

## PART TWENTY-EIGHT

### THE STORY OF ABRAHAM: DIVINE ELABORATION OF THE PROMISE AND THE COVENANT

(Ch. 15)

#### 1. *The Biblical Account (ch. 15)*

1. *After these things the word of Jehovah came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. 2 And Abram said, O Lord Jehovah, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and he that shall be possessor of my house is Eliezer of Damascus? 3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. 4 And, behold, the word of Jehovah came unto him, saying, This man shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. 5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and number the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. 6 And he believed in Jehovah; and he reckoned it to him for righteousness. 7 And he said unto him, I am Jehovah that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. 8 And he said, O Lord Jehovah, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? 9 And he said unto him, Take me a heifer three years old, and a she-goat three years old, and a ram three years old, and a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon. 10 And he took him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each half over against the other: but the birds divided he not. 11 and the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses and Abram drove them away.*

12 *And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, a horror of great darkness fell upon him. 13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be sojourners in a land that is not theirs,*

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*and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; 14 and also that nation whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. 15 But thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. 16 And in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full. 17 And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold, a smoking furnace, and a flaming torch that passed between these pieces. 18 In that day Jehovah made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: 19 the Kenite, and the Kenizzite, and the Kadmonite, 20 and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Rephaim, 21 and the Amorite, and the Canaanite and the Girgashite, and the Jebusite.*

### 2. *The Unity of Chapter 15*

The analytical critics have tried to tear this chapter into shreds from three points of view, namely, 1. That there is discrepancy in respect to time. According to v. 5, it is in the night and the stars are visible; but vv. 7-11 imply that it is in the day; in v. 12a, the sun is setting, and in ver. 17, it has gone down. Green (UBG, 202-203): "But it is not easy to see how anyone can imagine a difficulty here. The transaction described required time. The vision (v. 1) occurred in the night or in the early morning when the stars still appeared in the sky (v. 5). A fresh communication was made to Abram (vv. 7 ff.) which, whether it followed the preceding one immediately or after an interval, contained directions that could only be executed in the daytime. Five animals were to be taken and slain, properly prepared and divided, and the parts suitably adjusted. This would occupy a portion of the day, and during the remainder of it he guarded the pieces from the birds of prey. Then came sunset with the pro-

phetic disclosure (vv. 12-16), and finally darkness with the symbolic ratification of the covenant. The narrative is consistent throughout and develops regularly from first to last." 2. That a vision is announced in v. 1, but it cannot possibly be continued through the chapter, Green (*ibid.*, 203): "Knobel thinks the vision does not begin till v. 12, and ends with v. 16. This is plainly a mistake; the communication in v. 1 is expressly said to have been made in a vision. Whether all the communications in the chapter were similarly made, and only vv. 10, 11 belong to Abram's ordinary state, or whether the vision is limited to vv. 1-6, as Wellhausen supposes, it may be difficult to determine, and it is of no account as nothing is dependent on the mode in which the revelation was given." 3. That v. 8 is inconsistent with v. 6. In the latter Abram is said to have believed the Lord; and yet he asks in the former for a visible token of the truth of God's word." Green (*ibid.*, 203): "But this request does not indicate doubt or distrust, but rather a desire for a more complete assurance and a fresh confirmation of his faith in the fulfilment of promises so far transcending all natural expectation." (*ibid.*, p. 208): "It is plain enough that no partition of the chapter has been found possible. The signs of its composite character are hard to discover. Its lack of conformity to any one of the so-called documents discredits these documents, not the unity of the chapter." (But—can any *measured* time sequence be ascribed to prophetic vision?) Again, we have an instance in which the ultra-intellectualized mentality is unable to see the forest for the trees: unfortunately, this defect is, in most cases, a manifestation of the *will* to find discrepancies (where none actually exist) for the ultimate purpose of discrediting the trustworthiness of the Bible.

The content of this chapter (15) divides naturally into four parts: the Promise, the Sign, the Oracle, and the Covenant.

## 3 Abram's "Dialogue" with God (vv. 1-4).

Leupold (EG, 470): "In a very particular sense this is a monumental chapter, monumental in the testimony that it bears to saving truth. It is for this reason that Paul alludes to a word from this chapter when he establishes the truth concerning salvation (Rom. 4:3, Gal. 3:6). It is nothing short of amazing to find in the patriarchal age so clear-cut an answer to the question: How can a man be justified in the sight of God? The way of salvation was one and the same in the old covenant as well as in the new." (That is, by the obedience of faith to the terms prescribed by the Divine Will in either case.) Skinner (ICCG, 280) rightly refers to his incident (esp. v.6) as a "remarkable anticipation of the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith" (cf. Rom. 4:3, 9, 22; Gal. 3:6).

V. 1—"the word of Yahweh." The first occurrence of this remarkable phrase, afterward so common in the Hebrew Scriptures (Exo. 9:20, Num. 3:16, Deut. 34:5, 1 Sam. 3:1, Psa. 33:6, *et passim*). "That this was a personal designation of the pre-incarnate Logos, if not susceptible of complete demonstration, yet receives not a little sanction from the language employed throughout this narrative (cf. vv. 5, 7, 9, 13, 14, etc.) At least the expression denotes 'the Lord manifesting himself by speech to his servant'" (Whitelaw, PCG, 216; Murphy, MG, 295). Note that the word of Yahweh came to Abram *in a vision*, that is, a night vision, not in a dream (cf. v. 5). Whitelaw (*ibid.*, 216): "Biblically viewed, the vision, as distinguished from the ordinary dream, defines the presentation to the bodily senses or to the mental consciousness, of objects usually beyond the sphere of their natural activities; hence, visions might be imparted in dreams (Num. 12:6) or in trances (Num. 24:4, 16, 17)."

V. 1—"Fear not, Abram," etc. Was this fear anxiety about his defenseless position among the surrounding Ca-

naanite tribes, many of whom probably were growing envious of his increasing power and prosperity, and by the possibility—certainly not to be ruled out—of a retribution descending on him from the Eastern powers? Or, was it a kind of mental dejection—not necessarily distrust of God, but melancholy—caused by the fact of his continuing to remain childless? Skinner (ICCG, 279): “To die childless and leave no name on earth (Num. 27.4) is a fate so melancholy that even the assurance of present fellowship with God brings no hope or joy.” This was considered a tragedy indeed, in the thinking of the ancient world! Leupold *et al* affirm that this “fear of remaining childless is what Abram and the Lord alone refer to.” With this view we are inclined to agree, from the fact that this constitutes the subject matter of the “dialogue” that follows between Abram and Yahwe. Note the divine reassurance, v. 1—“I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.” Murhpy (MG, 293): “The word ‘I’ is separately expressed, and therefore emphatic, in the original. I, JEHOVAH, the Self-existent, the Author of existence, the Performer of promise, the Manifester of myself to man, and not any creature however exalted. This was something beyond a seed, or a land, or any temporal thing. The Creator infinitely transcends the creature. The mind of Abram is here lifted up to the spiritual and the eternal. 1. Thy shield. 2. Thy exceeding great reward. Abram has two fears—the presence of evil, and the absence of good. Experience and conscience had begun to teach him that both of these were justly his doom. But Jehovah has chosen him, and here engages Himself to stand between him and all harm, and Himself to be to him all good. With such a shield from all evil, and such a source of all good, he need not be afraid. The Lord, we see, begins, as usual, with the immediate and the tangible: but he propounds a principle that reaches to the eternal and the spiritual. We

have here the opening germ of the great doctrine of 'the Lord our righteousness,' redeeming us on the one hand from the sentence of death, and on the other to a title to eternal life." "In the vision the intelligent observer passes from the merely sensible to the supersensible sphere of reality." (SIB, 236): "Fear not, indulge no slavish or excessive terror on account of thine enemies, wants, or dangers, or on account of the awful appearances of God, Isa. 43:1, 41:10; Matt. 28:5; Rev. 1:17-18. *I am thy shield*, infallibly to protect thee, Psa. 3:3, 84:11, 91:4, and thy *exceeding great* but *gracious* reward of thy piety and love, giving myself, in all that I am and have, to thee, as thine everlasting all and in all, Prov. 11:18; Psa. 19:11, 16:5-6, 42:5; Deut. 33:26-29, Isa. 41:10; 1 Cor. 3:22, 15-28, 58; Col. 2:9-10." *Abram's Reply* (v. 2, 3). What avails it in the way of external prosperity and comforts, as long as I have no child of my own, but only this Syrian servant, Eliezer of Damascus, to be my heir? Again (SIB, 236): "The full force and meaning of Abram's words can only be seen by considering his position in connection with the promise originally given to him. He was not only childless, but to all human appearance hopelessly so. God had promised him that his seed should be as the stars of heaven for multitude. As yet there was no sign, as he thought, no hope of its fulfilment. Consequently, when the Lord now says, 'I am thy shield,' etc., Abraham replies in the bitterness of hopelessness, 'What wilt thou give me? What can make up for the want of a child?' 'The heir of my house is this Damascus-Eliezer—my slave must be my heir.' Abram's complaint amounts to just this: All gifts and promises are nothing to me since a child is withheld." Special notice should be taken of Abram's form of address here: "O Lord Jehovah." This is the first time the name Adonai appears in the divine records. This address, comments Leupold (EG, 473), "represents a very respectful and reverent ad-

dress and shows Abram as one who was by no means doubtful of God's omnipotence. But, at the same time, Abram voices the natural misgivings of the limited human understanding." Certainly this limitation God Himself recognized: hence His reiteration of the subject-matter of 12:2-3 and 13:16, coupled with a reply to Abram's particular complaint.

4. *The Divine Promise of an Heir* (vv. 4-6).

(HSB, 25): "The concern of Abraham here is made intelligible by the Nuzi tablets. From these tablets we learn that childless couples used to adopt a slave on condition that he would care for them and give them a proper burial. If a natural son should be born later, the slave heir was disinherited to a great extent." Speiser (ABG, 112): "We know now that in Hurrian family law, which was also normative for the patriarchs, two types of heir were sharply distinguished. One was the *aplu* or direct heir; and the other was the *ewuru* or indirect heir, whom the law recognized when normal inheritors were lacking. Such an *ewuru* could be a member of a collateral line, and at times even an outsider, depending on the circumstances. Consequently, our Dammesek Eliezer—whoever he may have been and whatever the first word might mean—was juridically in the position of an *ewuru*. Here, then, is another instance of Hurrian customs which the patriarchs followed, but which tradition and its later expounders were bound to find perplexing." V. 6 surely indicates that a servant by the name of Eliezer, apparently a Damascene by birth, was the only prospective heir to Abram's estate. It is significant to note that the divine promise was specific: Yahwe declared explicitly that, not Eliezer, *but the one who would issue from Abram's own body would be his heir*. Thus Abram's unwillingness to part with the hope that the Promise, however seemingly impossible, would eventually be realized, the unwillingness "which caused him so pathetically to call the Divine attention to his childless

condition," was recognized and rewarded by Yahwe's assurance that the Promise would not go unfulfilled—"an assurance that must have thrilled his anxious heart with joy."

5. *The Accompanying Sign* (vv. 5, 6).

Apparently without any request on Abram's part, Yahweh then proceeds to confirm the Promise with a sign: "and he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and number the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be." That is, since no man can put himself into a position such as to be able to count the number of the stars, it follows that *Abram's posterity likewise would be innumerable*. (Cf. again 12:2, 13:16.) V. 6—And Abram "believed in Jehovah; and he reckoned it to him for righteousness." One of the greatest words in the Old Testament is found here for the first time in Scripture; it is the word rendered "believe," a word which essentially means "trust": "the author would indicate that the permanence of this attitude is to be stressed; not only, Abraham believed just this once, but, Abram proved constant in his faith" (Leupold, EG, 477). So now, when God asks Abram to carry out certain orders, Abram unhesitatingly obeys, and this attitude is demonstration of his faith. But even more is revealed here: God's response to Abram's implicit obedience shows that the patriarch met with God's favor (*grace* is unmerited favor); he was justified; his faith had been counted to him for righteousness. And now, in the verses following, *we see the promise and the Sign issuing forth in the Covenant*.

*God reckoned this abiding trust to Abram as righteousness.* "Righteousness is here a right relationship to God, and it was conferred by the divine sentence of approval in response to Abram's trust in God's character. In Deut. 6:25, 24:13, this righteousness is attained by obedience to the law. Here Abraham, who had no law to fulfill, was nevertheless made righteous because of his inner

attitude, a position which is approximated in Psa. 24:5 and to a lesser degree in Psa. 106:31" (IBG, 600). (JB, 31): "The faith of Abraham is an act of trust in a promise which, humanly speaking, could never be realized. God acknowledges that this act is worthy of reward (Deut. 24:13, Psa. 106:31), accrediting it to Abraham's 'righteousness,' namely, to that sum of integrity and humble submission which makes a man pleasing to God. St. Paul uses this text to prove that justification depends on faith and not on the works of the Law; but since Abraham's faith was the mainspring of his conduct, St. James is able to cite this same text when he wishes to condemn 'dead' faith, i.e., faith without the works that spring from it." (Cf. Rom., ch. 4, James 2:14-26). *Righteousness* is "the equivalent of measuring up to the demands of God." Righteousness here, as elsewhere in Scripture, means literally *justification*, that is, divinely accepted as just, good, or righteous; it follows from loving obedience to God's way of doing things (as distinct from self's way of doing things (cf. Matt. 3:15). Leupold (EG, 478): "What God demands and expects of a sinful mortal is faith. He that has faith measures up to God's requirements, is declared to have manifested the normal attitude pleasing to God; against such a one God has no wrath or displeasure. He counts him innocent; He gives him a verdict of 'not guilty.'" "Under the old covenant salvation was the gift of the grace of God through faith as it is under the new covenant. In Romans (ch. 4) the Apostle Paul uses Abraham as an example of one whose faith, and not his works, justified him. Indeed, he argues that Abraham was justified *before* he was circumcised, a seal that follows faith, not precedes it" (HSB, 26). Cornfeld (AtD): "It was the tribal practice to enter into a personal relationship, namely a covenant or agreement, with the deity, so that God would devote himself to the covenanters, in return for their exclusive agreement with him. This was not an

agreement between equals, but as between a great ruler and those who promise to be his loyal subjects. So the divine protector was known to Abraham as 'Your Shield' (15:1), whereby Abraham was to recognize and worship no other deity and God was to protect and seek the welfare of Abraham and his family exclusively. . . . This closeness of man to God was a social phenomenon which will be illustrated shortly in the dialogue between God and Abraham over the fate of Sodom (Gen. 18). It is important to note that in Israel's tradition of the divine covenant, the role of the patriarchs was twofold: (a) They stood in a covenantal relation to the Lord Yahweh; (b) They lived by faith on the one hand and experienced the faithfulness of God on the other. One point of the patriarchal narratives and their arrangement is to teach what the Bible meant by faith; an illustration is the description of Abraham as 'father of faith.' This will make clear a most significant statement explaining Abraham's attitude: 'And he believed the Lord, and he reckoned it to him as righteousness' (15:6). This implies that God required just that man should choose Him to be his God. *Biblical Hebrew, be it noted, has no word for 'religion.'* The true religion is designated as the 'fear of God' (or Yahweh)."

6. *The Divine Promise of the Land and the Accompanying Sign* (vv. 7-11).

On this occasion the Almighty not only solemnly assures His servant that he shall sire a son himself, an earnest of a seed as numerous as the stars in the heavens; but He also reiterates the Divine promise of the Land of Promise, namely, that the land on which the patriarch walks shall be his progeny's inheritance (cf. 12:1, 13:14-17). Abram asks in reply, By what proof shall I know that I shall possess the land; that is, May I have some intimation as to the time and mode of entering upon possession of it? "O Lord Jehovah": "Again the same reverent address as in

v. 2, in token of his faith in God's ability to perform what He promises. But this faith seeks legitimate tokens; it is anxious to have still fuller assurance. So Abram asks, not in a spirit of doubt but with the purpose to be more solidly established in its conviction." The sign Abram asks for is in reference to concrete possession in the here and now: a perfectly reasonable and legitimate request, under the circumstances. (Cf. Gideon's prayer, Judg. 6:17 ff.; also Mary's question, Luke 1:34.) In reply, God condescends to show him that a covenant is to be established, and tells him what must be done on his part. (Note again Cornfeld's explanation in the paragraph above.) He bade the patriarch take a heifer, a ram and a she-goat, each three years old, together with a turtle-dove and a young pigeon, and after dividing each of them except the birds, to lay them piece by piece over against the other. This seems to have been the ancient procedure in the matter of establishing covenants, especially among the Chaldeans. Having divided the animals (cut each in two, cf. Jer. 34:18-19), the contracting parties would pass between the halves; this may have implied that a similar lot—that is, being killed—was to befall their own cattle in the event of their violating the covenant. However, in this case, there was a significant modification: the contracting parties were not to pass between the halves, nor is the threat implied in anything that was done. In this case, Abram did as the Lord had ordered him, slew the victims, and laid the divided parts in order. Then from morning until evening he watched them, and from time to time drove away the birds of prey which hovered over them. The proceeding in this instance, therefore, was not a sacrifice, even though the victims killed were later incorporated in the Mosaic ritual of sacrifice; rather, it was that aspect of the *covenantal* relationship which manifested the faith of the worshiper.

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It should be noted, in this connection, that the Amorites of the Mari documents used asses for this kind of ritual, with the result that "to slay an ass" was in their terminology idiomatic for "to enter into a compact." It was this prominence of the ass in pagan cults that caused the Israelites to proscribe that animal in their own ritual sacrifices (Exo. 13:13, 34:20). Archaeologists tell us also that the Hurrians (Horites) of Nuzi resorted on solemn occasions to a combination of "one bull, one ass, and ten sheep." Turtle doves and pigeons are mentioned repeatedly in connection with the ritual provisions laid down in the book of Leviticus (14:22). (HSB, 26): "Cutting the animals in halves may have been part of the normal custom or ritual at a covenant sealing. The Hebrew of 15:18 reads that God 'cut a covenant' with Abraham. For a long time Old Testament scholars doubted the accuracy of this expression, but texts have been uncovered in Quatna and Mari informing us that covenants were sealed by some ritual involving the cutting up of asses." Cf. JB, 31: "Ancient ritual of covenant (Jer. 34:18): the contracting parties passed between the parts of the slain animal and called down upon themselves the fate of the victim should they violate the agreement. The flame symbolizes Yahweh (cf. the burning bush, Exo. 3:2, the pillar of fire, Exo. 13:21; the smoke of Sinai, Exo. 19:19); He alone passes between the parts because His Covenant is a unilateral pact, the initiative is His; cf. 9:9 ff." (The covenant with Noah was likewise a unilateral covenant). (Some commentators hold that this covenant was bilateral (as described in ch. 15) because Abram passed between the parts when he placed them in proper order.)

Is any symbolic significance to be attributed to the respective animals used in this covenantal response by Abram? (JB, 31): "The birds of prey were a bad omen (cf. 40:17 ff.) signifying the miseries of Israel's bondage in Egypt; the dispersal of the birds symbolizes her de-

liverance." (Cf. Virgil's *Aeneid*, 3:225 ff.) Murhpy (MG, 298): When Abram asks for some intimation as to the time and manner of entering into possession of the Promised Land, "the Lord directs him to make ready the things requisite for entering into a formal covenant regarding the land. These include all kinds of animals afterward used in sacrifice. The number *three* is sacred, and denotes the perfection of the victim in point of maturity. The division of the animals refers to the covenant between two parties, who participate in the rights which it guarantees. The birds are two without being divided. *Abram drove them away* (i.e., the birds of prey). As the animals slain and divided represent the only mean and way through which the two parties can meet in a covenant of peace, they must be preserved pure and unmutilated for the end they have to serve." Skinner (ICCG, 281): "The preparation for the covenant ceremony; although not strictly sacrificial, the operation conforms to later Levitical usage in so far as the animals are all such as were allowed in sacrifice, and the birds are not divided, Lev. 1:17."

Note the elaborate symbolism suggested, SIBG, 236-237: "Ver. 8-15. Moved by the Spirit of God, Abram asked this sign. The beasts he presented to God were emblems of his seed; the *beifer* prefigured them in their patience, labour, and proneness to backsliding, Hos. 4:16; the *goat*, in their mischievousness and lust, Jer. 5:7-9; the *ram*, in their strength and fortitude, Num. 24:8-9; the *doves*, in their simplicity and harmlessness in their purest state, Psa. 74:19. The *division* of the four-footed animals (1) represented the torn condition of his seed, by the division of the kingdom, etc., 1 Ki. 11:12-13; (2) ratified the covenant made with him and his seed, in God's passing between the pieces, in the symbol of the *burning lamp*. The pieces being laid over against one another, imported that God would in due time join the separated and scattered Hebrews into one body, Ezek. 37:15-22. The *fowls*

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which attempted to light on the pieces, denoted the Egyptians, and other enemies of Israel, which should in vain attempt to devour them, Ezek. 17:3, 7, 12. The *horror of great darkness* which fell upon Abram, signified their great distress and vexation in Egypt, and under their frequent oppressors, Psa. 55:3-5, Dan. 10:8; and hence they are like to a bush burning and not consumed, Exo. 3:2-3. The *burning lamp* denoted their manifest and joyful deliverance, Judg. 6:21, Isa. 62:1; the *smoking furnace*, their affliction in Egypt, Deut. 4:20, Jer. 11:4." *It should be noted again that it was the Lord Jehovah who did the promising and the revealing: all that was required of Abram was that he believe the word of God and act accordingly. This Abram did, actualizing in every detail the ritual of the unilateral covenant (which was soon to be extended to include circumcision as the divinely appointed seal).*

### 7. The Oracle (vv. 12-17).

In this connection, review Green's analysis (*supra*) of the time element involved in the sequence of Abram's experiences as related in this chapter. After keeping watch over the birds of sacrifice, driving away the birds of prey, evidently from what in his consciousness was morning until evening, the sun went down, we are told, and a deep sleep fell upon him, and a horror of great darkness gathered around him. "Amidst the deepening gloom there appeared unto him a Smoking Furnace and a Burning Lamp passing along the space between the divided victims. Presently a Voice came to him telling him that *his seed should be a stranger in a land that was not theirs, that there they should suffer affliction 400 years; that afterwards, in the fourth generation, when the cup of the Amorites was full, they should come out with great substance, return to the spot where the patriarch now was, and enter on their promised inheritance.* Thus, amidst mingled light and gloom, the ancestor of the elect nation was warned of the

chequered fortunes which awaited his progeny, while at the same time he was assured of the ultimate fulfillment of the Promise, and the actual boundaries of the lands of his inheritance were marked out from the river of Egypt to the distant Euphrates; and in this confidence Abram was content to *possess his soul in patience*, Luke 21:19" (COTH, 37). The present writer is inclined to the view that the time sequence of events narrated here was not that of Abram's usual day and night, but that of his experiences of light and darkness (daylight, sunset, etc.) in his prophetic or preternatural "sleep" brought on by Divine influence. Many a man has experienced dreams whose content stretched over more or less extended periods of duration, only to discover on awaking that he has actually been asleep only a few minutes of humanly-measured time. Such indeed are the phenomenal powers of the Sub-conscious in man. We have no way of knowing how long-drawn-out the sequence of Abram's total "vision" experience was. As Leupold writes (EG, 482): "As far as the vision itself is concerned, it transpires in such a fashion that in the course of it Abram sees the sun at the point of setting, about as a man might dream he sees the sun setting. Such a dream or vision might occur morning, noon or night. Attempts to compute the length of time over which the experience extended by the expressions used such as 'the sun was about to go down,' would lead to an unnaturally long lapse of time. The setting of the sun in the vision prepares for the falling of darkness upon him. But first of all comes a 'deep sleep' which is as little a 'trance' here as it was in 2:21. The 'terror and the great darkness' that fall upon him are the terror which the ancestor experiences in the vision, at the revelation of the sufferings which his descendants must endure. In the vision he feels these things in anticipation, even before the revelation is imparted to him that his descendants are destined to this particular form of misery." Again, *ibid.*,

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p. 483, concerning vv. 13-16: "Now comes the revelation in words apart from the symbolic act, which here is made to represent the same facts, but it can be understood only after the revelation thus offered by word and by symbol makes the fact involved doubly impressive; and, surely, there was need of unusual emphasis, for this word was largely to furnish the much needed light during the dark ages of the period here described." Thus Abram was to *know of a surety* (v. 13), that is, in a very definite way, of the bondage in which his progeny should suffer in the times ahead, of their subsequent deliverance by the mighty hand and outstretched arm of Jehovah (Deut. 5:15), and of the divine judgment that was certain to fall upon their oppressors.

Lange comments as follows (CDHCG, 411), and in a somewhat different vein: "V. 12. From this reference to the time, we may judge what was the marvelous attention and watchfulness of Abram. The great scene of the revelation began on the previous night; he had stood under the starry heavens as holding a solemnity; the victims were slain, and the pieces distributed, and then the watch over them was held until the setting of the sun. His physical strength sinks with it, a deep sleep overcomes him. But the disposition for visions preserves itself in the sleep, and so much the more, since it is even the deep, prophetic sleep. Abram sees himself overtaken by a great horror of darkness, which the word of Jehovah explains to him. It was the anticipation of the terror of darkness, which, with the Egyptian bondage, should rest upon the people. This bondage itself was pointed out to him, under three or four circumstances: 1. they would be oppressed and tortured in this service; 2. it would endure four hundred years; 3. the oppressing people should be judged; 4. they should come out of the bondage with great substance. It is to be distinctly observed, that the name of this people, and

the land of this servitude, is concealed. Moreover, there are further disclosures which concern the relation of the patriarch to this sorrow of his descendants. *He himself should go to his fathers in peace* in a good, that is, great age. But his people should reach Canaan in the fourth generation after its oppression, from which we may infer that a hundred years is reckoned as a generation."

Jamieson (CECG, 145): "While visions and dreams were distinct, there was a close connection between them, so close that, as *Henderson* ('On Inspiration') has remarked, 'the one species of revelation occasionally merges into the other.' Such was the case in the experience of Abram. The divine communications first took place in the daytime in a vision, but afterwards, at sunset, they continued to be made when 'a deep sleep and a horror of great darkness fell upon him.' 'The statement of the time is meant to signify the supernatural character of the darkness and of the sleep, and to denote the difference between a vision and a dream' (*Gerlach*). That Abram saw in prophetic ecstasy the servitude of his children in Egypt, represented in a panoramic view before his mental eye, is maintained by *Hengstenberg*, who thinks that this scenic picture accompanied the prediction made to him, and recorded in the following verses—a prediction remarkable for its specific character, and which bears upon its front the marks of having been uttered before the event to which it refers took place." "God here revealed to Abram future history and events in the life of the promised seed. The bondage in Egypt is foretold and its length marked as four hundred years or four generations. The Egyptian bondage, then, was part of the plan of God for the cradling of the Hebrew race. But it also reveals the mercy and kindness of God toward the Amorites to whom He extended time for repentance before judgment should befall them" (HSB, 26).

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v. 15—Note the personal aspects of the Divine promise. These were literally fulfilled. “Abram did go *to his fathers* in death, his spirit to the world of spirits, and his body to the grave (dust), where they—his fathers—had gone before him (Heb. 12:23; Gen. 25:8, 17; Gen.49:29; Eccl. 12:7; Num. 27:13, 31:2; Judg. 2:10; 1 Chron. 23:1, 29:28; Job 42:17; Jer. 8:2). And he went *in peace*, without remarkable trouble of any kind: in peace with God, with his own conscience, and with his neighbors (Psa. 37:37; Isa. 57:2; 2 Ki. 22:20). And it was also in a *good old age*, when he was full of years, weary of this world, and ready and longing for heaven, yet free from any of the infirmities of old age, and falling like ripe fruit in the time of gathering (Gen. 25:8; 1 Chron. 29:28; Job 5:26)” (SIBG, 238). Consider carefully the promise, “thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace.” Is not more implied here than the return of their bodies to the dust? From the vivid portrayal of Abraham’s faith presented in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, especially v. 10, it surely would seem so. Whitelaw comments (PCG, 221): “Not a periphrasis for going to the grave, since Abram’s ancestors were not entombed in Canaan; but a proof of the survival of departed spirits in a state of conscious existence after death, to the company of which the patriarch was in due time to be gathered. The disposal of his remains is provided for in what follows.” Cf. Leupold (EG, 485): “The expression ‘go unto thy fathers’ must involve more than having his own dead body laid beside the dead bodies of the fathers. So we find here a clear testimony to belief in an eternal life in the patriarchal age. Coupled with this revelation from God is the assurance of a decent burial at a ripe old age, a thing desired especially in Israel, and, for that matter, among most of the nations of antiquity.”

The specifics of the Divine communication (oracle) here are indeed clear, as follows: 1. The bondage of the Children of Israel in a strange (unnamed) land over a

period of 400 years. (Cf. Exo. 12:40, for 430 years, the witness of Moses; Acts 7:6, for 400 years, the testimony of Stephen the martyr; Gal. 3:17, for 430 years, from the confirmation of the Promise to the giving of the Law, the words of the Apostle Paul.) (For this problem of the *time span* involved, see *infra*.) The identity of the nation involved is not disclosed, probably because Egypt was wont to serve as a place of refuge for peoples of Mesopotamia and Asia (now designated Asia Minor) when those areas were hit by famine, as had occurred already in the case of Abram (12:10); probably because God did not want to appear to be interfering with the free volition of His creatures, "who, while accomplishing his high designs and secret purposes, are ever conscious of their moral freedom" (PCG, 221); conceivably, lest the fleshly seed of Abram should conceive, prematurely, an undue prejudice against the Egyptians. *We must keep in mind that man is predestined to be free, hence his free choices constitute the foreknowledge of God: it follows, therefore, that the sequence of events disclosed in this oracle, although indeed foreknown by Yahweh were not necessarily fore-ordained by Him. Foreknowing the circumstances that would cause the migration of the Israelites into Egypt, and the bondage that would ensue with the ascent of a Pharaoh to the Egyptian throne who would be driven by jealousy to attempt what might be called a modified form of genocide, i.e., of Israel and his progeny, Yahweh, according to His own pronouncement, would effect their deliverance "by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm" (Exo. 1:8 ff., Deut. 5:15). 2. Their delivery from this bondage "with great substance," and the judgment that would be divinely imposed on their oppressors. (Cf. Exo. 12:35-36.) The God of Israel utilized the world-shaking events of the Period of Deliverance (Exodus) to demonstrate beyond any possibility of doubt His absolute sovereignty, in striking contrast to the powerlessness of pagan*

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gods, and in particular those monstrosities which characterized Egyptian paganism. Jamieson (CECG, 145): "The exodus of Israel from Egypt was to be marked by a series of severe national judgments upon that country; and these were to be inflicted by God upon the Egyptians, not only because the subjects of their grinding oppression were the posterity of Abram, but on account of their aggravated sins particularly that of idolatry." As Dr. Will Durant writes (OOH, 197-200): "Beneath and above everything in Egypt was religion. We find it there in every stage and form from totemism to theology; we see its influence in literature, in government, in art, in everything except morality." The Egyptians heaped unto themselves gods of every kind and description: sky gods, the Sun-god (Re, Amon, or Ptah), plant gods, insect gods, animal gods (so numerous that they "filled the Egyptian pantheon like a chattering menagerie"), sex gods (of which the bull, the goat, and the snake were especially venerated for their sexual reproductive power), humanized gods (human beings elevated to "godhood": even these, however, retained animal doubles and symbols). The Nile River was especially an object of veneration (with good reason, to be sure, because all life in Egypt depended on its inundations). It is a matter of common knowledge that every one of the great Plagues (Exo., chs. 7 through 12) was directed against some form of Egyptian worship. In addition to all this, phallic worship in its grossest forms characterized all aspects of Egyptian ritual and life (Cf. Rom. 1:18-32). 3. Their return to the Promised Land "in the fourth generation," when the iniquity of its inhabitants should be "full" (cf. Gen. 6:5). 4. The specific boundaries of the land: it would extend "from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." This geography is further clarified by the enumeration of the Canaanite peoples who occupied the land (vv. 19-21). "*The River of Egypt*": not the Wady el Arish, at the

southern limits of Palestine (Num. 34:5, Josh. 15:4, Isa. 27:12), an insignificant winter torrent designated in Scripture "the brook of Egypt"; not the Pelusiac branch of the Nile, from Pelusium which was from earliest times the frontier town of Egypt; but surely the Nile itself, the only river worthy of being designated *the River of Egypt*. This did not necessarily mean that the boundary of Israel should some day actually extend to the Nile directly; but, that in relation to the Euphrates these two great rivers "were the easiest way of designating within what limits Israel's boundaries should lie" (EG, 490). Some authorities hold that at two different times in Israel's history this extent of territorial sovereignty was realized: first, during the reign of Solomon (1 Ki. 4:21-25, 8:65; 2 Chron. 9:26) and later, in the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel (2 Ki. 14:25-28). Because of the uncertainty of geographical identifications here, the present writer is inclined to agree with other authorities whose position is well stated by Jamieson (CECG, 147): "The descendants of Abram, in point of fact, never extended their possessions, even in the greatest height of their national prosperity, to the full extent of the boundaries here defined. But the land of promise, as contemplated in the Divine purpose, was co-extensive with the limits specified, and the failure to realize the full accomplishment of the promise arose not from unfaithfulness on the part of God, but from the sinful apathy and disobedience of those to whom the promise was given, in not exterminating the heathen, who had forfeited the right to occupy the land (Exo. 23:31)."

*The Inhabitants of the Land.* The nations enumerated here as occupying the Land of Promise are ten in number. The enumeration varies in other Scriptures: in Exo. 23:28, three are mentioned as representative of all; in Exo. 3:17, six are named; most generally named are seven, as in Josh. 24:11. This variation may be attributed to two factors: the appearance of other ethnic groups in

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the territory between Abram's time and the occupation under Joshua, and the obvious inclusiveness with which some of the names are vested, especially the names, Canaanite, Amorite, and Hittite. For the *Kenites*, see Num. 24:21; Judg. 1:16, 4:11, 4:17, 5:24; 1 Sam. 30:29; for the *Kadmonites*, "children of the East," Judg. 6:3; Job 1:3; for the *Hittites*, who certainly occupied the area in the north between the Sea of Tiberias and the Mediterranean, see Gen. 23:10, 26:34; Josh. 1:4; Judg. 1:26, 3:5; 1 Ki. 11:1; 2 Ki. 7:6; 2 Chron. 8:7; Ezra 9:1; for the *Perizzites*, who are always mentioned along with the Canaanites, cf. Gen. 34:30; Exo. 3:8, 23:23; Josh. 17:15; Judg. 1:4-5, 3:5; 2 Chron. 8:7; Ezra 9:1; for the *Rephaim*, see comment in Part Twenty-Seven herein, on Gen. 14:5; for the *Jebusites*, cf. Gen. 10:16; Exo. 33:2, 34:11; Num. 13:29; Josh. 15:63 (here mentioned as inhabiting Jerusalem); Judg. 1:21, 19:11; 2 Sam. 5:8. According to Speiser (ABG, 69), the Jebusites constituted "the ruling Hurrian element in Jerusalem during the Amarna age, ca. 1400 B.C." The location of the *Kenizzites* (mentioned only in this place) and that of the *Girgashites* are unidentifiable; however, cf. Gen. 10:16, 36:15, 42; Deut. 7:1, Josh. 3:10, 1 Chron. 1:14, Neh. 9:8. As for the *Canaanites* and the *Amorites*, either as an ethnic group or as a complex of ethnic groups, see any reliable Concordance.

*The Iniquity of the Amorites.* "Amorite," normally, designates a specific nation or people, but is sometimes also used, like the name "Canaanite," for the pre-Israelite population of Canaan. (Cf. all this material with the Table of Nations, ch. 10). The Amorites were so numerous and powerful throughout the land that their name was often, as is the case here, given to all the occupants (cf. Judg. 6:10, Josh. 10:5, 24:15): one of their great cultural centers was Mari, on the middle Euphrates northwest of Babylon, where the archaeologist, M. A. Parrot,

has dug up thousands of clay tables from the archives of an Amorite king. In the Oracle of Gen. 15:16, we are told that the occupancy of the Promised Land by the Israelites was to be delayed four hundred years because the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full, that is, had not reached such a state that there was no one righteous among them—no, not one! As a matter of fact, that the Canaanites were not yet vessels fit only for destruction is proved by the courtesy of Abimelech toward Abraham, and of one of his successors toward Isaac later (chs. 20, 26). Jamieson (CECG, 146), concerning v. 16: "The statement implies that there is a progress in the course of sin and vice among nations as well as with individuals, and that, although it be long permitted, by the tolerant spirit of the Divine government, to go on with impunity, it will at length reach a culminating point, where, in the retributions of a righteous Providence, the punishment of the sinner, even in this world, is inevitable." "Iniquity is full, when it is arrived at such a number of acts, such a degree of aggravation, and time of continuance, that God, in consistence with his purpose or honour, can no longer forbear to punish it" (SIBG, 238). (Cf. Gen. 6:3, Jer. 5:13, Dan. 8:23, Joel 3:12, Matt. 12:32, 1 Thess. 2:16, 2 Thess. 1:7-10, Rev. 19:15-16).

Murphy (MG, 299): "*For the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full.* From this simple sentence we have much to learn. 1. The Lord foreknows the moral character of men. 2. In his providence he administers the affairs of nations on the principle of moral rectitude. 3. Nations are spared until their iniquity is full. 4. They are then cut off in retributive justice. 5. The Amorite was to be the chief nation extirpated for its iniquity on the return of the seed of Abram. Accordingly we find the Amorites occupying by conquest the country east of the Jordan, from the Arnon to Mount Hermon, under their two kings Sihon and Og (Num. 21:21-35). On the west of Jordan

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we have already met them at En-gedi and Hebron, and they dwelt in the mountains of Judah and Ephraim (Num. 13:29), whence they seem to have crossed the Jordan for conquest (Num. 21:26). Thus had they of all the tribes that overspread the land by far the largest extent of territory. And they seem to have been extinguished as a nation by the invasion of Israel, as we hear no more of them in the subsequent history of the country." No nation is destroyed until its iniquity becomes intolerable to Absolute Justice. (Cf. Gen. 18:22-23, 1 Ki. 19:18, Rom. 11:4, Exo. 17:14, Deut. 25:17-19; Matt. 23:37-39; Ezek. 21:27—"I will overturn, overturn, overturn it," that is, Jerusalem.) *History proves that there are times when the destruction of a nation's power, even of the nation itself, becomes a moral necessity.* "National sin prevented the Israelites from possessing the *whole* country originally promised to Abraham (Exo. 23:20-33, with Josh. 23:11-16, Judg. 2:20-23). The country as promised here to Abraham was much more extensive than that described by Moses in Num. 34" (SIBG, 238).

*The Time-Span Problem:* "four hundred years," "in the fourth generation" (Gen. 15:13, 16; Acts 7:6), vs. "four hundred and thirty years" (Exo. 12:40, Gal. 3:17). These phrases have given rise to much computation and differences of interpretation. The Septuagint gives Exo. 12:40 as follows: "The sojourning of the children of Israel, which they sojourned in Egypt and *in the land of Canaan*, was 430 years." The Samaritan Version reads: "The sojourning of the children of Israel *and of their fathers*, which they sojourned *in the land of Canaan and in the land of Egypt*, was 430 years." Whitelaw (PC, Exodus, Vol. I, Intro., p. 17): "If the Hebrew text is sound we must count 430 years from the descent of Jacob into Egypt to the Exodus; if it is corrupt, and to be corrected from the two ancient versions, the time of the sojourn will be reduced one-half, for it was a space of exactly 215 years

from the entrance of Abraham into Canaan to the descent of Jacob into Egypt." "From the entrance of Abraham into Canaan to the birth of Isaac was twenty-five years (Gen. 12:4, 17:1, 21); from the birth of Isaac to that of Jacob was sixty years (Gen. 25:26). Jacob was 130 years old when he went into Egypt (Gen. 47:9). Thus 25 plus 60 plus 130 equals 215 years' (*ibid.*) In refutation of this view, it should be noted that according to the Hebrew text the Children of Israel were to be *afflicted* four hundred years. But there is no evidence that the seed of Abraham suffered affliction of any unusual kind at the hands of the Canaanites: indeed Abraham, Isaac and Jacob seem to have been treated with considerable courtesy by their Canaanite neighbors (chs. 20, 26; esp. ch. 34, the account of the perfidy of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, toward the Hivite princes). In fact none of the statements with reference to the nation oppressing the Israelites (vv. 13, 14) can apply to the Canaanites. Moreover, the longer period "is most consonant alike with the estimate formed of the entire number of the grown males at the time of the Exodus (600,000, Exo. 12:37), and with the details given of particular families in the Book of Numbers, as especially those of the families of the Levites, in ch. 3:21-39" (*ibid.*). It seems obvious that the account which is given in the Hebrew text is the authentic one: this is supported by the fact that there are signs that the Septuagint and Samaritan texts are interpolated, and by the additional fact that it is only the length of the sojourn in Egypt that is in the writer's mind at this point of his narrative (*ibid.*).

Leupold (EG, 484): "The whole experience of being sojourner, being enslaved, and being oppressed shall involve 'four hundred years.' To make the whole sojourn one continuous oppression is completely at variance with the facts. In fact, computing according to the life of Moses, we should be nearest the truth if we allot the last century

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to the oppression. The four hundred years mentioned are, of course, a round number, which is given more exactly in Exo. 12:40 as 430 years." Keil and Delitzsch (BCOTP, 216): "That these words had reference to the sojourn of the children of Israel in Egypt, is placed beyond all doubt by the fulfillment. The 400 years were, according to prophetic language, a round number for the 430 years that Israel spent in Egypt." Jamieson (CECG, 145): "'Four hundred years.' The statement is made here in round numbers, as also in Acts 7:6, but more exactly 430 years in Exo. 12:40, Gal. 3:17." Whitelaw (PCG, 221): "Three different stages of adverse fortune are described—exile, bondage, and affliction; or the two last clauses depict the contents of the first. *Four hundred years.* The duration not of their affliction merely, but either of their bondage and affliction, or more probably of their exile, bondage, and affliction; either a round number for 430, to be reckoned from the date of the descent into Egypt, as Moses (Exo. 12:40) and Stephen (Acts 7:6) seem to say, and to be reconciled with the statement of Paul (Gal. 3:17) by regarding the death of Jacob as the closing of the time of promise; or an exact number dating from the birth of Isaac, which was thirty years after the call in Ur, thus making the entire interval correspond with the 430 years of Paul, or from the persecution of Ishmael which occurred thirty years after the promise in ch. 12:3." Gosman (CDHCG, 413): "The genealogical table, Exod. 6:16 ff., favors a much shorter residence than four hundred years; since the combined ages of the persons there mentioned, Levi, Kohath, Amram, including the years of Moses at the time of the exodus, amount to only four hundred and eighty-four years, from which we must take, of course, the age of Levi, at the entrance of Jacob into Egypt, and the ages of the different fathers at the birth of their sons. It is better, therefore, with Wordsworth, Murphy, Jacobus,

and many of the earlier commentators, to make the four hundred years begin with the birth of Isaac, and the four hundred and thirty of the apostle to date from the call of Abram." Again, Leupold (EG, 484): "The four hundred years mentioned are, of course, a round number, which is given more exactly in Exod. 12:40 as 430 years. Michell's computations agree with these figures, making the year of Jacob's going down into Egypt to be 1879 B.C. and the year of the Exodus 1449. Since this latter year, or perhaps 1447 B.C., is now quite commonly accepted, we may let these dates stand as sufficiently exact for all practical purposes. How Moses arrived at the computation 430 in Exod. 12:40 need not here concern us. Other instances of exact predictions in numbers of years are found in Jer. 25:11, 29:10, in reference to seventy years; and Isa. 16:14, for a matter of three years." As for the Apostle's time-span, Gal. 3:17, this "would simply show that, in writing to Greek-speaking Jews, whose only Bible was the Septuagint version, he made use of that translation. It would not even prove his own opinion upon the point, since the chronological question is not pertinent to his argument, and, whatever he may have thought upon it, he would certainly not have obtruded upon his Galatian disciples a wholly irrelevant discussion" (PC, Exodus, Vol. I, Intro., p. 18).

V. 16. *In the fourth generation.* This should probably read "the fourth generation shall return," etc. Here the original word, *dor*, translated "generation," means "circle," "turning," "age." Jamieson (CECG, 146): "the revolution or circle of human years; an age or generation. Like *genea* among the Greeks, and *saeculum* among the Romans, its meaning, as to extent of time, differed at different periods. In the patriarchal age it denoted a hundred years (cf. v. 13 with Exo. 12:40). In later ages its signification was more limited, as it is used to describe a period of from thirty to forty years (Job 42:16). And on the ground of

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this ordinary import borne by the word 'generation,' a recent writer has founded an objection to the historical truth of this history. But he draws an unwarrantable conclusion; for, as there are only two modes of computing a 'generation,' the original rate of calculating it at from thirty to forty years, and the patriarchal usage to which, in accordance with Abram's habits of thought, the Divine Revealer accorded his words, it is evident that the 'fourth generation' is to be taken in the latter sense, as is distinctly intimated in v. 13." Keil and Delitzsch (BCOTP, 216): "The calculations are made here on the basis of a hundred years to a generation: not too much for those times, when the average duration of life was above 150 years, and Isaac was born in the hundredth year of Abraham's life." Speiser (ABG, 113): As in Gen. 6:9, "Heb. *dor* signifies, 'duration,' 'age,' 'time span,' and only secondarily 'generation' in the current use of the term. The context does not show specifically how the author used the term in this instance; it could have been any of the several round numbers of years. No conclusion can therefore be drawn from this passage in regard to the date of the Exodus." Murhpy (MG, 299: "*In the fourth age*. An age here means the average period from the birth to the death of one man. This use of the word is proved by Numbers 32:13—'He made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the *generation* that had done evil in the sight of the Lord was consumed.' This age or generation ran parallel with the life of Moses, and therefore consisted of one hundred and twenty years. Joseph lived one hundred and ten years. Four such generations amount to four hundred and eighty or four hundred and forty years. From the birth of Isaac to the return to the land of promise was an interval of four hundred and forty years. Isaac, Levi, Amram, and Eleazar may represent the four ages." Again, on v. 13, Murphy (*ibid.*, p. 298): "Four hundred years are to elapse before

the seed of Abraham shall actually proceed to take possession of the land. This interval can only commence when the seed is born; that is, at the birth of Isaac, when Abram was a hundred years of age, and therefore thirty years after the call. During this interval they are to be, *first, strangers in a land not theirs* for one hundred and ninety years; and then for the remaining two hundred and ten years in Egypt: at first, *servants*, with considerable privilege and position; and at last, *afflicted serfs*, under a hard and cruel bondage. At the end of this period Pharaoh and his nation were visited with a succession of tremendous *judgments*, and Israel went out free from bondage *with great wealth* (Exo. chs. 12:14)."

Leupold (EG, 486): "Another factor enters into these computations and readjustments—the guilt of the Amorites.' All the inhabitants of Canaan are referred to by the term 'Amorites,' the most important family of the Canaanites (see on 10:16). The term is similarly used in 48:22; Num. 13:29, 21:21, etc., Deut. 1:7, 19. These aboriginal inhabitants of Canaan had heaped up a measure of 'guilt' by this time. The measure was not yet 'complete' (*shalem*), that is, they were nearing the point where divine tolerance could bear with them no longer, but they had not yet arrived at this point. God's foreknowledge discerned that in a few more centuries these wicked nations would have forfeited their right to live, and then He would replace them in the land of Canaan by the Israelites. Passages bearing on the iniquity of the Canaanites are Lev. 18:24 ff.; 20:22 ff.; Deut. 18:9ff. So God will allow the children of Israel to be absent from the land while the Canaanites continue in their evil ways. When He can bear the Canaanites no longer, He will have another nation ready wherewith to replace them. Thus far we have encountered no direct evidence of Canaanite iniquity but shall soon see the starting examples offered by Sodom."

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It seems to us that the following summarization of the time-span problem here under study is by far the most satisfactory (from PC, Exodus, Vol. I, Intro., p. 19):

From the descent of Jacob into Egypt to the death of Joseph	71 years
From the death of Joseph to the birth of Moses	278 years
From the birth of Moses to his flight into Midian	40 years
From the flight of Moses into Midian to his return to Egypt	40 years
From the return of Moses, to the Exodus	1 year
Total	430 years

(For a thoroughgoing explanation of these figures, see Keil and Delitzsch (COTP, 371, and 414, art., "Chronological Survey of the Leading Events of the Patriarchal History"; also Kalisch, *Comment on Exodus*, Introduction, pp. 11-13). Finally, Lange (CDHCG, 413): "The difference between the four hundred years, v. 13, and Acts 7:6, and the four hundred and thirty years, Exo. 12:40, is explained, not only by the use of round, prophetic numbers here, but also from the fact that we must distinguish between the time when the Israelites generally dwelt in Egypt, and the period when they became enslaved and oppressed. Paul counts (Gal. 3:17) the time between the promise and the law, as four hundred and thirty years, in the thought that the closing date of the time of promise was the death of Jacob (Gen. 49)." (See also, on Exo. 12:40, Haley, ADB, 418.)

### 8. *The Covenant* (vv. 17-21)

The Divine promises—of a seed and of a land—with the accompanying signs are now brought up into the Covenant, i.e., subsumed therein. The Divinely appointed

sign of the Covenant as an ethnic, and later a national, institution (that is, with Abraham *and* his fleshly seed) is to be disclosed in the 17th chapter.

*Stages of the Promise.* Lange (CDHCG, 412): "The stages of the promise which Abram received, viewed as to its genealogical sequence, may be regarded in this order: 1. Thou shalt be a man of blessing, and shalt become a great people (12:2); 2. To thy seed will I give this land (12:7); 3. To thy seed the land, to thy land thy seed (13:14 ff.). Here (15:18) *the promise of the seed and the land* was sealed in the form of a covenant. 4. The promise of a seed advances in the form of a covenant to the assurance that God would be the God of his seed (17:7). 5. The promise is more definite, that not Ishmael but the son of Sarah should be his heir (17:15 ff.). 6. The heir was promised in the next year (18:10). 7. The whole promise in its richest fullness was sealed by the *oath of Jehovah* (ch. 22)."

*God's Covenants*, it must be understood, are not like compacts or contracts between men. The covenant with Noah, of course, was absolutely *unilateral* (Gen. 9:8-17), that is, the obligation (promise) was solely on the Divine side; nothing is required of mankind. The two great Covenants of the Bible, with the fleshly seed and the spiritual seed of Abraham respectively, of which the Old and New Testaments are the permanent or stereotyped records (Gal. 3:15-29), strictly speaking are likewise unilateral in essence but conditioned upon man's response by the obedience of faith (Gal. 3:2). That is to say, God overtures, states the terms upon which the Divine promises will be fulfilled; man must hear, accept, and obey the terms or conditions, whereupon he will receive the fulfillment of the Divine promises. Hence, not even the great Covenants are, strictly speaking, bilateral. "Whatever may have been the supposed relative standing of the two parties to the covenant. [in

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pagan cults] . . . in the Israelite tradition it was no agreement between equals. The terms of the covenant were not the result of negotiation: they were imposed by the Lord (cf. Exod. 34:10-11; 24:7); and the covenant was inaugurated at the foot of the flaming mountain (cf. Exod. 19:18)." The commentator here is assuming the premise that the Old Covenant of the Bible was a borrowing from the "cult of Baal-berith at Shechem." The theory is absurd for two reasons: (1) the ethical purity of the Covenant with Israel as compared with that of the pagan cults; (2) the name of Deity (I AM) of the Covenant with Israel expresses *pure personality* in striking contrast to the names of pagan gods and goddesses which are simply *personifications* of natural forces. The difference between pure personality and mere personification is the difference between heaven and earth, the divine and the human. The NAME of the Old Covenant God is a *revealed* name; the names of pagan gods and goddesses were all of human origin. (There is no word for goddess in the Hebrew language.) It is inconceivable that any human being could ever have conjured up out of his own imagination the great and incommunicable NAME by which God revealed Himself to His ancient people (Exo. 3:14-15), and especially any member of a nation surrounded on all sides by nothing but pagan idolatrous cults with their gross immoralities as was ancient Israel. We now quote the remainder of the comment in which the writer (IBG, 603) emphasizes the ethical superiority of the Covenant with Israel. Israel made the covenant idea, he goes on to say, "the vehicle of their faith in the dependability of God. He was no capricious despot but a God of righteousness and order who respected human personality. He would not change: his favor was sure. But Israel would benefit by that favor only in so far as they were obedient to the divine will." With these statements we agree wholeheartedly. The commentator continues as follows concerning v. 18: "In this

passage, stating God's promise to Abraham in covenant terms, no conditions are imposed. But the implication of the narrative in its present and final form would seem to be that the covenant would stand so long as Abraham's descendants continued to follow the example set by him when *he believed the Lord* (v. 6)." *Biblical covenants are not agreements between equals*: hence can hardly be designated bilateral in the strict sense of the term. *In all such covenants, Grace promises and provides, but human faith must accept and obey in order to enjoy.*

V. 17. R.S.V.—"A smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces" (cf. Jer. 34:18-19) of the various sacrificial creatures arranged in proper order. Keil-Delitzsch, (COTP, 216-217): "In this symbol Jehovah manifested Himself to Abram, just as He afterwards did to the people of Israel in the pillar of cloud and fire. Passing through the pieces, He ratified the covenant which He had made with Abram. His glory was enveloped in fire and smoke, the product of the consuming fire—both symbols of the wrath of God, whose fiery zeal consumes whatever opposes it." (Cf. Exo. 3:2, 13:21, 19:18; Deut. 4:24, Heb. 10:31; Psa. 18:9.) Continuing (*ibid.*): To establish and give reality to the covenant to be concluded with Abram, Jehovah would have to pass through the seed of Abram when oppressed by the Egyptians and threatened by destruction, and to execute judgment on their oppressors (Exo. 7:4, 12:2). In this symbol, the passing of the Lord between the pieces meant something altogether different from the oath of the Lord by Himself in ch. 22:16, or by His life in Deut. 32:40, or by His soul in Amos 6:8 and Jer. 51:14. It set before Abram the condescension of the Lord to his seed, in the fearful glory of His majesty as the judge of their foes. Hence the pieces were not consumed by the fire; for the transaction had reference not to a sacrifice, which God accepted, and in which the soul

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of the offered was to ascend in the smoke to God, but to a covenant in which God came down to man. *From the nature of the covenant, it followed, however, that God alone went through the pieces in a symbolical representation of Himself, and not Abram also. For although a covenant always establishes a reciprocal relation between two individuals, yet in that covenant which God concluded with a man, the man did not stand on an equality with God, but God established the relation of fellowship by His promise and His gracious condescension to the man, who was at first purely a recipient, and was only qualified and bound to fulfill the obligations consequent upon the covenant by the reception of gifts of grace.*" (Italics mine—C. C.) Skinner (ICCG, 283): "This ceremony constitutes a *Berith*, of which the one provision is the possession of 'the land.' A *Berith* necessarily implies two or more parties; but it may happen that from the nature of the case its stipulations are binding only on one. So, here: Yahweh alone passes (symbolically) between the pieces, because He alone contracts obligation. The *land* is described according to its ideal limits." Keil-Delitzsch, on vv. 18-21 (*ibid.*, p. 217): "In vers. 18-21 this divine revelation is described as the making of a covenant . . . the bond concluded by cutting up the sacrificial animals, and the substance of this covenant is embraced in the promise, that God would give that land to the seed of Abram, from the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates. The river of Egypt is the Nile, and not the brook of Egypt, Num. 34:5, i.e., the boundary stream *Rhinocorura*, *Wady el Arish*. According to the oratorical character of the promise, the two large rivers, the Nile and the Euphrates, are mentioned as the boundaries within which the seed of Abram would possess the promised land, the exact limits of which are minutely described in the list of the tribes who were then in possession." With these concluding statements the present author finds himself in complete agreement.

Schultz (OTS, 34): "The covenant plays an important role in Abraham's experience. Note the successive revelations of God after the initial promise to which Abraham responded in obedience. As God enlarged this promise, Abraham exercised faith which was reckoned to him as righteousness (Gen. 15). In this covenant the land of Canaan was specifically pledged to the descendants of Abraham. With the promise of the son, circumcision was made the sign of the covenant (Gen. 17). This covenant promise was finally sealed in Abraham's act of obedience when he demonstrated his willingness to sacrifice his only son Isaac (Gen. 22)."

In its present fused form, ch. 15 consists of two interrelated parts. The first (1-6) has to do with the increasingly urgent matter of Abraham's heir. The patriarch's original call (12:1 ff.) implied that the mandate was to be taken over by Abraham's descendants. Thus far, however, Abraham has remained childless. The ultimate success of his mission was therefore in danger. Moreover, he had cause for personal anxiety, for in ancient Near Eastern societies it was left to a son to ensure a restful afterlife for his father through proper interment and rites ('he shall lament him and bury him,' say the Nuzi texts). God's reaffirmed promise of a son now sets Abraham's mind at rest on both counts. The remainder of the chapter (7-24) places the preceding incident in a broader perspective. Above and beyond personal considerations, the birth of an heir to Abraham is essential to God's scheme of things. It involves a nation to be, and its establishment in the Promised Land. That land shall extend from Egypt to Mesopotamia (18). The emphasis shifts thus to world history, and the importance of the episode is underscored by the conclusion of a covenant. In secular practice, this is normally a binding compact between states. This time, however, we are witnessing a covenant between the Creator of the universe and the ancestor of a nation ordained in

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advance to be a tool for shaping the history of the world. Small wonder, therefore, that the description touches on magic, and carries with it a feeling of awe and mystery which, thanks to the genius of the narrator, can still grip the reader after all the intervening centuries" (ABG, 115).

## FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

What God Did Through the Children of Israel

(1 Cor. 10:1-13, Rom. 15:4, Gal. 3:24-25)

We often hear the question, Why did not God send His Son into the world to redeem mankind immediately after the disobedience of our first parents? Why did He not send Him in the time of Abraham or Moses or the Prophets, etc.? Why did He wait so long before inaugurating the redemptive phase of His Eternal Purpose? (Cf. Eph. 3:8-13, 1 Pet. 1:10-12, Gal. 4:4.)

We might counter these questions with the following: Why did not God so constitute the acorn that it would grow into an oak instantaneously? Or, why did He not so create the infant that it would grow into a man or woman in a few minutes, weeks or months? The answer seems to be that "sundry matters had first to be practically demonstrated before the Gospel could be fully and properly revealed to mankind as the power of God for the salvation of every true believer" (Milligan, SR, 73). In the Purpose of God, it was left to the Gentiles to demonstrate by their numerous failures in theoretical and practical "wisdom," such as, for example, Platonism, Aristotelianism, Stoicism, Epicureanism, etc., and indeed all "schools" of philosophy, the sheer inadequacy of human speculation to fathom the mysteries of Being; and by their equally numerous failures in trying to establish an adequate system of religion with only the dim light of "nature" to guide them (cf. Rom. 1:20-32). The history of philosophy shows that man's greatest problem has ever been that of relating, in any

satisfying way, the mystery of life to the supreme and inevitable frustration, death. Philosophy has ever been concerned, above all other things, with *death*. (By way of contrast, Jesus had little to say about death—the theme that was on His lips at all times was life: Matt. 25:46; John 5:40, 10:10.) As Immanuel Kant has put it, the three great problems that have always engendered human speculation are God, freedom, and immortality; it will be noted that these have to do with the origin, nature, and destiny of the person. The outstanding fact that has to do with human life in its fullness is that the question voiced by Job in the early ages of the world (Job 14:14) remained unanswered until it was answered at Joseph's tomb (1 Cor. 15:12-28).

What ends, then, did God achieve through His ancient people, the fleshly seed of Abraham, the Children of Israel? The following:

1. The continuance and increase of the knowledge of Himself, His attributes and His works, among men. Through the Patriarchs He revealed His self-existence, unity and personality. Through Moses and the demonstrations in Egypt, He revealed His omnipotence. Through the Prophets especially He revealed His wisdom and holiness. Throughout the entire history of the People of Israel He revealed His infinite justice, goodness, and righteousness. Through His Only Begotten He revealed His ineffable love and compassion (John 14:9, 1 Cor. 1:21, Heb. 1:1-4). How utterly absurd for any human being to try to apprehend and worship God aright from the revelation of "nature"! Hence it was that God put His Old Testament people in the pulpit of the world to preserve monotheism, the knowledge of the living and true God, HE WHO IS (Jer. 10:10, Matt. 16:16, John 17:3, 1 Thess. 1:9, 1 John 1:20); by way of contrast to the coldly intellectual "God," THAT WHICH IS, of human philosophy. This God, the pantheistic God of human philosophy, will never suffice

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to meet the institutions, aspirations, and needs of the human spirit (cf. Rom. 8:26-27).

2. The perpetuation and development of the essential principles, laws, and institutions of true religion. These are, as we have learned already, the Altar, the Sacrifice, and the Priesthood. (Cf. Gen. 8:20, 12:7-8, 13:18, etc.; Exo. 20:24-26; Heb. 9:22; Lev. 17:11; Exo. 12:5; Rom. 3:24-26; Rev. 5:9; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9, 24; Heb. 9:11-28; Rev. 1:6, 5:10, 20:6.)

3. The revelation of the essential principles of moral conduct, and of national and social righteousness. There were many noted lawgivers in the ancient world: Minos and Rhadamanthus of Crete, Hammurabi of Babylon, Numa Pompilius of Rome, Solon of Athens, Lycurgus of Sparta, etc. Undoubtedly there was a strain of Semitic moral (and civil) law—norms of right and wrong conduct—handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation (Rom. 2:14-15). The apostle tells us that under conscience, however, as educated by tradition alone, man became more and more sinful; hence the necessity of incorporating these basic norms into a permanent code: this was done through the mediatorship of Moses (Gal. 3:19). There can be no doubt, in the minds of honest intelligent persons that if all men could be induced to shape their lives by the two Great Commandments as incorporated in the Decalogue (cf. Matt. 22:34-40, Deut. 6:5, Lev. 19:18, Exo. 20:1-17) this temporal world of mankind in which we are living today would be a very different world. H. A. Overstreet (*The Mature Mind*, 96) points up the superiority of the Mosaic Code to all other legal codes of antiquity, in these words: "The Decalogue remains for us the first great insight of our culture into man's moral nature. There had been other 'codes' before this one, but they had lacked the consistency of moral insight conveyed in the Decalogue. One and all, they had been class codes, making arbitrary discriminations

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between human beings; assigning more rights to some than to others. Thus, they were not yet moral because they failed of moral universality. They belonged to cultures that had not yet emerged from the stage of many gods and many different truths: one truth for the highborn, another for the lowborn. The Decalogue was the first statement of the oneness of all who are human: oneness in rights and oneness in obligations." The Decalogue is God's Mandate to Humanity: to prince, scholar, commoner, rich man, and pauper alike. (See also Rom. 3:20, Eccl. 12:13, Prov. 14:34, Psa. 111:10, Amos 5:11, Mic. 6:8, Isa. 1:15-17, Jer. 25:5-6, etc.)

4. The fact of the indaequacy of law to save people from their sins. (See Rom. 7:7-8, 8:3; Heb. 10:1, 1 Cor. 15:56, John 1:17, 1 John 3:4). It is not the function of law to save or redeem: law serves only to distinguish right conduct from wrong conduct. The Children of Israel were specially called and used of God to demonstrate the exceeding sinfulness of sin, our inability to save ourselves through works of the moral law, and consequently the need of every accountable human being for personal regeneration and holiness (John 3:1-8). (Rom. 4:2, 5:1; Gal. 2:16, 3:11, etc.)

5. The development of a system of type, symbol, and prophecy that would serve to identify the Messiah at His coming, and to establish the divine origin of the entire Christian System. (1 Cor. 10:11, Rom. 15:4, Heb. 10:1, etc.) Most of the characters, institutions and events of the Old Covenant were designed to be types (shadows) of Christ and His Church. Adam, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Jonah, etc., were all typical of Christ in certain respects. The deliverance of Noah from the ungodly antediluvian world, through water as the transitional element, was typical of our deliverance from the bondage and corruption of sin, through baptism, again the transitional element through which deliverance is consummated

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(1 Pet. 3:20-21, Gal. 3:27, John 3:3-5). The Tabernacle and the Temple were successively types, in even their minute details, of the Church. The Paschal Lamb, the Smitten Rock, the Brazen Serpent, etc., were metaphors of Christ. The Levitical Priesthood was typical of the priesthood of all Christians. In fact the entire Mosaic System was, in its essential features, typical of the Christian System. Typology is a most convincing proof of the divine origin of the Scriptures, for it must be admitted that the points of resemblance between the types and their corresponding antitypes were designed and preordained by the same God who established them and revealed them through His Holy Spirit. In addition to the types and symbols, there are some three hundred prophetic statements in the Old Testament that are fulfilled in the life and ministry of Jesus and in the details of the constitution of His Church and His Kingdom. What more evidence could any honest and intelligent person require, to convince him that Jesus is truly the Christ, the Son of the living God? (Matt. 16:16.)

6. Finally, the giving to the world of the Messiah Himself, the Seed of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and David, through the Virgin Mary, by the "overshadowing" of the Holy Spirit. (Gal. 3:16, Luke 1:26-38; Gen. 22:18, Gen. 49:10; Num. 24:17, Rev. 22:16, Heb. 7:14, Rev. 5:5; Isa. 9:6-7, 11:1-2; Rom. 1:1-4, Matt. 1:1, Heb. 7:14, etc.)

In view of this array of evidence that our God piled up in olden times as preparatory to the full disclosure of His Eternal Purpose, His Plan of Redemption, two fundamental truths present themselves to us:

1. That one can ascertain this divine truth—the content of this revelation—only by treating the Bible *as a whole*. For, as Augustine put it hundreds of years ago,

In the Old Testament we have the New Testament concealed,

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In the New Testament we have the Old Testament revealed.

2. That the very people to whom all this evidence was revealed, and through whom it was preserved for future generations, should reject the evidence and reject the Redeemer whom it identified so clearly, becomes the irony—and the most profound tragedy—of all the ages. This tragedy is expressed in one simple statement by John the Beloved, "He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not" (John 1:11; cf. John 5:40, Matt. 23:37-39, 27:25; Acts 7:51-53).

### History's Message to Man

(Gen. 15:16)

Can any over-all purposiveness be discovered in history? Does history have any lessons for us? Does it have any meaning? There are those who have answered affirmatively, but with considerable variability of interpretation. There are those who answer in the negative. History, they say, is simply the record of man's Will to Live, to resist extinction, to just keep on going on, but without any predetermined end or goal. Popeye's "philosophy" expresses this negative view fairly well, "I yam what I yam,"

It is interesting to note that all prevailing "philosophies" of history arose in ancient Greece. *Herodotus*, "the father of history," who lived in the 5th century B.C., originated what has come to be known as the *ethical* philosophy of history. His view was that history is largely the record of the work of the goddess Nemesis, Retributive Justice, who inevitably interferes in the affairs of men to overthrow inordinate human pride, ambition, and arrogance. *Thucydides* (ca. 471-400 B.C.) adopted the strictly *secularistic* theory of history, namely, that the events of history are brought about by purely secular (chiefly economic) causes; that human events are the

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consequences of purely human causes, apart from oracular, superhuman or supernatural influences. *Polybius* (ca. 205-125 B.C.) was the first to propose the *fatalistic* view, that all events of history are foreordained by a Sovereign Power bearing the name of Destiny or Fortune. Polybius was a Stoic, and this was Stoic doctrine. The *secularistic* interpretation has been revived in modern times, first by Machiavelli, then by Thomas Hobbes; and finally by Marx and Lenin, with their theory of economic determinism and their substitution of expediency for morality. The *fatalistic* interpretation is represented in our day by the work of Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*. According to Spengler, every culture inevitably passes through four successive periods corresponding respectively to the four seasons—spring, summer, fall and winter—the last-named being the period of decay that terminates in death, the period that is best designated that of “civilization.” Spengler was a pessimist: there is no escape from this remorseless cycle, according to his view. The *ethical* interpretation, in broad outline, is represented today in the thinking of such men as Berdyaev, Sorokin, Schweitzer, and Toynbee. Toynbee’s elaborately-worked-out theory is known as that of challenge and response. According to Toynbee, Christian “civilization” or culture must meet three primary needs or challenges: the need to establish a constitutional system of cooperative world government (politically), the need to find a workable compromise between free enterprise and socialism (economically), and the need to put the secular superstructure back on a religious foundation, that in which the dignity and worth of the person is made the supreme ethical norm. Toynbee’s over-all thesis is that our Western culture will survive only if it responds in a positive way to these basic needs or challenges. *Augustine* (in his great work, *The City of God*) interprets the function of the secular state to be the preservation of order whereby the righteous can culti-

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vate the Spiritual Life here that is befitting that of the Heavenly City. *Montesquieu*: the end of the state is its own self-preservation. *Hegel*: the end of the state is its self-glorification to the achievement of which individual citizens are but the means: indeed the state is God on the march. The present-day *totalitarian* state, whether Communistic, Nazi, or Fascist, is the concrete embodiment of Hegel's state-ism.

In Genesis 15:16, we have an intimation of what may properly be called the *providential* interpretation of history. This doctrine is given us in its fullness in Jeremiah, ch. 18, vv. 5-10. It may be stated as follows:

1. *God rules the world. But within the framework of His Providence both individuals and nations are left relatively free to work out their own history and ultimate destiny.* God exercises sovereignty over the whole creation. He owns it all (Psa. 24:1-2, 19:1-6, 8:3-9, 148:1-6; Psa. 50:12, 89:11; Isa. 45:18, 46:8-11; 1 Cor. 10:26). "You can't take it with you" is infinitely more than a cliché: it is absolutely truth (cf. Luke 16:19-31). The redeemed are in a special sense God's own: they are not *their* own, they have been bought with a price, and that price was the blood of Christ (1 Cor. 6:19-20, 7:23; Acts 20:28). Law is the expression of the will of the Lawgiver: hence, what scientists call laws of nature are simply the laws of God. His Will is the constitution of the Totality of Being. In the unforgettable lines of Maltbie D. Babcock's great hymn:

"This is my Father's World,  
And to my listening ears,  
All nature sings, and round me rings  
The music of the spheres  
This is my Father's world:  
I rest me in the thought  
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas;  
His hand the wonders wrought."

## HISTORY'S MESSAGE TO MAN

At the same time, however, God has chosen to recognize man's freedom of will with which he has been endowed from the beginning and without which he would not be man. God chooses to allow man to exercise this freedom of choice. Men are predestined to be free, and their free choices constitute God's foreknowledge. *God does not rule His moral world by coercion. He does not burglarize our wills.* He surrounds us with the necessary means to physical and spiritual life and growth and then looks to us to work out our own salvation within the framework of His Providence, holding us accountable in the long run for the deeds we have done in the flesh. (John 5:29, Rom. 2:6, Phil. 2:12, Acts 17:31, Rom. 14:10, 2 Cor. 5:10, Rev. 20:13).

The same is true of nations as of individuals. God does not rule the affairs of nations by force. He allows them to work out their own history and destiny under the aegis of His Providence. At the same time, however, he *overrules* (overthrows, Ezek. 21:27) peoples and their rulers when pride, ambition, greed, and arrogance may impel them into schemes of world conquest. For the simple fact is that God has reserved universal sovereignty for the only One worthy of it, His Only Begotten (Phil. 2:9-10, 1 Cor. 15:20-28, Rev. 11:15). *In every great conflict in which the forces of righteousness have been challenged by the combined powers of evil, the evil powers have always gone down to defeat. I know of no exception to this principle in all human history.* Free men will never be enslaved for any great length of time by would-be empire builders.

2. *Nations fall when they ignore and violate the moral law and thus make themselves vessels fit only for destruction.*

(1) No better example of this fact can be cited than that of the text before us. Abraham made his pilgrimage of faith to the Land of Promise, lived there throughout

his natural life (as did also Isaac and Jacob) without owning a foot of Canaan's soil except the small plot of land which he bought from Abimelech, a Canaanite prince, for a burial ground. What is the explanation? It is that of our text: the iniquity of the Canaanites had not yet reached the point where there was none righteous, no, not one. We know this from the kindness shown Abraham by various Canaanite chieftains (Gen. 14:13, 20:1-18, 23:7-20, 26:6-11). Some four hundred years later when Israel came out of Egypt under Moses and Joshua, the Canaanites had become so given over to the grossest forms of licentiousness and idolatry that their very existence was a moral blight on mankind. Therefore God gave them up to destruction *as nations* when the Israelites under Joshua took possession of their land (cf. Lev. 18:24-28).

(2) History is the story of the rise and fall of nations; the stage on which history is acted out has rightly been called the graveyard of nations. As expressed in Shelley's imperishable lines:

“My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:  
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair.  
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.”

And in the memorable lines of Kipling's *Recessional*:

“Far-called, our navies melt away;  
On dune and headland sinks the fire—  
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday  
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!  
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!”

(3) Nations do not die of old age: they perish when they die of a *rotten heart*. They die when they cease to be fit to go on living (Cf. Abraham's intercession for Sodom and Gomorrah: not even ten righteous souls could

## HISTORY'S MESSAGE TO MAN

be found therein (Gen. 18:22-33). (For the opposite side of the coin, see 1 Ki. 19:9-18, Rom. 11:2-4).

(4) There are times in the course of human events when the destruction of a nation's power becomes a moral necessity. Cf. Exo. 17:14. In the namby-pamby notions of God that men seem to have today, He takes on the status of a glorified bellhop, or that of a kindly old gentleman up in the sky who will permit his beard to be pulled, with impunity, by every rogue that happens to pass by. Our God is the God of love, to be sure; but *He is also Absolute Justice*. Lacking this Absolute Justice, He simply could not be God. The God of the Bible is still, and always, the Lord of Hosts (1 Sam. 1:11, 2 Sam. 6:2; Psa. 59:5, 24:10; Isa. 6:3; Mal. 1:14, etc.). The unredeemed will discover, when it is everlastingly too late, that our God is truly "a consuming fire" (Deut. 4:24, Heb. 12:29, Rev. 6:12-17).

*Conclusion:* God's "philosophy" of history is clearly stated in Jer. 18:5-10. It may be stated in a single sentence: *the stability of a nation or national state depends on the ethical quality of the national life*. This is true, regardless of the type of regime, whether that be a tyranny, a monarchy, or a democracy.

How fitting, then, these lines, again from Kipling's *Recessional*:

"The tumult and the shouting dies;  
The captains and the kings depart—  
Still stands Thine ancient Sacrifice,  
An humble and a contrite heart.  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!"

As Christians we look forward with keen anticipation to the return of our Lord to receive His church into eternal Glory and to Judge the living and the dead (Acts 17:31, 10:42; Matt. 25:31-46; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Thess.

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1:7-10; 2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:5; Rev. 19:11-16, 20:4-6, 20:11-15).

### REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART TWENTY-EIGHT

1. Show the fallacy of the alleged composite character of ch. 15.
2. Can measured time sequence be attributed to prophetic vision? Explain.
3. What are the four parts into which the content of ch. 15 divides?
4. Where does the phrase, "the word of Yahwe," first appear in Scripture?
5. How does Whitelaw explain this designation?
6. What in all likelihood was the cause of Abram's "fear," as alluded to in v. 13?
7. Explain the Divine assurance, "I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward."
8. What was the character of Abram's response to this Divine assurance? Explain.
9. What ancient custom prevailed concerning an heir in instances of couples who remained childless?
10. Explain the distinction in customary law between the direct heir and the indirect heir.
11. What was Yahweh's promise in response to Abram's complaint?
12. What was the sign by which God confirmed the promise?
13. Explain what is meant by "righteousness" (v. 6).
14. Explain as fully as possible the meaning of v. 6. How and where is this meaning developed in the New Testament?
15. Differentiate works of the law (Paul) and works of faith (James).
16. What more profound meaning must be attributed to the term *faith* in the light of these Scriptures?

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17. State Cornfeld's explanation of the term "covenant."
18. What is to be inferred from the fact that Biblical Hebrew has no words for "goddess" or "religion"?
19. What sign did God give Abram to confirm the latter's possession of the Land?
20. Explain ancient ritual procedure in the establishing of a covenant. How did this differ from the ritual of sacrifice?
21. Explain what was meant by the phrase, "to cut a covenant."
22. What was symbolized by the "smoking furnace"? By the "flaming torch"?
23. What was symbolized by the birds of prey? By their dispersal?
24. Explain the symbolism of the various details of this sign as given in SIBG.
25. Explain what is meant by the Oracle. List the specifics of it, vv. 13-16.
26. How is the time element to be understood in relation to a preternatural sleep? Explain, in relation to v. 12.
27. Summarize Leupold's explanation of Abram's "deep sleep" experience.
28. Summarize Lange's explanation of it.
29. In what sense can it be said that God here revealed to Abram future events in the life of the Promised Seed?
30. What were the personal aspects of the Divine promise?
31. What was involved in the promise that Abram should "go unto his fathers"?
32. What were the probable reasons why the identity of the oppressing nation was not revealed at this time?
33. What fact about Himself did God demonstrate by the events of the Deliverance?
34. What were the judgments inflicted on the oppressing nation?

35. Summarize Durant's comment on Egyptian "religion." What were the characteristic features of this "religion"?
36. How were the great Plagues related to forms of idolatry?
37. What were to be the boundaries of the Promised Land?
38. Explain what is meant by the "River of Egypt."
39. Did the Israelites ever extend their dominion to the full extent of the limits named here? If so, when? If not, why not?
40. How account for the differences in the various Old Testament listings of the inhabitants of the Land of Promise?
41. Who were the Amorites in the most inclusive sense of the name? What was their great cultural center and where located?
42. Why was the deliverance of the Israelites from bondage to be delayed 400 years?
43. What great ethical lesson does this have for us?
44. By what incidents do we know that the Amorites (and Canaanites in general) were not yet wholly given over to iniquity?
45. Summarize Murphy's analysis of v. 16.
46. How does Exo. 12:40 appear in the Septuagint and Samaritan versions respectively?
47. What is the time-span problem involved here?
48. What reasons does Whitelaw give for preference for the Hebrew text?
49. How does Leupold resolve this time-span problem?
50. What feasible explanation can be given of the Apostle's time-span, Gal. 3:17?
51. What is the literal meaning of the Hebrew word *dor*, translated "generation" here?
52. What is the probable significance of the phrase, v. 16, "in the fourth generation"?

## THE PROMISE AND COVENANT 15:12-17

53. Summarize Whitelaw's proposed solution of this time-span problem.
54. Summarize Lange's proposed solution of it.
55. Repeat the stages of the revelation of the Promise as given by Lange.
56. How do God's covenants differ from agreements or compacts among men?
57. What did the covenant idea mean to Israel?
58. Explain: "Biblical covenants are not agreements between equals."
59. In what way did Yahweh ratify the covenant with Abraham regarding the seed and the land?
60. What was the character of the reciprocal relation between Yahweh and Abram in this covenant?
61. Trace the development of the covenant as given by Schultz.
62. What are the two interrelated parts of ch. 15? Show how the emphasis shifts from personal to world history in the latter part.
63. What did God do, through the fleshly seed of Abraham, in the unfolding of His Eternal Purpose?
64. What is history's message to mankind?
65. What briefly are the ethical, secularistic, and fatalistic philosophies of history?
66. By what Greek historians respectively were these three views presented? Name modern exponents of these views.
67. What is Augustine's theory of the function of the secular state?
68. What was Hegel's philosophy of the state? In what political systems was it objectified?
69. State clearly God's "philosophy" of history as given in Jeremiah 18:5-10.
70. For Whom alone has our God reserved universal sovereignty? Give Scriptures to confirm your answer.