such things, but that it should be holy and unblemished.

*Gen 24:54-60*

Very unusual in the type are the marks of a marriage altogether extraordinary in itself. After a long journey, and even without such a one, how strange to refuse to eat, before the errand was told! A distinguished commentator remarks that his story seems superfluous. Far from this, it was in perfect keeping with the business in hand: and every part of his narrative to the household conveyed grounds of the nearest interest and of the deepest moment.

If he was the father's servant and devoted to the son's honour, God in His covenant name was before his heart from first to last. He, Jehovah, it was who had so greatly blessed; He directed his master in the oath exacted to take no daughter of the Canaanites for the heir, only from his father's house and kindred. If election thus dominated, providential mercy would control hearts and circumstances, as indeed was apparent throughout. Prayer was thus stimulated and promptly answered. The desired maiden came before he ended speaking in his heart, met every test with grace proper to her, and convincing to him that she was none other than the woman whom Jehovah appointed for his master's son. Her reply to his question about her parentage sealed the matter, so that he could not hesitate to bestow suited ornaments, and once more bowed down in worship of Jehovah. When they of the house acquiesced in its proceeding from Him and bade the man to take Rebekah to be Isaac's wife, again the servant bowed down to the earth before Jehovah, and the gifts flowed yet more to the bride in particular, but abundantly to all the rest also. It is a unique scene in itself and in what it thus appropriately foreshadows.

"And they did eat and drink, he and the men that were with him, and lodged. And they rose up in the morning; and he said, Send me away to my master. And her brother and her mother said, Let the maiden abide with us days, at least ten; after that she shall go. And he said to them, Hinder me not, seeing Jehovah hath prospered my way; send me away to go to my master. And they said, We will call the maiden, and inquire at her mouth. And they called Rebekah and said to her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go. And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant and his men. And they blessed Rebekah, and said to her, Our sister, become thou thousands of tens of thousands; and may thy seed possess the gate of those that hate them!" (vv. 54-60).

Simple and fitting is the figure of communion with which this account opens: how strikingly is this too in keeping with the church's calling! Never in point of fact could there be full communion of saints till the deliverance came to Christians through the efficacious work of Christ and the new relationships founded on it. Hence the picture given in Acts 2 from the day of Pentecost. "And they continued stedfastly in the teaching of the apostles, and the fellowship, the breaking of the bread, and the prayers" (v. 42); "And day by day, continuing stedfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they partook of food with gladness and simplicity of heart" (v. 46). In the Lord's Supper, it was the communion of Christ's body and blood; but it pervaded their new relationship even in the most ordinary things of earthly life. And no wonder; for as Christ was their life, so was the Holy Spirit power against the flesh, that faith and hope, peace and love, in active exercise might fill them with joy. Their associations were based on Christ come, and their crown was to be in His coming again.

He Himself so taught and set them. Compare *Luk 12:21-38*. Again, in the parable of the Ten Virgins we have the same principle modified by the Spirit's special aim in the Gospel of Matthew. It is in the middle or Christendom section of our Lord's great prophecy, the first part of which (*Mat 24:1-44*) presents the future for the Jews to the end of the age, and the third (*Mat 25:31* ff.) that of the nations when the new age opens. Nor is it service in its corporate aspect as in the close of Matthew 24, or in variety of gift as in Matthew 25. It is the individual responsibility of the Christian, true or untrue; and its character is that thus, having taken their torches, they went forth to meet the bridegroom. For this nothing but the unction, the power of the Spirit, avails. The tarrying of the bridegroom became the test when all grew drowsy and slept. They all failed in the very aim which drew them out to Christ from every link of flesh or world. Where was their hope, if they no longer went forth to meet Christ? When the cry at midnight awoke them, the prudent alone resumed the early and alone right attitude. For they only had oil in their vessels; and, being ready, they joined Him at His coming, whilst the foolish went in quest of what they never possessed. How could such as these wait for His coming? Only those who had oil in their vessels. Alas! all failed in watching for Him, all fell asleep. But only the prudent had the Spirit's power and presence — oil in their vessels. The foolish had barely the torches of profession without His sustaining energy, and must be thus unready when Christ comes.

Only we have to bear in mind that the exigencies of the parable required, not the bride, but the train of maidens prudent and foolish, so as to represent Christendom; as the type demanded not such a retinue but the bride. Rebekah becomes now the prominent figure, as is the trusty servant of the father and the son, who here puts aside the natural feelings of the family. His one thought is to fulfil his mission. They would have her abide awhile. He, the more he is prospered, will hear of the less delay. The bride has to decide the matter. "And they called Rebekah and said to her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go." Her heart is made up.

So it is, so at least it ought to be, with her who is espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ; whom not having seen she loves, on whom, not now looking but believing, she exults with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of faith, soul-salvation. What is country or kin or father's house, or all other objects combined in comparison with her Bridegroom? What could she say but "I will go"? She falls in with Eliezer's zeal. This report was answered by her faith, hope, and love. Unhesitating decision was the result. She goes forth to meet the bridegroom; and the faithful servant who had won her heart to Isaac, continues his care, and guides her across the desert. "And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant and his men," with abundant blessings, short as they might be of her real position. But the picture is unmistakable. It is the bride, delivered out of the present evil age according to the will of God our Father, to belong to Him who is in heaven, soon to join Him there, typified by the elect maiden who sets out on her pilgrim journey to meet the one to whom she is betrothed.

÷09 The Meeting and the Marriage

*Gen 24:61-67*

How can one be surprised that the Holy Spirit dwells on circumstances such as those we have considered, if they prefigured the call of the bride the Lamb's wife? It is ever and justly a matter of the utmost spiritual interest for all but the thoughtless. What could this be to God if meant to typify the consummation of His Son's love to the church? What of wonder, love, and joy did He not intend for us who read it in the communion with His mind and His grace which faith gives to those so directly and deeply concerned? Here it is pursued to the close.

"And Rebekah arose, and her maids, and they rode upon the camels and followed the man; and the servant took Rebekah and went away. And Isaac had just come from Beer-la-hai-roi; for he was dwelling in the south country. And Isaac had gone out to meditate in the field, toward the beginning of evening. And he lifted up his eyes and saw, and, behold, camels were coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes and saw Isaac, and she lighted off the camel. And she said to the servant, Who [is] the man that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant said, That is my master; and she took the veil and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. And Isaac led her into his mother Sarah's tent; and he took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her. And Isaac was comforted after his mother ['s death]" (vv. 61-67).

Rebekah thus far answers more clearly than any other in Scripture to the requisite type of the church; as Isaac we have seen to set forth in parable (according to the Epistle of the

*Heb 11:19*) the Son risen from the dead, as the Head of the church is and must be. This last section of the chapter carries out the analogy no less than all the rest. Her decision was simple and true. As the servant urged immediateness of departure, so notwithstanding every otherwise strong tie of natural affection, the bride was no less unhesitating: "I will go." There was a most unusual distance that separated, a long journey to be undertaken, dangers of many kinds to be faced, deserts to be crossed; and she was a young maiden under the guidance of one entirely new to her, with no face familiar along the road but of her damsels.

"And Rebekah arose, and her maids, and they rode upon the camels and followed the man; and the servant took Rebekah and went away." What simple faith, and confidence in love, and hope abounding in her breast! There is no such combination of becoming affections in any bride that one could name among the many we read of in the entire Old Testament circle. Dependence on her conductor along the dreary way was what sustained her heart, looking on to him who was about to bring her into the enjoyment of the most endearing of all relationships. What ample and reliable reports the wise and trusty servant, we may and must assume, told her to wean her mind from looking back on her old home and fill her with worthy expectation of such a father and such a son as awaited her!

It is just so that the Holy Spirit deigns to form our renewed souls with the love of Christ, the grace of His life and His death, the glory that was His eternally as a divine Person, and His present exaltation as the risen Man and Head to the church over all things, His coming manifestation in glory when he will make good His title and subject all things even to Him, having abolished all rule and all authority and power, but never changing in that purpose or the nearness of love He has for His bride.

"And Isaac had just come from Beer-la-hai-roi; for he was dwelling in the south country," the Negev. It was Canaan, but that southern district of it which borders on the adjacent wilderness. There he went out to meditate in the field at the eventide. One cannot doubt what occupied the thoughts of the gentle, calm, contemplative spirit. "And he lifted up his eyes and saw, and, behold, camels were coming."

But another also was quick to perceive as they neared the land of promise. For "Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. And she said (or, had said) to the servant, Who is this man that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant said, That is my master; and she took the veil and covered herself."

Yes, the Bridegroom is coming! and the Spirit crying, Come ye forth to meet Him. It is good to work for Him; it is better far to wait for Him; nor is there any more needed guard or more precious guide and spring for us in the Spirit for our work than this blessed hope. We require it in a world of seduction on one side, and of destruction on the other, for purifying ourselves as He is pure; we require it even with consecrated and heavenly affection, however truly we believe on Him and His love, and ourselves love Him. Nothing can make up for this hope if it be lacking or even feeble. "I am jealous over you," said the apostle, "with a jealousy of God; for I espoused you to one husband that I might present you a chaste virgin to Christ."

Rebekah covered herself with her veil; and the instinct should be sure to be for Him only. Thus shall all else be the truer and holier. And our Bridegroom has no such need to hear like Isaac what the servant had to tell; yet He in the communion of the Holy Spirit, one doubts not, takes all interest in her whom He loved as His own for heaven. He had His sorrows over the present death of Israel; but He even had hope in her end, if it be not rather her real beginning. But He loved the church, for which He gave Himself and will present her to Himself glorious.

÷10 Isaac the Heir

*Gen 25:1-6*

We may not now meditate on all this closing scene of Abraham's life, for we are occupied with Isaac. Yet it presents not a little of interest in itself, and in its bearing on eastern races who are to play their part in the glorious days of the future kingdom as they have in the past. Whatever tradition says otherwise, Keturah was not a bondmaid like Hagar, nor was she mother of the promised seed, but of six sons born to the father of the faithful.

"And Abraham took another wife, and her name [was] Keturah. And she bore him Zimran and Jokshan and Medan and Midian and Ishbak and Shuah. And Jokshan begot Sheba and Dedan; and Dedan's sons were Asshurim and Letushim and Leummim; and Midian's sons, Ephah and Epher and Enoch and Abidah and Eldaah: all these [were] Keturah's sons. And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac; and to the sons of the concubines that Abraham had Abraham gave gifts, and, while he yet lived, sent them away from Isaac his son, eastward to the east country" (vv. 1-6)

To none was Abraham indifferent, nor the God of Abraham who will remember them in the coming era of earth's joy and blessedness. But Isaac has a place altogether distinctive. To the rest Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, to whom he "gave all that he had."

Thus Isaac stands before us typically as the manifest heir of all things (*Heb 1:2*). This title, of course, belongs only in its full sense to Jesus the Son of God. As the Creator of all, it is meet that He should inherit all (Hebrews 1); and through redemption and purchase (Hebrews 2) He will take all in the day of displayed glory, as the exalted Son of man. He who humbled Himself as none else ever could is beyond all crowned with glory and honour: though now given, we do not yet see all things put under Him. But unseen of man He has already this supremacy in place and title according toPsalm 8:6 (7) thrice referred to in the New Testament; a supremacy so universal that He only is excepted who subjected all things to Him. God left nothing unsubjected to Christ, as attested by His actual seat on the throne of God, the Father's throne. But this is quite distinct from the intimation of *Psa 110:2*, etc. when the Lord will reign on His own throne and actively subjugate all the enemies whom Jehovah will have made His footstool. For the Lord it is who shall rule in the midst of His enemies and strike through kings in the day of His wrath. It is an evident contrast with all He is doing now at the right hand of the Majesty on high, where till that day He sits during this day of salvation by grace.

It is seasonable to recall here the specific use in the Epistles made of the citation from Psalms 8, where the glorious result of the Son of man's humiliation, announced there for Israel's instruction and joy, is set in the full light of God's final revelation. 1 Corinthians 15 fixes the time and the condition. It is when not only Christ is raised from the dead, but they that are Christ's at His coming. The resurrection of the saints precedes the kingdom there described as dealing with all the enemies, even to annulling death, last enemy though it be. It is the proper work of the risen Man, who when all things shall have been actually subjected to Him, will Himself be subjected to Him that subjected all things to Him, giving up the kingdom to Him that is God and Father, that God [Father, Son, and Holy Spirit] may be all in all.

In *Eph 1:22* the same words are applied to Christ in His present exaltation as given to be Head over all things to the church which is His body. It is not here the risen Man, with those raised at His coming that are His, reigning to the subduing of the last foe, but the mystery about Christ and about the church, the mystery in unique greatness of Christ set over all things heavenly and earthly, and the church united to Him in that supremacy after the nearest sort, He the Head, she the body.

*Heb 2:5-9* completes the divine picture. Here the words from Psalms 8 are again employed to show that the glorification of the Lord Jesus is the pledge of their future fulfilment as a whole, when all things shall be seen put under Him. Also the habitable earth to come is not for angels to reign over. All the universe will be put under the Son of man, as surely as we see Him already crowned.

Thus we have in the last Scripture the blessed fact on which Christianity depends that the once-suffering Son of man is exalted to the highest seat in heavenly glory, the assuring proof that in due time all things shall be seen, as they are not yet seen, to be put under Him. Next, the intermediate Scripture lets us know that meanwhile the church is made one with Him, as the body with its Head, sharing His exaltation over all things. Hence the delay; because, as we are all aware, the body is being now formed while He is seated and waiting in the heavens. The first Scripture accordingly explains that at His coming we shall be raised and like Him, in order to join the risen Lord in reigning with Him over all things, when He undertakes to reduce to subjection all the enemies which are made His footstool. For He will not reign alone. He, the Heir of all things, has joint-heirs; as it is written in Romans 8, the Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God; and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and joint- heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be glorified together with Him. For as *Heb 10:12-13* shows, after having offered one sacrifice for sins, He in perpetuity sat down on God's right hand, from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made a footstool of His feet. Having suffered all and done all for His friends, He will then trample down His foes, while His own reign with Him in glory.

÷11 Abraham Dead, and Isaac Blessed

*Gen 25:7-11*

We have seen the death of Sarah followed by the call of the bride. It was no longer to be "our mother," free as she was, but the type of the church, the Lamb's wife. The dead and risen Heir of all things has a spouse called out from the world and brought into that which figures the heavenlies. The mystery or secret is great, says the apostle, "but I speak as to Christ, and as to the church," its two parts. Though the grace and the glory were intrinsically His only, yet are we called all the more to rejoice; for we delight that the worth is His alone, and this gives all our security to God's glory.

Now we have another weighty and honoured link of the past removed.

"And these [are the] days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, a hundred years and seventy years and five years. And Abraham expired and died in a good old age, an old man and full, and was gathered to his people. And Isaac and Ishmael, his sons, buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in Ephron's field, son of Zohar the Hittite, which [is] before Mamre, the field which Abraham bought of the sons of Heth: there was buried Abraham, and Sarah his wife. And it came to pass after Abraham's death that God blessed Isaac his son; and Isaac dwelt at Beer-la-hai-roi" (vv. 7-11).

Here it is, the depository of promise who departs this life. For many years what had there been of divine moment to record? He was given, comparatively long before, a great place in sending his servant, honoured and trusted in the highest degree, to call and conduct the God-appointed bride for his son. And the son was not only in a new standing since the day of Moriah but exclusively associated with the heavenly land. Promise now, like covenant before, fades away before the brighter light of the mystery and its special relationship. The progenitors of many nations who had Abraham as their father as to the flesh were born, owned, given suitable gifts, and while he lived sent away, that Isaac might abide the undisputed heir of all that he had. Now in a good old age, Abraham too must expire and die. The new things were to receive their honour without a rival.

Little is said of Abraham's funeral, save to mark the link with Sarah's grave, of which the Holy Spirit made so much in Genesis 23. It had its just place for loving remembrance. Faith looks onward to the true hope for "the elders" also. It is the resurrection from out of the dead, which will be the portion of all the righteous departed. Groundless is the unbelief which imagined them in gloom, insensibility, or any other lack, unworthy of His grace who watched in love over their feeble pilgrimage for His name here below. The love of Him who in due time became flesh and died for their sins and ascended on high in resurrection life was no transient thing but eternal. Still their resurrection at His coming, so as to be not only with Him but like Him where He is, will be a blessed accession for them as well as for Him to God's praise; and for this they wait in assured hope and full of glory.

As things were, there could be no spiritual sympathy between Isaac and the others who boasted to be of Abraham's seed. But it is here told us that "Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah," in the field Abraham had purchased of Ephron, where Sarah lay already. The son of the bondmaid was in no way forbidden thus to honour his parent. "Cast out" he must be and was in presence of the child of promise; yet fleshly relationship has its place, and the son of the free in no way disputes it, but is gracious. The feelings of the two before God may have been as widely different as spirit and flesh, by which they were respectively characterized; but there at least around the grave they were together in the sorrow of bereavement, and in loving memory of him who was gathered to his people, "the friend of God."

The conclusion of the statement here vouchsafed is that after this God blessed Isaac, the son of the deceased patriarch; and that he dwelt at Beer-la-hai-roi, the well of the living one that seeth me. Thus Isaac left alone (of the fellow-heirs before him of the same promise) has this marked distinction — God blessing him: a precious reality in a world of curse through sin; and this not in the general form which was extended to those that sprang from Abraham, but as the heir. But there is the remarkable fact noted that he dwelt at the spot first designated by a fountain of water in the wilderness, where Hagar was found of Jehovah's angel, who told her of Ishmael's birth and singular destiny. Indeed He is a God that sees, as surely as He lives. But how different the path which awaited Ishmael and Isaac! Here Jehovah heard Hagar's affliction; here God blessed Isaac, already blessed on a still higher plane and with better blessings in hope.

÷12 The Generations of Ishmael

*Gen 25:12-18*

In Scripture family connection is noticed by the Holy Spirit according to the well known principle stated by the apostle (*1Co 15:46*): not first that which is spiritual, but that which is natural. As we have had the progeny sprung from Keturah, and Isaac in his distinct place, so now we have the sons of Ishmael before the line of promise.

"And these [are] Ishmael's generations, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's bondwoman, bore to Abraham. And these [are] the names of Ishmael's sons by their names according to their generations: Ishmael's firstborn, Nebaioth, and Kedar and Adbeel and Mibsam and Mishma and Dumah and Massa, Hadar and Tema, Jetur, Naphish and Kedemah. These [are] Ishmael's sons, and these their names in their villages and in their encampments, twelve princes according to their peoples. And these [are] the years of the life of Ishmael, a hundred and thirty and seven years; and he expired and died, and was gathered to his people. And they dwelt from Havilah to Shur which [is] before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria. He settled (or, died, lit. fell) before all his brethren" (vv. 12-18), or, it may be, "to the east of all his brethren."

Flesh has its privileges speedily. Already was the beginning of what Jehovah's angel prepared Hagar to expect, "I will multiply thy seed exceedingly that it shall not be numbered for multitude." Jehovah hearkened to her affliction, and could not forget Abraham. Ishmael was to be a wild-ass man, his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him and he should dwell before or in face of all his brethren (*Gen 16:10-12*). This too, as we may easily find out, has been precisely fulfilled from the beginning till now. But yet more minutely as a proximate fact, the pledge of all to follow, in Genesis 17 had God said, "For Ishmael I have heard thee: behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful, and will very greatly multiply him. Twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation" (v. 20). So it was now. They are enumerated in their order, as later (*Gen 28:9*) we read of Ishmael's daughter Mahalath, Nebaioth's sister, whom Esau took to wife, besides those of Canaan.

Scripture clearly shows us the government of God providentially, and outside His covenant, in the same books which reveal the dealings of His electing grace. Nor is it the Jews only who are prone to overlook it. Unbelief rises up against God in this as in all else. Yet His Word abides worthy of all trust to whatever it applies. No more graphic a sketch was ever drawn than is given of Ishmael's posterity in the words cited. "Who hath sent out the wild-ass free? or who hath loosed the bands of the onager? whose house I have made the wilderness, and the salt land his dwelling-place. He scorneth the tumult of the city, neither heareth he the shoutings of the driver. The range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searcheth for every green thing" (*Job 39:5-8*). Such exactly are the Bedouins. No sober Christian supposes a perpetual miracle as to Ishmael, but that what God said of that race is as sure as what He said of Israel, no less than of Babylon, Medo-Persia, the Greek power, or the Roman.

No sceptical ingenuity then avails to shake the certainty that Ishmael's singular lot stands revealed from early days. The meaning of *Gen 16:12* is as plain as it is striking, and as applicable today as for thousands of years past. This is not true of any other notable people. Compare the Egyptians, the Assyrians, or the Israelites: what differing changes have they not each and all experienced? How little if at all has the Bedouin altered? Cushites have settled here or there in Arabia, or passed across the Arabic gulf to the opposite coast of Africa. Joktanites in varied lines may still abide, especially in the South and the West; but their characteristics are by no means akin. The stamp of Ishmael is unmistakable in the North and East, as well as elsewhere; and the wild-ass marks him indelibly now as of old. Exceptions there may have been in the long tract of ages that have elapsed, but mostly affecting the nomad Arabs, in Yemen far more than where they pitched their tents, but also as to Mecca and Medina; as well as for awhile in the North. But these seizures are allowed to have been temporary and local. "The body of the nation has escaped the yoke of the most powerful monarchies; the arms of Sesostris and Cyrus, of Pompey and Trajan, could never achieve the conquest of Arabia; the present sovereign of the Turks may exercise a shadow of jurisdiction, but his pride is reduced to solicit the friendship of a people, which it is dangerous to provoke and fruitless to attack."

It is easy to say that the obvious causes of their freedom are inscribed on the character and country of the Arabs. But God only could and did reveal their course from their earliest progenitor. The same unbelief which attributes Christianity to natural causes seeks to explain away the interest God felt about Abraham's offspring, even outside His covenant, and His expression of it in His Word. The believer enjoys His communications and is grateful to the enlargement of heart and mind, as unbelief reaps darkness increasingly and death. It is good to own Him, who is not only the Highest and only true God, but our Father in that gift of His love, His written Word: whatever be its subject matter, it is worthy of Himself. And if in the Old Testament He speaks of outward things and His moral government, are we not to appreciate His condescension?

÷13 The Generations of Isaac

*Gen 25:19-26*

As we have had occasion to remark in Scripture, the Spirit briefly notices the fleshly claim before giving us what is of grace: not first the spiritual but the natural; afterward the spiritual. We have had Ishmael's generations of much and speedy show; now we hear of Isaac's.

"And these [are] the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son. Abraham begot Isaac. And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah as wife, daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan-Aram, sister of Laban the Syrian. And Isaac entreated Jehovah for his wife, because she [was] barren; and Jehovah was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If so, why [am] I thus (or, do I live?)? And she went to enquire of Jehovah. And Jehovah said to her, Two nations [are] in thy womb, and two peoples shall be separated from they bowels; and [one] people shall be stronger than [the other] people; and the elder shall serve the younger. And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, twins [were] in her womb. And the first came out red all over like a hairy garment; and they called his name Esau. And after that came his brother out; and his hand took hold of Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob; and Isaac [was] sixty years old when she bore them" (vv. 19-26).

It is of God that faith should be tried. The promise is sure; but the believer has to wait for it. Ishmael can boast of his twelve sons, with names soon notable by their villages, if not "towns," and by their encampments, if not castles. Isaac mourned for a mother beloved, and had not a wife provided for him, till he was forty years old. Even then he abides childless some twenty years. "And Isaac entreated Jehovah for his wife, because she was barren; and Jehovah was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived." As Abraham knew that "in Isaac should his seed be called," yet staggered not at God's call to offer him up for a burnt-offering, assured that this very Isaac would be given back to him and continue the line of blessing, so Isaac had His Word securing the call inalienably in himself, the type of the promised Seed on whom all hangs. It was grace; but grace revealed the channel through which the blessing was to flow, and this drew out his prayers, while patience had its perfect work. Isaac therefore entreated Jehovah, and Jehovah was entreated of Isaac. The trial of his faith was far from being so searching as Abraham's. It was suited to each in divine wisdom. Strong faith shone in the father, gracious dependence in the son, to the praise of God in the blessing of both.

We may notice too that Isaac and Rebekah were kept from the snare that involved Abraham and especially Sarah in the grief which impatience brought into their home. In Rebekah's case there was no thought of building up the desired heir to Isaac by a concubine; nor did he on his part look to so fleshly a device. Conjugal faithfulness and purity in the main characterized the pair. They hoped for the promised boon which for so long they saw not; but with patience they waited for it, and not in vain. Isaac did not faint, but besought Jehovah according to His promise, and he was heard in due time.

There were to be twins. And the children gave anticipative token to their mother, as we are told, for her trial, so that she too went to enquire of Jehovah. Who can overlook the propriety with which the name of covenant relationship is here employed? All intrinsic value is lost by the supposition that it is due to an accidental occurrence of that designation; it is really divine purpose clothing the account with the title of moral government. Nor is there any ground to fancy that she consulted Melchizedek or journeyed to Moriah. Without either she knew where to find Jehovah and how to enquire of Him. Her faith might be weak, but it was real, and without superstitious dependence on any man or place.

Here was Jehovah's answer (v. 23): "Two nations are in thy womb, and two peoples shall be separated from thy bowels; and people shall be stronger than people; and the elder shall serve the younger." Predestination as to their history on earth is manifest here. It is made all the more striking because the babes yet unborn were of the same mother as well as father, nay twins. So it is that the apostle in *Rom 9:10-12* deduces the truth intended. "But Rebekah also having conceived by one, Isaac our father, (for [the children] being not yet born, nor having done anything good or worthless, that the purpose of God according to election might abide, not of works, but of him that calleth) it was said to her, The elder shall serve the younger." Divine sovereignty was thus shown to be as free as it is certain to faith. Fleshly descent on which the Jews founded their exclusive title is disproved; expressly and assuredly of Esau. For here flesh is excluded most distinctly, and the title is drawn from Jehovah's sovereign pleasure. His word made it all the more pointed by declaring that "the elder should serve the younger," and this in view of their future nations respectively.

The details of fact follow. Esau appeared first, full of evident vigour; Jacob afterward, with his hand holding Esau's heel, which gave his name of supplanter before he had power with God. But it is meet, whatever appearances say, that God should have His way, not man; and if man resists, it is to his own sorrow, shame, and ruin. We perhaps may say of Jacob, that God placed more abundant honour on that which lacked. Is our eye evil because His is good?

÷14 The Sons, Esau and Jacob

*Gen 25:27-34*

Now the difference in life and manners in the two sons was an issue of deep moment for each, and a warning for every reader who needs God's grace.

"And the boys grew; and Esau became a man skilful in hunting, a man of the field, and Jacob an upright man dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau because venison was to his taste (or, in his mouth), and Rebekah loved Jacob. And Jacob boiled a dish (or, boiling), and Esau came in from the field, and he [was] faint. And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, pray, with the red — the red thing there, for I [am] faint. Therefore they called his name Edom. And Jacob said, Sell today thy birthright to me? And Esau said, Behold, I am going to die, and what [is] this birthright to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me today, and he swore to him; and sold his birthright to Jacob. And Jacob gave to Esau bread and the dish of lentils; and he ate and drank and rose up and went away: thus Esau despised the birthright" (vv. 27-34).

As the boys grew, it became plain that Esau had no faith, and that Jacob had. The life, far more truly than the lips, indicated where the heart turned and where the treasure lay. Of those from whom they sprang, it is written that "all of these died in faith," or according to faith. They had not received the things prescribed; from afar they saw and saluted them, confessing thereby that they were strangers and sojourners on the earth (or land), of which dwelling in tents was an express token (*Heb 11:9*; *Heb 11:13*). It was not so with Esau. He had no relish for the believing and expectant posture of the patriarchs. He threw off all the lessons inculcated by the life and confession of his father and his grandfather. Nimrod was his prototype, not Abraham; still less was He the Object, who shone before the eyes of all the elders that obtained testimony in the power of faith. He chose and gave himself up to the exciting pursuits of the chase; he became a man skilled in hunting, a man of the field. He was bent on visible and present gratification, finding his pleasure in its vicissitudes, in its demand on craft and resources of every kind, and even in its occasional dangers as well as its successes. As with that rebel whom he thus far emulated, God was not in any of his thoughts. What cared he for that bright expectation of victory over the power of evil, through One more than man who should nevertheless come of woman and taste of the sharpest suffering though triumphant? The unseen was nothing to Esau, whose heart was filled with his own things of every day, catching and killing the animals without reason.

Jacob, on the other hand, could be described as an upright man dwelling in tents. He was an heir, with Isaac and with Abraham, of the same promise. The like faith produced like fruit. He waited for the city that has the foundations, beyond all that earth can furnish, of which God is artificer and master-maker, or demiurge. He had not a little to watch and contend against in his natural ways; but he looked beyond present scenes and so was kept from living according to motives of self-will with no object above the earth. His walk was feeble compared with Abraham, and chequered compared with Isaac. Still he could say ere he departed that God tended him all his life long, and that His Angel redeemed him from all evil. Esau could not and did not speak of any such shepherd care, of which he never felt the need and would have been ashamed. The earth as it is was his one field of enjoyment, and its wild creatures the object of his skilled toils. The future of divine glory was no more to his heart than a dream that is told. But Jacob, faulty as he was, did prove the watchful and gracious care of God now, and wait for "that day." It is this only which gives integrity before God, without which "dwelling in tents" had been no more than to the Bedouin; but with him it was the mark of his pilgrim character and hopes.

Alas! The faults of children often betray the carelessness or worse of their parents. Partialities, as in verse 29, may be natural; but they bring inevitable chastening. A parent on the one hand may like a character the most distant from his own, as we see here Isaac did; or there may be preference given to one that resembles, as appears in Rebekah. They had been more blessed and more a blessing, if they had commanded their children with vigilant love in faith, as Jehovah said of Abraham in *Gen 18:19*. Here the inspiring Spirit had a humbling tale to tell, as we learn the retribution in God's moral government.

Passing hunger led to the gravest results. Jacob sod a pottage of lentils the day when Esau returned faint and famished (v. 29). This gave the occasion. Jacob earnestly sought that title which to his forefathers and his descendants was bound up with blessing; and he knew that his brother had no such value for it. He therefore availed himself of Esau's need to strike the bargain. "Feed me, pray, with the red, that there," said the spent hunter. "Sell me today thy birthright," eagerly replied the unbelieving believer.

Thus Esau, ever open to the present, agreed and swore to it (vv. 30-33).

"And Jacob gave Esau bread and the pottage (or, dish) of lentils; and he ate and drank and rose up and went his way," with the simple and solemn comment, "Thus Esau despised his birthright."

No doubt, the edge of his appetite was keen, and the dish before his eyes was tempting to the hungry hunter. But had he no father that loved him, no mother to pity and provide? Blame Jacob as you will for seizing the opportunity for what he valued if Esau did not. And this was now evident: no hunger and thirst for him an hour longer. "That red there" he must have at once, cost what it might. Let others be for Christ's sake "in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings, in cold and nakedness." What was that to one who lived only to please himself? He could not fast another hour. "Behold, I am going to die, and what is this birthright to me?"

Ishmael, the bondservant's son, was evil enough. Born of the flesh only, he persecuted him that was born after the Spirit; he mocked the son and heir of Abraham born under circumstances which pointed to God's intervention for all who believe. But Esau was all the more guilty because according to prayer and prophecy he was born of the heir of promise, with whatever of advantage over Jacob that an earlier birth could give. Was not he equally with Jacob brought up in the familiar sound of God's word and ways as far as this is known? But tried in a way which to a hunter should have been comparatively light, and with resources at hand which never had failed, and which it would be monstrous to conceive could fail his urgent need, he deliberately sold his own birthright "for one meal" (*Heb 12:16*), and thus incurred from the Holy Spirit the awful stigma of a "profane person."

÷**15 Jehovah Appears to Isaac**

*Gen 26:1-5*

The chapter opens with the account of Isaac tried by "famine in the land," as Abraham had been a hundred years before. It was meant to put faith to the proof passingly, as the Canaanite then in the land tried it permanently. But well did father and son know that the time had not arrived for possession. For this the object of their hope must come in power; and the prospect of Christ's day, we may be assured, filled the heart of Isaac with joy, as we are expressly told of Abraham (*Joh 8:56*). Meanwhile they were content to dwell in the land of promise, as not their own, looking for the coming glory, not on earth only but in heaven too. Here therefore they bowed to whatever tribulation God might send. We shall see, however, distinctions as interesting as they are instructive.

"And there was a famine in the land, besides the former famine which was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines to Gerar. And Jehovah appeared to him and said, Go not down to Egypt: dwell in the land that I shall tell thee of. Sojourn in this land; and I will be with thee and bless thee; for to thee and to thy seed I will give all these lands; anathema maranatha, and I will establish the oath which I swore to Abraham thy father. And I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and to thy seed I will give all these lands; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (vv. 1-5).

Here we have Isaac's distinctive trial of faith. Abraham was called to get out of his land and from his kindred and from his father's house to the land that Jehovah would show him, as He did. But Isaac was charged not to leave, but to sojourn in that land. This had its own difficulties, which grace does not spare. Blessed is the man that endures temptation or trial; for having been proved, he shall receive the crown of life which He promised to those that love Him, and meanwhile the proving of our faith works patience. Isaac accordingly, expressly forbidden by Jehovah, did not go down into Egypt even under the pressure of famine in the land. Abraham, as we know, did go; but there he dishonoured Jehovah, his wife, and himself, however rich he became in consequence.

Personally Abraham was a man of faith far more thoroughly than his son. And the son was forbidden where no interdict was laid on the father. Isaac was called, whatever it might cost, to abide in the land, and not go down to Egypt. The land, as all know, typifies heavenly places, as he does Christ, dead, risen, and in heaven, though the Philistines were there as yet uncleared.

This is the trial now. If we have been given to know that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ, our responsibility is to walk worthily of the call wherewith we were called with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love. It is in this very association that we are prepared to face the sharpest trial. We must expect to be visited by every wind of the teaching which is in the trickery of men, in craft for the systematizing of error; but we are exhorted to be truthful in love and grow up unto Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ. Our conflict is not against blood and flesh, like Israel in their day, but against principalities, against authorities, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies. For this reason we need to take to us the panoply of God; and withal we need to pray at all seasons with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching "hereunto with all perseverance. Our exposure is all the more because our blessing is of the highest: just as Isaac was the object of incomparable favour then, and called to abide where he was.

So are the saints now. What can match their revealed and blessed relationship? Is it possible to conceive greater privileges? Nothing is easier than to despise the pleasant land, and to cast longing eyes on Egypt. There flourish the resources of the world, the incentives to flesh, the pleasures of sin for a season. In the land such attractions are not; there was a famine as to all that feeds nature. But the word to those whose blessing lay in Canaan is, Go not down to Egypt: dwell in the land that I will tell thee of. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee and bless thee.

We are diligently to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, even as also we were called in one hope of our calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in us all. Far beyond the oath to Abraham is our security, far beyond the lands of Israel or earth is our inheritance, though we rest on the same One who is the Seed of blessing for them and all the nations; and we boast a Father infinitely above their father Abraham.

÷16 Isaac in Gerar

*Gen 26:6-11*

What candour is in Scripture! How truly divine! Isaac was saved from going down into Egypt, whither famine had driven his father. He was guided so as to be a suited type of Him who is now for us only in heaven. But he sinned in Gerar, as Abraham sinned before him. This ought to have been to him a solemn admonition, if he had remembered it as he ought in God's presence. Out of it the failure of one we love becomes a snare to repeat it, and it may be an excuse as not pretending to be better.

"And Isaac dwelt in Gerar. And the men of the place asked him about his wife. And he said, She [is] my sister; for he feared to say, My wife, lest the men of the place slay me on account of Rebekah; because she was fair in countenance. And it came to pass when he had been there some time, that Abimelech, king of the Philistines, looked out of the window and saw, and, behold, Isaac [was] sporting with Rebekah his wife. And Abimelech called Isaac and said, Behold, she [is] certainly thy wife; and how saidst thou, She [is] my sister? And Isaac said to him, Because I said, Lest I die for her. And Abimelech said, What [is] this thou has done to us? Lightly might one of the people have lain with thy wife, and thou shouldest have brought on us a trespass. And Abimelech charged all the people, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife shall surely (dying) be put to death" (vv. 6-11).

For the Christian it is the sure proof of a low and earthly state of soul to palliate a lie by toning it down to "incorrect speech." One thus panders to the world's code of honour, where the truth is unknown, and an impeachment of veracity, however certain, demands wiping out with blood. Still more deplorable is the delusion which plays into the enemy's hand, as if no saint can be guilty of lying. Even the New Testament warns of the danger in Epistles such as those to the saints in Ephesus and Colosse, which treat of the highest privileges of the church. "Wherefore putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each with his neighbour; for we are members one of another." "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds." The repeated warning proves how readily it might be even among the best taught. Only ignorance or worldliness could think otherwise. In fact it is recorded for our admonition that such was the first sin after the great Pentecost.

But it is intolerable to compare or class with lying any mistakes of inadvertency or hearsay, particularly when there is care to correct them after the facts are better known. The essence of lying is the wish to deceive, whatever the motive; which may be to exalt self or to injure another, to evade through fear or to gain a desired end. There is no difficulty in discerning where the eye is single. Even the least esteemed or those of no account in the church are quite capable of judging matters of wrong or falsehood, though it would be absurd to expect from such a sound judgment on deeper questions. But as the Old Testament does not hide or extenuate the fathers, so the New Testament lets us know how far in this very way might fall an honoured apostle, who trusted himself and let drop the warning words of the Lord.

Is it not a most humbling element presented in Isaac's case as in Abraham's, that a saint may sink below the world's standard of morality? The king of the Philistines reproved Isaac for untruthfulness, and this in exposing that wife to dishonour and his own people to guiltiness; as either he or probably his predecessor had similarly denounced the same case of deceit in Abraham, made yet worse by his previous failure in a like way with Pharaoh in Egypt. Had Isaac borne all holily in mind, it must have proved a safeguard by grace, instead of a cloak for the flesh yielding through unbelieving terror. Let ourselves now see to it that we profit by the written Word all the more, because He who is the truth, now fully revealed, makes all such failure appear in its full heinousness.

There is an added element in the untruth of Abraham and of Isaac: the betrayal of the relationship of their wives, Sarah and Rebekah, by their own shortsighted selfishness. How blessed is the contrast of Christ, as the Husband of Israel, and the Bridegroom of the church! CompareNumbers 30.

÷17 Isaac Blessed of Jehovah

*Gen 26:12-16*

It is well to note the manner of Scripture. God does not need to vindicate His holy character, and still less does He attenuate or excuse the faults of His people. He demands and deserves our trust. He tells the unvarnished truth now of Isaac's prevarication, as before of Abraham's. He makes known the successive and humiliating reproofs of Philistine kings. On His part is no hiding of what man would have gladly ignored. The sin was too sadly true; and inspiration preserved the record for warning and profit at all times to His servant's shame but to His own glory. There He stops, leaving us to infer the inner exercises of Isaac. Yet striking is that which follows in the way of external blessing.

"And Isaac sowed in that land and found in the same year a hundredfold; and Jehovah blessed him. And the man became great, and went forward and grew great; until he became very great. And he had possession of flocks and possession of herds, and a great store of servants; and the Philistines envied him. And all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines stopped them, and filled them with earth. And Abimelech said to Isaac, Go from us; for thou art become much mightier than we" (vv. 12-16).

Here it is the silence of Scripture which we do well to heed. For nothing is told us of what must have passed in such a man's soul. Did he not review the unworthy cheat by which he sought to screen himself from danger at the cost of his wife? Was he not humbled by its just exposure by Abimelech? Isaac was a gracious and prayerful person, who knew what it is to meditate in the fields at eventide. Is it conceivable that one of such habits would fail to sit in judgment on his own deliberate untruth, stumbling to the world, dishonouring to his Almighty Protector, to his beloved wife, and to himself as a saint? His father's sin in the same way, ought it not to have admonished him all the more, instead of ensnaring him to follow so bad an example? Can one doubt then, that the fear of Isaac (*Gen 31:42*) wrought in his conscience to humble and to clear his spirit from guile.

God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap. For he that sows unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that sows unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life eternal. Did not Isaac judge himself? How else can we understand the blessing vouchsafed in so marked a way and degree to the patriarch at this juncture? It was no doubt of an external sort; but so it is that Jehovah wrought of old, and thus did He act then. There was no longer a moral obstacle in the way. The defilement, even when publicly known, grace had removed. "And Isaac sowed in that land and found in the same year a hundredfold; and Jehovah blessed him. And the man became great and went forward, and grew until he became very great," etc.

Isaac's increase, especially in the great year of famine, drew out the envy of his neighbours. Nor did ill-will stay there. The Philistines stopped with earth the wells dug before by Abraham's servants. But Isaac was a man of meek spirit. It was a felt loss to one whose household and herds were dependent on such supplies; it was no less insulting than injurious; but Isaac bowed before the wrong. "If when ye do good and suffer, ye shall endure it, this is acceptable [grace] with God." None of the fathers manifested the passive virtues equally with Isaac. Even Abimelech failed to rebuke the unkindness and enmity. "Go from us," said he, "for thou art become much mightier than we." Even so, He who is higher than the highest walked in His grace. Indeed it was His portion from a babe and onward, for Satan is "the prince of the world" — the personal enemy of the Lord of glory. There was no room for the Son of God in the inn: was not the manger good enough for Him? But is the slight nothing in God's eyes? The reproach of Christ ought to be dear to the hearts of His own. Yet is it excellent discipline for the godly, if indeed they walk by faith, not by sight. They declare thereby that they belong to the One crucified on earth but glorified in heaven.

So the Lord in Matthew 5 opens the principles of the kingdom of heaven, that those who follow Him now may clearly know His mind till the Father's Kingdom come, and His will too is done on earth as it is in heaven. Then must evil vanish divinely and judicially, for unrighteousness shall disappear from the earth when the Lord reigns in power; it is His patience as yet. Hence for the present the enemy rules. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens; blessed they that mourn, for they shall be comforted; blessed the meek, for they shall inherit the earth; blessed they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. In the day that hastens, as Jehovah will govern manifestly, His people shall dwell at ease, and the oppressor be broken in pieces; the righteous, instead of suffering, shall flourish, with abundance of peace till the moon be no more. For the Great King shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him. Can contrast be more complete with what the Lord taught us to expect till that day? We shall know His sufferings, with the assured prospect of reigning with Him then, as the Epistles no less than the Gospels and the Revelation so amply and plainly attest to Him that has ears to hear. For the world it will be Jehovah reigning as could not be now.

÷18 Isaac Up to Rehoboth

*Gen 26:17-22*

Gerar was a district as well as a town. When the patriarch removed from the king's neighbourhood, it was still the same country, the valley or "torrent" of Gerar, a wadi in our more modern term. At times of much rain a stream ran for awhile through the valley.

"And Isaac departed, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there. And Isaac again (returned and) dug the wells of water which they had dug in the days of Abraham his father, and the Philistines had stopped after the death of Abraham; and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them. And the servants of Isaac dug in the valley and found there a well of living water. And the herdsmen of Gerar strove with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, Ours [is] the water. And he called the name of the well Esek (Strife), because they quarrelled with him. And they dug another well; and they contended for that also; and he called the name of it Sitnah (Hatred). And he removed thence, and dug another well, and they strove not for that; and he called the name of it Rehoboth (Broadways); and said, For now hath Jehovah made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land" (vv. 17-22).

Neither sense of his own failure in the past depressed Isaac now, nor did the unmerited goodness of Jehovah puff him up. It was a pain, though it ought not to be a surprise, that the Philistines envied his prosperity; nor was it wonderful that Abimelech should gratify the popular feeling, and prompt his departure. But if he departed from their vicinity, he kept the word of the Lord and did not deny His name. Egypt was forever barred to him. He encamped in the valley of Gerar and dwelt there.

With none of the wandering fathers do we find wells of water so largely and conspicuously connected as with Isaac. This is manifestly characteristic. In that quarter of the earth they were of the greatest value. They were a needed and welcome part of his blessing here below, not so much for one that sowed and reaped abundantly, but in the possession of flocks and herds with a great retinue of servants, who suffered from the spite which sought to render useless what men did not need for themselves.

But the typical interest is no less instructive. Where but with Isaac should the pledge of spiritual use and refreshment be appropriately sought? The washing of water by the word, and yet more the fountain of water springing up unto life eternal, and the rivers of living water flowing out richly, have we not this and more in the New Testament as the figure of the Holy Spirit's operations, now that the Son of God is come, redemption accomplished, and the Man (who is no less God) glorified consequently in heaven? What can be plainer than the fact here attested? What less worthy than for believers to allow that inspiration had no divine motive or end in recording such facts as these and very few others in the lowly and peaceful path of Isaac? He dug again the wells of water, dug in the days of his father: even this is reserved for the account of Isaac, and his perseverance in the face of that enmity which has its pleasure in opposing and destroying the unused good.

Another feature in the case it is well to notice, because the blatant scepticism of the hour, more audacious and malicious than Philistinian hatred, perverts it to dishonour God's Word as well as to injure needy man. "He called their names after the names by which his father had called them": a very natural and proper thing for any upright soul to do, and peculiarly suitable to such a son as Isaac showed himself uniformly to be.

But here in verses 19-22 we hear also of wells unheard of before. "And Isaac's servants dug in the valley, and found there a well of living water. And the herdsmen of Gerar strove with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, The water is ours; and he called the name of the well Esek, because they quarrelled with him." Change of place does not see change in man. "And they dug another well, and they contended for that also; and he called the name of it Sitnah." But Isaac did not change from that meekness which becomes the man of God, gentle to all, and forbearing to such as opposed themselves. Nor was his dependence on God without a speedy answer. For removing thence he dug another well, and they strove not for that; and he called the name of it Rehoboth, and said, as accounting for the name, "For now hath Jehovah made room for us; and we shall be fruitful in the land." Contention was as far from his spirit, as ingratitude to the Almighty Protector of him who must not strive. How is it with us? Do we indeed know that all things work together for good to them that love God? Do we give thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to Him that is God the Father?

÷19 Isaac at Beersheba

*Gen 26:23-35*

We cannot avoid seeing, at least when it is pointed out, how truly Isaac typifies the part of the Christian who is not of the world as Christ is not. He does not resist evil. Smitten on the right cheek, he presents the other also. He does not contend for the goods of which he was deprived, but when his cloak was taken away, he does not fight even for his coat. Neither Abraham nor Jacob was so tried, nor did their patience shine so eminently; the one fought for Lot (Genesis 14), the other for himself (Genesis 48), but never Isaac. The Christian, the church, has this call to suffer still more as a living principle, for which not only the Pagans of old taunted, but no less the sceptics who inherit their enmity.\* Christ was the perfect exemplar.

\*"The Christians were not less averse to the business than to the pleasures of this world. The defence of our persons and property they knew not how to reconcile with the patient doctrine which enjoined an unlimited forgiveness of past injuries, and commanded them to invite the repetition of fresh insults. Their simplicity was offended by the use of oaths, by the pomp of magistracy, and by the active contention of public life; nor could their humane ignorance be convinced, that it was lawful on any occasion to shed the blood of our fellow-creatures, either by the sword of justice, or by that of war; even though their criminal or hostile attempts should threaten the peace and safety of the whole community. [This is nowhere taught in the New Testament, which only lays it down for the individual believer.] It was acknowledged that under a less perfect law [the Mosaic], the powers of the Jewish constitution had been exercised, with the approbation of heaven, by inspired prophets and by anointed kings. The Christians felt and confessed [in contrast with Socinians, Anabaptists and Quakers, that such institutions might be necessary for the present system of the world; and they cheerfully submitted to the authority of their pagan governors. But while they inculcated the maxims of passive obedience, they refused to take any active part in the civil administration or the military defence of the empire [CompareJohn 18:36]. Some indulgence might perhaps be allowed to those persons who, before their conversion, were already engaged in such violent and sanguinary occupations; but it was impossible that the Christians, without renouncing a more sacred duty, could assume the character of soldiers, of magistrates, or of princes. This indolent [!], or even criminal [!!], disregard to the public welfare, exposed them to the contempt and reproach" of the Pagans, who very frequently asked what must be the fate of the empire, attacked on every side by the barbarians, if all mankind [!!! "little flock" says Christ] should adopt the pusillanimous sentiments of the new sect? To this insulting question the Christian apologists resumed obscure and ambiguous answers as they were unwilling to reveal the secret cause of their security: the expectation that before the conversion of mankind was accomplished, war, government, the Roman empire, and the world itself, would be no more. It may be observed, that in this instance likewise, the situation of the first Christians coincided very happily with their religious scruples, and that their aversion to an active life contributed rather to excuse them from the service, than to exclude them from the honours, of the state and army" (Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, ch. 15, vol. 2, pp. 104,105, Oxford ed. 1827). Separation to God from mere man as such or the world is proper, in differing characters and degrees, for Israel His people under law, and to the Father now for Christians, His children under grace. This is the true key.

"And thence he went up to Beersheba. And Jehovah appeared to him the same night, and said, I [am] the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I [am] with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake. And he built an altar there, and called upon the name of Jehovah, and pitched his tent there; and there Isaac's servants dug a well. And Abimelech, and Ahuzzath his friend, and Phichol the captain of his host, went to him from Gerar. And Isaac said to them, Why are ye come to me, seeing ye hate me and have sent me away from you? And they said, We saw certainly that Jehovah is with thee; and we said, Let there now be an oath between us, between us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee; that thou wilt do us no wrong, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done to thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace: thou [art] now blessed of Jehovah. And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink. And they rose early in the morning, and swore one to another; and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace. And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servants came and told him concerning the well that they had dug, and said to him, We have found water. And he called it Shebah: therefore the name of the city is Beersheba to this day.

"And Esau was forty years old, when he took as wife Judith, daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basmath, daughter of Elon the Hittite; and they were bitterness of spirit to Isaac and Rebekah" (vv. 23-35).

Patience had a perfect work with Isaac. If the old wells were stopped up out of spite, if the new that were found excited envy and ill-will, he contended not. Enmity on his side there was none. He departed when the ruler bade him, till at last a well was found beyond for which the opposing herdsmen did not strive. Yet thence, however promising it looked, he went up to Beersheba; and Jehovah again appeared to him "the same night," and bade him "fear not"; His presence and blessing were assured for Abraham's sake. And there a fresh spring was dug, where he raised an altar and pitched his tent.

Nor was this all. The very king with his friend and chief captain seek Isaac, not he them; and on his remonstrance own that they saw plainly that Jehovah was with Isaac, and seek an oath and covenant that he would do them no hurt, though they explained away their own shabby course. "Thou art now blessed of Jehovah." Yes, this is emphatically Isaac's position, the Philistines themselves being judges. They came and paid homage at his feet, and acknowledged that Jehovah loved him. And as a prince he treated them with a feast and the pledges they sought; for indeed he desired their blessing, as will one day be fully in the Promised Seed to all the nations of the earth. And "the same day" a new well was found, which he called Shebah, and renewed the name of the old city adjoining.

But verses 34 and 35 reveal a bitter sorrow in sad contrast. Not content with despising his birthright, profane Esau took to him at mature age two daughters of Heth, to the grief of both his parents. Was this a man to receive or value the blessing of Jehovah? It was He who was dishonoured most by such a marriage, to say nothing of the family.

÷20 Isaac Old and Seeing Dimly

*Gen 27:1-5*

Humbling for Isaac, and for all concerned yet more, is the scene which opens for our admonition. No such failure stained the testimony of his father nor yet his son Jacob's. His life of comparative easy-going blinded him for awhile to distressing forgetfulness of Jehovah's mind and declared purpose. Alas! it was not a new thing that Isaac loved Esau, not simply as his son on account of his natural boldness, but because venison was to his taste. Whereas Rebekah loved Jacob, whose character in its fleshly traits resembled her own in Syrian craft and selfishness; but in neither was there lukewarmness to divine promise.

"And it came to pass when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim so that he could not see, that he called Esau his son, the eldest, and said to him, My son; and he said to him, Here [am] I. And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death. Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and hunt me venison, and make me savoury meat such as I love, and bring [it] to me that I may eat, in order that my soul may bless thee before I die. And Rebekah heard when Isaac spoke to Esau his son; and Esau went to the field to hunt and bring venison" (vv. 1-5).

No doubt the words of Jehovah, before the sons were born, the more impressed Rebekah because they were said to her, "The elder shall serve the younger." But Isaac was wholly responsible as one that loved and feared Him. Then again did not Esau, when arrived at years of discretion, sell his birthright for one mess of food? And was not this profane act aggravated by indifference to that separateness which the chosen family were bound to maintain before Jehovah in the midst of the doomed races who possessed the land? His Hittite wives were bitterness of spirit to both parents: how sad that the father should now treat it so lightly!

The Holy Spirit puts the matter simply and livingly before us for our profit. Nor let us fail to adore our God for His wondrous patience. Let us delight in the wisdom of His ways, overruling carnal partiality which would make His Word void, and securing His purpose, however faulty they were who remembered it. And as they resorted to unworthy expedients to correct the wrong and insure His promise, they each fell under His righteous chastening of their crooked policy. God loves dearly, but rebukes and chastises.

What a grief it is to one who feels for God and His saints to look on this household of faith reversing that godly order which long before characterized Abraham's in His estimate! "For I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of Jehovah to do righteousness and judgment, in order that Jehovah may bring upon Abraham what he hath spoken of him" (*Gen 18:19*. Yet what He spoke of Abraham was the Seed of promise, and not only a great and mighty nation, but all the nations of the earth blessed in him. Now the type of that very Seed was oblivious save of present gratification of the flesh, and this with the intention of conveying the blessing to the profane line and away from the divinely designated heir! Again she who once turned her back on kin and country to become the bride of the father's only son and heir in distant Canaan, plotting against her husband, and teaching the true inheritor of the promises to cheat against the father's shortsighted folly! O what shame before God, men, and angels, even if we say not a word of him who hoped through his father's weakness to retrieve his hopes, ruined by his own rash and unbelieving self-seeking!

But, if we anticipate, Isaac's words certainly filled Rebekah with alarm. Instead of enquiring of Jehovah as in days of more lively faith, she heard them now to devise her own wretched way of deceit, in order to defeat the wrong her husband had in mind to do. Esau meanwhile went, we may be sure, with alacrity as unbounded as his surprise, to gratify his father after his own fashion, and regain what had seemed lost irreparably. But be not deceived. God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life eternal. Even if all faithlessly fail and receive rebuke from above in righteous government, God abides faithful; for He cannot deny Himself; and His Word is as sure for the future as it has ever proved in the past and the present.

21 Rebekah's Advice

*Gen 27:6-17*

Every Scripture is inspired of God and is profitable. How much is passed by without notice in the life of Isaac! Inspiration implies special purpose. When a grave lesson was to be taught, there is no sparing the reputation of a saint: God speaks and writes holily and all is for our profit.

"And Rebekah spoke to Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak to Esau thy brother, saying, Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat and bless thee before Jehovah before my death. Now therefore, my son, hearken to my voice according to that which I command thee. Go, I pray thee, to the flock, and fetch me thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make of them savoury meat for thy father such as he loveth; and thou shall bring [it] to thy father, that he may eat, so that he may bless thee before his death. And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother [is] a hairy man, and I a smooth man. My father perhaps will feel me, and I shall be in his eyes as one that mocketh, and I shall bring on me a curse and not a blessing. And his mother said to him, On me [be] thy curse, my son: only hearken to my voice, and go, fetch me [them]. And he went and fetched and brought [them] to his mother. And his mother prepared a savoury dish such as his father loved. And Rebekah took the clothes of her elder son Esau, and put them on Jacob her younger son, the costly ones that [were] with her in the house; and she put the skins of the kids of the goats on his hands, and on the smooth of his neck; and she gave the savoury meat and the bread into the hand of her son Jacob" (vv. 6-17).

We may assume that Rebekah acted on impulse in circumventing her husband's forgetfulness of the Lord's word, and Esau's profane and evil character. Who can suppose that she "went to enquire of Jehovah," as when troubled by appearances before the birth of the twins? The sly Syrian character of her family asserted itself, in the assurance that Isaac was altogether in the wrong. But if right in her judgment, how sorrowful to tarnish it, not only by her own means of giving it effect, but by drawing her beloved child, the object of divine promise, into conduct so unworthy of faith!

In nothing be anxious, wrote the apostle; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God, as our gentleness should be known to all men. We walk by faith, not by sight. Do you say that this applies to faith since redemption? But what of the three young Hebrews in view of the burning furnace of fire? What of the aged Daniel with the den of lions before him? No petition, nor visit to the king juggled by vanity into the impious decree pressed by the ruling princes. No hiding of his devotions to God, so well known to those that were envious of his position. "And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house (now his windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem); and he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. Then these men assembled together and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God." He obeyed God rather than men, and he took the consequences to His glory.

Rebekah and Jacob took the way of the flesh; and as they sowed, so they reaped; for God is not mocked, while He showed Himself faithful to His promise, and Isaac's folly was of no avail to reinstate the son who sold his birthright. But how humbling to the family all around, and not least of all to him who ought to have obeyed God in subjection to His express will, and have upheld in faith the dignity of its head! How foolish and unworthy in Rebekah particularly! She of all best knew Isaac's piety, as she beyond doubt had the liveliest remembrance of the divine sentence that the older should serve the younger. It was therefore the graver failure in her not to be open with her husband in Jehovah's name who would have blessed all around instead of having to chastise.

Even Jacob felt and expressed his qualms, lest the deceit of his mother which he was about to practice should elicit a curse, instead of a blessing from his father. But Rebekah's will was too much committed to her device; and she displayed no little aptitude in guarding her son from the danger he anticipated. In neither do we find conscience at work, still less any reckoning on God's gracious power to bring to naught the carnal design of Isaac to bestow that title to the blessing of Jehovah which Jacob truly valued, and Esau made of less account than one mess of food.

On me, said Rebekah, be thy curse, my son: only hearken to my voice, etc. Certainly Isaac had no curse to call on Rebekah; but as she was the prime mover in the wrong way to gain a right end, so had she most to feel the chastening of God's unfailing moral government. For soon after the transaction here recorded Jacob took his leave for the land of the sons of the east; and the mother never again saw her beloved child. He too through sorrowful years had to smart under the wily cheating schemes of his mother's brother, his own father-in-law. No flesh shall or can glory. It only remains to glory in Jehovah. He never fails; and alone, when every other failed as in this case, He accomplishes His purpose in mercy and wisdom. How worthy is He of all trust!

It was all skilfully done to deceive Isaac; and Jacob only too ready to comply with his mother to God's dishonour, who would surely have defeated the father's desire to favour Esau. But unbelief is ever far from God, and is nowhere so low and hateful as when it works in believers.

22 The Common Sin and Shame

*Gen 27:18-29*

The Scriptures do not spare us the needed lesson of what man is, even elect man. It is painful reading, and meant so to be, but full of profit; for many believers are slow to allow that flesh is no better in them than in the patriarchal family. Every one of them betrayed at this point the bad state morally of each. The usually blameless Isaac was so overcome by self-indulgence in his appetite as to lose sight not only of the profanity of the elder son but of Jehovah's will and choice of Jacob. Rebekah, however right as to the end in view, was utterly unscrupulous as to the means; and Jacob, not without conscience and fear about the deceit he was to practice on his blind father and lying personation of Esau, dreaded a curse instead of the blessing which he valued. But O what a God have we to do with, unmoved in His purpose of grace (else never could it stand)! unchanging in His righteousness which chastened every one of them for good even now, yet with pain because of their sins, that they might not be condemned with the world. It may not be that He brings good out of evil, as men say; but His own good to do us good, rising above every fault and dishonour. Thus "We know that to those that love God all things work together for good, to those that are called according to purpose" (*Rom 8:28*).

"And he (Jacob) came to his father and said, My father: and he said, Here [am] I: who [art] thou, my son? And Jacob said to his father, I [am] Esau, thy firstborn; I have done according as thou didst say to me, Arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of thy venison, in order that thy soul may bless me. And Isaac said to his son, How [is] this [that] thou hast found [it] so quickly, my son? And he said, Because Jehovah thy God brought [it] before me. And said Isaac to Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou [be] my very son Esau or not. And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him and said, The voice [is] Jacob's voice, but the hands [are] Esau's hands. And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy as his brother Esau's hands; and he blessed him. And he said, Thou then my very son Esau? And he said, I [am]. And he said, Bring [it] near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, in order that my soul may bless thee. And he brought [it] near to him, and he did eat; and he brought him wine, and he drank. And Isaac his father said to him, Come near now and kiss me, my son. And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothes, and blessed him and said, See, my son's smell [is] as a field's smell which Jehovah hath blessed. And God give thee of the dew of the heavens, and of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and new wine. Let peoples serve thee and races bow down to thee. Be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee. Cursed [be] every one that curseth thee, and blessed every one that blesseth thee" (vv. 18-29).

Undoubtedly for the time Isaac was blinded in the eyes of his heart worse than in his physical sight, even in his foolish partiality to thwart the declared mind of God. And this Rebekah overheard and sought to counteract with a woman's craft and quick fertility of resource. Had she looked to God instead of her feeble husband and her fond son, how different all would have been! Even Abraham listened to Sarah's voice when he was deeply moved for Ishmael: how much more ought not Rebekah to have counted on her appeal to Isaac's conscience, backed by the divine oracle even before the birth of the twins, that "the elder should serve the younger"! But she did not now inquire of Jehovah as of old; she yielded to a low deceit, as sinful before God as it dishonoured her husband and herself, reckless of its direct demoralizing of the heir apparent of the promise.

Alas! Jacob showed himself an adept to the manner born. "I am Esau thy firstborn," replied he to his hesitating father; "I have done as thou didst say to me." Not content with audacious falsehoods, he went on to hypocritical lying; for no sin grows less or better in the use. He meets his father's wonder at the quickness of the supply by his daring answer, "Jehovah thy God brought it before me." His voice made a difficulty even to dull Isaac; but the feeling of the goat skins which overlaid his neck and hands so cunningly, and the smell of Esau's best clothes, especially after savoury food and wine, removed further question from the aged father. And the blessing was given, both from Jehovah in covenant, and from God in sovereignty. Yet did its terms mainly consist of earthly abundance from the favour of the heavens, and the subjection not only of peoples and races of mankind generally, but also and specifically of his brethren and of his mother's sons, closing with a double sentence of larger and deeper import: "Cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be every one that blesseth thee."

Neither Esau's "running" nor Isaac's "willing" could set aside God's purpose. As the apostle says inRomans 9:18, "So then it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." Without His mercy not one could inherit the blessing. But this does not at all hinder His moral government meanwhile, which passes over no fault on their part of His children, and this because He detests their wrongs, and loves themselves. Were they spurious and not His sons, He would leave their iniquities to meet just doom at the last day.

23 Isaac Blessing Esau

*Gen 27:30-40*

We have now to hear of Esau and his blessing.

\*The distinction of Jacob from Esau in the blessing which Isaac pronounced is stated strikingly inHebrews 11:20, though in a way which, as far as I know, is peculiar to the Greek language. The article is attached to each of their names, the Jacob, and the Esau. The intention was to present them respectively as distinct objects before the mind. It would have been enough ordinarily to have put no article before either. We may see a similar usage as to Paul and Barnabas in *Act 13:2*; *Act 13:43*; *Act 13:46*; *Act 13:50* as compared with Acts 7 and *Act 14:14*, and in *Act 15:2* both forms in the same verse. A further variety of the two names combined under one article is in *Act 15:22*. These are but a few instances of what is common in Greek.

"And it came to pass when Isaac had ended blessing Jacob, and when Jacob was hardly gone out from before Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came from his hunting. And he also prepared savoury meat, and brought [it] in to his father, and said to his father, Let my father arise and eat of his son's venison, in order that thy soul may bless me. And Isaac his father said to him, Who [art] thou? And he said, I [am] thy son, thy firstborn, Esau. And Isaac trembled with a trembling exceedingly great, and said, Who then [is] he that hunted venison and brought [it] to me? And I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him: also blessed he shall be. When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a cry great and exceeding bitter, and said to his father, Bless me, me also, my father. And he said, Thy brother came with subtlety and has taken away thy blessing. And he said, Is he not rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: my birthright he took away; and behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved for me a blessing. And Isaac answered and said to Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren I have given him for servants; and corn and new wine have I supplied him; and what then shall I do for thee, my son? And Esau said to his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, me also, my father. And Esau lifted up his voice and wept. And Isaac his father answered and said to him, Behold, of the fatness of the earth shall be thy dwelling, and of the dew of heaven from above; and by thy sword shalt thou live, and thou shall serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt rove about, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck" (vv. 30-40).

It is all very touching in a natural way. One's indignation kindles at the underhand course of Jacob and Rebekah; one feels for the erring and deceived aged saint; one pities the bitter disappointment of Esau, worthless though he was, and ungodly as he had already proved. But we rejoice at the turning-point of grace in Isaac's soul when he bowed to God's thwarting his endeavour to gratify the son who had ministered to his appetite, forgetful alas! of the already declared will of Jehovah as to Jacob. When God's overruling broke on him, instead of reviling the wife and younger son, he bowed in self-judgment and trembled with a trembling exceedingly great, sealing in faith what his lips said unwittingly but under God, "also he shall be blessed." He felt that, however others were to blame, the error was his own. God was but securing now what He had said before the sons were born. Faith now wrought, unhindered by the flesh which had lately darkened his eyes. And so says the Spirit in Hebrews 11. It was not according to his proclivities, but against them; "By faith Isaac blessed," not Esau and Jacob, but "Jacob and Esau [even] concerning things about to be."

Jehovah, as the Lord God, is and must be free to act according to the good pleasure of His will, whether for the heavens or for the earth; for man to assert his is alike folly and sin. As a saint he is set apart to obey God, not merely in the Ten Words, but in every respect; as a sinner, he is Satan's slave, and only deceives himself when he boasts of liberty, freewill, and what not. Obedience is the essential duty of the creature; and no reasoning can lessen the obligation, though it may blind man already fallen. But it is a believer's shame to be deceived, as the whole habited world is. Satan may accuse, but ought not to deceive him who has God's Word and Spirit; as we have seen Isaac deceived for awhile, but restored.

Still there was a blessing for Esau, and one far more suited to his nature than that which was reserved for Jacob. What did Esau care for the promises or the covenant? What relish had he for Messiah's kingdom? What reverence or readiness of subjection to Messiah Himself? The fatness of the earth was more to his taste, and the dew of heaven from above. Heaven itself was only a sentiment he gladly left for others to enjoy. He was, he flattered himself, a practical man; and the present world was to him a scene of enjoyable pleasures. Then what a fine thing to live by the sword when men opposed! He did not envy the poor spiritless creatures who lived, or said they did, by God's Word. Such fanaticism he despised. It was true that the word declared that he, Esau, should serve his brother. This was a disagreeable sentence, which had to be proved, and he would do all he could to prevent it. Meanwhile the same sentence said, that he should some time get loose, or rove about, and break the yoke from off his neck. Well, this would be a joy indeed: let his brother have the rest. Esau was profane; and it is a growing sin in our day, more glaring in Christendom than among the heathen. Without doubt the end of the age is at hand. The day of the Lord hastens; but the apostasy must first come, and the man of sin be revealed, the lawless one, in his own time, whom the Lord Jesus shall consume by His breath and annul by the appearing of His presence.

÷24 The Family Distracted

*Gen 27:41-46*

Grace alone secures salvation to sinful man, yet only to such as believe. But God ever carried on, as now also, a righteous government, whereby He deals with every fault among His own. So it was then. The sin of Isaac threw all into confusion, and gross evil ensued on the part of Rebekah and Jacob. So great indeed was the complication, that Esau, ungodly as he was, at this sad and shameful moment seemed more an object of pity than any other concerned, whilst those who really cared for Jehovah's will and blessing exposed His name to dishonour by the deceitful means they employed to gain it. O what sorrows and shame they make for themselves who forget that God cannot fail to accomplish His own purpose, and who in their haste for a good end do not scruple to adopt wicked means!

"And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him. And Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand, and I will slay my brother Jacob. And the words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah. And she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said to him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, comforteth himself that he will kill thee. And now, my son, hearken to my voice; and arise, flee to Laban my brother to Haran; and abide with him some days, until thy brother's fury turn away; until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget what thou hast done to him: then I will send and fetch thee thence. Why should I be bereaved of even both in one day?

"And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth. If Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these, of the daughters of the land, what good should my life be to me?" (vv. 41-46).

Thus Esau soon turned from wailing and tears to murderous hatred. It was not Jehovah that he valued, but the blessing; as he had already proved how far he estimated the birthright when he sold it for one mess of food. He was a profane person. This was no real excuse for the misdoing of Rebekah and Jacob; but it aggravated the sin of Isaac. Henceforth hatred of his brother, even to take his life, filled Esau's heart, though he had received the promise of all he cared for, save the supremacy of his brother which his pride could not brook. So he plots with himself, when his aged father departed, or at least the days of the mourning were over, to slay his brother. Truly Esau went in the way of Cain.

But He whose eye is over all hearts kept aged Isaac for a long while to come, and the days of mourning did not arrive before Esau with four hundred men met Jacob to his sore distress; but God turned the heart that meant to slay him to receive the trembling man with kisses and tears. So truly does God dispose, let those propose as they may who know him not. Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?

Rebekah was the one to send her beloved child away, whatever it cost her. It was meet that she should be the instrument of his exile whom she had so guiltily instructed; it was meet that she should never again behold in the flesh the one whom she knew was the object of God's favour and the true heir to the promises, as Isaac also was, to the exclusion of both Ishmael and Esau. God is, and must be, and ought to be Sovereign; but God is just, and cannot look on cunning with impunity, while He can have no terms with profanity and ungodliness. She herself therefore has to do the greatest violence to her own feelings as well as Jacob's, and urges his fleeing to Haran, that he might abide with her brother Laban. "Some days" did she say? Ah, poor Rebekah, for many a long year to be cheated by Laban, as you and Jacob cheated Isaac! No, never will it be thine, whatever come of Esau's fury and anger, to send and fetch thy Jacob thence. Indeed it is striking that her death is in Scripture without notice. We know from Genesis 35 that Deborah, her nurse, died in Jacob's company, and was buried beneath Bethel under the oak which thence derived its name of Allon-Bachuth, Oak of Weeping. It is certain that Rebekah is not spoken of when Esau and Jacob met at the funeral of their father; whence we may fairly gather that she had died, we know not how long before the most aged of the patriarchs.

But this at least can be said of Rebekah that she shared with Isaac bitterness of spirit over the Hittite wives of Esau, and that she was the more faithful of the two in grief at Esau's godless ways. This was what she pressed on her husband as to Jacob, that he might be saved from so ill an example. Yet there was an impatience in the tone which left not a little to be desired. But Scripture tells us things as they were, even of the saints: as it alone reveals God to us.

÷25 Isaac's Charge to Jacob

*Gen 28:1-5*

Rebekah did not speak in vain; Isaac acted on her word as to Jacob; as God directed Abraham to listen to Sarah's voice when she demanded the dismissal of mocking Ishmael and his mother.

"And Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan-Aram, to the house of Bethuel, thy mother's father; and take thee a wife thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother. And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest become a congregation of peoples. And may he give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land of thy sojournings, which God gave to Abraham. And Isaac sent away Jacob; and he went to Padan-Aram to Laban, son of Bethuel the Aramean, brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother." (vv. 1-5).

How pointed the distinction from the blessing Isaac heard from the angel of Jehovah when he called to Abraham! Then on the gift of his son, his only son, to die as far as he knew, came the promise of blessing in the widest terms, and seed multiplied as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand on the seashore. Nor was it only for the numerous seed to possess the gate of the enemies, but "in thy seed" (where no number is named, the one Seed of the apostle's interpretation), the true Son raised as truly from out of the dead, "shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." So indeed they are now as Christians. Nothing of the kind is in the blessing Isaac gave Jacob. Nor is this in any respect faulty, but faith speaking according to God's mind in a wholly different case, as we shall see more fully in the sequel.

Indeed it was a charge with which he opens, "Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan." So Isaac in his day was to marry not from the people of the land, but from Abraham's land and kindred; yet how different the manner! Most emphatically he, the bridegroom, must not leave Canaan; but Abraham's servant, the elder of his house that ruled over all that he had, goes under solemn oath to fetch a wife thence for Isaac. Here on the contrary Jacob is asked to go to Padan-Aram, and take a wife thence of the patriarch's kin, of Laban's daughters. So early must Jehovah visit Jacob according to his ways. "Jacob fled into the fields of Aram; and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept [sheep]." He became an exile from the land of promise, to be cheated in a strange land by his kindred, the sad recompence of his own crooked ways to gain what Jehovah had given and would have secured in His holy way of faithfulness and truth.

"And God Almighty bless thee," prayed Isaac, "and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee that thou mayest become a congregation of peoples." So it was of old, so it will be yet more in the future. Here, as before, it is strictly blessing on earth. Not a word drops that points to heaven or eternity. Enlargement on earth is assured, but nothing is said of a higher order. Even when Isaac asks God to give him "the blessing of Abraham," to him and to his seed with him, it is narrowed to this, "that thou mayest possess the land of thy sojournings which God gave to Abraham." The stopping short thus of higher and deeper and larger things is surely significant, where Jacob comes before us. Such precision is as marked in this earliest of the Scriptures; and the lack of observing it is not less apparent in critical eyes, which, failing to learn what is immeasurably above them, set up to judge them as human documents to God's dishonour and their own shame.

Of an opposite school are those who seek to read the church into every Scripture, because they do not see that the glory of Christ will have an object of His love on earth as well as for the heavens. They have fallen into the Gentile conceit, which Romans 11 was written to denounce and correct. God has not cast away His people Israel. They stumbled at the stumbling-stone, and rejecting their own Messiah, are rejected themselves, while the Gentiles are called, and the church is being formed wherein is neither Jew nor Greek, but Christ is all. But the Gentiles have been as faithless to their privileges as Israel, and must as surely be cut off. Divine mercy will then restore His ancient people when Christ returns and brings in His Kingdom in power and glory.

Israel is here in question for the earth, as the call of Rebekah to be Isaac's spouse typifies the bride for the heavenly Bridegroom. As to the administration of the fullness of times, which will only be when Christ appears, room must be left for all things to be headed up and centred in Christ, the Heir of all, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth — in Him, in whom we also were allotted a portion being marked out beforehand according to God's sovereign purpose. The Christian is not part of the inheritance, but heir of God and joint-heir with Christ. This truth was early lost. The church judaized wholly after the apostles. Even Irenaeus, one of the best of the early ecclesiastics, betrays this confusion, which has gone on deepening ever since.

÷26 Isaac's Death

*Gen 35:27-29*

It was a long while before the close of this life came for Isaac; indeed his was a greater span than fell to Jacob or even to Abraham. But the last forty years of it gave no occasion for the Spirit of God to dwell on. He had cancelled his sorrowful desires on behalf of Esau, when he trembled at the discovery of his wilfulness; and this was confirmed afterwards, when he summoned Jacob to repair to Padan-Aram with his renewed blessing.

Jacob too with his large household and retinue had come back to the land of promise after an absence of more than twenty years, with many a sin and a sorrow, among his children. This delayed his steps; but he now found his way at length to his father's house. The record is brief but affecting.

"And Jacob came to Isaac his father to Mamre, Kiriath-Arba, which [is] Hebron; where Abraham had sojourned, and Isaac. And Isaac's days were a hundred years and eighty years; and Isaac expired and died, and was gathered to his peoples, old and full of days; and Esau and Jacob his sons buried him" (vv. 27-29).

As the Holy Spirit says little, it is not for a believer to say much. But one may remark how truly our patriarch lived to the end of his long life, confessing himself a stranger and sojourner on the earth. Isaac had not even to require a foot of the land of promise, as did Abraham a burying place for Sarah and those who followed. He too knew what famine in the land was, but he did not, under its stress, go down into Egypt like his fathers. And his marriage stood in the strongest contrast with Jacob's, who was forced to leave the land for the country of his kindred, and there cheated of the wife he loved to have another, parents of the twelve tribes of Israel, with many an experience of sorrow, yet blessed and bright in his end, while waiting for the end of God, when glory shall dwell in the land. Isaac remains in the land peaceful and comparatively unseen, but in no way signalized by victorious energy like Abraham, nor even an exile and wanderer like Jacob. His very wife was sought for him, and evidently given him by God from afar, brought across the desert by the father's trusty and honoured servant, object of purpose, prayer, and thanksgiving beyond all other brides of whom Scripture speaks, as already in due place shown by her typical bearing.

Now Jacob, after varied vicissitudes, comes to Isaac his father. It was at Mamre, or Hebron, once the city of the four, where was the cave of Machpelah, where Abraham and Sarah rested in hope of the resurrection. For this was ever the faith of God's elect; and as they, so in due time slept Isaac in or according to faith, having not the land but its promise, and assured of its fulfilment in Christ's day, but waiting patiently till closes man's day of corruption and violence, when Jehovah alone shall be exalted.

For the burial of their aged father, old and full of days beyond the good old age even of Abraham, came Esau and Jacob; as Isaac and Ishmael had buried their father. Death has a powerful and subduing voice for the heart of man, even where faith is not; and it was surely not for those who believed to forbid the presence of their near of kin at the grave, but rather to welcome them where many a self-seeking and haughty soul has been bowed under the solemn issues of salvation on the one hand and of judgment on the other. The days of mourning were not at hand, when Esau's rage turned to kill his brother Jacob; and when they came, God who has power over all hearts so wrought that no such intention remained. Jacob too had passed through dealings of God which turned to good account his manifold and humiliating trials, at length strengthened in heart to confide in His mercy, above fear of human vengeance, and ashamed to betake himself to any further device of his own. Esau still lived to himself and for present enjoyment of the world and its things, Jacob saw the promises, and from afar greeted or embraced them, like his father and his grandfather; and they that say such things show clearly that they possess not but seek after a better fatherland, that is, a heavenly.