

**The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter**  
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**Editorial**

**Faith, Fact And Fantasy.**

Greetings in the name of our Lord.

There are those who misunderstand what faith is, it seems to me. They will say "it's your own wishful thinking", or, "you will believe what you want, regardless of evidence". Is faith just fantasy? Imagining an outcome that simply suits what we want to believe in? If it's not a "proven fact", is it only therefore speculative, and open to fanciful thinking?

We might well bring to mind this passage from Hebrews, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:6), which might well appear to support those words from our antagonist friends, as that does seem to agree with what they are saying to us. However, is it only a case of "things we hope for" and a "conviction in things not seen"? Look at those words again, "ASSURANCE"; so how then are we assured, how indeed are we "convicted" (be able to trust, without uncertainty).

Of course, we have not been in Heaven, with God, we have never met Him "face to face". We were not there at creation, or there when He set the foundations of the earth etc. "By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible." (Hebrews 11v3).

Yet, though we accept this by faith, we do also have a knowledge of God, not only from the certainty of His word (The Bible), but also by the spirit (which calls us, and which convicts us).

"How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." (Romans 10 v.14-17)

"These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have

received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ." (1 Corinthians 2 v.10-16).

We do not believe in myths, those stories that are at best made from some history, but have no real depth. No, we spiritually DISCERN, and trust in God, who will open our eyes and ears to the truth.

"Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness" (1 Timothy 4:7). Our faith must, and will (if it be true faith) lead us to righteousness. If we say we do have faith, then we will work abundantly for the Lord. This IS having the mind of Christ. When we stumble, when we wander off the path, that is because we are not being strong in our faith.

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. (James 2v14-26).

So, we will walk in faith, with the word of God, and the mind of Christ. Ask, we only have to seek the Lord, he will draw us near, and yes, He will hear the genuine prayer of the faithful. In these troubling days, where faith seems so rare, let us be faithful, let us continue as we started, and renew our lives in Christ, leaving behind the folly of this world and all its disappointments.

"Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation, if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel." (Colossians 1v21-22)

God be with us all.

Love in Jesus, Julian.

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**"Is There A God Beside Me: I Know Not Any." -**

Jehovah dwells alone,  
No equal can He see;  
The unchangeable and mighty God,  
From all eternity.

Chorus - We praise, we praise His Name,  
His wondrous Name of Yah,  
Through Him who stands within the veil,  
Our bright and morning star.

Through realms of boundless space  
His spirit works His will,

And with Creation's endless forms  
The Heavens and earth doth fill.  
Chorus - We praise, we praise, His Name . . .

Who can compare with Him  
In Majesty Divine?  
Ye sons of God His praises sing,  
Who in His glory shine.  
Chorus - We praise, we praise His Name . . .

And ye His Saints rejoice  
His praises to declare,  
Whose mercy calls you from the dust  
Their blessedness to share.  
Chorus - We praise, we praise His Name . . .

For soon He will reveal  
Himself in His dear Son,  
To seal the covenants of His truth,  
And perfect all in One.  
Chorus - We praise, we praise His Name . . .

Jehovah! He is God,  
And there is none beside;  
Under the shadow of His wings,  
O Israel, still abide!  
Chorus - We praise, we praise His Name.  
DAVID BROWN.

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Continued from last Quarter - Part 9

## **Veritas and his Friends.**

“It seems clear to me,” continued Veritas, “that when Jesus makes the sending of a messenger from ‘Abraham’s bosom’ equivalent to one rising from the dead, he intends that we shall see, or at any rate enables us to see, what his own opinion is, as to the condition of those who have ‘departed this life.’ In Christ’s judgment they are dead, and in order to return to men they must needs be raised from the dead. Then the Scriptures instead of speaking of ‘heaven’ and ‘sheol’ as being in near neighbourhood, speak of them as being a whole antipodes apart, as in the 84<sup>th</sup> Psalm, ‘If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.’ Then, in sheol, the dead are represented as being unconscious, as may be established by many texts, of which we will take Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6, as an example: ‘for the living know that they shall die, but the dead know not anything... also their love and their hatred and their envy is now perished.’”

“I see,” said Mentor, “that your views are destructive of the immortality of man: if man ceases to exist in death, he cannot be regarded as immortal.”

“These views in no wise conflict with the Scriptural doctrine of immortality,” Veritas answered, “but only with what is merely a speculation, which has come down from ancient times to our own.”

“I see we are drifting further into the deep,” said Pietas, with a sigh.

“As long as we keep to the Scriptures,” said Veritas, “I hold that we are safe, whether near to shore or far out at sea. It is speculation that is the unknown and perilous ocean.”

“Science certainly won’t help you in proving man to be immortal,” interrupted Dubitas.

“Whether that remark is true or not,” Veritas replied, “science is not the first authority on this subject. What man is will have to be determined by reference to the Creator’s revealed word. If the belief in natural immortality were absolutely universal (which it is not), and if the desire for immortality could also be proved universal, the question as to the fact would still have to be settled by an appeal to Scripture.”

“But surely,” observed Pietas, “such universal instincts and desires that mankind feels toward a life beyond the grave, count for something in the argument for his survival in death. Every known faith of the world, I believe, embraces this doctrine, and the common instincts of humanity may be regarded as a natural revelation.”

“I hold that you are wrong,” replied Veritas, “both in your facts and your reasonings upon them. In the first place, it cannot be proved that the masses of humanity that live in the present, and have lived in past ages, have any longing for a future life, or have anything more than a mere fleshly recoil from death, while millions of pagans, such as the Buddhists, have it as their highest hope that they will hereafter lose individual existence by attaining to the Nirvana.”

Dubitas nodded assent.

“Then suppose the longing were as universal as you seem to think, what does it prove? The desire for happiness is surely as universal as any desire within us, but does this prove a future provision of happiness for every individual of our species?”

“One moment,” said Mentor; “such a desire certainly proves that happiness is a fact.”

“Granted,” Veritas resumed; “but what I am saying is that while the desire for happiness may be universal, the attainment and possession of it are not so. These are limited by certain conditions which attach to the thing, and which prevent many from adequately getting it at all. I am not denying that immortality is a fact (which is all that instinct for it could be urged to prove), but the Scriptures show that it is limited to such as fulfil the conditions of its bestowment, and that it is not the natural birthright and inheritance of human nature.”

“But ‘happiness’ is within the reach of all,” Mentor remarked.

“Yes,” said Veritas, “but perfect happiness is not, which is what our instinct longs for; indeed, it may be doubted whether simple happiness is a possibility for all, though, bear in mind, I do not deny it.”

“You may safely do that,” said Dubitas, with a shrug.

“No, I will not: my contention does not require it, and I leave it an open question.”

“Then what is your view of man’s immortality?” enquired Pietas.

“I believe that it is the gift of God to all those who fulfil the terms of future existence, viz. belief of, and obedience to, the gospel, that it is a physical ‘change’ from a ‘natural body’ to a ‘spiritual

body,' which takes place at resurrection; that it will only be entered upon by such as 'seek' for it by patient continuance in well-doing."

Dubitas said here that he admitted his friend's views, so far as he had expressed them, hung together in remarkable symmetry, and that for his part he had no idea that man was immortal, only his impression had been that the Scriptures taught this.

"That arises," said Veritas, "from your being only fragmentarily acquainted with the Scriptural teaching on the subject, and as for your 'impression,' what is its value? Touching the 'symmetry' of these statements, they are none the worse for that; but a truer observation would be, had you information enough to make it, that they harmonise the whole Book, whereas popular teachings can only be maintained by ignoring many of the most pregnant passages contained in the Scriptures. But allow me to ask you, gentlemen, have you made a careful examination of the entire testimony on this subject of human immortality?"

The three friends joined in the confession that they had not.

"That is what I generally find to be the case, wherever I put this question," Veritas continued, "and as long as people generally are content just to keep afloat the current traditions which have been drifting on from age to age, I fear the truth stands little chance with the multitude."

"But though we may not have threshed these things Scripturally out," Pietas observed, "surely they have been examined and sifted to the very bottom by those whose professional duty it is to make such investigations."

(To be continued).

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**Extract from a discourse on**

## **"The Evil of Sin"**

The word sin, I apprehend, is to many people, obscure, or not sufficiently plain. It is a word seldom used in common life. It belongs to theology and the pulpit. By not a few people sin is supposed to be a property of our nature, born with us, and we sometimes hear of the child as being sinful before it can have performed any action. From these and other causes the word gives to many, confused notions. Sin in its true sense is the violation of duty, and cannot consequently exist before conscience has begun to act, and before power to obey it is unfolded. To sin is to resist our sense of right, to oppose known obligation, to cherish feelings or commit deeds which we know to be wrong. It is to withhold from God the reverence, gratitude and obedience which our own conscience pronounce to be due to that great and good Being,

It is to transgress those laws of equity, justice, candour, humanity, and disinterestedness which we all feel to belong and to answer to our various social relations.

It is to yield ourselves to those appetites which we know to be the inferior principles of our nature; to give the body the master over the mind, to sacrifice the intellect and the heart to the senses, to surrender ourselves to base and indulgence or to prefer outward accumulation and power to strength and peace of conscience to progress towards to perfection. Such is sin.

It is voluntary wrong-doing. Any gratification injurious to ourselves is sin, indifference to our Creator is sin. The transgression of any command which this excellent Being and rightful sovereign has given us, whether by conscience or revelation, is sin, so broad is this term. It is as extensive as

duty. It is not some mysterious thing wrought into our souls at birth. It is not a theological subtlety. It is choosing and acting in opposition to our sense of right, to known obligation.

W.E.Channing D.D,

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### **MISSING THE POINT.**

In the Christadelphian for November 1873, page 520, is a notice headed “To the Point.” It may be judged from the style of this piece that the author thought it to be of the weighty and conclusive order. “Who will contradict it?” he cries, like Goliath of Gath. We answer, that it is already contradicted by the word of God. The Editor affirms that “when the apostles spoke of the flesh they meant mortal flesh of men.” We must pause to consider.

If we too hastily admit Bro. Roberts’s proposition, we shall perhaps be led to his conclusion. Is it true, then, that when the apostles spoke of the flesh, they always meant the mortal flesh of men? We think every reader of “To the Point” will understand that, by this leading proposition, Bro. Roberts means to say that whenever the apostles speak of human flesh they mean flesh under sentence of death, or, as he phrases it elsewhere in contradiction to his own teaching on the subject, flesh-full of sin. It is in this sense of his question, we say, first the scriptures contradict it.

The piece before us is not concerned with every passage in which the apostles speak of the flesh; it is concerned with certain verses in John’s epistles. In these John does not use the word ‘the’ before the word ‘flesh’. Both in his first and second epistles he omits the article, and says, ‘in flesh.’ John did not do this by accident. Three times over he employs this form of words. True, the authorised English version reads “in the flesh.” Perhaps Bro. Roberts will discover that here, as in Rom. viii. 3, it is a question of idiom! An idiom is a particular mode of speech; a form of words in one language which will not make sense, if translated by the same words into another language. But it is not so either with Rom. viii. 3., or with the verses in John.

In order to understand a particular phrase, regard must be had to the context, and the subject against or in favour of which the phrase is used. In Rom. vii. 5, viii. 8,9, Paul, speaking of the lusts of the flesh, and of the law of Moses which was “a carnal ordinance,” employs the words “in the flesh” and “in flesh”; but anyone may see that he is not speaking of literal “mortal flesh;” for how could he say to the Roman believers “when we were in the flesh”? And again, “But ye are not “in flesh”? Well, then, here in the second place are several texts in which the apostle spoke of “the flesh” and of “flesh,” when nothing, we think, is plainer than that he did not mean “mortal flesh of men.”

When it is desired to investigate a subject by the process of question and answer, all the questions must be fair and pointed. They must not include what is not needful, nor must they omit what is. A judge sometimes reminds counsel that his question is unfair; sometimes he will say, I think you ought not to put your question in that form. A competent judge would do likewise with respect to Bro. Roberts’s proposition that “the flesh” always means “mortal flesh of men.” It is clear from what goes before, that such is not always its meaning, and it is also clear that John did not use the words “the flesh,” or “in the flesh;” but “in flesh.” Bro Roberts has great faith in “the Socratic method.” There is no reason to dislike it when properly employed; but from what we know of Socrates, we do not think he would have been so mean and unstraightforward as to ask a grossly unfair question, or to put forward a misleading proposition.

The beloved apostle’s denunciation of certain antichrists, for there were divers sorts, can only be understood in a clear and critical manner through an acquaintance with the doctrines they held. A periodical, professing a rigid critical accuracy in regard to matters of faith “Eighteen hundred years

ago,” ought certainly to have someone on its staff, either editor or contributor, sufficiently well read to enable it to fulfil its high promise.

Standard works, on ecclesiastical history, bring us face to face with the antichrist protested against so forcibly by John. They make us acquainted with a powerful sect flourishing in John’s time and long afterwards, who denied absolutely that Christ came in flesh of any kind whatever. It was not with them a question at all of “mortal flesh of men,” or flesh of angels, or any other sort. Their belief was a denial of all flesh in the matter. They did not profess to define what the substance of the body of the Lord was, they denied that it was a substance at all. The following citation, kindly sent to us some months ago by a friend of the truth, will help to make the subject plain and interesting:

“The Docetes and Cerinthian heretics who lived in the time of John, maintained that the pure Word was the Christ, the Son of God, abstracted from and independent of all humanity. The Docetes maintained that the Sagas assumed the outward shape and visible appearance of a mortal, but they denied that He was clothed with a real body, or that He suffered really, believing that He was altogether an airy immaterial phantom, who, instead of issuing from the womb of the virgin, descended on the banks of the Jordan in the form of perfect manhood, and seemed to expire on the cross, and after three days to rise from the dead.

“Now as the man Jesus, and no other, was the Son which the Docetes and Cerinthians denied, the Docetes and Cerinthians denied the Son; and as God was the Father in respect to the Son, in no other way than in begetting the man Jesus, they denied the Father; and this was the spirit of antichrist, or the sort of doctrine antichrist was to teach” (from “The Theory of Prophecy,” by Alfred Addis, B.A.

We trust this will be sufficient to show to any person of sense and impartiality that the Editor of the Christadelphian did not understand his subject, and that if he had understood it, and honestly handled it, he would have directed his hot anathemas, not to those who with the apostle abhor the doctrine of Docetian and Cerinthian antichrists, but “to the point.”

Brother Edward Turney

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## Death By Sin

### **"If these men die the common death of all men..."**

So universal is the belief among Christians that natural death is the wages of sin that one almost despairs of obtaining even a hearing for, much less consideration of, the reasonable but rather less common view that in Scripture, death and death are sometimes two different things.

It is entirely true that in Romans 5:12 the Apostle Paul says “As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;” and if a person elects to believe that he is there speaking of natural death and blankly refuses to consider any possible alternative, then so far as that one is concerned the matter is at an end.

There are however, some very sound reasons for thinking that we ought to go a little below the surface. Is Paul referring to the self-evident fact of the natural order, that men have died, are dying and will go on dying so long as they remain a race of corruptible creatures? Or is he explaining to enlightened believers the Divine laws which govern their relationship to God and which will determine their ultimate and eternal destiny?

If it is the purpose of this passage in Romans to establish that natural death, or corruptibility, became the law of our nature because of sin, then it must follow that before he sinned Adam must have been of a different nature, and we are back to changed nature, which as we have already seen, is an untenable view.

Here again we may call Dr. Thomas to witness, this time from *Elpis Israel*, page 72,

“The animal nature will sooner or later dissolve. It was not constituted so as to continue in life for ever independent of any further modification. We may admit therefore, the corruptibility and consequent mortality of their nature without saying they were mortal. “

There is no doubt whatever that Dr. Thomas was correct here; man as he was created and before he sinned, was corruptible and it necessarily follows that irrespective of whether or not he had sinned, either natural death must have overtaken him or he must have been delivered, as will the righteous living at the return of Christ, by being changed to an incorruptible nature.

In view of this admission by the Doctor and of the unassailable reasoning behind it, what is to become of this second unclean spirit of doctrine which has entered into possession; which affirms that the death which came into the world by sin is the common death of all men, and which is given a certificate of respectability by that same Clause III (or V) of the Statement of Faith where it says: “Adam was sentenced to return to the ground from whence he was taken... a sentence which works out dissolution and death”?

Well, then, it may be asked: If man was already corruptible, before he sinned and while still very good, what was it that came into the world by sin? Paul says it was death - was he right or wrong?

This might appear to be a very knotty problem, and so long as we are satisfied with superficialities it will remain so. It is very easily solved by asking ourselves the question:

“What was the first death of which we have a record?”

It certainly was not Adam's, even though he was the actual sinner; his death did not take place till nearly a millennium afterwards, and it is probable that many of his descendants pre-deceased him.

The answer is, the first death was that of the animal with whose skin Adam was covered. Our opponent replies that this is not stated but merely inference. Perfectly true; neither is it stated “that Adam commenced to die in the day that he sinned.” This also is an inference. The former, however, has the advantage that unless we imagine that animals were skinned alive, we know it actually happened. This was not a natural death, it was a sacrificial death; a life cut short by bloodshedding. But it is what that death stands for which makes it important.

The death of a sacrifice signifies that the penalty incurred by sin was not the implantation of corruption but a violent or more precisely, a judicial death; as Robert Roberts said on one occasion, “It was typical of a violent manner of death.”

This is put beyond any question by the rite of clothing the man with the skin of the victim, signifying that the death of the sacrifice was the death from which he had been delivered. He died in a legal sense when he transgressed the commandment: he was legally restored to life, after confession and repentance, with the life of the sacrifice. This principle is defined in connection with the prohibition of eating flesh with the blood. “The life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given



it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." Leviticus 17:11.

Thus, when Paul says, "By man came death," he is speaking in what may be called a doctrinal sense, of the death which really matters; that sentence which "passes upon" all men when they become responsible sinners, and which will be executed upon such as remain under condemnation, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, in the second death.

That this is the correct view is proved by the fact that the condemnation can be individually remitted by faith and obedience. Jesus says, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Paul likewise: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." If the condemnation resulting from sin were natural death, then those in Christ are still under condemnation, for they are still corruptible, and both Paul and Jesus are contradicted.

If death in Scripture is always death, no more, no less, then Christ's words are falsified, because He says a believer has already actually passed from death into life. This is not "prolepsis" - speaking of what is future as though it were present; He is speaking of a death-state and a life-state which exist independently of our physical life or death.

Paul says: "Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." His use of the words "passed upon" implies that he is dealing with something in the nature of a law or sentence. Natural death is not a sentence; it is not passed upon us - we are corruptible and therefore dying because we were created so, as Dr Thomas has said.

The Bible says "The wages of sin is death." If this does indeed mean natural death then God is unjust; because those wages are paid to good and bad alike, saints and sinners. Furthermore, an additional payment is in store for the wicked - the second death. Even human law does not punish the same crime twice; is God less Just? If on the other hand, as we believe, the wages of sin is that death which one contemplates in reading God's charge to Moses: "Bring forth him that hath cursed, without the camp...and all the congregation shall certainly stone him...when he blasphemeth the name he shall be put to death" - then the ways of God are seen to be in strict accord with justice. "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer judgment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace." (Hebrews 10:28,29).

Only those who have sinned presumptuously and unrepentantly or who have wilfully withstood the grace of God ever have or ever will suffer such punishment; and such a death can truly be said to be the wages of sin.

Some years ago the force of our reasoning reduced Islip Collyer to the straits of denying that Jesus bore the penalty of sin. In commenting on this John Carter wrote one of the strangest things we have ever read. He said: "As for a full penalty of sin, this happens in the unbroken sleep of an unenlightened, unforgiven sinner." One who is unenlightened does not deserve and will not receive any penalty whatsoever. On the other hand, the death of an unforgiven sinner will not be an unbroken sleep - it will be broken by the resurrection to judgment, condemnation and the second death. That is the penalty of sin; and that is how a false theory can make fools of its professors. The sleep of a sinner is no more a part of his punishment than the sleep of a saint part of his reward.

It is utterly wrong to look upon natural death as in any sense the penalty of sin. When it cuts short a life, severs friendships or leaves a loved one desolate, it brings grief and unhappiness, but in

the case of the saints or saved ones, their death is a blessed sleep from which they will awake in Immortal Glory.

We conclude that the truth is not as stated in the Statement of Faith, that the sentence on Adam was his return to the ground. This evil spirit of doctrine should be cast out and replaced by the true one; the sentence was not carried out except in symbol; if it had been the human race would never have existed at all.

Unless this is understood and accepted it is impossible to go on to the mighty truths that the mercy of God is from everlasting unto everlasting and that Jesus is the Saviour of all men - specially of them that believe.

Brother Ernest Brady

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## Young People's Pages

Hello everyone. I hope you are all well. Do you remember in our last lesson we talked about Abraham, his wife Sarah, and Isaac their son, and how, when Isaac had grown up, his father, Abraham didn't want him to marry anyone of the Canaanites amongst whom they lived, so he arranged for Eliezer, his chief servant, to travel to his brother's home country to find a wife for Isaac. And do you remember how far he had to go with his camels? (about 600 miles); and what did Eliezer do as soon as he arrived in Haran where Abraham's brother lived?

He was standing by the well just outside the town where everyone came to draw water for themselves and for their animals, and he prayed that God would guide him – and he said, “O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.”

And it came about before he had finished speaking, that at that moment, Rebekah came out, she who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother.

How quickly God answered his prayer!

We have seen in Abraham and his family how God was revered (i.e. highly regarded and trusted) and how they sought guidance of Him in their daily lives; and we see how highly God thought of Abraham to call him His friend. It was because of Abraham's love of God that God chose him and his family to be a special family to become a great nation – a family we can trace throughout all history to the present day, and God promised Abraham the land of Israel for their inheritance – but in those days it was called Israel but Canaan.

So let us continue our story with Isaac and Rebekah now they are husband and wife. They had hoped to start a family soon after they married but God withheld Rebekah from having children and Isaac prayed that she should conceive. God accepted his prayer and Rebekah conceived twins in her womb. We read of this in Genesis 25 verses 22 to 26; “And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD. And the LORD said to her, two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger. And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb.

And the first came out red, all over like a hairy garment; and they called his name Esau. And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them."

So these two brothers grew up together and the next we read about them is that Esau grew up to be a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man dwelling in tents, and looking after the herds and flocks. And Isaac, their father, loved Esau because he ate of his venison, but Rebekah, their mother, loved Jacob.

We read very little of their lives until one day Esau came home exhausted and hungry, and Jacob had boiled some broth; "And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him: and he sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright." (Genesis 25:29 to 34).

Now, you may be wondering what a "Birthright" is. Well, upon the death of the father, the firstborn (eldest) son became the new head of the family, and would receive a double portion of inheritance. Jacob and Esau were twins but because Esau was born only minutes before his brother he was considered the first born and was due to receive his birthright whenever his father died and here we see how little he cared about it even though he would be head of the family and also very wealthy but most of all he would receive the promised inheritance from God - promise of the land of Israel for his descendants. But now Esau gave all this away to Jacob and so the Promised Land would now pass on to Jacob's children. . In due course Abraham died and Jacob received the inheritance which Esau had forsaken in exchange for just one meal.

This is in fulfilment of God's prophecy to Rebekah while she was still carrying the twins in her womb

Thus Jacob became head of all that his father Isaac had left and he remained in the land amongst the Philistines in Canaan.

But Isaac was not sure of the Philistines; His wife Rebekah was very beautiful and he feared he may be killed and Rebekah taken by them to be someone else's wife. When the men of the place enquired about his wife he said "She is my sister." However, it came about a long time after that Abimelech, the King, looked out of his window and saw Isaac caressing his wife, Rebekah and so he called him and said to him 'See now, surely she is your wife and why did you say, "She is my sister"?' And Isaac said to him, 'Because I said, "In case I die on account of her" ' And Abimelech said, 'What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have lain guilt on us.' So Abimelech charged all his people saying, 'He who touches this man or his wife will surely be put to death.'

Isaac sowed in the land and received crops of hundred-fold and the Lord God blessed him blessed him and he continued to prosper and became very wealthy with large herds and flocks and an abundant body of servants – and the Philistines envied him.

So one day Abimelech said to him "Go from us for you are mightier than us. Isaac departed, but it would take a long time to move such a large company of people with all their flocks of goats and sheep and herds of cows, and very many camels. First he went as far as the plain of Gerar where Abraham had stayed years before and where he had dug wells to water their flocks and herds but after Abraham had died the Philistines had filled the wells in again and so Isaac had to dig them out once more; and when they did so the Philistines contended for them so Isaac would not quarrel but

moved on further and dug out other wells which had been filled in until there was no more contention between them. Isaac eventually settled at Beersheba.

Now I would like you to read from Genesis 26 verses 24 to 33.

**Suggestions for discussion:**

Did you notice that once again God made a promise – the same promise He made to Abraham, about the land in which they lived would become the home for their descendants to live and which today is called Israel and, in recent years, many of the Jews have returned there.

Do you have any questions?



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