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## Abraham: A Bride for Isaac

Gen. 24

Larry Steers

Unfolding before the eyes of the believer is this beautiful chapter. Flooding the soul is one of the most touching incidents found in the Old Testament. Surely there is a prophetic character to the chapter as we meditate on it. Our thoughts go to the blessed moment when we shall see the Heavenly Bridegroom in all of His splendor and glory.

Abraham faced a second crisis relative to the seed God had promised him. He had waited until his old age for the promised son and along with Sarah had schemed to produce an offspring that violated the purposes of God. He had to learn a vital but precious lesson that "with God nothing was impossible" (Luke 1:37). When he had reached one hundred years and Sarah ninety, God kept His word and blessed them with the son of promise.

How quickly the years continued to slip by. From Genesis 12:7 and throughout the scripture's record of Abraham's sojourn on earth and on to Isaac, the promise of "the seed" had been intimated a number of times. Abraham was fully aware that the seed must spring from the loins of Isaac.

Sarah had died when she was 127 years old. As she had given birth to Isaac when she was 90, Isaac would have been 37 when his mother died. Some suggest that by the time we come to Genesis 24, 10 more years had been added to Isaac's life.

In Genesis 24, the second crisis arises. "Abraham was old, and well stricken in age" (v.1). He faced another dilemma. Isaac must have a bride and must produce an offspring. But, it was also essential that Isaac maintain the stranger--pilgrim character of his father.

Deeply rooted in the memory of Abraham were the

idolatrous lives of Ur of the Chaldees which he had left. He witnessed that behavior again in the lives of the daughters of the Canaanites among whom he dwelt. Isaac's leanings or interest in these wicked daughters of the land are not revealed to us. His father's deep concern was clearly evident and expressed to the servant: "...thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell" (Gen. 42:2). Such a marriage would have far-reaching consequences for succeeding generations. Abraham realized the inherent danger of a union that would join his son to a Canaanitish woman.

Such a marriage would have been an unequal yoke. The ancient Patriarch deeply understood an essential truth which threads its way throughout the Word of God. This truth is reiterated by Amos: "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:5). The apostle Paul clearly and emphatically presents the danger of a believer being yoked to an unbeliever by asking five questions, all of which demand a firm, negative response (2 Cor. 6: 14-17).

1. "For what fellowship hath righteousness (the believer) with unrighteousness (the unconverted)?" (v.14). The answer is none.

This would embrace all the social activities of life.

2. "What communion hath light with darkness?" (v.14). The answer is none. The believer is a child of light. The unbeliever is in nature's darkness. The word "communion" expresses fellowship that cannot exist between light and darkness.

3. "What concord hath Christ with Belial?" (v. 15). The word "concord" is the translation of the Greek word *sumphonesis* that means "a sounding together from which is the English word symphony. The word suggests the various instruments of the orchestra, responding to the conductor and sounding harmoniously together. The believer is responding to the Lordship of Christ while the unbeliever bows to dictates of Satan. There can be no "concord".

4. "What part hath he that believeth with an infidel (an unbeliever)?" Again, no part. The believer will join in singing the anthem of heaven, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood" (Rev. 5:9). The unbeliever has no part in this scene of eternal worship but will languish eternally in the Lake of Fire.

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5. "What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" Again, there is no agreement. The context reminds us that the Assembly is the temple of God. A sister, warned by the elders about a contemplated unequal yoke, is determined that he might get saved, and marries the unbeliever. The children are born, she sits at the breaking of bread with a broken heart. He has the children off to a hockey game or some other ungodly activity. There can be no agreement but there have been many broken hearts and grieving spirits.

Abraham, wasn't familiar with the words of Paul, but the truth expressed in 2 Cor. 6: 14-17 was a heavy burden on his soul. While it may seem repetitious to repeat his instructions to his servant he clearly emphasized, "*Thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell*" (Gen. 24: 3).

Abraham radiates confidence in the servant obtaining a bride from "*my country, and of my kindred*" (Gen. 24:4). But one might ask, "Were the inhabitants of Ur which Abraham left behind when he exited the area not as wicked as the daughters of the Canaanites among whom he dwelt?"

There may be two reasons which could be suggested why Abraham was confident that a bride could be found for his son from among his people. First he left an impeccable testimony when he departed Ur. They would know that he had rejected their idols and had a confident faith in a living God. But, as is true today, when a soul is saved they have a burden for their family who are yet strangers to the grace of God. Word may have reached the family left behind that the God Abraham had trusted had blessed him.

Secondly, Laban and Bethuel listened to the servant recounting how, "*I being in the way the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren*" (24:27), his meeting Rebekah at the well, and his conversation with her. They responded "*The thing proceedeth from the Lord*" (24:50). Evidently "the Lord" had visited the family. They recognized the hand of the Lord in the servant's account.

The servant would remind us of the Holy Spirit. While unnamed here, the Holy Spirit does not draw attention to Himself, for Christ must have the preeminence. The servant is likely Eliezer (15:2). His purpose to secure a bride for Isaac would remind us of the mighty workings of the Holy Spirit in preparing a bride for Christ.

The meeting of the servant and Rebekah at the well was no chance meeting. The Holy Spirit is deliberate in speaking to sinners. Our Lord gave the

great commission of the Holy Spirit, *“When He is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness because I go to my Father ... of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged”*. (John 16:8-11). Every soul saved has first been brought by the Holy Spirit to the genuine conviction of sin. The Holy Spirit opens dark, blinded eyes in a desperate moment of despair to see, by faith, the Redeemer shedding precious blood for them. A sinner's moment of receiving the Savior fulfills the eternal purpose of God to provide a bride for His Son. That soul becomes part of the bride of Christ.

Had Rebekah known the beautiful hymn, she would sing with us:

“I'll bless the hand that guided  
I'll bless the heart that planned”

Our Lord was present at a marriage in Cana of Galilee. We assume that a young couple was being united in marriage according to the customs of that day. One senses that as the Lord witnessed that event, His thoughts must have passed over the ages of time to a moment He anticipated when He would have a bride. But in contrast to the bride of Cana of Galilee, His bride would be blood bought.

The question was presented to Rebekah, *“Wilt thou go with this man?”* (24:58). I respect my brethren who suggest “the man” is the servant. I think not. The man was the one she had heard about, the waiting man in the field. Like her experience and ours Peter penned the lovely words, *“Whom having not seen, ye love: in whom though now ye see him not yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory”* (1 Pet.1:8).

As Isaac was waiting in the field so there is a living man waiting for the fulfillment of a joy He does not have, but soon will have. Rebekah was longing for that meeting. Are we?

*“The servant took Rebekah and went on his way”* (Gen. 24:61). The journey through the desert may have been long and arduous. Rebekah would not have been occupied with the hot desert sands nor the intricate harnesses of the camels. She was going to meet Isaac, whom having not seen she loved. No doubt along the way her heart's desire and longing was for the servant to reveal more about Isaac.

Like Rebekah, we express the longing of our souls as in the hymn:

“I journey through a desert drear and wild,  
Yet is my heart by such sweet thoughts beguiled  
Of Him on whom I lean, my Strength, my Stay.  
I can forget the sorrows of the way.”

The Holy Spirit would unfold to our wondering minds the treasures of His inexhaustible person. He should be the center of our conversation one with another as we journey homeward.

For Isaac and Rebekah there was a moment of meeting on earth. There will be a meeting of the Lord and His bride in the air. He anticipates that grand moment when *“He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied”* (Isa. 53:11). The shout will soon be heard. Sleeping saints will rise and living saints will be caught to meet the Lord in the air, never to part.

Till then:

“Thoughts of His coming; for that joyful day  
In patient hope I watch, and wait, and pray;  
The dawn draws nigh, the midnight shadows flee,  
O what a sunrise will that advent be!”

“Not to Thy cross, but to Thyself,  
My living Savior, would I cling!  
Twas Thou, and not Thy cross, that bore  
My soul's dark guilt, sin's deadly sting.  
A Christless cross no refuge were for me;  
A crossless Christ my Savior could not be:  
But, O CHRIST CRUCIFIED, I rest in Thee!”

anon

## The Last Adam — The Second Man.

F. B. Hole.

**A**t first sight, the subject now before us may seem to belong rather to the superstructure of the faith than the foundations: but it is not so. It is truly fundamental, and this we shall see as we proceed.

Both the expressions that head this chapter are found in the course of the great argument on the resurrection in 1 Cor. 15:1-58. If their force is to be grasped, verses 35 to 49 should be read.

The point raised in these verses is as to the body in which the risen saints will appear, and the Apostle shows that though identity is preserved between the body which is buried and the body which is raised, yet in condition and character the risen body will be altogether new. As to condition, the former is marked by corruption, dishonor, and weakness; the

latter by incorruption, glory, and power. As to character, the former is a natural body, the latter a spiritual body.

The next fact that confronts us is that just as there is a natural and a spiritual body so there is a natural and a spiritual race. "The first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam. . . a quickening spirit" (ver. 45).

Adam is presented to us in Scripture as the original progenitor of the human race. He came fresh from God's hand as recorded in Gen. 2:7, with his body formed out of the dust, but receiving the spiritual part of his constitution by God's in-breathing, and in this way, he becoming a living soul. This tripartite nature of man is clearly stated in 1 Th. 5:23. What characterized Adam's position in creation was, however, that he was a living soul — a living soul, we may say, possessing spirit as well as body. The last Adam, who is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ, bears an infinitely higher character. He is "spirit" rather than "soul", and not merely "living " but "quickenning" or "life-giving."

Here there breaks out upon us the true Divine glory of the Lord Jesus. He is a Spirit — so is God. He is life-giving because He is the Life-Giver. "*Am I God to kill, and to make alive?*" asked the distracted King of Israel (see 2 Kin. 5:7). No; he was not, but Jesus was and is. But then, He who is the life-giving Spirit is the last Adam, i.e. really and truly Man; the Head and Source of a new race of mankind, having stamped upon it the character of *spiritual* as definitely as the character *natural* is stamped upon the first Adam and his race.

Notice, too, that He is "the *last* Adam." The contrast here is between the first and the last, not the first and the second. Why *last*? Evidently, because that word excludes the idea that any third or subsequent race can ever be needed, or enter upon the scene. "*He taketh away the first that He may establish the second,*" is what Heb. 10:9 says. He never takes away the second in favor of a third! The second is *established*. The last Adam abides without rival or successor, for perfection — Divine perfection and not merely human — is reached in Him.

The forty-sixth verse of our chapter points out the historic order of the two Adams. First the natural, then the spiritual; though, of course, in importance and the thoughts and purposes of God, the last was always first.

Verse 47 again speaks of the two heads, emphasizing the condition that marked them rather than their respective characters, as in verse 45. The one is

"of the earth, earthy," or as it may be translated, "out of the earth, made of dust." The Other is "out of heaven." In this verse they are termed "the first man" and "the second Man"; not this time "the first" and "the last." Now, why is it *second*? Because here, where Christ's manhood rather than His headship is before us, the object of the Spirit of God is to exclude every other man. After the first Adam and until the last Adam historically appeared no man counted at all. The last Adam was the second man, and not Cain, as we might have supposed.

Who and what, then, was Cain? Simply Adam reproduced. Adam "begat. . . in his own likeness, after his image" (Gen. 5:3). "*In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He him*" (Gen. 5:1). This likeness, alas, was marred by the Fall, and it was not until he was a fallen creature that Adam begat "in HIS OWN *likeness*. He reproduced his fallen self both morally and physically. Hence from the point of view of this passage in 1 Cor. 15:1-58, there was nothing but "the first man" until the appearance of Christ, who is the second. Adam was a marvelous and complex being, and every one of his millions of descendants during that time was an individual with characteristics, that showed on the surface, if we may so put it, some fresh permutation or combination of the many features which make up the Adamic nature; yet fundamentally all were one in both nature and character.

At this point, we may perhaps appreciate more fully the immense importance of the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ was born of a Virgin. There was a hint of this great fact in the first prediction concerning Him ever given. It was the Lord God Himself who spoke of "the woman" and "her seed" (Gen. 3:15). Hence, "when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman" (Gal. 4:4), yet conceived under the direct action of the Holy Ghost (Luk. 1:35). Therefore it is that while the Deliverer was by the woman He was not an ordinary son of Adam at all. The virgin birth means that the Lord Jesus while truly Man was yet a *Man of a new order*.

Verse 48 turns to the two races, ranged respectively under the two heads; stating that the earthy race of the first man partakes of the character and position of Adam; the heavenly race of that of Christ. To understand rightly the race we must therefore rightly understand the head.

Verse 49 links on the truth of the preceding verses with the great theme of the chapter, viz., resurrection, by showing that the identity between the last Adam and His race is to be complete even as to the physical body. We certainly have borne the image of

Adam in our physical bodies. So certainly shall we bear the image of the last Adam, the heavenly Man. Our resurrection bodies will be fashioned in conformity with His body of glory.

The latter part of Rom. 5:1-21, beginning at verse 12, should also be read. Here we find the spiritual results flowing from the characteristic actions of the two heads. Adam's characteristic action was disobedience, whilst obedience even to the death of the Cross characterized Christ. From Adam's sin, there flowed death and condemnation. From Christ's obedience unto death flows life and justification. The main line of the Apostle's argument runs straight from verse 12 to verse 18. Verses 13 to 17 are parenthetical, running like a loop line between the same two points and giving details that show that what is offered in Jesus Christ the risen Head of the new order cannot be confined to any section of humanity, such as Israel. It must be as universal as the calamity it is designed to overcome. Moreover, the blessings thus introduced are of a nature to meet, and more than meet, the penalties incurred by Adam's fall.

Verses 18 and 19 are important to sum up the whole matter. One distinction which is not quite clear in our excellent Authorized Translation should be noted. We quote therefore from the New Translation of the late J. N. Darby. Verse 18 deals with "one offence *towards all men to condemnation*" and "one righteousness *towards all men for justification of life*." Verse 19 states that "*the many have been constituted sinners*" and "*the many will be constituted righteous*."

In these words, we observe the same distinction as we have before seen when sins were in question in Rom. 3:22. It is a question of sin — the nature — here, but again the *bearing* of Christ's one righteousness, consummated in His death, is distinguished from its actual *effect*. Its bearing is towards all with justification as the objective, only here the justification is not contemplated as being *from offenses*, but rather as being "justification of life." The former is, of course, perfect and absolute, but somewhat *negative* in its bearing i.e. by it we *lose* both guilt and condemnation. The latter is more positive and indicates that full and perfect clearance which is the portion of every believer because of his standing in the life and nature of the risen Christ as Man. It might have pleased God to clear us from the guilt of our sins without cutting the old links with the fallen Adam and implanting us in the risen Christ. This further great favor is ours, however, as believers, and consequently, we are now "constituted righteous." While we are in this world the old nature with its unchanged tendencies is still in us, as other

scriptures show; but in this verse, the Spirit of God is contemplating what we are in Christ as God sees us.

Rom. 8:1 sums up this section of the epistle and reverts to the truth we have just considered. "*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus*." If it stated that in the day of judgment we believers should escape condemnation, that would be wonderful. What it does state, however, is that there is NOW no condemnation. The condemnation has been borne and exhausted as far as we are concerned, and we are now in the life of the risen Christ and as clear of condemnation therefore as He is.

A great many Christians, we fear, have never seriously considered this important side of truth. It deals with life and nature rather than with the overt acts in which life and nature express themselves, or, as we commonly say, with what *we are* rather than with what *we have done*, and hence it is not quite so easy of apprehension. Still, it really conducts us to that which is the secret of the profound blessedness which characterizes Christianity, and we are great losers if we ignore it.

#### **What is the difference between "the first man" and "the old man?"**

The first man, as the context in 1 Cor. 15:1-58 shows, is Adam personally if the expression is taken in its primary sense. There is, however, a secondary sense, as is clear from the fact that we do not meet with the second man until Christ appears. How then shall we designate the millions of humanity that came between? They were all "first man" in character; so that in a secondary sense "the first man" covers Adam and his race.

The "old man," on the other hand, is a purely abstract conception. It does not indicate any particular human being or group of human beings, but rather is the personification of all those moral features which characterize fallen Adam and his race. It is the fallen Adamic character personified.

#### **What is the significance of the expression "In Christ"?**

As 1 Cor. 15:22 shows, it is an expression in contrast with "in Adam." We are all "in Adam" by nature, i.e. we originate from him and stand before God in exactly his nature, position, and status. The believer is "in Christ" by grace since we owe our real and spiritual existence to His quickening action as the last Adam. We therefore stand before God in exactly the nature, position, and status of the risen Christ, as Man.

We might use the process of grafting as an illustration, if at liberty to exactly reverse what is actually carried out by the gardener. He grafts the good into the worthless, whereby the worthless is condemned, and the good dominates and characterizes the tree. In Rom. 11:1-36 grafting is used as an illustration of God's dispensational dealings with Jews and Gentiles, and the Apostle points out in verse 24 that he uses the figure in a way "contrary to nature" by supposing the wild olive branch grafted into the good olive tree and thereby partaking of the virtues of the good. This is the adaptation of the process we want for our illustration. The Christian is one disconnected from the "Adam" stock by God's work and grafted into Christ, partaking of His fullness. He is "in Christ," though the flesh is still in him.

#### **Does "in Christ" then only refer to the believer's new position or status before God?**

If the early part of Rom. 8:1-39 be read, we find that verse 1 gives us "in Christ," but this is followed in verses 8 and 9 by — *"So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you."*

Now "in the Spirit" is as clearly contrasted with "in the flesh" as "in Christ" is with "in Adam," and it indicates the new condition or state which corresponds to the position in Christ.

Now these two things, though distinct and distinguished thus in Scripture, are not to be disconnected. There is no such thought as a person being in Christ and not "in Spirit," nor *vice versa*. They are two parts of one whole. Speaking generally, we may say, then, that the expression "in Christ" often covers the fact of our new state as "in Spirit;" yet if we come to a closer analysis, as in Rom. 8:1-9, it does mainly refer to the believer's new *position* rather than his new *condition*.

#### **Has all this anything to do with that "new creation" of which Scripture speaks?**

It certainly has. It says, *"if any man be in Christ he is a new creature"* or "there is a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17).

New creation clearly does not mean the destruction of personality or identity. If that reversed form of grafting — "contrary to nature" — of which Rom. 11:1-36 speaks could be carried out in Nature we should see the once wild olive bearing good fruit, and generally behaving as the cultivated stock. It would indeed be newly created, yet the identity of the engrafted twig would remain.

Still, it is *creation*: as positive a work of God as the creation of Gen. 1:1-31. As Eph. 2:10 says, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works . . ." To be God's workmanship is a wonderful thing.

#### **The first man is evidently superseded by the second Man. When did this take place?**

If we consider things from the standpoint of God's purpose, He never had any but the Second before Him. We never were chosen in Adam in any sense whatever. God has "chosen us in Him [Christ] *before the foundation of the world*" (Eph. 1:4).

If, however, we consider things from our standpoint, we may say that the true character of the first man was fully revealed at the Cross. There he was judged, and at the same moment the perfection of the second Man also came fully to light and He was glorified (see Joh. 13:31). Historically, therefore, the Cross was the supreme moment. The first was judged and superseded by the Second, who was tested to the uttermost and raised from the dead.

In the new heaven and new earth of Rev. 21:1-7 new creation will characterize the whole scene. *"Behold I make all things new"* is the word. The supersession of the first by the second will then be absolute and complete.

"To be conscious of being beloved of God is one of the greatest protections that a believer can possess"  
(Plummer) □

## **Knowing God, pt. 5**

### **Attributes of God**

*Joel Portman*

**T**his series of articles on knowing God is limited because of time and space, but its intention is to try to stimulate others to study this subject by emphasizing its great importance and value to a believer. It is more than that, of course, since it also honors God as the only One who is worthy upon whom to concentrate our highest thoughts. Sadly, many believers put more effort into studying for material and earthly purposes having to do with their daily lives than they do to study the subject that has eternal value. We will be studying

and learning God eternally, since it is impossible for finite beings to ever exhaust the knowledge of One who is infinite in every respect.

We are looking at the General Attributes of God first, since they form a part of every other attribute of what He is. We looked at His eternal and infinite attributes, speaking of One who is without limit in any respect and who never began or will cease to be. We will now briefly consider three other general attributes of God in this article.

### **God is Complete**

It is hard to conceive of One who needs nothing and is never dependent on anything or person outside of Himself. Even the best of men, with all their ability, only have what they have received. Everything in life or creation is derived. All have sources outside themselves and they continue to receive all that is needed for existence and continuation of being from others. All began, whether animal or plant life, mineral or inorganic, from the work or activity of another. Without it, we would not exist, and we must continue to receive supplies from outside ourselves to continue to live. But the Scripture tells us that *"The Father hath life in Himself,"* (Jn. 5:26), and thus He is the source and sustainer of all life, whether physical or spiritual.

"Need" is a creature word that we use often in our daily lives. We need certain things, whether we express them or not. This word is absent from God's vocabulary. For God to admit need would be to say that there is something that He is lacking, some deficiency or failure. Such cannot exist in Him. He has voluntarily entered into a relationship with his creature, especially with mankind, but that relationship is not a necessary one as if He had a need. He didn't need man, neither does He need man now. But He willed to create and form man with the capacity to know Him and enjoy fellowship with Him (Gen. 1:26), but not because He needed man. God was, is, and ever will be complete in Himself. He is what He is in Himself without regard to any other. So that nothing that man does or doesn't do will detract from or add to what He is in Himself.

Notice Job 35:7-8, *"If thou be righteous, what givest thou Him?"* We should always remember that He doesn't need our help. He is fully capable of accomplishing all that is His will. But though this is true, He has purposed to use men for His work in certain aspects. Paul could say that *"we are labourers together with God"* (1 Cor. 3:9), but he previously emphasized that it was *"God who giveth the increase"* (v. 6). He isn't anxiously wondering if His purposes will fail

because of our weakness (Luke 17:10). It was an expression of His condescending purpose when man was placed in the garden that He had made to tend and guard it (Gen. 2), but it wasn't because God couldn't have done that alone. He brought man in to share with Him in that work and to become a partner with Him in this pristine creation that He had made. Though not needing our help, He deigns to use us, and that service for Him is His due and is for our ultimate good.

Neither does He require our worship. He receives it as part of His due and what He deserves to receive from His creatures, as we read in Neh. 9:5-38 and John 4:23-24. Worship is the only right response of the creature to the Creator, but He has existed for an eternity without man's praise in any respect. It is our privilege to render praise, laud, and honor to Him, the One who sits over His entire creation and for whose honor and glory it was created (Col. 1:16).

It is also true that God doesn't need us to defend Him, as if His throne is being assailed and is in danger of being overthrown. When the ultimate effort of the ungodly is unleashed against the Lord and His Anointed, they will be destroyed with a word from His mouth (Rev. 19:15) and finally with fire from God out of heaven (Rev. 20:9). The arch-enemy of God, Satan, will be bound and cast into the abyss by one angel of God (Rev. 20:1) and then cast into his final destiny, the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10). He rules over the nations, and Isa. 40:17 says, *"All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity."* He is in no danger of ever being overthrown, and thus in every way, He is truly complete in Himself and needing nothing. Yet how blessed it is to realize that though He needs nothing and no one, yet in condescending grace, He will use anyone who dependently seeks Him and serves Him faithfully. Lest we think too highly of ourselves, let us remember that He used Balaam's donkey to speak to the false prophet (Num. 22:30)! So He can use the smallest and the least.

### **God is Perfect**

This attribute indicates that He has no defect or deficiency. God is an absolute unity, not composed of various parts with different attributes visibly distinct or separated from others. Nothing about God is divisible or deficient. It is said that God is the perfection of every attribute expressed together in one harmonious whole without divisibility or isolation of any. So that in the exercise of any attribute, no other attribute is

compromised or suspended in its expression. This means that every attribute of God is expressed equally and simultaneously. We may speak of God showing mercy, for example, but let us always remember that it is not at the expense of His righteousness or holiness. God displays His grace in salvation, but in doing so, He never compromised His holy and righteous standard. It was only as He simultaneously upheld His righteousness in judgment by the great work of the cross when that judgment was brought down upon His provision, a perfect Substitutionary Sacrifice, that then His grace and mercy could be expressed toward the guilty. Holiness, righteousness, and justice have always been His attributes along with grace and mercy, but while those attributes always exist perfectly, they cannot always be expressed toward their objects.

These may be truths that are hard for our minds to grasp, and nobody would claim to perfectly understand them! Yet they are true and provide for those who are so exercised a source of rich material upon which to meditate. Our problems stem from our thinking of God in the context of limited human concepts, whereas His desire is for us to think of life in terms of the Divine mentality. If God were not absolutely perfect in every aspect of His person and character and if His attributes were changeable and alterable, how could anyone trust Him? It is because of His absolute perfection in every detail that we can rest our trust and hope in Him completely and without any doubt or wavering.

On this same theme, we can say that there is no inconsistency between anything belonging to God. He is absolutely simple in the sense that there is no complexity that indicates any separated components of His person. God is ONE UNITY without any form or possibility of division. The harmony of His being isn't the result of a perfect balance of parts, but it is the absence of parts. All of His attributes are One in unity. Another has said that all of God does all that God does. Everything about God is fully perfect, without any limitation or indication of any lack. It may seem that I am repeating myself in these words, but it is so that we might be able, in some measure, to consider it and then to meditate on these truths for a few moments so that our hearts rise in worship and praise to Him Who is absolutely perfect and complete in Himself and in all that He does.

### **God is Unchangeable**

This is to say that God has no alterations, either in any decline or improvement. He cannot decline, for if He did, it would make Him less than He is. He cannot

improve, since He is perfect in Himself. So that we say that God is immutable, which is to say that God cannot and will not ever change.

God is unchanging in His existence. He is from *"everlasting to everlasting"* (Ps. 90:2). His character never changes. His attitude toward sin is eternally the same, He always loves righteousness, holiness always becomes His house, and His love never ebbs and flows as does ours. Neither do God's purposes ever change. What He purposed from eternity never changes and what He expressed with regard to man's dominion over the earth has never changed. Even Adam's sin and fall in the garden didn't alter God's intention to put Man over all things, and that will be fulfilled in the Second Man, Jesus Christ. The same can be said about His truth, since it is everlasting and never compromised. God is eternally the same and never will nor need to change in any way. The unchanging attributes of God could be elaborated, but unchangeableness is the mark of every one.

Notice what is written in Ps. 102:27, *"Thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end."* Again, in Heb. 1:12, we read that in contrast to creation, *"And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same and thy years shall not fail."* Again, in Mal. 3:6 the Lord says, *"For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."* It was His unchangeable character that had preserved that nation until that day, despite His chastening hand upon it for their sins. James 1:17 tells us that *"Every good and perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning."*

So that there is no change in God's, Essence.. that is, what He is in Himself essentially by His nature or character. Being God, therefore He is God in every sense of that word and never changes from it.

Attributes.. how He works and displays Himself. That is not to say that He will not work or act differently in different situations, but every act is perfectly compatible with what He is and what He determines to perform. As we noticed earlier, His attributes are perfect in themselves and are perfectly expressed at all times. Counsel.. what He determines in His eternal purposes and truth.

Change always indicates a decline or an increase; it is from the greater to the lesser, higher to lower, from one moral condition to another, or from one position to a different one. That is impossible with God. He cannot change for the better nor change for the worse. We change because we learn and develop,

or we realize that we were wrong. Since God is omniscient, He does not learn, and being perfect, He is never wrong. He never forgets, nor can He. He need not, as we, alter His purpose because He lacks wisdom, or lacks perfect knowledge of the future. Nor does He lack the power to accomplish what He purposes. In His perfect wisdom, foreknowledge, and power to determine and accomplish His will, there is no need to change, neither can anything change it. He is unchanging.

**I would not be anything else but a poor, despised minister of Jesus Christ for ten thousand worlds.**

George Whitefield

## When The Lord Commends Hatred

F C Jennings

*"But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate." Rev. 2:6*

Here I believe we have a still more specific intimation as to the evil ones, and those false apostles that the Ephesians had tried and exposed. *"Those that are evil,"* and *"those that say they are apostles and are not,"* and *"the Nicolaitan,"* are all intimately related, if indeed they are not all identical, as I believe we shall see them to be.

We have thought that the life of that poor failure Samson was, in its broad outlines, a perfect type of the path of the church as here told out prophetically. He, too, had one good thing; he certainly did hate those armies of his people, the Philistines. And here, if I err not, in these "evil ones," the "false apostles," and "Nicolaitans," are the Philistines again in the domain that belongs solely to faith. People who know none of the humbling lessons and experiences of the Cross: that know nothing of the true entrance into that domain through Jordan's swelling flood. Yet did those Philistines eventually give their names to the land, "Palestine," as these, shortly after this, claim to be "the church."

But in the day of the Ephesians they were firmly and sternly met—their deeds hated. Oh, then, is it not of the highest importance that we should know beyond doubt or question, by the light that God's word itself

gives, who are these Nicolaitans? Our faith must stand firmly fixed, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

It is one of the most remarkable phenomena of Biblical interpretation that this word Nicolaitan could have had the meaning that has been put upon it throughout the church's history. And yet it will not appear so strange when we recognize the craft of the enemy; for he naturally desires to hide the truth contained in the word, for Nicolaitanism is and has been one of his most effective weapons. If the Lord hates it, the devil loves it. Naturally, too, we may say that the false hierarchy of clericalism would not desire to condemn itself, so it was imperatively necessary to find some far-fetched explanation; and Rome calmly assured Christendom that there was in it no reference to herself or her clerical system, but that the Nicolaitans were an obscure sect founded by the deacon, Nicholas (Acts 6). Poor Deacon Nicholas! Well, it is rather a comfort to be told by those competent to tell us, that there is not the slightest trace in history of any such sect...how often we look afar off for a solution of a Scripture difficulty when it is at our elbow. We fail to see it because of its very nearness and simplicity. Those who could translate the very word Nicolaitan as easily as they could every other word would have no difficulty at all.

Nor is it a new thought that the word itself gives us simply its own interpretation, as is so frequently the case in Scripture. There have always been those who so regarded it. Nikao means to get the upper hand, and Laos is, as we all know the "laity" or the "people," so that the whole word Nicolaitan would mean in English, "those who get the ascendancy over the people or laity," i.e., "clergy" as opposed to "laity," and the deeds of such the Lord Jesus Himself has ever hated and will ever hate...et me guard this carefully. We must not for a moment think that "ministers," or ministry, are intended here by the Nicolaitans. Nothing—and I could prove it by a large portion of Scripture, not one thing—is so dear to the Lord Jesus as the ministry of love to His own people, and never can we too highly esteem, or too carefully submit ourselves to such ministry (1 Cor. 16:16). No, no, it is not "Ministry," but "Clerisy." Not the love that would give itself up to service of the saints, and beat their feet; but the self-love that would assume a position of superiority over them. The one word speaks of service, the other of lordship.

There is another point of great practical importance in the Lord commending Ephesus for hatred. We live in a day of spurious charity (written in 1909!).

If we hate anything, it is "uncharitable," and we are pressed to cover with this cloak of "charity" every wicked deed and doctrine if it comes in a specious religious garb. Love for Christ will hate without trimming or dilution, mitigation, what dishonors or wounds Him either in His own person or in His beloved people....shall we love, or at least show a negative, neutral attitude, to anything that raises itself against Him and works for the destruction of His people? Will He commend such a course? ...oh, let us not fear the false charges of "narrowness" and "bigotry" as long as our hearts are broad enough to take in all that is of God, let them be narrow enough to exclude and hate all that He hates.

**In Christianity, what is new is not true, and what is true is not new.**

## The Mountains of Scripture

### A Great and High Mountain

#### John Saw the City Prepared as a Bride

Allan Davidson

*"And He carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain" (Rev. 21:10).*

**F**rom the high vantage point of the Mountains of Scripture as we get nearer to heaven, we can see things below from a different perspective.

1. Abraham saw the PROVISION.
2. Moses saw the PATTERN.
3. Elijah saw the POWER.
4. Peter saw the GLORY OF THE PERSON.
5. The disciples HEARD THE PROPHECY.
- 6. John saw the CITY PREPARED AS THE BRIDE.**

We have considered, Peter the man of action. John is the mystical man. John was banished on earth; he is the only man who prophesied from Heaven. John looked into the tomb; he saw the Throne. He turned from the terrestrial; he was called to the celestial. He was the man who lay in the Lord's bosom and worshiped at His feet. John was alone on Patmos, yet he

saw multitudes in Heaven. John was upon an island, yet he wrote about a city.

Peter was an eyewitness. John was the seer. John saw the Lord in Judea and Galilee; in the house and on the roadside; in the room and at the sea; on the Cross and by the tomb; on the shore and on the Throne. John is the only disciple that we know for sure was at the Cross. John is the only Gospel that mentions literal blood.

John writes his Gospel that we might believe.

John writes his Epistles that we might know.

John writes Revelation that we might be ready.

John's theme is the Deity of the Son of God. Yet, John notes with tenderness that He was wearied at the well, He wept at the grave, and He thirsted on the cross. John's Gospel speaks of the cross of Jesus, the mother of Jesus and the feet of Jesus.

In Revelation, John presents Him as the LORD of the CHURCHES, the LAMB on the THRONE, the LEGISLATOR among the NATIONS, the LEADER of the ARMIES, and the LOVER at the MARRIAGE. In this paper, we want to consider Him as the LIGHT of the CITY.

We read of "A great and high mountain". (Rev 21:10). As we ascend a mountain, things below look smaller and we can see further into the distance as we rise above the smog of earthly things. John could not see any defilement, nor death, nor darkness.

*"Come hither, I will shew thee the Bride, the Lamb's wife. And shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God".* (Rev. 21:9,10). When the Lord spoke about our future abode, He spoke about the Father's House. (John 14). Paul spoke about Paradise. (2 Cor. 12). Peter wrote about new Heavens and a new Earth (2 Peter). John was called to see the Bride and he looked and saw the City.

The first cities, built by Cain and Nimrod, were marked by corruption. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were notorious for filth. Babylon and Nineveh rose before God in rebellion. Modern cities of commerce and power are polluted centers of moral repugnance. The world materially, politically, commercially, religiously, and socially will combine to produce the scarlet woman riding the beast (Rev. 17). The devil's final masterpiece will be Babylon the Great, the fallen city. (Rev. 18) Now John sees the final city.

*"I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2).*

On the mountain great and high, John saw the

city prepared as a bride. The city is not the Church but a dwelling place of radiance, freshness, beauty and purity. He had already seen Babylon as a whore, corrupt, fleshly and immoral. He saw 'new Jerusalem', for the old Jerusalem failed. Now he sees a city with foundations, walls, gates, dimensions and structure. This is the abode of the redeemed, to display the light and glory of God, for communion and fellowship, the administration of the government of God, the metropolis of the Everlasting Kingdom, a spotless transparent luminary in the universe, enshrining the glory of God described in terms meaningful to us.

To the overcomer, separated from the synagogue of Satan at Philadelphia, the Lord promised (Rev. 3:12), *"I will write upon him the name of my God, the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God"*.

God planned a New Creation (21:5) *"I will make all things new"*. New in Character – NO DEATH.

God protected a New Constitution (21:6) *"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end"*. – NO DISAPPOINTMENT.

God provided a New Capital (21:10) *"Holy Jerusalem"*. As a virgin bride. - NO DEFILEMENT.

God purposed a New City (21:11) *"Having the glory of God"*. - NO DETERIORATION.

God pledged a New Community (21:27) *"Written in the Lamb's book of life"*. - NO DELETION.

So that we might understand a little of the glory of the City, John records seven negatives.....

- No sea (21:1) *"no more sea"* – Undisturbed rest.

- No sin (21:3) *"no more curse, nothing that defileth"* – Untarnished purity.

- No sorrow (21:4) *"neither sorrow, nor crying"* *"wipe away all tears"*. – Unending joy.

- No sanctuary (21:22) *"I saw no temple..Lamb..the temple of it"* – Unsurpassed fellowship, nothing between.

- No sun (21:23) *"No need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof"*. – Uninterrupted light.

- No separation (21:27) *"Lamb's Book of Life"* - Unalterable register. Register of the Redeemed, all who enter are objects of grace and purchased by sacrifice.

- No shadow (21:25) *"there shall be no night there"*. Never close the gates.

(22:5) *"They need no candle neither light of the Sun, for the Lord God giveth them light"*. - Unveiled glory.

So that we might grasp something concerning the activities of the citizens of the City, John records a Sevenfold Delight:

Rev 22: 1-5 The RIVER he says, was clear as crystal, flowing out in a sparkling purity of delight and satisfaction.

The restriction of Eden was past. There was free access to the TREE bearing twelve manner of fruits on the banks of the crystal river.

The Eternal THRONE was the Throne of God and of the Lamb.

The BONDSERVANTS would keep on serving Him.

The FACE of acceptance and perfect communion was always towards them.

The NAME of allegiance would be in their foreheads in contrast to the mark of the beast..

The LIGHT of His Regal Glory would shine "unto the ages of the ages".

This latter expression, which ends the prophetic vision given to John occurs 14 times in Revelation. *"They shall reign for ever and ever,"* proves that the section Rev 21:1 to 22:5 has been dealing with the City which will be Eternal.

On the mountain great and high, John could see no sin, nor sorrow, nor suffering. Also John could not see any unbelievers. *"The fearful and unbelieving shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone."* (Rev 21:8). May we, believers, try with the Gospel to reach the perishing before we leave them behind.

As a result of our meditations upon some of the Mountain of Scripture, may we rise a little higher, may the things below become smaller, and our vision out into the glorious future be clearer. *"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."* (Col. 3:2). Looking for that blessed hope and appearing in Glory of our great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. (Tit. 2:13).

"There they need no sunshine bright  
In the city four square,  
For the Lamb is all the light,  
And there is no night there."

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*"Upon a Life I did not live,  
Upon a Death I did not die;  
Another's Life, Another's Death,  
I stake my whole eternity."*