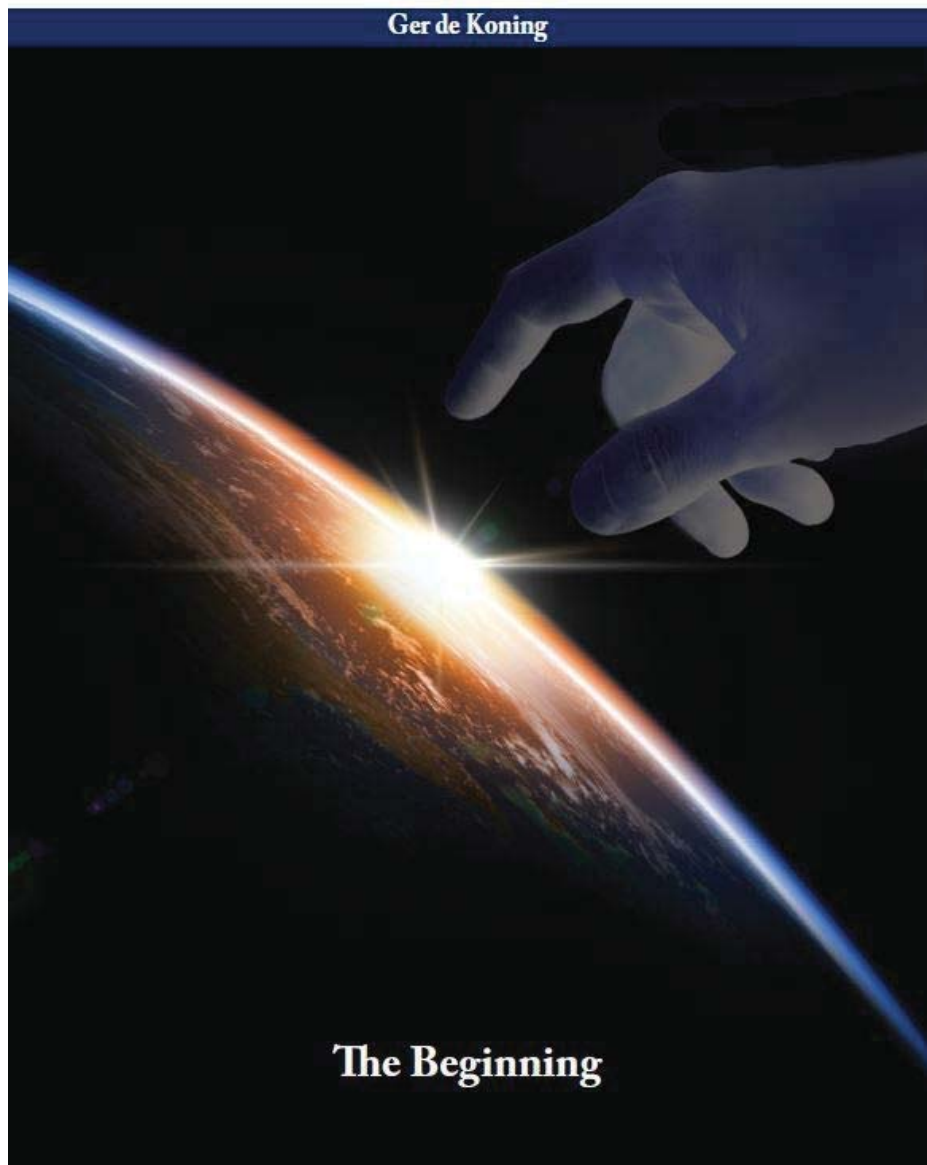


Genesis Explained & Applied 01

Ger de Koning



The Beginning

Genesis

Explained and Applied

GENESIS

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Ger de Koning

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Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible

Old Testament

Gen	Genesis
Exo	Exodus
Lev	Leviticus
Num	Numbers
Deu	Deuteronomy
2Ko	2 Korinthiërs
Jos	Joshua
Jdg	Judges
Rth	Ruth
1Sam	First Samuel
2Sam	Second Samuel
1Kgs	First Kings
2Kgs	Second Kings
1Chr	First Chronicles
2Chr	Second Chronicles
Ezra	Ezra
Neh	Nehemiah
Est	Esther
Job	Job
Psa	Psalms
Pro	Proverbs
Ecc	Ecclesiastes
Song	Song of Songs
Isa	Isaiah
Jer	Jeremiah
Lam	Lamentations
Eze	Ezekiel
Dan	Daniël
Hos	Hosea
Joel	Joel
Amos	Amos
Oba	Obadiah
Jona	Jonah
Mic	Micah
Nah	Nahum
Hab	Habakkuk
Zep	Zephaniah
Hag	Haggai
Zec	Zechariah
Mal	Malachi

New Testament

Mt	Gospel of Matthew
Mk	Gospel of Mark
Lk	Gospel of Luke
Jn	Gospel of John
Acts	Acts of the Apostles
Rom	Letter to the Romans
1Cor	First Letter to the Corinthians
2Cor	Second Letter to the Corinthians
Gal	Letter to the Galatians
Eph	Letter to the Ephesians
Phil	Letter to the Philippians
Col	Letter to the Colossians
1Thes	First Letter to the Thessalonians
2Thes	Second Letter to the Thessalonians
1Tim	First Letter to Timothy
2Tim	Second Letter to Timothy
Tit	Letter to Titus
Phlm	Letter to Philemon
Heb	Letter of the Hebrews
Jam	Letter of James
1Pet	First Letter of Peter
2Pet	Second Letter of Peter
1Jn	First Letter of John
2Jn	Second Letter of John
3Jn	Third Letter of John
Jude	Letter of Jude
Rev	Revelation

Explanation of general format

PERSONAL PRONOUNS are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

BRACKETS [] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

SHARP BRACKETS < > are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

When **ASTERISKS** * are used in New Testament quotations, it is to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

ALL CAPS in the New Testament quotations are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.

Genesis

Introduction

Genesis is written around 1450 BC by Moses, in the Sinai wilderness.

In Hebrew this book is called 'Bereshith', which means 'in the beginning', after the first words with which this book begins. In Greek it is called Genesis, which means 'birth', or 'origin, or 'becoming'.

It is rightly the book of the beginning. We find the origin of all things in it. This book tells us, among other things, about the origins of heaven and earth, the institution of marriage and family, the first sin and, as a result, the death, the first sacrifice, the judgment, the origins of nations, of the Hebrew race, of the covenant and circumcision, of the heavenly priesthood.

We will search in vain for the origin of God. God has no beginning. He is the eternal God Who was "in the beginning" (Jn 1:1; Psa 90:1b).

All truths that appear in the following books of the Bible are already indicated in this book. A truth can be communicated directly, a truth can also be presented in pictures. Some examples of the first: creation, man and his fall into sin, the power of satan. Some examples of the second: salvation – God clothed man after his fall in sin with the skin of an animal, which refers to the substitute death of the Lord Jesus; the resurrection – in the history of Abraham and Isaac; the reign of a rejected Lord on the throne of the world – in the history of Joseph.

Strikingly beautiful is the way in which God *personally* makes Himself known to man in this book. Thus He comes to Adam in the cool of the evening (Gen 3:8), announces to Noah His intention about the flood (Gen 6:13) and visits Abraham and speaks with him (Gen 18:1,10-14). He does not use prophets or priests here, but He Himself comes into the confidentiality with which a man treats his friend. In this book we experience the living, tangible proximity of God to His creature.

Genesis can be divided into seven parts, according to the seven patriarchs that appear in it (other divisions are also possible):

1. Genesis 1-4 Adam
2. Genesis 5(:21) Enoch
3. Genesis 6-11 Noah
4. Genesis 12-23 Abraham
5. Genesis 24-26 Isaac
6. Genesis 27-36 Jacob
7. Genesis 37-50 Joseph

Genesis 1

Verses 1-2 | The Creator of Heaven and Earth

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

God created everything (Isa 45:12; Zec 12:1; Eph 3:9). When people make something, they need material. God not. He does not need anything outside of Himself. He is not part of His creation. He creates from His own omnipotence (Rom 4:17b). Through creation we know that God is there: "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made" (Rom 1:20; Psa 19:1b).

God is the triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Not the Father does the work of creation, but the Son (Jn 1:3; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2). No one was present at the creation of heaven and earth (Job 38:4). After all, there was nothing yet. What we read in this chapter can therefore only be understood by faith: "By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible" (Heb 11:3).

Some commentators assume that a certain time has elapsed between verse 1 and verse 2. In the meantime, the fall of satan would have taken place. For others, there is no time between the two verses, but the story of creation continues. To see the acts of creation as an ongoing story has been a problem for me for some time because of the word "formless". In my opinion it could not be that God had created the earth "formless and void" (Isa 45:18). A plausible explanation for me was therefore, that there had to be some time between verse 1 and verse 2 with as event the fall of satan, which would have caused this formlessness and void.

As a result of the input in a Bible study, I started thinking about it again. God can create something that is 'formless and void' and continue to work with it. In this connection a verse from Psalm 139 came to me, which says:

“Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained [for me], When as yet there was not one of them” (Psa 139:16). There is an “unformed substance” of the life that God gives in the womb and allows to grow further. This has solved this problem for me.

It is sometimes formulated in this way: ‘God first tells us in verse 1 what He does, to tell us from verse 2 how He does it.’ That seems to me to be a good reflection of what Genesis 1 is all about.

Then we see that God continues to work. His Spirit “moving over the surface of the waters”. This ‘moving’ has the meaning of ‘breeding’ and then we think of new life that will appear later. As said, the Lord Jesus, God the Son, is the Creator. There is “one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things” (1Cor 8:6b). And He does everything through the Holy Spirit.

Verses 3-5 | The First Day

3 Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

In the middle of the darkness a powerful voice is heard. God speaks. His first word is: “Let there be light!” The result is immediate: “And there was light” (cf. Psa 33:6,9). When God speaks, His might and power are revealed.

God looks at His work and concludes that it is good. This announcement shows God’s commitment to His work. He does not look at it to see if there is any unevenness. He is perfect and everything He does is perfect. The project is not only good in itself, but also serves a good goal.

God gives everything a name. In that name He expresses the character, the nature of it. This is how we can recognize things. Man is wise to call the things as God calls it (cf. Isa 5:20). The first day is bordered by evening and tomorrow. Because of this we know that the days of creation are ordinary days of twenty-four hours, as we still know them.

If we read Genesis 1 without prejudice, we can only conclude that God created heaven and earth in six literal days (Exo 20:11). There is spoken

about day and night and about “and there was evening and there was morning”. The Hebrew word for day, *yom*, as a separate word, is in all cases ‘day’ in the ordinary sense of the word (Gen 8:22; 29:7, as opposed to ‘night’). Knowing the truth exposes the lie. Every theory of origin that deviates from the account in Genesis 1, we can send to the realm of fables.

Verse 3 is applied by Paul to the work of God in the darkened heart of a sinner: “For the God who said, “For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (2Cor 4:6). From this we learn that what happened literally and historically also contains a spiritual application. In this way, during the days of creation, we discover a process that takes place in someone who comes to repentance.

This process begins in the sinner who is in darkness: “For you were formerly darkness” (Eph 5:8a). The Spirit begins to work at the heart of such a person, to ‘breed’. Then comes the moment when the sinner discovers that he is in darkness and needs light. Then God lets His light shine in the heart. This makes all anger and dirt public. By repentance and conversion new life comes.

Verses 6-8 | The Second Day

6 Then God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” 7 God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so. 8 God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

In the light that is created, the prevailing disorder or formlessness is seen. In the disorderly mass of water of verse 2, God, by means of a separation, brings order. He speaks for the second time His commanding “let there be”. By His command the atmosphere is created with the observation “and it was so”. As a result, there is water below and there is water above the expanse. It is striking that it does not say: “And God saw that it was good.” On the other days it says so. Although, at the end of all creation days, so including this second day, it says: “God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good” (verse 31a).

This second day also has its significance in the spiritual development of someone who has been converted. When someone is converted, he gets a new nature. From that moment on he has an old and a new nature. That old nature someone only loses when the Lord comes or when he dies.

Through Bible teaching, especially the letter to the Romans, the converted man learns to live according to his new nature. There he also learns what God has done with the old nature. He learns by this that there is a separation between the two natures. In the practice of faith life, this learning process can give rise to many conflicts (Rom 7:15-19,24). But it is not God's ultimate goal with the believer's life that he continues to wrestle and worry with the ancient nature. This is evident from the following days.

Verses 9-13 | The Third Day

9 Then God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so. 10 God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good. 11 Then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, [and] fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them"; and it was so. 12 The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good. 13 There was evening and there was morning, a third day.

Again God causes a separation. He lets the dry land appear from the water. Again He gives the names to His work: He calls the dry "earth" and the gathered waters He calls "seas". By this He also borders the waters (Pro 8:29; Jer 5:22).

That is not the end of the third day. God speaks twice on this day. He wants fruit to appear on earth. Man will be allowed to enjoy that. In the fruit itself He puts seed, through which new fruit comes. The fruit will multiply. God is a God of multiplication, of abundance.

The third day in the life of the believer is characterized by fruit bearing. He has accepted God's teaching about the old and the new nature. The conflict of the second day is over. He stands on solid ground, on dry land. The third day in the Bible speaks of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Whoever sees that the Lord Jesus not only died and was buried for his sins,

but was also raised up on the third day (1Cor 15:3-4), has peace with God: “Those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, [He] who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification. Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 4:24b-25; 5:1). There comes peace in his heart. He knows Himself secure in the Lord Jesus and accepted by God. The new life will bear fruit (Jn 15:5), fruit which is to the glory of God (Jn 15:8).

Verses 14-19 | The Fourth Day

14 Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years; 15 and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth”; and it was so. 16 God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; [He made] the stars also. 17 God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, 18 and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good. 19 There was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

The fourth day we can connect with the first day. On the first day the light is created; on the fourth day God makes the celestial bodies or light bearers. In that the sun not only provides light, but also warmth. The celestial bodies are subject to God and are known by name by Him (Isa 40:26). They should never be worshipped (Deu 4:19; 17:3).

Here again there is a separation that God makes. The lights are also signs of God’s greatness. He proposes them to determine the timeframe in days and years and regularly recurring periods in nature and the cycle of feasts in Israel.

In the spiritual development of the converted the fourth day is the stage of light bearing in the world. The *sun* represents the Lord Jesus (Mal 4:2). He is “the Light of the world” (Jn 8:12a). The believer is “Light in the Lord” (Eph 5:8b) and “the light of the world” (Mt 5:14a). The *moon* shines in the night. He gets his light from the sun. So it is with the believer. It is night in the world. In this the believer may pass on the light of the sun, the Lord

Jesus. Stars also shine at night. God's children shine like light bearers in the world, "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation" (Phil 2:15).

Do people see in us the difference between day and night, and can they perceive in us something of God's greatness and how He reigns things in the world events?

Verses 20-23 | The Fifth Day

20 Then God said, "Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens." 21 God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good. 22 God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." 23 There was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

The fifth day we can connect with the second day. By God's command, life comes into the water and into the air. Fish and what can fly are created. God creates in a great diversity, both in size and in kind. The first form of animated life originates. The first four days give the conditions for life; on the fifth and sixth day life itself comes.

A second command from God is that life will multiply. Fish and birds must have many offspring. Water animals must fill the waters, birds must become numerous on earth.

With the fifth day we have reached the next aspect in spiritual development. Waters are a symbol for the trials in the life of faith. The waters of the second day symbolize inner struggle and doubt, despair sometimes. It is so to speak the waters within us. The inner struggle comes to an end as soon as the Lord Jesus is seen in faith. The waters of the fifth day symbolize outside battle (1Pet 1:6). It is, so to speak, the waters around us, the circumstances in which we find ourselves. There may be peace within, but then the trials come from outside (Rom 5:3-4). The enemy will do everything in his power to shake faith.

The result that God wants to achieve with this is a life of faith that is 'teeming' with activities of faith. These faith activities in turn generate new

works of faith, in the person himself or in others who see this and are encouraged by it.

We see this for example with Paul. His captivity encourages the Philip-
pians: “Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have
turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment
in [the cause of] Christ has become well known throughout the whole
praetorian guard and to everyone else, and that most of the brethren, trust-
ing in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to
speak the word of God without fear” (Phil 1:12-14).

Verses 24-25 | The Sixth Day – the Animals

24 Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind”; and it was so. 25 God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good.

Just like on the third day it is about the earth on the sixth day. On the final day of God’s work, land animals and finally man are created. With the making of the animals all the preparatory work for the introduction of man has been done. In His creative work He works towards that. He creates an area in which man – man and woman – can feel optimally ‘at home’. For them He does all that.

Verses 26-28 | The Sixth Day – Man

26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” 27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Also on the sixth day God speaks twice. The creation of man is introduced in a special way and explained in a special way. We hear the special in-

roduction in the words “let Us make man”. It means that there has been consultation in God. The word “Us” indicates that God is triune.

The special explanation is that God creates man “in Our image, according to Our likeness”. We see the *image* of God in the *position* that man occupies as the head of creation: he is God’s representative in it. The *likeness* of God is expressed in man’s *actions*: he acts with insight into creation. Because of this high place of man we are called to honor all men (1Pet 2:17; Jam 3:9), even though man has fallen into such decay by sin and is sometimes compared to an unreasoning animal (Jude 1:10; 2Pet 2:12).

God creates man “male and female”. There is, so to speak, a male and a female variant of man. God has created one man, where that man is, as it were, a two-unity. Modern man makes frantic efforts to erase the distinction, but that is downright folly.*

For the difference between man and woman, the attack on them and their rebuttal by means of the Word of God, see the booklet ‘Sexuality, a gift from God. Part 1’ on www.oudesporen.nl.

“God blessed them” by saying to man that he may fill the earth and subdue it. This blessing is more than giving the strength to be fertile and to become numerous, as has been said of sea animals and birds (verse 22). It is also the power over the earth and all animals.

Verses 29-30 | The Sixth Day – Food

29 Then God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; 30 and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, [I have given] every green plant for food”; and it was so.

After God has finished His deeds on the sixth day, He tells man what his food and that of the animals will be. For humans, this food is everything that carries seed from the crop and that carries fruit from the tree. This

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means that man feeds himself with what in himself has the power of life. That is for the body. The food for the soul is the Word of God (Mt 4:4), which is also compared to seed, but then imperishable seed (1Pet 1:23). The animals and birds get the green plants to eat.

The food of man does not originally include the meat of animals, nor do the animals eat each other. Violent killing of animals is not an issue. This will only happen when the fall into sin and the flood have occurred (Gen 9:3). That there are originally no carnivorous and tearing animals is also proven by the state of the kingdom of peace.

When God's kingdom is established and sin can no longer do its devastating work, the killing in the realm of the animals will stop: "And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the young goat, And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them. Also the cow and the bear will graze, Their young will lie down together, And the lion will eat straw like the ox. The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den" (Isa 11:6-8).

Verse 31 | The Sixth day – Everything Was Very Good

31 God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

After each day of creation, God said of the result: "It was good." The sixth day is a unique day. If God sees the result of all His work on this day, He can record as a conclusion of all His work of creation: "And behold, it was very good." This means that everything is perfect, so that every creature serves the purpose for which God created it.

In all of God's actions in this chapter we see a picture of His plan with the world we live in now. God gave the earth to Adam and Eve to rule over it. Thus, soon He will be giving to Christ, "the last Adam" (1Cor 15:45), together with the church of which Eve is a picture (2Cor 11:2-3), the government over all things in heaven and on earth, "the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth" (Eph 1:10). And so, "as Head over all things", God "gave Him ... to the church" (Eph 1:22).

Christ will then be the center of the universe. Everything shall be put under His feet (Psa 8:4-10) and honor Him: "And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, [be] blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever"" (Rev 5:13).

In the spiritual development of the believer this is also the goal God works towards. He wants Christ to take form in every believer (Gal 4:19), that he shows Christ in his deeds (2Cor 3:3). If one's life is only about Christ, in spiritual growth the 'father'-stage is reached (1Jn 2:13-14).

Genesis 2

Verses 1-3 | The Seventh Day

1 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. 2 By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

On the seventh day God rests from all His work, which is summarized in “the heavens and the earth ..., and all their hosts”. “Their hosts” are all living beings that fill the heavens and the earth. God has come to His goal. Therefore He blesses and sanctifies that day.

This rest of God has come to an end through sin. In John 5 the Lord Jesus says: “My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working” (Jn 5:17; cf. Isa 43:24b). Those who believe in Christ and His work on the cross enter the sabbath rest in a spiritual way (Mt 11:28).

Yet God will reach His goal with creation also in a literal sense. In the kingdom of peace, when the Lord Jesus reigns, the sabbath rest (Heb 4:9) for creation, for man and for God will be a thousand years long.

Verses 4-6 | Creation Before Man Was There

4 This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven. 5 Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground. 6 But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground.

In verse 4 begins again a report of what happened at creation, with the addition of some new details. That is done brief. It is as it were a quick run-up to the actual subject: the human being. It is expressly stated that man is not yet there. That man is the writer’s concern is also evident from the name

used for God from verse 4, “LORD God”, *Jahwe Elohim*, that is the name that indicates His relationship with man.

Verse 7 | Man, a Living Being

7 Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

This verse describes the special way in which God formed man and made him “a living being” or a living soul. The word ‘forms’ describes the work of an artist. God forms man out of the earth (1Cor 15:47a), because the whole existence of man is connected to the earth. He belongs there (Psa 115:16b). But God also connects him with Himself by breathing the breath of life into him. That’s why he stands above the animals. By it man also received an immortal soul.

By breathing in the breath of life, man changes from an outer form into a living being. This also makes him a spiritual being with the ability to serve and follow God.

Verses 8-9 | Paradise with Man

8 The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed. 9 Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

In the midst of all the creation that God has already created for the benefit of man, He makes an exceptionally beautiful part where He places man. ‘Garden’ is literally a ‘garden protected by a fence’. The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, uses the word ‘paradise’ in three places as an indication for artistically designed parks (Song 4:13; Ecc 2:5; Neh 2:8).

“Eden” means ‘pleasure’ or ‘highest pleasure’. That is a fitting name for this most beautiful place on earth, where the LORD God places man. It speaks of the abounding goodness of God for man. In a way, Eden is a picture of Israel, when we consider that from that people the Lord Jesus

came forth through which the blessing flows to the whole world. He is “the Savior of the world” (Jn 4:42).

Paradise is a pleasure garden, where man may enjoy exuberantly, although with a certain limitation, which is given in verse 17. This limitation makes paradise at the same time a testing ground for obedience to faith.

The tree of life is explicitly said to be “in the midst of the garden”, while the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is said to be also in paradise. The tree of life shows man that he has no life in himself, but that he depends on “the tree of life”. This also applies to the believer, who has no life in himself, but has it in the Son, the true tree of life. “He who has the Son has the life” (1Jn 5:12a).

The “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” teaches man that he must be obedient to Who stands above him in order to enjoy life.

Verses 10-14 | A River Flows out of Paradise

10 Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers. 11 The name of the first is Pishon; it flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12 The gold of that land is good; the bdellium and the onyx stone are there. 13 The name of the second river is Gihon; it flows around the whole land of Cush. 14 The name of the third river is Tigris; it flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

In the garden flows out a river. It first humidifies paradise. From the garden the river divides into four rivers. The number four is the number of the earth (Rev 7:1a; 20:8). The river is a channel of blessing. Here we see that from the garden the blessing flows out over the whole earth. In the future, in the millennial kingdom of peace, a river of water of life will flow out of the direct presence of God, out of the new temple (Eze 47:1). This river will give life and healing (Eze 47:9; Rev 22:1-2).

In these rivers we can see a picture of the refreshing and rich working of God’s Spirit, which is compared with rivers of living water (Jn 7:38-39). Thereby the believer can already spiritually enjoy what will soon be generally enjoyed on earth.

Eden is the origin of blessing for the whole earth that receives this blessing, through the river that flows out of Eden, in a fourfold way. That it is an abundant blessing is already apparent from the name of the first tributary. "Pishon" means "free flowing", "richly flowing", "overflowing". This can also be said of God's blessing for the believer, for He blessed him with "all spiritual blessings in the heavenly [places]" (Eph 1:3). It says "all" and that really is all. It is all God has been able to think of to give His sons. That can only be rich and abundant.

The Pishon flows "around the whole land of Havilah". 'Havilah' means 'sand land'. This points to the earthly existence of man. But in that 'sand land' "gold" is present, to which is added that this gold is "good". Connected to the river that flows around it, it is reminiscent of the work of God's Spirit, through which the believer, who lives in "sand land", finds God's Word as a "great spoil" (Psa 119:162). God's Word is more precious than gold (Psa 19:10; 119:72,127). Gold also speaks of the glory of God and of Christ. Through the Spirit that glory is presented to us through God's Word. That is the 'good gold'.

In the country Havilah are also "the bdellium and the onyx stone". Bdelium is reminiscent of the manna (Num 11:7) and therefore of the Lord Jesus as the bread of life (Jn 6:31-33). The onyx stone appears on the breastplate of the high priest (Exo 28:20) and determines us with the Lord Jesus as our High Priest in heaven.

The name of the second river is "Gihon", which means 'breakthrough'. This river flows through "the whole land of Cusj". 'Cusj' means 'dark colored' or 'black'. This is reminiscent of man in the blackness of his sins on whom the Spirit of God works to bless him. No one is excluded from this activity of God's Spirit.

The third river is called "Tigris", which means 'arrow' or 'fast arrow'. This river flows east of Assyria. Assyria reveals himself in Scripture as a rebel against God and the enemy of God's people (Isa 10:5,12). But also to this hostile people comes the grace of God in a drastically fast manner (Isa 19:23-25).

The fourth river is called "Euphrates", which means 'lovely' or 'sweet water'. Where it flows, is not mentioned here. The Euphrates will be the

north-eastern border of Israel in the kingdom of peace (Gen 15:18). This again determines us with the general blessing that God has for every human being and for the whole earth. In order to participate in it, repentance and faith are necessary, but the call to participate may be made to all people, without exception.

Verses 15-17 | Assignment and Command

15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. 16 The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; 17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

The LORD God puts man in the garden to enjoy all that He has made for him. The word for "put" has to do with peace. God puts man in the rest of paradise. He is also given the assignment to cultivate garden and to keep it.

God gives man only *one* command: He shall not eat from only *one* tree. By keeping this commandment, he can show that he is obedient to God. By doing so he recognizes God as his Superior. It is also the condition to continue to enjoy the blessing. Obedience is for man in all times, even now, the condition to be blessed.

Verses 18-22 | Adam Gets His Wife

18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." 19 Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought [them] to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. 21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. 22 The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.

Before Adam feels the lack of his wife (verse 20b), God has already expressed the intention to give her to him (verse 18). Adam gives the animals names. A name expresses the character of the animal. This shows the deep insight Adam has in God's works.

The word "helper" is not a derogatory expression for the woman. God Himself is also called "Help" (Psa 33:20; 70:5; 115:9). That she is "suitable to him" or literally "as one opposite to him" means that she is also created in the image of God (Gen 1:27).

Then God Adam gives his wife. God does not do this by forming Eve out of the dust of the earth just like Adam. Then she would be independent of Adam. He forms Eve from Adam. He does not do this out of his head, for she is not his superior. Nor does he make her out of his feet, for she is not his slave. He forms her from His side. She is therefore a man of equal value, standing beside him. She is his "opposite", as it literally says.

To be able to give Adam his wife, God puts him in a deep sleep, a death-sleep. Here we have a beautiful picture of the way in which the Lord Jesus received the church as His wife. That is through His death on the cross (Eph 5:25).

By forming Adam first and then Eve, God establishes the order of precedence that He wants to see maintained in creation. With this He determines that the man is the head of creation and also of the woman. Paul draws that conclusion unambiguously in his first letter to the Corinthians and his first letter to Timothy, while also indicating the purpose for which the woman was created (1Cor 11:8-9; 1Tim 2:11-13).

Verses 23-25 | The Unity of Man and Woman

23 *The man said,*

*"This is now bone of my bones,
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man."*

24 *For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*

Adam recognizes his wife as taken from him and given to him. The conclusion of this action of God is given in verse 24, which we see in the words “for this reason” at the beginning of that verse. The words of Scripture are not open to any other interpretation. God establishes the monogamous marriage between a man and a woman. It is also the only form of living together between people that is established and recognized by God.

The Lord Jesus refers to this when He is asked a snare question about marriage: “And He answered and said, “Have you not read that He who created [them] from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, and said, ‘FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate”” (Mt 19:4-6). Paul also refers to this beginning to prove that fornication is not permitted under any circumstances (1Cor 6:16). Just as the account of creation exposes every different theory of origin, the institution of marriage exposes every other form of living together as false and reprehensible.

Marriage is a picture of the connection between Christ and the church. We find the proof of this in the third time that verse 24 is quoted in the New Testament (Eph 5:31-32). Therefore, any other form of living together is not only disobedience to the Word of God, but also a lowering of the glory of Christ. The latter is always the aim of the enemy, satan. Because for the Christian the glory of Christ is above all else, he will honor marriage (Heb 13:4).

The fact that they are “both naked” and were not ashamed indicates that there is no shadow over their connection. They deal openly with each other and with the LORD God. This is more than just the fact that there are two undressed people here. It also shows two people between whom is nothing that should not be there. They have nothing to hide from each other. They see the other as he and she is and show themselves as they are.

Some practical comments in this respect. I read in the newspaper that a terrorist had been arrested who had been able to hide from her husband and her child that she was a terrorist all the time she was married. She led a double life. Unfortunately, it is so, that in some marriages also a kind of

double life is lived. That does not have to be as extreme as with this terrorist, but sometimes husband and wife live alongside each other. Some people hide a lot for each other.

If that is the case with you, show yourself 'naked' to your partner, that is to say: tell the other person everything that concerns you, everything that you want to dedicate yourself to. Share that with each other, be open towards each other. It should not be the case that a woman has to guess what her husband is doing, what is going on in him. The same applies the other way around. Otherwise it may be that after a while, if it has taken long enough for each other to play hide-and-seek, one is confronted with the hard reality on a shocking way: the other leaves.

Therefore, open yourself up to the other and listen when the other person opens up for you. You will be amazed by the results. No one has ever regretted opening up to another. On the contrary, the sigh is: 'If only I had done it before'.

Genesis 3

Introduction

The untouched nature and the state of innocence in which man has lived have been short-lived. As soon as God has finished His work to bless man, satan appears on stage in the form of a serpent. It is his nature to destroy what God has made. The Lord Jesus calls him “a murderer from the beginning” and “a liar and the father of lies” (Jn 8:44; cf. Rev 12:9).

Through man’s infidelity, satan has succeeded in breaking into the relationship between God and man. This is how everything that God has entrusted to man in grace and blessing has gone. The opportunity to do so always lies in the weak link in that relationship: the human being. If a man does not trust God completely, he will fall prey to the temptation of satan.

However, there has been a Man on whom satan has not been given a hold: the Man Christ Jesus. This Man is the guarantee that everything God has made will be restored and become as He intended.

Verse 1 | The Serpent

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden’?”

The deceiver comes in the shape of a serpent to Eve. Adam gave the animals names, thus showing his sovereignty over and his insight in the animals. Adam is along with Eve master of the animals and head of the whole creation.

The fact that animals cannot speak and an animal speaks here should have been a clear signal to Eve that this is not the voice of God. Satan uses the serpent as a medium to hide himself. This is the first medium in the history of mankind. Here the world of occultism takes its hold.

An important point is the nature of the snake. Do we have to see the serpent literally or figuratively? A ‘figurative’ serpent leads to an artificial interpretation of the text:

1. The qualification that the serpent was “more crafty than any beast of the field” remains in the air.
2. The judgment about this animal then does not really make any sense. Just look at the parts of it:
 - (a) he has been cursed among all the livestock and all the field animals,
 - (b) he shall go on his stomach,
 - (c) he shall eat dust,
 - (d) there will be constant enmity between the serpent and man.
3. The use of speech in other passages that connect to this chapter must be violated (Isa 65:25; Mic 7:17). When the Lord Jesus says to His disciples, “Be shrewd [or: wise] as serpents” (Mt 10:16), He certainly does not call us to imitate the “old serpent”, that is, satan!
4. In the case of a ‘figurative serpent’ you can no longer say that the (literal) serpent has deceived Eve by his craftiness, as Paul states (2Cor 11:3).

In short, we do not read the Scriptures as the open-minded reader does, who justifiably takes the statements about the literal speaking of the literal animal *as* they are given here.

Another question we can ask in this context is whether Paul is wrong when he compares the craftiness of the instrument used by satan in the garden of Eden – the literal serpent (2Cor 11:3) – with that of human instruments of satan (2Cor 11:14-15). However, there is no question about such a mistake.

That becomes clear when we read carefully. He speaks of the cunning of this instrument of evil as the opposite of false apostles, who are *servants* of satan. We also see a clear distinction between the literal serpent and the satan itself. It does not say that the *serpent* himself presents himself as an angel of light, but “Satan disguises himself as an angel of light” (2Cor 11:14)!

If we say that in Genesis 3 the manifestation of satan would be a kind of mirage, something that took place in the brain of Eve, it undermines the historic fall into sin. In that case, this chapter only has an exemplary character, along the lines of: we are all tempted by satan and then we are faced with important choices. But then man is no longer a fallen creature!

Satan chooses Eve as the interlocutor and not Adam. He knows that she is the weak link in the whole. In his teaching on the behavior of men and women in the house of God, Paul refers to what is happening here (1Tim 2:11-14). Satan opens the conversation with a cunning question. With his question he tries to sow doubt and mistrust in what God has said. His stratagem succeeds. Many times since then Satan has asked the question: "Indeed, has God said ...?" He has thus defeated countless people.

Satan suggests that God has deliberately limited the blessing that man may enjoy in the garden by saying "do not eat of all trees of the garden". Arithmetically this remark is consistent with what God has said to man (Gen 2:16-17). Indeed, God has forbidden to eat from one particular tree, that of the knowledge of good and evil. The cunning way in which the serpent represents the commandment of God comes down to the fact that man may eat from all trees minus one. In this way he suggests a restriction of human freedom.

But what exactly did God say? God has said: "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely" (Gen 2:16). In Hebrew it says 'eating eat'. We can understand this as allowed to eat from the abundance of tree fruits. The serpent, however, uses a totally different, misleading formulation. He does not speak of the freedom and blessing of man, but shifts the emphasis to limitation. God did *not* say so.

Verses 2-6 | The Fall

2 The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; 3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" 4 The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! 5 For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make [one] wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

The serpent manages to mislead the woman by his cunning (2Cor 11:3). Eve no longer sees things as God has said, but as the serpent reflects them

on her. Do we not often hear in connection with clear statements from the Word of God: 'You have to see things differently'? He who surrenders to it loses God's sight of things and becomes the prey of another. Instead of referring the serpent to Adam, she talks to the serpent herself. She is open to his suggestion. Her answer betrays that the suggestive speaking of the serpent has an effect.

Her answer shows that in her thinking the tree of the knowledge of good and evil stands in the middle of the garden (verse 3), while God has placed the tree of life in the middle of the garden (Gen 2:9). If man has another center than God, it always goes wrong. Her answer betrays another thing: she adds to the commandment of God. God has said that she shall not eat of it; she changes it into not to eat of it *and not to touch it*. She makes the commandment of God heavier than He has given it.

In summary, we see that the woman says six things that differ substantially from what God has said and intended (Gen 2:16-17):

1. She conceals 'eat freely' (eating eat), and only speaks of 'eat'.
2. She does not speak of 'any tree', but of 'the trees'.
3. She speaks of 'the fruit of the trees' instead of the 'trees'.
4. In her view she places the tree of knowledge of good and evil "in the midst of the garden", while it is explicitly mentioned that the tree of life stands there (Gen 2:9).
5. She also says: 'not touch it', but God has not spoken about this with a word.
6. She says, "you will die," while God has said, "you will surely die", which is a much more powerful expression.

We can learn from this that we must follow the example of the Lord Jesus and respond to the enemy in the way He did. We must react spiritually alert and see where the twists and one-sides are; where the enemy "adds" or "takes away" (Rev 22:18-19). We may be aware of the power and presence of Him Who said: "The ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me" (Jn 14:30).

The woman's reaction has given the serpent a wide opening to inject its deadly poison into her. He openly denies the goodness of God and pres-

ents Him as One Who withheld the good from man. In fact, he says, ‘God does not really love you.’ This is the greatest conceivable disgrace of God, Who is love: “God is love” (1Jn 4:8,16). Satan has also achieved countless successes with this representation of God.

The woman is now so brainwashed that she takes over the ‘insight’ from satan. She entrusts herself more to satan, as if he has the best of intentions for her, than to God. She judges God according to satan’s lie. She looks at the tree and sees what satan has shown. It is indeed a beautiful fruit. And shouldn’t you be allowed to eat that? God can never have intended that. The desire to take from the fruit is born.

Through desire carried away and lured, satan’s desire for what satan has presented to her takes possession of her: to become wise and therefore to be as God. Desire gives birth to sin and sin brings forth death (Jam 1:14-15). She takes and eats and also gives her husband and he eats too. This is a tragedy with irrevocable, deeply tragic consequences. By their action, they indicate that they reject God for the enjoyment of a fruit.

Verses 7-8 | Afraid for the LORD God

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. 8 They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

The result of their deed is that they now indeed know good and evil, as satan had said. Only from this moment on they are no longer able to do good, but only evil. Their eyes are open, but they see only their nakedness, their own sinfulness. They realize that they can no longer face God in the same way they could before their deed. They find the covering they are looking for in homemade aprons of fig leaves.

These aprons of fig leaves are still made today by all who have a sense of God, but believe that they can exist for Him by observing religious obligations. But that is not a covering for God. In verse 10, Adam says, despite his apron, “I am naked. Neither dare Adam and Eve, despite their aprons, to face God. For fear of Him they hide when they hear from the wind that

He is coming. God comes to seek fellowship with man, but sin has made this impossible.

Verses 9-13 | Called to Account

9 Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" 10 He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." 11 And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" 12 The man said, "The woman whom You gave [to be] with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." 13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

While Adam and Eve have been hiding, the voice of God to Adam sounds: "Where are you? Thus God still seeks the sinner today and calls everyone by name to come out. Change begins with coming into the light of God. Adam knows God sees him and answers. However, it is not a direct answer, but more evasive. He speaks of his fear and nudity as the reason to hide from God. He does not talk about the cause.

He and Eve do not bow directly under God's judgment. Therefore God continues to ask questions. He knows perfectly what happened, but he wants to hear it from the mouths of Adam and Eve. In the questions He asks, He puts in their mouths what they should say, as it were, because He wants them to confess their sin. By asking questions, God forces them to think about what they have done.

His questions reveal instead of an honest confession their selfishness and their search for justification of their actions. Adam blames Eve. By speaking of "the woman you gave to be with me," he indirectly blames God. Eve also shoves the blame off and puts it with the serpent.

Verses 14-19 | The LORD God Gives Judgment

*14 The LORD God said to the serpent,
"Because you have done this,
Cursed are you more than all cattle,
And more than every beast of the field;
On your belly you will go,*

*And dust you will eat
 All the days of your life;
 15 And I will put enmity
 Between you and the woman,
 And between your seed and her seed;
 He shall bruise you on the head,
 And you shall bruise him on the heel."*

16 *To the woman He said,
 "I will greatly multiply
 Your pain in childbirth,
 In pain you will bring forth children;
 Yet your desire will be for your husband,
 And he will rule over you."*

17 *Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife,
 and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall
 not eat from it';*

*Cursed is the ground because of you;
 In toil you will eat of it
 All the days of your life.*

18 *"Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;
 And you will eat the plants of the field;*

19 *By the sweat of your face
 You will eat bread,
 Till you return to the ground,
 Because from it you were taken;
 For you are dust,
 And to dust you shall return."*

In His response to the defenses of Adam and Eve, God first addresses himself to him who has been the instrument of temptation to sin. Without hearing the serpent God curses him. The serpent hears a direct verdict, without the possibility of a reply. Going on the belly indicates extreme humiliation and misery (cf. Mic 7:17a; Psa 44:25).

In the curse God also speaks of "the seed of the woman". That is a clear reference to the Lord Jesus (Gal 4:4). He will crush satan's head, while satan

will crush his heel. If the heel is crushed, it is impossible to walk. With the Lord Jesus this happens when people, led by satan, pierce His feet on the cross and kill Him. But just by the cross He obtains victory and crushes the head of satan (Col 2:15).

After the curse of the serpent and the prospect of victory over the leader, God also pronounces His judgment over man's sin. He mentions the consequences of sin first for the woman and then for the man. They are not cursed. The consequences for them are an aggravation of the task God has given each of them.

It is God's intention that the woman should have children, so become pregnant (Gen 1:28). Apparently until then pregnancy and giving birth are painless in origin. That will no longer be the case. Pregnancy will cause many inconveniences and giving birth to children is a painful experience. Sin has weakened the woman slightly, making pregnancy and giving birth difficult.

To this judgment is added the fact that her desire will go to her husband and that he will rule over her. This is the result of her self-perpetuating action by independently entering into conversation with the serpent without involving Adam. She has also drawn Adam into her sin by giving him the fruit. Instead of being a help to him, she has led him to commit sin. In this judgment God says that she will really depend on her husband and that he will tell her what to do. Therein lies her blessing at the same time.

The judgment on Adam is twofold. The earth is cursed for him, and he will return to dust, that is to say die of physical death. Adam, by listening to his wife, denied his principal position over creation. As punishment for this, from now on nature will be in revolt against him. Creation also shares in the consequences of the Fall, for it is "subjected to futility" (Rom. 8:20). From that moment on, she also produces thorns and thistles. Adam will no longer be able to manage nature.

For his livelihood he will have to work the soil hard. "The earth, from it comes food" (Job 28:5a), which is so necessary for his sustenance (Psa 104:14b). That will be his part, as long as he lives. But the moment of physical death comes. By transgressing the Divine Commandment, He has set

God aside. By the judgment of returning to dust he must become aware of the void of his being (Psa 104:29; 103:14; Ecc 3:19-20; 12:7).

The assignment to work is still valid. He who does not work while he can, disobeys God and does not deserve to be fed: “When we were with you, we commanded you to do so: If anyone does not want to work, they will not eat either (2Thes 3:10). The Lord Jesus has worked (Jn 5:17). He prophetically even said that he worked in vain: “But I said, “I have toiled in vain, I have spent My strength for nothing and vanity” (Isa 49:4).

Verse 20 | The Faith of Adam

20 Now the man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all [the] living.

Adam calls his wife “Eve” which means “life”. Here appears the faith of Adam. He accepts God’s judgment, but at the same time, in faith, lays hands on what God has said about the offspring of women. He focuses his eye on the future when he says that Eve is the mother of all living. “All living” are all those who, by faith, are connected with the offspring (or: the seed) of the woman: the Lord Jesus. Adam did not realize this, but we may know it by what we read in the New Testament (Gal 3:16; 4:4).

Verse 21 | God Clothes Man

21 The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.

The fact that Adam and Eve have seen their sin before God is shown by the fact that God cloths them with skin-cloths. It does not say ‘hides’, but ‘skin’; it originally says a single word. Homemade aprons disappear. Clothes from a skin can only come from an animal that has been killed before. Blood has flowed.

They are clothes made from the skin of one animal. Here we see the truth that there is only through the blood of one Innocent salvation for the guilty man. It refers to the one sacrifice of Christ, to His blood and death, and that this sacrifice is given by God Himself (Jn 3:16). Only through the blood of the Lord Jesus is forgiveness of sins possible (Acts 9:22), only through the death of the Lord Jesus is a person reconciled to God (Rom 5:10).

As a result of faith in Him and His work, the believer is clothed with Christ, by which he is pleasing to God (Eph 1:6-7). He is clothed with “the best robe” (Lk 15:22), with “garments of salvation” (Isa 61:10). This must also become visible in our practice, as shown by the exhortation to put the Lord Jesus Christ on (Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27). Clothing speaks of our behavior, what people see of us. Do they recognize the Lord Jesus in our conduct and in us speak? Do we behave as He wills and do we speak as He wills?

Verses 22-24 | Driven out of the Garden of Eden

22 Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” — 23 therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. 24 So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

The LORD God confirms what satan has said to Eve about being like God (verse 22; verse 5). As said, the parable is only the knowledge of good and evil, while at the same time the possibility of using that knowledge in a divine manner is completely lacking. Man has been deceived by accepting the suggestion of satan.

After God’s gracious provision of the clothes of a skin they must leave paradise. As far as man is concerned, that has been lost forever. A return to the tree of life is not possible. The access is closed. This is also a proof of God’s grace, because with it God prevents man from having to remain in this state of misery forever.

The history of man shows that he is tireless in his attempts to open the way to paradise again. He will not bow under God’s judgment. But all efforts are in vain and will always be. The sword of the cherubs guards the way to the tree of life by God’s command.

Man is sent away to cultivate the soil, because the soil is no longer pure and no longer produces only good fruit. However much God sees the possibility of living with Him, the consequences of sin are not all taken away. A complete recovery to the old situation cannot take place. Later we will

see that God has plans that go far beyond a restoration of paradise: the congregation will be eternally connected to the Lord Jesus and eternally with Him in the Father's house.

Yet God's plans for the earth will also be fulfilled once. But first man must be tested in every possible way to see if anything good can be expected of him. The outcome of this can be seen in the rest of Genesis and the books that follow.

Genesis 4

Introduction

In Genesis 3 sin causes the break between God and man (Isa 59:2a). Genesis 4 shows that the break with God through sin also has consequences for the relationship between people.

Verses 1-2 | Cain and Abel

1 Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, "I have gotten a manchild with [the help of] the LORD." 2 Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

Sinful people get sinful children (Jn 3:6a; Psa 51:5b; Job 14:4). The Lord Jesus is the only exception. He is born of Mary, a sinful woman, but not conceived by a sinful man. He was begotten by God the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:35). Therefore it says of Him that He "knew no sin" (2Cor 5:21) and that He "committed no sin" (1Pet 2:22). He is the Son of God Who has no sinful nature: "In Him there is no sin" (1Jn 3:5).

Eve gives her firstborn son the name "Cain". That name means 'obtained' or 'gain'. She may call him that way because she believes he is the promised Seed (Gen 3:15). Soon she will learn that he is not. In the same way Samuel later also makes a mistake when he thinks that Eliab, David's eldest brother, will be God's chosen king because this man is so great (1Sam 16:6-7). Cain also gets a brother: Abel.

Both boys develop differently. There is nothing wrong with that. However, we do see in the difference in their activities an indication of the orientation of their hearts. Abel becomes a keeper of flocks. That seems an easy work, while Cain seems to be a hard-working man.

The fact that Abel becomes a keeper of flocks makes it clear that his heart goes out to God. He doesn't have the flocks to eat from them himself. This is not yet the case, for it is only in Genesis 9 that God gives the flesh to man for food (Gen 9:3). Abel keeps sheep to sacrifice them to God, as we read

in verse 4. He is deeply aware of the fact that a man can only exist for God on the basis of an offering.

Verses 3-5 | Cain and His Offering; Abel and His Offering

3 So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. 4 Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; 5 but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.

Although we are not reading about it, Adam and Eve will have told their children about what happened in paradise. They will have told of their sin and of their alienation from God. Then they will have told that God has provided an opportunity to have them back with Him by covering them with the skin of an animal that has been killed for that. They have realized that they can only exist for God on the basis of an animal slaughtered by God to clothe them with the skin of that animal.

Cain is the first to bring an offering. Abel also brings an offering. We read about “Cain and ... his offering” and about “Abel and ... his offering” (verses 4-5). The person and his offering belong together. Abel and his offering are accepted, Cain and his offering are not. Here begins the separation that runs through the whole Bible: the separation between the family of God and the family of the devil (1Jn 3:10-12).

As humans they are both sinners. There is no distinction in this (Rom 3:23). The rejection of Cain and the acceptance of Abel must therefore lie in the offering. That is exactly what Hebrews 11 says: “By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain” (Heb 11:4). Abel is no better than Cain, but he has really taken the lesson of his parents to heart and comes to God with an animal of his flock. He understands that the blood of an innocent one is necessary to be accepted by God. God can accept that offering and He accepts the offeror in the offering.

Cain comes with a completely different kind of offering. He comes with the fruit of the land, with the fruit of his own honest, hard work. But it is a *bloodless* offering. It is like with the fig leaves (Gen 3:7). Own effort can never bring reconciliation and bridge the gap that exists between the sin-

ner and God. It applies to the own righteousness that a man tries to build up and of which he thinks that God should be content with that. This is what Jude in his letter calls “the way of Cain” (Jude 1:11), the self-willed way to approach God. Following that path leads one to turn his back on God and to live their own lives, without considering Him, as we see later in this chapter (verses 16-22).

Through the rejection of him and his offering the true nature of Cain comes to the surface. He is “of the evil one” (1Jn 3:12a). He becomes very angry at his rejection instead of humbling himself before God. This can be read from his face. His countenance falls, or becomes gloomy.

Verses 6-7 | The LORD Offers Cain a Solution

6 Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 7 If you do well, will not [your countenance] be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.”

The LORD speaks to him about his anger. He gives Cain the opportunity to convert from his error and to “do well”, that is to bring the good offering and thereby take the right place for God.

The LORD also warns him of the consequences if he does not do so. Then sin will take full possession of him. If he listens, he will also be able to take the place of the firstborn and enjoy the blessing attached to it.

Verse 8 | Cain Kills Abel

8 Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

On the *way* of Cain the *works* of Cain happen: murder (1Jn 3:12b). Instead of responding to God’s call, Cain turns against his brother. The first sin – that of Adam and Eve – is one against God, the second is one against the neighbor. The second sin is the result of the first.

What did Abel Cain do? Abel did nothing against Cain, but Cain begrudges Abel the grace he received from God. That’s how it always went. Those who believe they can serve God in their own righteousness have always persecuted those who want to live by grace (Gal 4:29). Religious leaders

killed the Lord Jesus because He preached grace. Later they captured Paul and wanted to do the same with him because he went to the nations to preach the gospel to them (Acts 22:19-22).

Verses 9-12 | The LORD Sentences Cain

9 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" 10 He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground. 11 Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. 12 When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth."

Like as after Adam's sin, God comes after Cain's sin with a question to the sinner. By asking questions God forces man to think about his actions and to give a well-considered answer. Cain does not answer evasive, like Adam and Eve, but with a pertinent lie. In Cain two main features of sin are expressed to which all sins can be traced: violence and lie or corruption.

God points out to him that He hears the voice of Abel in his blood. There is no point in denying it. God curses Cain for his obstinate refusal to acknowledge his sin. This curse will have an effect on the results of its cultivation of the ground. The soil will no longer provide him with what he had previously provided. All his efforts will only show a moderate result.

Verses 13-16 | Cain Leaves the LORD

13 Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is too great to bear! 14 Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." 15 So the LORD said to him, "Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay him. 16 Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

If God as Judge confronts Cain with his sin, he can no longer get away from it. Then Cain takes a different direction. He believes his sin is too great to be forgiven. Here we see the two extremes. First Cain denied his

sin. Now that he can no longer get away from it, he states that his sin is unforgivable. In both cases it becomes clear that he does not want to bow before God.

Both evasions are a lie of satan, preventing people from repenting to God and accepting the offer of grace to be saved. The first is a justification of oneself, the second is a belittling of God, as if there were a sin with which He would not know what to do, for which the Lord Jesus could not die.

Guilt that is not forgiven fills man with constant fear (Pro 28:1a; Job 15:20-21; Psa 53:5a). Wherever Cain wanders around, everywhere he thinks he is in mortal danger. In every one he meets, he sees an officer of the law. The people who live on earth are his brothers and sisters, but even for them he is rightly afraid that he will die by their hand.

Yet God, in His goodness, still meets Cain with regard to his life on earth. By appointing a sign for him, others will see that God alone reserves the right to act with the sinner Cain. After this promise, Cain turns his back on the LORD. He leaves to the east, the direction to which God has expelled Adam and Eve (Gen 3:24) and settles to live there.

Verses 17-24 | The Descendants of Cain

17 Cain had relations with his wife and she conceived, and gave birth to Enoch; and he built a city, and called the name of the city Enoch, after the name of his son. 18 Now to Enoch was born Irad, and Irad became the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael became the father of Methushael, and Methushael became the father of Lamech. 19 Lamech took to himself two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other, Zillah. 20 Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and [have] livestock. 21 His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe. 22 As for Zillah, she also gave birth to Tubal-cain, the forger of all implements of bronze and iron; and the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah. 23 Lamech said to his wives,

*“Adah and Zillah,
Listen to my voice,
You wives of Lamech,
Give heed to my speech,*

*For I have killed a man for wounding me;
And a boy for striking me;
24 If Cain is avenged sevenfold,
Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold."*

The first genealogy in the Bible is that of Cain, the genealogy of the line of unbelief, of flesh. In Genesis 5 comes the genealogy of faith. Here we see the principle: "The spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual" (1Cor 15:46). We have seen this in the bringing of the offering: first Cain brings an offering, then Abel. The fact that Cain is building a city and naming it after the name of his son is proof that this record of genealogy is about people who live in unbelief. He writes his own glory on his building. His descendant Lamech tramples on God's institution of marriage by taking two women. The children he has begotten with these women have received qualities from God, but use them for themselves.

1. Jabal is "the father of those who dwell in tents and [have] livestock", which we can apply to economic prosperity, property and convenience.
2. Jubal is "the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe", which we can apply to bringing entertainment through art and culture and other forms of amusement.
3. Tubal-cain is "the forger of all implements of bronze and iron", which stands for science and technology.

These things characterize the world today. There is no need to ask God. Man arranges everything himself.

We also hear the bragging voice of Lamech who boasts of his power. He is the man who can stand up for himself. He finds himself head and shoulders above his ancestor Cain. No one will be able to do anything to him, Lamech, or that person will be punished much more severely than the one who would kill Cain. He finds himself that important.

Verses 25-26 | Seth, the Substitute for Abel

25 Adam had relations with his wife again; and she gave birth to a son, and named him Seth, for, [she said,] "God has appointed me another offspring in

place of Abel, for Cain killed him.” 26 To Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then [men] began to call upon the name of the LORD.

After the dark painting of ‘the way of Cain’, a ray of hope lights up. We go back in time and hear about the birth of “Seth”. He replaces Abel. Seth means ‘compensated’ or ‘substitute’. Here we can see a general principle: what has been given to God or taken (back) by Him will always be compensated or replaced by Him.

Seth also gets a son, “Enos”, which means “man” in the sense of “weak man” or “mortal man”. From that name appears the faith of Seth. Unlike Cain and his descendants, Seth does not expect anything from man, but everything from God. It is therefore remarkable that precisely in the days of Enos “[men] began to call upon the name of the LORD”. While there are those who make a name for themselves on earth (verse 17), there are those who, in the awareness of their own weakness, call upon the name of the LORD (cf. Pro 18:10).

Genesis 5

Verses 1-2 | Beginning of Adam's Verseology

1 This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. 2 He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created.

After the bankruptcy of the human race via the line of Cain it is as if God starts history with man again. Cain and his descendants represent people who do not want to have anything to do with God. They build their own world where God is consciously excluded.

“The book of the generations of Adam” gives an account of all who were born of him through the line of Seth. The description goes from Adam to Noah, which are ten generations. First we are reminded of man’s origin: he was not begotten by anyone else (no evolution), but created directly by God (Gen 1:27). Reference is also made to his high descent: he is made “in the likeness of God”. That means knowledge of and dominion over creation and being free from evil.

God created man in a male and female form. He thus establishes marriage as the only form of society to produce offspring. He blesses them with all the good things of creation, including having offspring. That He gives them the name “Man” is to remind them that God made them out of the dust of the earth. This is from their creation their name. Man is in Hebrew *adam* and means ‘of earth’. Paul points at this when he says that man is “from the earth, earthly” (1Cor 15:47).

Verses 3-5 | Adam

3 When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of [a son] in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth. 4 Then the days of Adam after he became the father of Seth were eight hundred years, and he had [other] sons and daughters. 5 So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died.

The genealogy of Adam that God gives here does not run through Cain, but through Seth, who has replaced Abel (Gen 4:25). It is a completely different genealogy from that of Cain (Gen 4:17-24). It mentions people who have lived in faith. No special efforts of them are mentioned, as with the descendants of Cain. It does not seem that they were greatly respected in the world.

But despite the characteristics of faith, we also notice the consequences of sin in this genealogy. Adam can only become the father of a son “in his own likeness”. The consequence of that cannot but be that he gives his son his own sinful nature. The proof of sin and also its reward is death (Rom 6:23) which has passed on to all men (Rom 5:12). The remainder of this chapter and the entire history of mankind show this. Adam can grow as old as he is, even nine hundred and thirty years, he cannot escape the judgment of God: “In the day that you eat from it, you will surely die” (Gen 2:17).

Verses 6-20 | And He Died

6 Seth lived one hundred and five years, and became the father of Enosh. 7 Then Seth lived eight hundred and seven years after he became the father of Enosh, and he had [other] sons and daughters. 8 So all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years, and he died. 9 Enosh lived ninety years, and became the father of Kenan. 10 Then Enosh lived eight hundred and fifteen years after he became the father of Kenan, and he had [other] sons and daughters. 11 So all the days of Enosh were nine hundred and five years, and he died. 12 Kenan lived seventy years, and became the father of Mahalalel. 13 Then Kenan lived eight hundred and forty years after he became the father of Mahalalel, and he had [other] sons and daughters. 14 So all the days of Kenan were nine hundred and ten years, and he died. 15 Mahalalel lived sixty-five years, and became the father of Jared. 16 Then Mahalalel lived eight hundred and thirty years after he became the father of Jared, and he had [other] sons and daughters. 17 So all the days of Mahalalel were eight hundred and ninety-five years, and he died. 18 Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years, and became the father of Enoch. 19 Then Jared lived eight hundred years after he became the father of Enoch, and he had [other] sons and daughters. 20 So all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years, and he died.

Not only about Adam, but about all those mentioned in this genealogy, we hear the death bell ring when, as in a chorus, we hear the words “and he died”.

An important side-effect is that through the high ages the truth of God could be passed on by as few intermediaries as possible. Thus, between Adam and Moses, that is, over a period of about twenty-five hundred years, there were no more than seven intermediaries.

Verses 21-24 | Enoch Taken by God

21 Enoch lived sixty-five years, and became the father of Methuselah. 22 Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah, and he had [other] sons and daughters. 23 So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. 24 Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.

Enoch begot Methuselah and sons and daughters, was three hundred and sixty-five years old, and he did *not* die, “for God took him”. Enoch is thus a wonderful exception to the law of nature “and he died” which sounded in the previous verses and which applies to all men throughout the ages. The only other descendant of Adam who went to heaven without dying is Elijah (2Kgs 2:11). The only person who could have gone to heaven without dying is the Lord Jesus. But He voluntarily died the death of the sinner in order to save him.

Enoch has “obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God” (Heb 11:5). The reason is that he walks with Him. Enoch walks with God because he agrees with God (Amos 3:3). God wanted to walk with Adam in the garden (Gen 3:8), but sin made that impossible. Enoch believes in God, takes into account Him in everything.

He warns his contemporaries of the judgment to come: “[It was] also about these men [that] Enoch, [in] the seventh [generation] from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him”” (Jude

1:14-15). God has told Enoch about this, because He always makes His thoughts known to those who walk with Him and please Him.

The fact that Enoch really walked with God is shown by the fact that He did not keep God's communication to himself, but passed it on to the people around Him. "Enoch" means 'taught'. We have also been taught by God about what He is going to do with the world. Does that also bring us to a walk with God and a preaching of judgment to those around us to warn them?

Enoch is also a picture of the members of the church who live on earth and who, at the coming of the Lord Jesus, will be caught up by Him without dying (1Thes 4:15-18). Enoch is taken away before the judgment of the Flood comes upon the world. In the same way, the church will be caught up before God's judgments come upon the world as an introduction to the Lord Jesus' return to earth.

Verses 25-27 | The Oldest Man

25 Methuselah lived one hundred and eighty-seven years, and became the father of Lamech. 26 Then Methuselah lived seven hundred and eighty-two years after he became the father of Lamech, and he had [other] sons and daughters. 27 So all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years, and he died.

Methuselah begot Lamech – not to be confused with the descendant of Cain (Gen 4:19-24) – and sons and daughters, was nine hundred sixty-nine years old, "and he died". He is the oldest man in the world so far. In the millennial kingdom of peace, people will still grow older (Isa 65:20,22).

Verses 28-32 | Noah

28 Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and became the father of a son. 29 Now he called his name Noah, saying, "This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands [arising] from the ground which the LORD has cursed." 30 Then Lamech lived five hundred and ninety-five years after he became the father of Noah, and he had [other] sons and daughters. 31 So all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years, and he

died. 32 Noah was five hundred years old, and Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Lamech begot Noah, and sons and daughters, and was seven hundred and seventy-seven years old, “and he died”. As with Enoch, the repeated course of events of birth, life, having children and dying is interrupted with Lamech. This is done here to communicate the motive of his son’s naming. Lamech lives in a world where violence and corruption are increasing (Gen 6:12-13). He notices that. He realizes and acknowledges that the earth is cursed. In the midst of this situation, he seeks peace. In the faith he calls the son who is born “Noah”, which means ‘rest’.

The comfort that Lamech speaks about when giving this name is also connected with this peace. This indicates a link between rest and comfort. It is not to be seen in Dutch, but there is a play on words between the name Noah (‘rest’) and the Hebrew word for ‘comfort’. His longing for that rest is the longing of a God-fearing soul. But that rest can only come after the judgment. Nor can Noah give that rest, and Lamech is mistaken when he says that “this one” will comfort him and others. It is the mistake that Eve also made, when she gets Cain (Gen 4:1) and sees in him the promised offspring (Gen 3:15).

While Enoch is taken away before judgment (verse 24), Noah is kept through judgment, save in the ark. Noah is a picture of the faithful remnant of Israel that is kept by God during the great tribulation that will come upon the whole earth.

By naming the sons of Noah, the genealogy of faith ends. There is no mention here of how old Noah eventually became. Noah’s three sons are mentioned, and not just one by whom the genealogy is continued, as in all previous cases. This also points forward to the further course that will make it clear that a new beginning is being made by these three sons.

Shem is mentioned first. Through him the lineage continues to Abraham, the ancestor of God’s earthly people Israel. God is called “the God of Shem” (Gen 9:26). Through him, finally, the Christ will be born (Lk 3:23,36).

Name	Year of birth	1st child begotten	Following years	Total age
Adam	0	130	800	930
Seth	130	105	807	912
Enosh	235	90	815	905
Kenan	325	70	840	910
Mahalalel	395	65	830	895
Jared	460	162	800	962
Enoch	622	65	300	365
Methusalah	687	187	782	969
Lamech	874	182	555	777
Noah	1056	500	450	950

Table 1: The Patriarchs

The flood came over the earth in the six hundredth year of Noah (Gen 7:6) that is, in $1056 + 600 = 1656$ years after the creation of Adam.

Genesis 6

Introduction

The people of the lineage of faith have not been able to stop the development of the corruption of the world at that time. It is not in accordance with God's thoughts that the gospel or political efforts will ever win the world for Him. Evil spreads and reveals itself in ever-changing forms.

Verses 1-4 | Sons of God and Daughters of Men

1 Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, 2 that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose. 3 Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." 4 The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore [children] to them. Those were the mighty men who [were] of old, men of renown.

With the increase of the wicked people sin also increases (Pro 29:16a; cf. Acts 6:1). Evil takes on such horrible forms that "the daughters of men" connect themselves with "the sons of God". The sons of God mentioned here are fallen angels "who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode" (Jude 1:6) and have taken on a human form. The results are also there. It produces "Nephilim" or "giants", "mighty men", "men of renown", impressive appearances.

That angels are meant by the sons of God is evident from the book of Job (Job 1:6; 2:1). The contrast between "sons of God" and "daughters of men" supports this idea. What sense would this contrast have if with sons of God also were meant men? The idea that it would be a connection between believers and unbelievers is not correct. The expression 'sons of God' for believers is only used in the New Testament (Gal 3:26; Rom 8:14,19) and applies there to men and women.

That the judgment does not come directly, man sees as a reason to continue sinning (Ecc 8:11). But God's judgment does not slumber. God's

patience comes to an end. His Spirit does not endlessly try to convince people of their sins and to persuade them to repent. God determines of man that "he also is flesh", thus indicating the incorrigible sinfulness of mankind. Therefore, He sets a limit to man's wickedness: another hundred and twenty years and then comes judgment.

Verses 5-7 | The Reason for the Flood

5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. 7 The LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them."

The LORD always has a reason for everything He does. He never does anything without cause. He does not always make known the reason for His actions, but sometimes he does, as here. Nothing is left of His good work on earth. Any hope of improvement is a thing of the past. If He now looks at the earth, there is pain in his heart (cf. Psa 95:10; Isa 43:24). Is this the man whom He created so well? Is this the man to whom He did not retain, even after the Fall, His favors?

The great wickedness of the people is not only evident from the horrible sin of mixing their daughters with fallen angels, but is also evident from the lives of the decent people. The Lord Jesus speaks of life "in the days of Noah" and says of the lives of men in those days: "They were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage" (Lk 17:26-27). These are the ordinary things of life. But in the days of Noah, life consisted of that. God was not thought of. That kind of life also makes the wickedness of people great and is the reason for the flood.

When the LORD sees this, He is sorry, or He repents, that he made man. God's faithfulness never has to do with acknowledging a wrong deed. God never does anything wrong. His repentance indicates His feelings when He sees what man does with everything He has given him. He mourns about it. The element of regret about wrongdoing is not present here. If God repents something, it means that in His government He comes back to

something He intends to do, but changes it, when He sees people behaving differently than He may expect.

The same we see with Saul, of whom God also says that He repents that He has made him king (1Sam 15:11a,35, Darby translation). The other sense of repentance, that it would have been wrong of God to make him king, that He was mistaken, is not possible with God. Of him is true: "Also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind [or: repent]; for He is not a man that He should change His mind [or: repent]" (1Sam 15:29; cf. Rom 11:29; Num 23:19; Mal 3:6). God can repent in the sense that He returns to an intention to bless or punish man if the ways of man give cause to do so.

A clear example of this can be found in Jeremiah 18: "At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy [it]; if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent [or: will repent, Darby translation] concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant [it]; if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better [or: will repent, Darby translation] of the good with which I had promised to bless it" (Jer 18:7-10).

Repentance on the basis of a mistake is impossible, because God does not make mistakes. The repentance of God referred to here, shows that man is not a puppet and God is not an unrelenting God. This does not affect the fact that God is omniscient and sovereign. He is too. It does show how much God is involved with man. Even so that at some point He says: "I am become weary of repenting" (Jer 15:6, Darby translation). God gives people so many opportunities, every time they repent He postpones the judgment, but every time they corrupt it.

Finally, He can no longer postpone the judgement. This is evident here with Noah, although He still gives man a certain time to repent. He used the preaching of Noah, who is called "a preacher of righteousness" (2Pet 2:5).

Even the senseless animals are included in the announced judgment. They are made for man to serve and honor God together with him, but because of man's sin they no longer meet the purpose of their creation.

Verses 8-12 | Noah, the Exception

8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. 9 These are [the records of] the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God. 10 Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. 11 Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. 12 God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.

Noah finds grace in the eyes of the LORD. What can that mean other than that he has also looked for it? Whoever seeks grace, is aware of the judgment. Noah is no exception to all people as sinners. He also deserves to be judged. He is the exception in the midst of all corruption, because he acknowledges that God's wrath rests on him. The result is that of him can be said that he is "a righteous man, blameless". This is also evident from his walk, for he "walked with God". It must have been a great joy for God that this man walks with Him in the midst of corruption and violence.

Verse 13 | God Tells Noah What He Is Going to Do

13 Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.

Just like with Enoch, God tells Noah what He is going to do. "The secret of the LORD is for those who fear Him, And He will make them know His covenant" (Psa 25:14). With man the earth will be destroyed. Man has corrupted everything in connection with him. By his fault there is a curse on creation (Rom 8:20,22).

Verses 14-16 | The Ark

14 Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch. 15 This is how you shall make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. 16 You shall make a window for the ark, and finish it to a cubit from the top; and set the door of the ark in the side of it; you shall make it with lower, second, and third decks.

Just like with Enoch there is salvation from the judgment for Noah, but in an other way than with Enoch. God not only makes Noah familiar with judgment, but also with salvation. He does not leave it to Noah to think of a way in which he can bring himself to safety. That is still the case today. There is only one Name given under heaven by which people can be saved (Acts 4:12) and that is “the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene” (Acts 4:10).

As with the tabernacle, God gives a precise description of the ark to be built. The ark is a picture of the Lord Jesus. The wood of the ark speaks of His Manhood. The Man Christ Jesus is the “mediator between God and men” (1Tim 2:5). The word “pitch” is the same word used for “reconciliation”.

Verse 17 | Everything on Earth Shall Perish

17 Behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish.

So far God has not said how He will destroy the earth. Here He says that He will do it by “the flood of water”. Now Noah understands why he has to build a big ship.

Verses 18-21 | Who Shall Enter the Ark

18 But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark— you and your sons and your wife, and your sons’ wives with you. 19 And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every [kind] into the ark, to keep [them] alive with you; they shall be male and female. 20 Of the birds after their kind, and of the animals after their kind, of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every [kind] will come to you to keep [them] alive. 21 As for you, take for yourself some of all food which is edible, and gather [it] to yourself; and it shall be for food for you and for them.”

The ark serves primarily to save Noah and his family. Furthermore, everything that has value for God, everything that lives, must also enter the ark. God’s plan is to populate an earth cleansed by judgment with everything that lives. God’s great care is evident not only from the ark itself but also from the compartments that have to be made in the ark. The ark is not one

big space, but every living being gets his own compartment. Food also speaks of God's care.

Verse 22 | Noah Obeys

| *22 Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.*

Noah's faith is evident from his obedience. He acts exactly according to the instructions of God. Similarly, Moses later acts in the construction of the tabernacle (Heb 8:5; Exo 40:16). Our faith is also evident in our obedience to everything God has said in His Word. If God warns of the judgements to come, then it is wisdom to make provision accordingly (Exo 9:20-21; Eze 3:18).

Genesis 7

Verses 1-3 | Noah Must Bring All in the Ark

1 Then the LORD said to Noah, "Enter the ark, you and all your household, for you [alone] I have seen [to be] righteous before Me in this time. 2 You shall take with you of every clean animal by sevens, a male and his female; and of the animals that are not clean two, a male and his female; 3 also of the birds of the sky, by sevens, male and female, to keep offspring alive on the face of all the earth.

Noah has prepared the ark. In Hebrews 11 it says that he does so "by faith ..., being warned [by God] about things not yet seen" (Heb 11:7). He does it "in reverence", out of respect for what God has said. And he does it "for the salvation of his household". God wants to save families.

What is the responsibility of the head of the family great to live with the Lord, so that he can receive Divine "warnings" to build the ark. What am I building on as head of the family? What am I doing as head of the family?

It must have been a foolish activity for the people of his time. There they see a man building a huge ship, in the middle of the land, without water in the neighborhood. However, they do not only see him, they also hear him. Noah is "a preacher of righteousness" (2Pet 2:5), so he is called. While he is building the ark, where does he warn the people for the coming judgment and invite them to come into the ark. He has been doing this for one hundred and twenty years.

But they don't believe. They continue with everyday life. As time goes by, they laugh harder and mock Noah. So it is also now: "Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with [their] mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For[ever] since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." For hen they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God [the] heavens existed long ago and [the] earth was formed out of water and by water, 6 through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water" (2Pet 3:3-6).

People also mock today when they hear about the coming judgment. As a Noah, am I also a preacher of righteousness, i.e. of the righteous judgment of God? Judgment is again about to burst. God will no longer destroy the world by water, but by fire (2Pet 3:7).

When the ark is ready, the LORD commands Noah and his house to enter the ark and also to take with him the animals. It is striking that in the animals a difference is made between pure and impure animals. It is the first time this difference is mentioned. Of the pure animals he takes more with him. That is to be able to sacrifice of them (Gen 8:20).

Verse 4 | Seven More Days Added

4 For after seven more days, I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights; and I will blot out from the face of the land every living thing that I have made."

After commanding Noah to enter the ark, God leaves the door of the ark open, as it were, for an extra seven days. To God's patience which "kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark" (1Pet 3:20a) seven more days are added.

Verses 5-9 | Noah Obeys the LORD in All Things

5 Noah did according to all that the LORD had commanded him. 6 Now Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of water came upon the earth. 7 Then Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him entered the ark because of the water of the flood. 8 Of clean animals and animals that are not clean and birds and everything that creeps on the ground, 9 there went into the ark to Noah by twos, male and female, as God had commanded Noah.

When Noah has finished constructing the ark, his mind is still as it was at the beginning of constructing the ark (Gen 6:22). He does "according to all that the LORD had commanded him". When the flood begins, he is six hundred years old. He enters the ark. God sends the animals to the ark. The same hand that first brought the animals to Adam to receive their names from him (Gen 2:19), now brings them "into the ark to Noah" to be kept alive by him. "An ox knows its owner, And a donkey its master's manger",

but man has no understanding or knowledge (Isa 1:3). The animals are more obedient than the people. Noah gives all animals their place.

Verse 10 | God Does What He Has Said

10 It came about after the seven days, that the water of the flood came upon the earth.

Then the patience of God is at an end. God does what He has said. All mockers are silenced when they see that every word God has spoken will be fulfilled by Him.

Verses 11-16 | All Go into the Ark; the LORD Closes the Door

11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened. 12 The rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights. 13 On the very same day Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark, 14 they and every beast after its kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind, all sorts of birds. 15 So they went into the ark to Noah, by twos of all flesh in which was the breath of life. 16 Those that entered, male and female of all flesh, entered as God had commanded him; and the LORD closed [it] behind him.

On the same day that the flood begins, Noah with his house and the animals enter the ark. Only Noah and his house, which are “a few, that is, eight persons”, enter the ark (1Pet 3:20b), no one else. The LORD closes the door behind him. Everyone who is outside at that moment is lost without salvation (cf. Mt 25:10-13).

The devastating judgments of the future will not come until God has provided for the safety of His people (Rev 7:3; Gen 19:22). If the God-fearing men are taken away, the judgments are not far away, for they are taken away before evil (Isa 57:1). This also applies to the church that will be raptured before the great tribulation comes upon all the earth (Rev 3:10). We have seen this in the picture of Enoch, who was taken away before the judgment of the flood (Gen 5:24).

Verses 17-20 | On the Water and under the Water

17 Then the flood came upon the earth for forty days, and the water increased and lifted up the ark, so that it rose above the earth. 18 The water prevailed and increased greatly upon the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. 19 The water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered. 20 The water prevailed fifteen cubits higher, and the mountains were covered.

For forty days the water rises – and the ark and its contents rise with it – until the highest mountains are covered by the water. It takes no imagination to imagine the terrible scenes that have taken place in those days. When it begins one may have been surprised by the heavy rainfall, but an explanation might be sought and found why.

When it keeps raining, there will be some who started to go to the ark. They will have banged on the door and begged to enter, but it is too late (cf. Lk 13:25). Then they fled to the hills, but the water has chased them and hunted them higher and higher. There is less and less space available. The battles for survival will have been numerous, both between humans and between humans and animals and between animals. Until the highest mountain is finally covered by water.

It is clear that this flood has been global and not just a local flood. It says that “all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered”. The fact that the water rises to fifteen cubits above the highest mountains may have something to do with the depth of the ark.

Verses 21-23 | All Blotted out Except What Is in the Ark

21 All flesh that moved on the earth perished, birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind; 22 of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died. 23 Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth; and only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark.

This an end is put to “every living thing that was upon the face of the land”. Only Noah and what is with him in the ark are left. What judgment

means for the world means salvation for them. The waters that destroy the world lift up the ark and place it on a land cleaned by judgment. The ark undergoes the judgments of God, while those who are in it are spared.

This is an impressive picture of the Lord Jesus during the three hours of darkness on the cross, over Whom God pours out the waters of His judgment in those hours (Psa 42:7). All sinners who take refuge in Him are spared thereby, and are not struck by judgment, for He has carried it in their place.

In 1 Peter 3 the flood and the ark are used as a picture of baptism: “who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through [the] water. Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1Pet 3:20-21). Who is immersed in the baptismal water undergoes, in correspondence, the judgment of God. But just as Noah is safe in the ark, so is such a person safe in Christ. In the case of Noah, judgment strikes the ark; he who is baptized knows that the judgment has affected Christ.

Only through the flood could Noah enter a new world; only through the death of Christ can the believer be with Him on earth. In 1 Peter 3:21 it is not about being saved by baptism to be *in heaven* with Christ, but to be with Christ *on earth*. As long as a believer is not baptized, he has not yet openly shown that he belongs to Him on earth.

Verse 24 | The Earth Under Water

| 24 *The water prevailed upon the earth one hundred and fifty days.*

After forty days of raining from the floodgates of heaven and great water floods having been pushed up from water sources under the earth, the water reaches its final height. At this level, the water remains standing for one hundred and fifty days.

Genesis 8

Verses 1-5 | The Water Decreases; The Ark upon the Ararat

1 But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark; and God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water subsided. 2 Also the fountains of the deep and the floodgates of the sky were closed, and the rain from the sky was restrained; 3 and the water receded steadily from the earth, and at the end of one hundred and fifty days the water decreased. 4 In the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat. 5 The water decreased steadily until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains became visible.

God thinks of Noah and therefore of all that is with him in the ark (Hab 3:2). Here is Noah a picture of the Lord Jesus. As God here thinks of Noah, God will for the sake of the Lord Jesus once put an end to the great tribulation in which the faithful remnant of His people will find itself. God always thinks of Him and in connection with Him.

Personal application: God thinks of each of His own who is in trouble and trials. He does not allow anyone to be tempted beyond ability, “but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it” (1Cor 10:13).

The waters of the judgment recede steadily from the earth. God does not let the water disappear at once. First the ark “rested on the mountains of Ararat”. Ararat means ‘holy ground’. Someone ends up there because of his conversion. In the life of a person who repents, the first consequence is rest for his conscience. He may rest in knowing that his sins are forgiven. This does not mean that all the consequences of his life in sin are immediately gone. It often takes some time. Sometimes certain consequences are even permanent.

Verses 6-7 | Noah Sends out a Raven

6 Then it came about at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made; 7 and he sent out a raven, and it flew here and there until the water was dried up from the earth.

Noah opens the window in the ark and sends out a raven. The window at the top of the ark is the only opening (Gen 6:16) that can be opened; the door is closed and remains closed. The opening at the top of the ark represents the connection with heaven, with God. Only by being in contact with God can it become clear whether the earth is dry, whether all the water is gone, whether the judgment has been raged out completely.

It seems that the raven has flown back and forth between the ark and the water, without really getting back into the ark. Once the water has dried from the earth, the raven no longer comes to the ark. The raven is an unclean animal (Lev 11:13,15). It is a bird of prey that lives from death. The raven is a picture of the flesh, the restless, old nature of the believer.

Verses 8-12 | Noah Sends out a Dove Three Times

8 Then he sent out a dove from him, to see if the water was abated from the face of the land; 9 but the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot, so she returned to him into the ark, for the water was on the surface of all the earth. Then he put out his hand and took her, and brought her into the ark to himself. 10 So he waited yet another seven days; and again he sent out the dove from the ark. 11 The dove came to him toward evening, and behold, in her beak was a freshly picked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the water was abated from the earth. 12 Then he waited yet another seven days, and sent out the dove; but she did not return to him again.

Noah releases a dove three times. The dove is a clean animal, a picture of the Holy Spirit, Who can only find rest with Christ (Mt 3:16) and with the believer, because he has Christ as his life (1Cor 6:19).

When Noah sends her out the first time, most likely seven days after the raven was sent out – because the second time it says that he waits “yet another seven days” (verse 10) –, she returns, because she can’t find rest anywhere. The second time, seven days later, Noah releases the dove again. Then she comes back with an olive leaf. That points to new life.

In the life of the believer, spiritual fruit will be discernible. God’s goal is that the new earth, the new life, produces fruit, fruit worked by the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22). This fruit we see here in the picture of the olive leaf of the olive tree. The olive tree produces oil. Oil was later

used for the anointing of priests, kings, and occasionally a prophet. Thus is the believer anointed with the Holy Spirit, he has the “anointing from the Holy One” (1Jn 2:20; 2Cor 1:21; 1Jn 2:27), through which he can produce the fruit of the Spirit.

When Noah sends out the dove for the third time, she does not return. Now he knows that the earth is dry.

Verses 13-14 | The Earth Is Dry Again

13 Now it came about in the six hundred and first year, in the first [month], on the first of the month, the water was dried up from the earth. Then Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and behold, the surface of the ground was dried up. 14 In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry.

The earth is dry again. This state is reached after a process. The same goes for the life of a believer. See also the spiritual application of Genesis 1.

Verses 15-19 | Out of the Ark

15 Then God spoke to Noah, saying, 16 “Go out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and your sons’ wives with you. 17 Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that is with you, birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, that they may breed abundantly on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.” 18 So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him. 19 Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by their families from the ark.

Noah went into the ark by order of God (Gen 7:1). Now, together with all that is in the ark with him, he goes out of the ark by order of God. They enter a renewed earth (Psa 104:30b), to take possession of and enjoy all the blessings God has in store for them. The earth is populated with everything that comes out of the ark.

The life of the believer who has come ‘on dry land’ also looks like this. He is going to walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4). He now looks at all things in a new, spiritual way, as God sees it. That is totally different before his conversion.

Verse 20 | An Altar and an Offering

20 Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

The first thing Noah does when he has entered the new earth is to build an altar for the LORD and to offer him offerings. In doing so, he acknowledges that God has every right to the new earth. He offers burnt offerings of all clean animals, which are animals that man is later given as food.

This is the third time we read about an offering pleasing to God. The first time it is an offering that God brings to clothe man so that he may exist before Him (Gen 3:21). The second time it is Abel who offers an offering (Gen 4:4). He is aware that he can only be accepted by God on the basis of the blood of an innocent one. Here it is a burnt offering on a new earth, brought on an altar.

A burnt offering is an offering that is exclusively for God (Lev 1:9,13). It goes up completely in fire and smoke, while its smell rises to God. An altar speaks of offering and worship. The clean offerings speak of the Lord Jesus. We bring a burnt offering when we tell God Who the Lord Jesus is for Him, what His work means for Him (Heb 13:15). Bringing a burnt offering requires an understanding of the joy that God has found in the Lord Jesus, of the honor that God has been brought by the Lord Jesus in His work on the cross.

Bringing such an offering is an expression of the new life of someone who has come to conversion and walks in newness of life. His heart goes out to the Savior. Such a person can do nothing but honor God in this way. He wants to do this in his personal life and he wants to do the same with other believers, as a church. Such worshippers the Father seeks (Jn 4:23-24).

The offering of Noah consists of clean animal and clean birds. The clean animal speaks of the Lord Jesus as Man on earth, the clean birds speak of Him as Man Who came from heaven.

Verses 21-22 | God's Answer to the Offering

21 The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's

heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.

*22 "While the earth remains,
Seedtime and harvest,
And cold and heat,
And summer and winter,
And day and night
Shall not cease."*

It is impressive to see what the soothing aroma of the burnt offering does with the LORD. This gives rise to thoughts in Him which He also makes known to us, so that He allows us to share in what concerns Him on the basis of the offering.

He says to Himself that He will no longer curse the earth because of man. The reason He gives for this is almost the same as He gave in Genesis 6 (Gen 6:5-7). There He says that He will destroy the earth, because the thoughts of man's heart are only bad. And now He says that He will not destroy the earth for exactly the same reason. We see the solution when we pay attention to context.

The first is said before the flood, the second after it. First comes the judgment about man because of his anger. After the flood the LORD takes into account that the heart of man is bad "from his youth". Evil is innate to man and that makes him all the more dependent on the grace of God. Therefore, after the flood, God takes another ground for His relationship with man. Judgment has not changed man's heart, but God now sees the earth by the pleasant smell of the burnt offering.

The LORD smells the soothing aroma of the offering. "soothing aroma" is literally 'the smell that gives peace'. God has found His joy and rest in the offering of the Lord Jesus, His Son (Eph 5:2). He still finds it, despite the immutability of man. On the basis of the offering He will not destroy the earth again through water.

Through the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross, which always stands before God's attention, God maintains the cycle of verse 22. On the basis of that work God still "causes His sun to rise on [the] evil and [the] good, and sends rain on [the] righteous and [the] unrighteous" (Mt 5:45).

Event	Time	Text
Noach enters the ark	2 nd month 10 th day	Gen 7:7-9
7 days later: The rain starts	2 nd month, 17 th day	Gen 7: 10-11
40 days later: The rain stops	3 rd month, 27 th day	Gen 7:12
150 days later: The water subsides, the ark at Ararat	7 th month, 17 th day	Gen 7:24 Gen 8:4
74 days later: Mountaintops visible	10 th month, 1 st day	Gen 8:5
40 days later: Raven and dove send out	11 th month, 11 th Day	Gen 8:6-9
7 days later: Dove send out; olive leaf	11 th month, 18 th day	Gen 8:10-11
7 days later: Dove send out, doesn't return	11 th month, 25 th day	Gen 8:12
Noach sees the land is dry	1 st month, 1 st day	Gen 8:13
70 days later: Noach leaves the ark	2 nd month, 27 th day	Gen 8:16-19
Total: 377 days	1 year+17 days in the ark	

Table 2: Chronology of the flood

Genesis 9

Verses 1-3 | God Blesses Noah

1 And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. 2 The fear of you and the terror of you will be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given. 3 Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as [I gave] the green plant.

Noah is on a cleansed, renewed earth (Psa 104:30b). He has made an offering. On the basis of this offering God blesses Noah and his sons. To bless is to speak good of someone, to wish someone good. God assures them of His benevolence for them and of His merciful intentions with them. All the promises of God to give the good flow from His intentions of love and the counsel of His will (Eph 1:11; Jer 29:11).

Noah is given the same command as Adam to be fruitful and to fill the earth (Gen 1:28). Just like Adam he also gets the rule over the animals (Gen 1:26,28). But there is an additional element that was not there in the case of Adam, and that is that "fear of you and the terror of you will be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea". This is the result of sin.

Another new element is that humans are given animals for food. This means a spiritual lesson: The life of man is based on feeding with the death of another (Jn 6:51b). Whoever believes this has eternal life (Jn 6:54).

Whoever is a vegetarian out of conviction; that is to say who consciously will not eat flesh in order not to have to kill an animal, (unconsciously?) adheres to a doctrine of demons: "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, [men] who forbid marriage [and advocate] abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth" (1Tim 4:1-3).

Everything is good and nothing is reprehensible of what comes from the hand of God and is given to us to feed us (1Tim 4:4).

Verses 4-7 | The Blood

4 Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, [that is,] its blood. 5 Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from [every] man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man.

*6 "Whoever sheds man's blood,
By man his blood shall be shed,
For in the image of God
He made man.*

*7 "As for you, be fruitful and multiply;
Populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it."*

God expands on the blood. He clearly states here that blood represents life: "The life of the flesh is in blood" (Lev 17:11) and to this He alone has the right. He never gives up that right. Therefore, the prohibition to eat blood – blood sausage is also covered by this prohibition! – still applies (Acts 15:29).

God also commands man to kill someone who kills another person. God thus predicts that violence will be committed again. He knows that man's heart hasn't changed and He sees the deeds to which man will fall again. With a view to the bloodshed, God says that whoever does so, his blood must also flow through the hand of a man. This also applies in case an animal kills a human being, which is later also laid down in the law (Exo 21:28).

With the commission and the right to retaliate bloodshed, God places something of Himself (Psa 9:12a; 2Chr 24:22) in the hands of – authorized – people (Rom 13:1). He does so because whoever offends against a human being, offends against His image bearer. He also does this to curb evil, so that no more situations develop as those that made the flood necessary: an earth full of violence (Gen 6:11). Here we find the institution of the government, which gets the sword power (Rom 13:4). The most characteristic of government is the judgment of evil.

If murder as an affront and violation of the image of God in man is to be punished with death, it is clear that this punishment cannot be exercised by every random man. It is only permitted to those who represent God's right and majesty on earth, which are the ones established by Him. These representatives are also meaningfully called "gods" (Psa 82:1-2,6).

Now that God, because of man's innate sinfulness, no longer threatens with a judgment of extermination, another way must be found to prevent evil. This is done through the establishment of rules and commandments, on which the government must ensure that they are maintained and where the government must punish for transgressing them.

Verses 8-11 | God's Covenant with Noah

8 Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, 9 "Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; 10 and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth. 11 I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth."

God establishes a covenant not only with Noah, but also with all his descendants and with all creation. This covenant makes clear how great for God the value of man's life is. Life is holy and belongs to God. It is also a general covenant, because it concerns the entire offspring of Noah and all living beings.

In this covenant there are no obligations for Noah and his descendants. God takes upon Himself all obligations to keep this covenant. It is a one-sided covenant. The foundation is the offering. When clouds appear again, man need not be afraid of a new flood (Isa 54:9).

Verses 12-17 | The Sign of the Covenant

12 God said, "This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; 13 I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. 14 It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the

earth, that the bow will be seen in the cloud, 15 and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16 When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” 17 And God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

The (rain)bow in the clouds is the visible proof of God’s faithfulness to His covenant for all creation. Not only man sees the bow, but God sees it too. Then He thinks of his covenant. The bow also holds the promise that God will bless after the judgments.

Therefore we see in Revelation 4 the bow again (Rev 4:2-3). In the book of Revelation the judgments about the world, Israel and Christianity burst forth from Revelation 6 onwards. But for the faithful, seeing the bow at the beginning gives the promise of blessing after the judgments. That fills them with hope. So they call upon God and cry to Him: “In wrath remember mercy” (Hab 3:2b).

The bow is a picture of the Lord Jesus. Only through Him is there blessing possible. Only through Him God blesses wherever and whenever. This blessing is only for those who are connected with Him by faith. Man sees the bow, God sees the bow. God wishes man to have the same thoughts when seeing the bow as He has. The bow then works fellowship between man and God.

Verses 18-23 | Noah Gets Drunk; The Reaction of His Sons

18 Now the sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem and Ham and Japheth; and Ham was the father of Canaan. 19 These three [were] the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated. 20 Then Noah began farming and planted a vineyard. 21 He drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent. 22 Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. 23 But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father’s nakedness.

The sons of Noah are named because they are the germ of the new earth. Out of them the human race develops in three directions. From them descend all future generations and peoples. One people is named by name: the Canaanites, of whom Cham is the father.

The earth has been cleansed, but man has not changed. After the blessing there is the failing of Noah. So it has always gone in the history of man. We see it with Adam in the beginning and here with Noah. Later we see that after establishing the priesthood the sons of Aaron fail (Lev 10:1-3) and after appointing a king, king Saul, he fails. It has been not different with the church (Revelation 2-3).

Noah, who has been given authority over creation, has no authority over himself. He uses the blessing of the earth for his own enjoyment, the blessing takes possession of him. Isn't that what often happens, also with us Christians? Love of drink drags the former preacher of righteousness (2Pet 2:5) into the mud. Noah cannot handle the wealth of the new earth. He splurges on it and so his nakedness becomes public.

It is like with the church of Laodicéa. She also finds herself so great and blessed. But blessing apart from God, blessing that is abused for one's own pleasure, results in nudity. Therefore the Lord Jesus says to that church: 'You are naked' (Rev 3:17).

Noah's sin is the reason for Cham's failure. That is a serious lesson for every father. Cham ridicules his father with his brothers. That is clear from the context. It is not a question of justifying Noah's sin – that cannot be justified – but for the son, his father's failure should not be a reason to mock him. This is an important principle at a time when parental authority is often undermined. Parents are not perfect, they make mistakes. Yet the Scriptures say, "Honor your father and mother" (Eph 6:2).

The other two sons treat their failing, naked father with the necessary respect. Not only do they not want to see the nakedness themselves, but they also make sure that no one else sees it. They use the garment as it were as a garment of love they throw over their father's lack, something that is an example to us in our dealings with the evil of others (1Pet 4:8).

Verses 24-27 | Curse and Blessing

24 When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him. 25 So he said,

*“Cursed be Canaan;
A servant of servants
He shall be to his brothers.”*

26 He also said,

*“Blessed be the LORD,
The God of Shem;
And let Canaan be his servant.*

27 *“May God enlarge Japheth,
And let him dwell in the tents of Shem;
And let Canaan be his servant.”*

Noah curses Cham in his son Canaan (Gen 10:6) and blesses Shem and Japheth. The special curse is that Canaan will be “a servant of servants” to his brothers, that is the very lowest servant. We see this fulfilled, among other things, in the victories Israel achieves over them, when they conquer the land of Canaan (Jdg 1:28,30,33,35), about eight hundred years later.

Not Cham himself is cursed. Cham and his brothers are blessed by God (verse 1), and Noah will not undo this. Here the father’s sin is visited to the children (Exo 20:5-6), although the punishment for sin is also earned by the children themselves.

The immorality of Cham is expressed in his descendants, the Canaanites. Israel is later warned not to behave in that way: “You shall not do what is done in the land of Egypt where you lived, nor are you to do what is done in the land of Canaan where I am bringing you; you shall not walk in their statutes” (Lev 18:3). In the kingdom of peace, the curse of Canaan will find its full fulfillment (Zec 14:21b).

The prophecy of Noah contains in a few words the course of world history. In Genesis 10 we see a further interpretation of it. There we have the generations of the sons of Noah from whom the entire world population originated (verse 19).

God is called here “the God of Shem”. Never before has God been connected to a human being in this way. Later He is also called ‘the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob’. This means that Japheth and Ham will have to seek their blessing from Shem, for God is with him (Zec 8:23).

Verses 28-29 | And He Died

28 Noah lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood. 29 So all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died.

Noah’s history ends with the mention of his age and the announcement of his death. Noah has seen two worlds in his life: an old world before the flood and a new world after it. Because by faith “he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith” (Heb 11:7), he died in the faith that in the resurrection he will participate in a world better than both.

Genesis 10

Verse 1 | The Descendants of Noah

1 Now these are [the records of] the generations of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah; and sons were born to them after the flood.

In this chapter God shows us the origins of the nations of the world. In this verse the sons of Noah are mentioned in order of importance.

Verses 2-5 | The Descendants of Japheth

2 The sons of Japheth [were] Gomer and Magog and Madai and Javan and Tubal and Meshech and Tiras. 3 The sons of Gomer [were] Ashkenaz and Jdgphath and Togarmah. 4 The sons of Javan [were] Elishah and Tarshish, Kittim and Dodanim. 5 From these the coastlands of the nations were separated into their lands, every one according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.

The descendants of Japheth are the first to be mentioned. Only four verses are dedicated to him. Of the predicted expansion (Gen 9:27) does not seem to come too much for the time being. Yet that will be the case later, especially during the fourth world empire, that is the Roman empire.

The nations are divided over the earth, counted from Israel as the center of the nations and taking into account the number of Israelites (Deu 32:8; Eze 5:5). The sons of Japheth settle north of Israel, far from it.

Verses 6-20 | The Descendants of Cham

6 The sons of Ham [were] Cush and Mizraim and Put and Canaan. 7 The sons of Cush [were] Seba and Havilah and Sabtah and Raamah and Sabteca; and the sons of Raamah [were] Sheba and Dedan. 8 Now Cush became the father of Nimrod; he became a mighty one on the earth. 9 He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD." 10 The beginning of his kingdom was Babel and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. 11 From that land he went forth into Assyria, and built Nineveh and Rehoboth-Ir and Calah, 12 and Resen between Nineveh

and Calah; that is the great city. 13 Mizraim became the father of Ludim and Ananim and Lehabim and Naphtuhim 14 and Pathrusim and Casluhim (from which came the Philistines) and Caphtorim. 15 Canaan became the father of Sidon, his firstborn, and Heth 16 and the Jebusite and the Amorite and the Girgashite 17 and the Hivite and the Arkite and the Sinite 18 and the Aroadite and the Zemarite and the Hamathite; and afterward the families of the Canaanite were spread abroad. 19 The territory of the Canaanite extended from Sidon as you go toward Gerar, as far as Gaza; as you go toward Sodom and Gomorrah and Admah and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha. 20 These are the sons of Ham, according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, by their nations.

The descendants of Cham settled east and south of Israel. The prophecy of Noah does not seem to be fulfilled in the descendants of Cham either. There is no question of serving his brothers (Gen 9:25-27) yet. His descendants provide impressive people. Thus Nebuchadnezzar, the ruler of the first empire, the Babylonian, is a descendant of Cham.

The enumeration of the names of the peoples is interrupted by the insertion of the history of Nimrod. He is the origin of the Babylonian realm and is "a mighty hunter before the LORD". This has become a proverb for people who, in his footsteps, have established kingdoms on the cost of the blood of many people.

"Before the LORD" means in this context that he defies the LORD in the face with his conduct and deeds. He does not respect Him, nor subdues himself to Him, but subdues others to himself. He is the founder of the earliest power of an empire. He establishes the kingdom of Babylon (verse 10).

Nimrod is a hunter. A hunter sheds blood. Nimrod, the tyrant, first shed blood from animals. He will also trample people for the establishment of his empire.

People who want to build God's kingdom are always shepherds. They give their own lives for those who are entrusted to their care. Examples of shepherds are: Abel, Jacob, Moses, David. The greatest example is the Lord Jesus, "the good Shepherd" (Jn 10:11,14).

Verses 21-31 | The Descendants of Sem

21 Also to Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, [and] the older brother of Japheth, children were born. 22 The sons of Shem [were] Elam and Asshur and Arpachshad and Lud and Aram. 23 The sons of Aram [were] Uz and Hul and Gether and Mash. 24 Arpachshad became the father of Shelah; and Shelah became the father of Eber. 25 Two sons were born to Eber; the name of the one [was] Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided; and his brother's name [was] Joktan. 26 Joktan became the father of Almodad and Sheleph and Hazarmaveth and Jerah 27 and Hadoram and Uzal and Diklah 28 and Obal and Abimael and Sheba 29 and Ophir and Havilah and Jobab; all these were the sons of Joktan. 30 Now their settlement extended from Mesha as you go toward Sephar, the hill country of the east. 31 These are the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, according to their nations.

A special characteristic of Shem is that he is the “father of all the children of Eber”. Eber – in other translations Heber – means something like ‘the area on the other side of a river, or the sea’ It is generally explained that Hebrew means something like ‘someone who is opposite’ and/or someone who has ‘crossed’. Abraham is the first to be called “Hebrew” (Gen 14:13), which is a son of Heber. Abraham distinguishes himself by distancing himself from Babylon and ‘crossing’ a river. He ‘crosses’ from his homeland to a new area God designates him to (Jos 24:2-3).

In the days of “Peleg”, one of the sons of Heber, the earth, that is to say the earth population, is divided. This division is the result of God’s judgment about the tower building of Babel, about which the next chapter tells us. Eber, the pilgrim, will have condemned the pursuit of unity. In the name of his son the event is reflected. “Peleg” means “division”.

Verse 32 | Summary

32 These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, by their nations; and out of these the nations were separated on the earth after the flood.

The enumeration of the nations ends with the recalling that all the generations are descendants of Noah and that the generations were formed into

nations. After the flood, the nations that came forth from the sons of Noah spread out over the earth.

The division in the days of Peleg is the result of the tower construction of Babel which is described in the next chapter. With this striving for unity, people turn against God's earlier command to spread themselves over the earth and to populate it.

Genesis 11

Verses 1-4 | The Tower of Babel Built

1 Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words. 2 It came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. 3 They said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and burn [them] thoroughly." And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. 4 They said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top [will reach] into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."

According to some, there are about thirty thousand people on earth at this time. They are all still together. Together they head east. It is the direction in which Cain went (Gen 4:16; cf. Gen 3:23-24). It is the direction that speaks here of leaving God. In the east, they find a plain, which speaks here of complacency. Abraham later seeks the mountains (Gen 12:8), which speaks of wanting to be close to God.

The plain is in the land Shinar. There lies the origin of Babel (Gen 10:8-10) and idolatry (Zec 5:5-11). Here people want to make a joint effort: they want to build a city with a tower that serves as a bridge to reach the sky. There seems to be interest in God.

It is remarkable that the first builders of cities, both in the old world (Gen 4:17) and here in the new world, are not men of the best character or the best name. Tents are the homes of those who fear God, while the first cities are built by those who rebel against Him and apostatize from Him. We see that also here. The people want to build this city with the tower to their own honor and name. They want to make a name for themselves on earth. They also build with self-made stones. This is in opposition to God's actions. God does everything in honor of His own Name (Isa 63:12,14; Jer 32:20).

The material they use, bricks, is made of clay from the earth and is therefore fragile and vulnerable. It suits man in his earthly, fragile existence (Job 33:6). Because man is not aware of this, he dares to build such a struc-

ture. God builds His city with very different materials: precious stones (Isa 54:11-12; Rev 21:18-21). He builds his spiritual house with living stones (1Pet 2:5).

What is happening here is the contemporary Christianity to the core. The nominal Christians want to be included, they want their opinion to be taken into account in political issues and decision-making. And do they not have great names in their history to boast of, theologians of name? But having a big name on earth does not automatically mean that that name is also written down in the heaven. In the construction of the city and the tower of Babel it is in any case a pursuit of unity and power. This is what we see in the ecumenical movement, the unity struggle of the churches led by the roman-catholic church, the spiritual Babylon, become reality.

Verses 5-9 | The Confusion of Language

5 The LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. 6 The LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. 7 Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's speech." 8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. 9 Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.

God's response to this endeavor will not take long in coming. People have said to one another: "Come, let us ..." (verses 3-4). Now the LORD says: "Come, let Us ..." – "Us" is the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To involve the human being as it were in His considerations the LORD comes down to take note of their works. It is to convince man of what He knows as the Omniscient. After His conclusion God speaks right. He pronounces the verdict and carries it out. He does not do this by a new flood or by opening the earth, but by a confusion of language.

Through the judgment of the confusion of language, God breaks man's striving together. A large and powerful stronghold is being demolished. The confusion of language is being undone on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-11),

when the Holy Spirit is poured out. Baptism with the Spirit creates a unity that is according to God's thoughts. This unity, the unity of God's church, is based on the work of Christ as the Lamb. Christ will receive the honor for this from the mouth of those whom He has purchased for God with His blood "from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev 5:9; Rom 15:6). In the kingdom of peace there will also be a unity among the nations of the earth in serving God (Zep 3:9-10).

The unfinished city is named "Babel", which means 'confusion'. This city will be the leading power in the world. It is a concentration of ungodly powers. At the same time it becomes clear that the unity that has been pursued and that has been seen as power by man is judged by God with a confusion of languages. What they wanted to prevent by their efforts, scattering (verse 4), is exactly what happens by God's judgment.

With this, the story of the early history of man on earth has come to a fitting conclusion. She describes how the generations of the earth have become hopelessly scattered and wandering around on earth, with no view. The solution comes in the next section. From the scattered nations God builds a people that will become the channel of His grace. God does not yet deal with the human race. The following section prepares us for God's work for and with His people.

Verses 10-26 | Descendants of Shem to Terah

10 These are [the records of] the generations of Shem. Shem was one hundred years old, and became the father of Arpachshad two years after the flood; 11 and Shem lived five hundred years after he became the father of Arpachshad, and he had [other] sons and daughters. 12 Arpachshad lived thirty-five years, and became the father of Shelah; 13 and Arpachshad lived four hundred and three years after he became the father of Shelah, and he had other sons and daughters. 14 Shelah lived thirty years, and became the father of Eber; 15 and Shelah lived four hundred and three years after he became the father of Eber, and he had [other] sons and daughters. 16 Eber lived thirty-four years, and became the father of Peleg; 17 and Eber lived four hundred and thirty years after he became the father of Peleg, and he had [other] sons and daughters. 18 Peleg lived thirty years, and became the father of Reu; 19 and Peleg lived two hundred and nine years after he became the father of Reu, and he had [other]

sons and daughters. 20 Reu lived thirty-two years, and became the father of Serug; 21 and Reu lived two hundred and seven years after he became the father of Serug, and he had [other] sons and daughters. 22 Serug lived thirty years, and became the father of Nahor; 23 and Serug lived two hundred years after he became the father of Nahor, and he had [other] sons and daughters. 24 Nahor lived twenty-nine years, and became the father of Terah; 25 and Nahor lived one hundred and nineteen years after he became the father of Terah, and he had [other] sons and daughters. 26 Terah lived seventy years, and became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran.

The records of the generations of Shem are given. This shows that the descendants of Shem finally also fell into idolatry (Jos 24:2). Then the LORD calls Abram. His calling and his person are the subject of this records of generations and the following chapters. God's answer to the construction of the city and the tower of Babel is the judgment of the confusion of language. Then God now goes on to call a man, Abram, who, as a heavenly minded man, is brought by Him to a land where he may live before God.

If everything is immersed in idolatry, God does not, according to His promise, put an end to it by a new judgment. He lets the nations go on their own ways (Acts 14:16) and starts something new with Abram. With Abram's calling, God will teach us a principle of great significance: separation from evil. God is going to teach that to Abram, step by step. He also wants to teach us this, step by step.

Verses 27-32 | Terah and Abram

27 Now these are [the records of] the generations of Terah. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran; and Haran became the father of Lot. 28 Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans. 29 Abram and Nahor took wives for themselves. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and Iscah. 30 Sarai was barren; she had no child. 31 Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan; and they went as far as Haran, and settled there. 32 The days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran.

Verse 31 shows that Terah, Abram's father, takes the initiative to leave for Canaan. God, however, did not appear to Terah, but to Abram in Ur of the Chaldeans: "The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, 3 and said to him, 'LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR RELATIVES, AND COME INTO THE LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU.' 4 Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, [God] had him move to this country in which you are now living" (Acts 7:2-4).

God has ordered Abram to leave his family and go to Canaan. It seems that family ties are still too strong to respond fully to God's call. That this is so, seems to be confirmed by the stay of Abram in Haran. That is still not Canaan. Abram goes to Canaan, when his father Terah died in Haran. Only then is he free to go.

We must all learn this lesson. When it comes to the voice of the Lord in our lives, family ties should not prevent us from obeying that voice. Then we must get away from it, learn to apply death to it, so that these bonds do not prevent us from going the way the Lord wants us to go. The Lord Jesus says: "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple" (Lk 14:26).

Genesis 12

Verses 1-6 | The Calling of Abram

1 Now the LORD said to Abram,

*“Go forth from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father’s house,
To the land which I will show you;*

2 *And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
And so you shall be a blessing;*

3 *And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse.*

And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

4 *So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 5 Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan.*

6 *Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite [was] then in the land.*

The Darby translation translates verse 1 that the LORD “had said to Abram”. This translation is to be preferred, for the LORD speaks to Abram while he is still in Ur of the Chaldeans (Acts 7:2-4a). There God tells him to go out of his land, to the land God will show him. He has to leave his family to form a new one. He even has to leave his father’s house, of which he is still a member, to become a father of many nations. God’s calling is always personal. God’s way is always with the individual. God calls Abram when he is but one (Isa 51:2).

This calling of Abram should later make it clear to Israel that their existence as a people is entirely God’s work and started with a man who in faith obeyed what God has said to him. This should convince Israel of

Abram's Divine calling and of the necessity of faith when the people leave Egypt to go to Canaan.

When God calls, He always connects promises to it. Abram receives a sevenfold promise (verses 2-3). That's enough to get him on his way. He goes, without knowing where he will end up. This means that he goes in faith. As we saw at the end of the previous chapter, it took Abram time and effort to get out of his father's house. Yet he goes. In Hebrews 11 we read about his obedience (Heb 11:8). God sees the willingness in his heart and has patience in overcoming the obstacles.

Abram obeys, in faith in the word of the LORD. This obeying in faith makes Abraham in Scripture the great example of faith: "Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, [saying,] "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU." So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer" (Gal 3:6-9; Jam 2:21-23). Its characteristic is to give up the visible things for an invisible purpose (2Cor 4:18).

When Abram comes into the land, the Canaanites are there and they are the bosses. The land of Canaan is for Israel literally the promised land, in which God has all blessings waiting for them. The condition is that Israel remains faithful to the LORD and in His power fights to drive out the Canaanites.

For the Christian, the land of Canaan spiritually represents the heavenly places, in which he is blessed with all spiritual blessing (Eph 1:3). But also for the Christian this blessing can only be enjoyed if he is willing to struggle for it. We read about this in Ephesians 6. Fortunately we do not have to struggle in our own strength (Eph 6:10). God makes His own armor available to us (Eph 6:11-18).

Verse 7 | The LORD Appears to Abram

7 The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him.

When Abram has arrived in Canaan, the LORD appears to him. He could not do that in Haran. Abram, after his calling and the promise of blessing for him and his descendants, receives here the promise that his descendants will receive the land in which he has now arrived. Following this announcement Abram builds an altar for the LORD. His heart is so full of thanks that he can only worship Him for His promises.

The LORD hath appeared to him; he hath seen Him. The LORD hath spoken unto him; he hath heard Him. Abram believes in Who appeared to him, and he believes in what the LORD promised him. This is living faith.

Thus the Lord also appears to us when we read His Word. Then we see Him. And we hear Him speak. We can be confident that He does what He says. If that lives for us, we will worship Him.

Verse 8 | Abram: Tent and Altar

8 Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD.

Abram's life is characterized by a tent and an altar. He goes to the mountains, he seeks to be close to God. He puts up his tent between Bethel and Ai. His tent is a symbol of his pilgrimage. He is a traveler, someone who has no permanent residence and abode. He does not seek a place on earth. He expects the city of God (Heb 11:10).

His altar is a symbol of worship. A worshipper is a pilgrim and a pilgrim is a worshipper. The altar is for the LORD, and there he calls upon His Name (cf. Gen 21:33; 26:23-25). To call upon the name of the LORD means to call Him by His name 'Yahwe' and on that basis to approach Him in prayer and in worship. Abram honors God for Whom He is. He will have worshipped Him for the promises He has received from Him and of which He knows that they are fulfilled by Him. By this God has among the Canaanites, who live in the land, a witness for His Name.

"Bethel" means "house of God". Thus in our time, the time of the New Testament, the church is called (1Tim 3:15). "Ai" means "ruin". That is the actual situation of the house of God, the church. The Christian who is a pilgrim lives in the midst of the ruins of the Christian testimony of God

on earth, while on the other side he tries to realize God's thoughts about His church.

Verses 9-20 | Abram in Egypt

9 Abram journeyed on, continuing toward the Negev. 10 Now there was a famine in the land; so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. 11 It came about when he came near to Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, "See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman; 12 and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. 13 Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may live on account of you." 14 It came about when Abram came into Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. 15 Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. 16 Therefore he treated Abram well for her sake; and gave him sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and female donkeys and camels. 17 But the LORD struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. 18 Then Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? 19 Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife, take her and go." 20 Pharaoh commanded [his] men concerning him; and they escorted him away, with his wife and all that belonged to him.

With the departure from Bethel the deviation begins for Abram. He goes to a border area. It is always dangerous for a believer to live in a border area. This is the area where the danger of a spiritual fall is defied. Hunger comes in that area. In Bethel Abram was not hungry.

Abram goes even further away. He crosses the border and enters Egypt. He has not received a commission from God for this. By the way, he does not intend to live there, but to sojourn there, he wants to stay there as a foreigner, for as long as he considers it necessary. Egypt is a picture of the world. When we go back to that area, we increasingly lose sight of God.

The result is that Abram is afraid that something will happen to him. His trust in God is gone. He devises an excuse to secure himself at the expense of his wife. Here we see to what the most God-fearing believer can come

when he leaves the place God has given him. His selfishness leads him to deny his wife Sarai her true relationship with him. He incites his wife to lie. What he says is partly true (Gen 20:12), but he says it with the purpose of misleading.

It turns out differently than he thought. He wants to prevent Sarai from being lost by his lie, but by his trickery he loses her. Ironically, it indeed goes well with for Sarai's sake, which he has given up as the motive for his misleading proposal of their relationship (verses 13,16). However, all the gifts he receives do not compensate for losing Sarai. He also lost his altar, as well as his place in the land to which God has sent him. He has also lost the blessing attached to his stay in the country for him.

He who once strays from the way God has shown, loses a lot. For the world, too, someone who wanders off is not a blessing. We see that here too. Through Abram's behavior God must bring plagues over Pharaoh and his house. Finally, Abram is admonished by Pharaoh, we can say the world. Something similar we see in the history of Jonah (Jona 1:6).

All in all, the situation in which Abram finds himself is a very sad one. It is a great grace of God that He saves Abram from this situation. That is no honor for Abram, but all honor is to God.

Genesis 13

Verses 1-4 | Abram Back at Bethel

1 So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, he and his wife and all that belonged to him, and Lot with him. 2 Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold. 3 He went on his journeys from the Negev as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, 4 to the place of the altar which he had made there formerly; and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

After his deviation and humbling lessons Abram returns to Bethel. It is said so remarkable: “The place where his tent had been at the beginning ... the place of the altar which he had made there formerly.” If we deviate and the Lord makes that clear to us, we must always return to the place where we last were with the Lord.

Again Abram there calls “on the name of the LORD”. He will have done so with a deeper understanding of the grace of God. Every fall in our lives followed by a recovery increases our admiration for God. Not that it doesn't matter if we deviate. Deviation also has other consequences, also for others. We see that in the case of Lot in the following verses.

Verses 5-7 | Strife

5 Now Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. 6 And the land could not sustain them while dwelling together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to remain together. 7 And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. Now the Canaanite and the Perizzite were dwelling then in the land.

When Abram left Egypt, Pharaoh gave him a lot of livestock (Gen 12:16). His nephew Lot also goes with him. Lot is not a man with own power of faith. He follows the faith of his uncle. He also is very wealthy. Their wealth becomes the cause of strife between the shepherds of Abram's livestock and the shepherds of Lot's livestock. That is not a good thing. It is telling that is says in verse 7 that the Canaanite and Perizzite live in the

country at that time. It means, as it were, that the world is watching the outbreak of strife between these foreigners.

The devil and the world see with gloating the strives between people who profess to be strangers on earth. Especially when it is also a strive about earthly things. Paul points out to the Corinthians that they should not stand up for their rights in such matters (1Cor 6:7b). The Lord can allow fraternal disputes to see in what mind they are resolved.

Verses 8-13 | The Choice of Lot

8 So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers. 9 Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me; if [to] the left, then I will go to the right; or if [to] the right, then I will go to the left." 10 Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere—[this was] before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah—like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar. 11 So Lot chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus they separated from each other. 12 Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled in the cities of the valley, and moved his tents as far as Sodom. 13 Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the LORD.

Abram, the eldest of the two and also the uncle of Lot, gives Lot the first choice. Abram is not standing on his right. Lot does not take the humblest place, but accepts this offer with both hands. We are informed about his considerations. He looks at everything according to his own advantage, which choice gives him the most benefit. With him it is about an immediate pleasure. With Lot, there is no future-oriented thinking. He is the man who lives for here and now. His heart follows his eyes, just like with Eve.

Lot sees the valley of the Jordan as if it is a paradise. But, it says, it also looks like the land of Egypt. Lot has joined Abram in his deviation to Egypt. He who relies on the faith of another person will fall into the mistakes of that other person. Abram learned lessons from his deviation to Egypt. Lot does not show that he has learned lessons from his deviation. The valley reminds him of Egypt. It seems that he has been overwhelmed by what he saw. That is why he chooses the valley of the Jordan.

A sideways lesson is that the deviation of Abram has caused Lot to get the taste of Egypt. Parents should take that lesson to heart. If they deviate and love the world for some time, but are then restored by God's grace and give up the world again, it may be that their children have gotten the taste of the world and stay in it.

Lot then moves to live close to Sodom, as it were under the smoke of the city, a smelly smoke. The wickedness of that city is indicated, as a preparation for the history in Genesis 19. All men are sinners. But there is a difference in wickedness (cf. Rev 20:12). God says of the people in Sodom that they are "wicked and sinners exceedingly". They are it proverbial (Isa 3:9; Eze 16:49), but Lot seems to be insensitive to it. The way down has been taken by him. Later he lives in Sodom, in a house – the tent has disappeared – and is even part of the city council – he is in the gate.

He settles in the city where God's judgment comes. He helps them to build it up, because he sees a future for it. But he loses everything, it all perishes in judgment. He does save his body, but he ends his life in the darkness of a cave and in acts that arouse disgust. He lets himself be led drunk and begets Israel's enduring enemies with his own daughters.

A practical application can be made when we face the choice of changing jobs, moving, or which school we let the children go to. So what are our considerations, the criteria of assessment? Do we have an eye for the moral and religious atmosphere that prevails somewhere? Do we think forward-looking, that is to say that we look beyond life on earth? Do we have in mind the spiritual well-being of our family, or only the social well-being?

Verses 14-18 | The Part of Abram

14 The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; 15 for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. 16 I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered. 17 Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you." 18 Then Abram moved his tent

and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to the LORD.

Abram gives Lot the choice. Is he the one who is worst off? No. Now that he is free from Lot, the LORD comes to him. And He shows him something! Lot himself has lifted up his eyes (verse 10), but the LORD tells Abram to lift up his eyes. Then he doesn't see a small part of the country, but the whole country. He not only sees it now, but also gets a look into the future: his offspring, who cannot be counted, will also live there.

First he gets to see everything and then he can enjoy it. He is allowed to walk through the country in all its vastness. By going on walking he takes possession of it, as it were. So it is for us with regard to our spiritual blessings. We may know that we own them, but by engaging in them, investigating them in Scripture under prayer, we will practically take them into our possession and enjoy them.

Abram is not put before the choice – he may see what the LORD has chosen for him (Psa 47:4a). Then you're fortunate! That is the reward for being dependent on God. Lot wants to have everything and loses everything, Abram leaves everything and gets everything. Whoever leaves the choice to God never will be disappointed (Psa 22:5b).

Abram does not settle at Sodom, but at Hebron. "Hebron" means 'fellowship'. Abram lives in fellowship with God. Again he builds an altar to worship the LORD. All we have enjoyed of the spiritual blessings God has given us will lead us to worship its Giver.

Genesis 14

Introduction

In this chapter we see the consequences of the positions taken by Abram and Lot in the previous chapter. At Lot there is battle, at Abram there is rest.

Verses 1-11 | War Between Five and Four Kings

1 And it came about in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim, 2 [that] they made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). 3 All these came as allies to the valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea). 4 Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, but the thirteenth year they rebelled. 5 In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him, came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim and the Zuzim in Ham and the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, 6 and the Horites in their Mount Seir, as far as El-paran, which is by the wilderness. 7 Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and conquered all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, who lived in Hazazon-tamar. 8 And the king of Sodom and the king of Gomorrah and the king of Admah and the king of Zeboiim and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) came out; and they arrayed for battle against them in the valley of Siddim, 9 against Chedorlaomer king of Elam and Tidal king of Goiim and Amraphel king of Shinar and Arioch king of Ellasar—four kings against five. 10 Now the valley of Siddim was full of tar pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and they fell into them. But those who survived fled to the hill country. 11 Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food supply, and departed.

This is the first war mentioned in the Bible. Maybe there have been more, but this is mentioned because Lot and Abram are involved, although for very different reasons.

The war is between four kings on the one hand and five kings on the other. The four kings attack the five kings. Among the four kings are the king

of Sinear, that is Babel, and that of Elam, that is Persia. The five attacked kings are kings of cities close together, in the valley of the Jordan. The cause of the war is the revolt of the five kings against Kedor-Laomer they served for twelve years.

Kedor-Laomer equipped himself with powerful allies and defeats various opponents before he submits the rebellious kings to himself. The five rebellious kings also gather their armies and line up in battle order. But they are no match for Kedor-Laomer and his allies. The army of the king of Sodom and his allies is defeated. Many of those who escape the sword die in tar pits. The cities are plundered and “all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food supply” are taken away by the victors.

Verse 12 | Lot Captured

12 They also took Lot, Abram’s nephew, and his possessions and departed, for he was living in Sodom.

Lot, after his inner conflicts as a result of his living in Sodom (2Pet 2:8), also becomes a prey of outer conflicts. He has chosen his part on earth and that is taken away from him. He also loses his freedom. Lot lives *in* Sodom, while he previously lives *as far as* Sodom (Gen 13:12). He has settled there; all his interests are intertwined with life in Sodom.

If we make a choice to live in the world and live according to it, because its pleasures attract us, we should not expect to escape its bitterness. We will also experience that.

Verses 13-16 | Abram Liberates Lot

13 Then a fugitive came and told Abram the Hebrew. Now he was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner, and these were allies with Abram. 14 When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. 15 He divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. 16 He brought back all the goods, and also brought back his relative Lot with his possessions, and also the women, and the people.

Abram has no fight. He keeps his distance from conflicts that do not concern him (Pro 26:17). He also has nothing to lose, for he has the promises of God, which cannot be taken away from him. Also, as a stranger and pilgrim, some of the other side – he is here emphatically called “Abram, the Hebrew” – he has nothing to do with the political situation around him. He lives “by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite”, which speaks of endurance, of which the oak is the symbol, and of vitality or fatness, which is the meaning of the word “Mamre”. Abram lives at the place where strength is obtained for battle.

When he learned of the fate of Lot, who is meaningfully called “his brother,” he took action and interfered in the battle. The only thing he has in mind is the liberation of his brother Lot. A brother may have wandered so far, but love will come into action with brothers who live as Abram in community with God and hear of the miserable situation of that brother. Lot is a believer, although in Genesis nothing is seen of it. In 2 Peter 2 it is said three times of him that he is a righteous one (2Pet 2:7-8). But how sad his life is. Such believers are there today. What is my reaction when I hear that they are in circumstances that require help?

Abram is not only a separated man himself, but all those who belong to his house are too. They are “his trained men” and are born in his house. These trained men, that is, trained in the use of weapons, have not only been taught in warfare, but also in the principles of religion, for Abram has commanded his house to keep the way of the LORD (Gen 18:19). As appears later (verse 24), Abram also asked his neighbors, who are his allies (verse 13), to join him in the battle.

In this battle Abram proceeds with wisdom. He is aware of warfare. He divides his men, to attack the enemy from different sides at the same time. Later Gideon and his small band do the same (Jdg 7:16). This gives Abram the impression that his small army is a large one. To surprise them he attacks them in the night.

The real power is in his faith. Because he has not connected himself with the world, he can overcome the world (1Jn 5:4). Then there is the spiritual strength to liberate a brother from the influence of Sodom and Sinear.

Abram is an example of men of faith “who by faith subdued kingdoms” (Heb 11:33a).

The fact that Lot ultimately learned nothing from his capture and liberation, but returns to Sodom, does not make Abram’s action any less significant. Any entanglement in which a brother finds himself must lead us to take action to liberate him, regardless of how he lives on. That is his responsibility. We cannot commit others to us. We must trust the liberated to the Lord.

Verses 17-24 | Two Meetings

17 Then after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley). 18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. 19 He blessed him and said,

*“Blessed be Abram of God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;*

*20 And blessed be God Most High,
Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.”*

He gave him a tenth of all. 21 The king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself.” 22 Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have sworn to the LORD God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, 23 that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, for fear you would say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’ 24 I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their share.”

The moment of success is always the moment of danger. The king of Sodom wants to negotiate. In him we see a picture of Satan, who comes “as an angel of light” (2Cor 11:14). But before that meeting takes place, Melchizedek meets Abram first. Melchizedek is a picture of the Lord Jesus (Heb 7:1-2), as is clear from the letter to the Hebrews, where this priest is often mentioned. This priest is called “the priest of God Most High”. That is the name of God, that is reminiscent of the millennial kingdom of peace, when everything will be subject to Him.

Melchizedek comes with bread and wine to Abram. That has nothing to do with the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is the memorial meal on the occasion of the death of the Lord Jesus. Here comes (in the picture) the Lord Jesus with what strengthens (bread) and gives joy (wine). He hands out blessings.

Abraham, we read in the letter to the Hebrews, gives Melchizedek a tenth of the spoils, thereby recognizing him as his superior (Heb 7:4). The right to the tithes is not yet regulated by a commandment of God. Melchizedek does not belong at all to the lineage of Levi for whom God later regulates that right by law, nor to another lineage for whom something is regulated. He takes tenths of Abraham by virtue of his own person and office. So he is greater than Abraham (Heb 7:6-7).

After receiving the tenths, he blesses Abram as the vessel of promises. Abram is the owner and keeper of divine promises. He will become the father of many nations in whom God will bless all the nations of the earth. So the person who blesses Abraham is really someone who can be called great. All true blessing is also for the Christian connected with the Person and the ministry of Christ in heaven.

He who blesses is 'without any contradiction' more than he who is blessed (Heb 7:7). The fact that the greater blesses the lesser is forgotten in Christianity. We see this, for example, in the pastor who blesses the church, as if he is more than the ones he serves. In Christendom, however, the one believer is no more than the other believer (Mt 23:8).

After this meeting comes the meeting with the king of Sodom who is already on his way to him. Abram rejects the proposal made by the king of Sodom, which conceals a great deceit. He sees through the trick. He does not want anything, even the slightest, of what the world offers him, by which the world could make a claim on him.

His refusal is all the easier because he has just been blessed on behalf of God Himself, of Whom Melchizedek said, He is the "Possessor of heaven and earth" (verse 19). What would a believer want to receive from the hands of the devil of earthly blessings, when he is aware that he is connected with the Lord Jesus, to Whom "all authority has been given ... in

heaven and on earth" (Mt 28:18) and to Whom the Father has given all things into His hand (Jn 3:35; 13:3)?

What Abram himself refuses because he has seen the riches of the Lord Jesus, he does not refuse for the men who went with him. The restrictions we impose on ourselves in the use of certain freedoms we should not impose on others. The choice we make is a personal choice that we cannot make for others.

Genesis 15

Introduction

Here begins a new part in the history of Abram. This part can be divided into three parts containing

1. in Genesis 12-14: God's public acts with Abram;
2. in Genesis 15-21: God's 'private conversations' with Abraham;
3. in Genesis 22-24: Abraham as a picture of God the Father.

Verse 1 | Who the LORD Is for Abram

*1 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying,
"Do not fear, Abram,
I am a shield to you;
Your reward shall be very great."*

After his refusal to accept anything from the king of Sodom, the LORD speaks to Abram in a vision. From what He says, we can conclude that Abram needs comfort, encouragement. The LORD encourages him by saying Who He is for him. Is Abram afraid, perhaps of retribution of his defeated enemies? The LORD saith unto him that he himself is his shield, his protector. Did Abram refuse goods? The LORD says to him that He Himself – not: shall be, but – is his very great reward.

This is a great encouragement to anyone who refuses to have anything to do with the world. For everything we refuse for the sake of the Lord Jesus, the reward is not so much something the Lord gives us, but what He Himself is for us. For what we refuse for His sake, He Himself comes in place with all His riches. Owning the Giver is much more than owning what He gives. The Lord wants to be everything to the heart of every one who forsakes the wealth of the world.

Verses 2-5 | Two Promises

2 Abram said, "O LORD GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 And Abram said, "Since

You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.” 4 Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, “This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.” 5 And He took him outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”

Abram still has a question. The LORD can indeed give him much, but to whom will he leave it? Abram cannot see further than his immediate surroundings. The only one who qualifies as his successor is his domestic servant. Will he be his heir?

Then Abram gets the wonderful promise that he will have a son himself. In that son, the son of the promise, God will fulfill his promises. That speaks for us of the Lord Jesus, the Son, in Whom all the promises of God are yes and amen (2Cor 1:20).

To give an impression of the size and nature of his offspring, the LORD takes Abram outside. He invites him to count the stars. They are uncountable. Such will be his descendants. The stars also say that Abram will also have a heavenly people as descendants.

Verse 6 | Abram Believes the LORD

6 Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Abram believes that the LORD is able to raise life from his already dead body and from the barren and now also dead womb of Sarai (Rom 4:19-20; Heb 11:11). That faith is reckoned to him as righteousness. This truth, that righteousness before God is obtained by faith, is repeated three times in the New Testament (Rom 4:3; Gal 3:6; Jam 2:23).

Abram is declared righteous. His trust in God, that is faith, is answered by God with the awareness that he may and can be in God's presence. Abram's faith does justice to God, it does justice to Whom God is. The point is not so much that he believes in God, that he believes that He exists, but that he believes God, that he believes in what God says, that He will do what He says. On this basis God speaks the right of Abram and convinces him in his heart that there is nothing that hinders of being with

God. Abram trusts God on His word, while the external circumstances show the opposite.

In Romans 4 this is extended to all who believe: “Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him, but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, [He] who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification” (Rom 4:23-25). We read here that whoever believes in God Who raised up the Lord Jesus from the dead, Who was delivered over because of our transgressions and was raised because of our justification, is justified by God, that is: declared righteous. Righteousness means being able to be in the presence of God without charge, completely free and in accordance with the right, without any fear of condemnation.

Verse 7 | The LORD promises Abram the land

7 And He said to him, “I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it.”

After the promise of an heir, the LORD Abram also promises an inheritance: the land. Heir and inheritance belong together. The LORD promises not only that Abram will possess the land, but that he will possess it as an inheritance. This means that the LORD gives him the inalienable right to it.

Verses 8-17 | The Promise Is Based on a Sacrifice

8 He said, “O LORD GOD, how may I know that I will possess it?” 9 So He said to him, “Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” 10 Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds. 11 The birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away. 12 Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror [and] great darkness fell upon him. 13 [God] said to Abram, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. 14 But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. 15 As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old

age. 16 Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete." 17 It came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, [there appeared] a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces.

As with the promise of an heir, Abram has the question of how this will happen with the promise of the inheritance. Then the LORD teaches him about the sacrifice. In picture, this means that God fulfils His promises on the basis of His Son's sacrifice, that is, on the basis of His death.

The different animals represent different aspects of the Lord Jesus and His work. The three year old young heifer represents the strength and perseverance with which the Lord Jesus accomplished His work on the cross. The goat is mainly used as a sin offering, also an important aspect of the Lord Jesus' work, for that speaks of Him as the One Who is made sin. The ram speaks of devotion and is used in the ordination of priests. The dove and the pigeons speak of Him as the heavenly Man.

The cutting in two speaks of God's wish that we reflect on all parts of the sacrifice. Chasing away the birds of prey means that we do not allow things or thoughts that prevent us from being busy with the Lord Jesus. The deep sleep that falls on Abram is the identification of Abram with the sacrifice.

God wants us to see how closely we are connected with the Lord Jesus, so that we can personally say, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20a). Then God will be able to show us what future His people face, as He does here.

Before the people will reach the glorious land, it will be oppressed first. The "smoking oven" speaks of this (verse 17; Deu 4:20). The people will be oppressed in Egypt (Exo 1:13). This situation will last 400 years. But directly connected to this is the "flaming torch", which speaks of the hope of salvation (Isa 62:1; Zec 12:6). That the flaming torch passes between the pieces is also the confirmation of the promise (cf. Jer 34:18-19). This is always the way that God's children must go and that the Lord Jesus also went: first suffering in this world, then glory with Him (Lk 24:26).

Abram will not experience that the good land is in the possession of his descendants. He lived in it as a stranger and will die in it as a stranger. But

neither will he experience the misfortune that shall come upon his seed and much less he will share into it (2Kgs 22:20; Isa 57:1). In peace and in old age he will go to his ancestors (Psa 37:37).

If God frees His people, it will be the judgment of the oppressors. However, God will only judge when the measure of sin is full. He is long-suffering, “because He does not want anyone to perish, but that all come to repentance” (2Pet 3:9).

Verses 18-21 | The Covenant with Abram

18 On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying,

“To your descendants I have given this land,

From the river of Egypt as far as 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.”

God’s covenant with Abram is without conditions. Here God describes the land in a vastness that it has not had so far, but which it will have in the kingdom of peace.

The land of us, Christians, is the heavenly places. God has already given us this in all its extent because we are connected with the Lord Jesus. God has given everything to Him and we may share it with Him.

Genesis 16

Verses 1-6 | Abram, Sarai and Hagar

1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife had borne him no [children], and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar. 2 So Sarai said to Abram, "Now behold, the LORD has prevented me from bearing [children]. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I will obtain children through her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. 3 After Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram's wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife. 4 He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her sight. 5 And Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done me be upon you. I gave my maid into your arms, but when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her sight. May the LORD judge between you and me." 6 But Abram said to Sarai, "Behold, your maid is in your power; do to her what is good in your sight." So Sarai treated her harshly, and she fled from her presence.

Abram's stay in Egypt (Gen 12:10-20) brought him quite a lot: a lot of shame, a lot of goods, and also Hagar. Here it appears that his stay in Egypt will have a terrible and long aftermath. A believer can be recovered from a stay in the world, but his stay can have long-term consequences. Ishmael was born of Hagar and his descendants will be Israel's most bitter enemies – and they are to this day.

There are more lessons in this history. God had promised Abram numerous offspring. That seems to fail, because Sarai can't have children. Sarai acknowledges that her infertility is from the LORD, because He prevented her from bearing children. However, she can no longer bear this test and comes up with an idea to have children by another way, by her own way. She proposes that Abram go into Hagar. Maybe there will come from Hagar an heir from whom her offspring will be built.

Abram listens. He is as guilty here as Sarai is, or in fact even more guilty. He too succumbed to the temptation to do something himself, because it takes so long for God to keep His promise. And the intention succeeds. But this is not the way God fulfills His promise.

Lack of patience and confidence that God will truly fulfill His promises has led many to premature, self-perpetuating action, the consequences of which sometimes have to be borne throughout the rest of their lives. In Genesis it becomes increasingly clear that every human being and every people who owes their existence to the election of God must live in faith. Human efforts will not help.

In the letter to the Galatians, Paul extensively teaches that Hagar and Sarai represent two principles (Gal 4:21-31). Hagar is the law and Sarai is the grace. God wants to give Abram and Sarai the heir by grace. But man by nature is not inclined to live by grace. Making a personal contribution, an effort to earn what God promises, fits much more his nature. That is why Hagar proposes the law.

The law is given to tell man what he must do to get life: "Do this and you shall live" (Lev 18:5). However, every human being fails in keeping the law and thus comes under the curse of the law. By keeping the law, by one's own power, the promise of God is not obtainable. God's promises are only for those who live by grace. That is the lesson Abram is taught and we have to learn through him.

At first it seems that their method is successful. People can go very far. Just look at Paul, who can say that he is blameless as to the righteousness which is in the law (Phil 3:6). But he is a persecutor of the church. The law calls upon the flesh, but nothing that is pleasing to God can come forth from it. Abram has to learn that, we have to learn that.

If someone succeeds in building up his own righteousness, he always will look down on others who have no high opinion of themselves and only want to live by grace. Thus Hagar becomes arrogant and looks despicable down on Sarai (cf. Lk 18:11).

When Sarai presents things again as they are to God— Hagar is a slave after all – Hagar flees.

Verses 7-14 | Hagar and Ishmael

7 Now the angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. 8 He said, "Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from and where are you going?" And she said, "I am fleeing from

the presence of my mistress Sarai.” 9 Then the angel of the LORD said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her authority.” 10 Moreover, the angel of the LORD said to her, “I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count.” 11 The angel of the LORD said to her further,

*“Behold, you are with child,
And you will bear a son;
And you shall call his name Ishmael,
Because the LORD has given heed to your affliction.
12 “He will be a wild donkey of a man,
His hand [will be] against everyone,
And everyone’s hand [will be] against him;
And he will live to the east of all his brothers.”*

*13 Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, “You are a God who sees”; for she said, “Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him?”
14 Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.*

“The Angel of the LORD” is the form in which the Lord Jesus appears in the Old Testament, that is, before His coming as Man on earth. He is Yahweh, the LORD. He follows Hagar and finds her on the way to Sur, that is the way to Egypt, the land where she comes from. He calls her by her true name: “Sarai’s maid.”

The questions He asks are meant for her. He knows her well and knows everything about her (cf. Jn 4:29). Through His questions He wants to remind her of where she comes from and make her see where she is going. She comes from a place of blessing and is on her way to destruction. It will be a great humiliation to return to Sarai, but it will be the best choice.

As for the child that she will bear, the LORD also makes an announcement concerning him. She must give him the name “Ishmael”, which means “God hears”. In his name he will carry with him the constant memory of God. Will he live by that? The LORD also makes an announcement on this subject. He will be “a wild donkey” (verse 12). His character will not match his name. Untied, free, without taking anyone into account, the boy will develop. He will show in his life that he is a son of Hagar.

In a symbolic sense it means that he will be an animal of burden, that is a donkey, that will throw his burden off. He is a picture of Israel under the law, which takes no account of that law. The result is that all chase away and repress Israel (Deu 28:25,33).

Thankful for His looking after her – she did not look for Him, but He for her – she calls him “a God who sees”. She acknowledges the grace He has shown her. The place where she has spoken with the LORD is called “Beer-lahai-roi”, meaning “the (or: well) of the Living One looking at me” or “the pit (or: well) of the Living One revealing Himself”. Here we have a picture of the Word of God, for in it God reveals Himself, in it He shows Himself. This well is mentioned twice more (Gen 24:62; 25:11). Later God also reveals Himself in the Lord Jesus at a well to a woman who is actually fleeing (Jn 4:6-7,25-26).

Hagar has come to know God as the God Who hears – that is how she had to call her son – and the God Who sees. To know God as the God Who hears and sees is a great encouragement for the faith that is put to the test.

Verses 15-16 | Abram Gets Ismael

15 So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. 16 Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him.

Abram gets Ismael when he is eighty-six years old. He gives him the name which the angel of the LORD called Hagar. Maybe he has mistaken him for the promised seed, until the moment God’s counsel has got through to him. It will take another fourteen years before the true heir is born.

Genesis 17

Verses 1-8 | God's Covenant with Abraham

1 Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him,

*“I am God Almighty;
Walk before Me, and be blameless.*

*2 “I will establish My covenant between Me and you,
And I will multiply you exceedingly.”*

3 Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying,

*4 “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you,
And you will be the father of a multitude of nations.*

*5 “No longer shall your name be called Abram,
But your name shall be Abraham;*

For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.

6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you. 7 I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. 8 I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

The LORD appears for the second time to Abram. He presents himself as *El Shaddaj*, that is “God, the Almighty”. Here not “LORD God”, because this time it is not about Who He is for Abram, but about Who He is in Himself. This may mean an enormous encouragement for the believing Abram to live in the country where he has nothing yet, but what his descendants will inherit. To know God in this way is also a great encouragement for us, who equally live by faith. It is a great privilege to walk before God, the Almighty, and to be always aware that He is with you.

At the same time, God can only expect this walk to be blameless, impeccable. That’s why He adds that. We can’t fill in that walk as we like. We know

that Abram is not perfect and that we are not. But God can never adjust His measure to who man is (cf. Mt 5:48).

In the relationship just established, God makes His covenant with Abram. He will fill in what He said in Genesis 15 (Gen 15:18). In this covenant He unfolds His counsel regarding Abram, which He also gives another name: Abraham. “Abram” means “exalted father”; “Abraham” means “father of a crowd”. In the sense of the name “Abraham” the content of God’s covenant is reflected. It is a covenant with Abraham *and his descendants*. His offspring shall be so great that he shall become the father of a multitude of nations.

This is his *physical* offspring, as it becomes clear in the following verses through circumcision, which is carried out only on all from Israel. The other nations will also be blessed on the basis of this covenant, for through Israel the blessing will go everywhere. Furthermore he is the father of a crowd in a *spiritual* sense because he is also the father of all who walk in the footsteps of his faith: “And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised” (Rom 4:11-12).

Verses 9-14 | The Circumcision

9 God said further to Abraham, “Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. 10 This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. 12 And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a [servant] who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants. 13 A [servant] who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 14 But an uncircumcised male who is

not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."

As a seal or sign of the covenant, God commands Abraham to circumcise every male. Stéfanus speaks of "the covenant of circumcision" (Acts 7:8), which indicates how much this covenant and the circumcision are connected. Abraham must cut away the foreskin of the male genitalia. Breeding takes place via this organ, through which sin is also bred. Practically that is a painful matter (Gen 34:24-25).

God considers the omission of circumcision a mortal sin. Even Moses experiences this when he was neglectful to circumcise his son (Exo 4:24-25).

What is a literal matter for Israel, an outward sign that they form the covenant people of God, has a spiritual and far-reaching meaning for the Christian. It means that the believer lives from the awareness that God's judgment on the flesh is carried out in the judgment that has come on Christ. Because of this he no longer lives according to his own 'I' (Rom 2:28-29; Col 2:11; Rom 8:3; Gal 2:20).

Verses 15-22 | The Heir Promised

15 Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah [shall be] her name. 16 I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be [a mother of] nations; kings of peoples will come from her." 17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear [a child]?" 18 And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before You!" 19 But God said, "No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. 20 As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. 21 But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year." 22 When He finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.

When everything concerning the covenant and circumcision has been brought forward by God, He tells who the heir's mother is. To this God also connects a name change for Sarai. The heir will be born of "Sara". "Sarai" means 'my princess'; "Sara" means 'princess'. When we think of 'my princess' we can think of a certain family or gender to which she belongs. That name implies a certain limitation. When we think of 'princess' we do not think of limitations, but of her dignity. She is a picture of Israel that is still infertile, but that will produce fruit that will be a blessing to the whole earth.

After this announcement Abraham throws himself down in worship before God and laughs. This is not a laugh of unbelief, as was later the case with Sarah (Gen 18:12). It is a laughter of joy and faith for the promise of God (Rom 4:19). That it is a laughter of joy and faith is also expressed in the name he has to give his son, for "Isaac" means 'laughing'.

Abraham still has a special request for Ishmael. After all, he is also his son? At Abraham's request, God only responds by promising blessing on the earth for Ishmael, without any special bond with God. Ishmael is the result of a work of disbelief. With this God can never stand in a covenant relationship.

Then God continues to speak about Isaac. The blessing for Abraham and his descendants is exclusively connected with Isaac. With him God will also establish His covenant. He predicts that the birth of Isaac will take place in the near future. The fulfilment of the promise will not be long in coming.

Verses 23-27 | Abraham Circumcises His House

23 Then Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all [the servants] who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's household, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the very same day, as God had said to him. 24 Now Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 25 And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 26 In the very same day Abraham was circumcised, and Ishmael his son. 27 All

the men of his household, who were born in the house or bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.

Abraham obeys God and circumcises his house. He does not wait with this, but does it “in the very same day” (cf. Psa 119:60). He brings, spiritually speaking, his whole house upon the foundation of death. That is the only way to receive the blessing promised by God. Later there is talk of the circumcision of all Israel (Jz 5:2). This is just as necessary if Israel is to inherit the blessing of the promised land.

In this context, it is good to pay attention to the doctrine that ‘baptism has replaced circumcision’. This is how it says in the Heidelberg Catechism, at Sunday 27, question 74. Now that is not the Bible and therefore it is important that we check whether what is said there is in accordance with the Bible. Of the reference texts quoted in Sunday 27, question 74, only Colossians 2:11-12 contains something about a connection between ‘circumcision’ and ‘baptism’.

We should therefore read this text carefully and through ‘covenant glasses’, because then we ‘read’ what it does not say. Reading through ‘covenant glasses’ means that one reads the Bible from the idea that the church replaced Israel. As a result, it is said that God has now made His covenant with the church instead of with Israel.

By extension, circumcision is given a meaning that is alien to what God means by it when He institutes the circumcision. This institution we find here in Genesis 17. Here it becomes clear that circumcision is the sign of God’s covenant with Abraham and his descendants. The offspring of Abraham is the people of Israel. Every Israeli boy must be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth.

Those who believe that God has a covenant with the church at this time say that the sign of this is no longer circumcision, but baptism. Therefore, it is said, children of parents going to church must be baptized. After all, these children must be included in God’s covenant with the church. In order to prove this reasoning, they appeal to Colossians 2 (Col 2:11-12), among others.

Now let us look at that text. The biblical text reads: “In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of

the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism" (Col 2:11-12a). First of all, it is striking that there is talk of "a circumcision made without hands". So it is not the same act as with Israel. That would make room for baptism, because that is really something else than circumcision. But we continue to read: "in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ". Here we find the explanation of circumcision.

It is about "the removal of the body of the flesh". This means that the sinful flesh is judged. This happened when Christ received the judgment on the cross (Rom 8:3). The believer is stripped of what used to characterize him: the flesh. It is 'removed', it may no longer play a role. And how did that happen? "By the circumcision of Christ." Of course, this can never refer to what literally happened to Him on the eighth day (Lk 2:21). To what it must be applied then? As said: To the judgment He received on the cross. Here it becomes clear that circumcision has not only a literal, but also a spiritual meaning (Rom 2:28-29).

If we now continue to read in Colossians 2, we see that "the circumcision of Christ" is followed by "buried with Him in baptism" (Col 2:12a). That is also clear: After death's judgment on the flesh, the burial follows in baptism.

If we read carefully, the conclusion is simple: the circumcision is not the burial, but the judgment. Thus, the circumcision is not replaced by baptism, but baptism as a picture of the burial follows the circumcision.

Genesis 18

Introduction

Abraham is called “a friend of God” in James 2 (Jam 2:23). Another two times it is written of him he is a friend of God (2Chr 20:7; Isa 41:8). A friend is someone to whom you entrust secrets and considerations that you do not disclose to everyone (Jn 15:15). In this chapter the LORD informs Abraham of His intentions concerning him (verses 9-15) and concerning the world (verses 20-21).

Verses 1-8 | The LORD Appears to Abraham

1 Now the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day. 2 When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw [them], he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth, 3 and said, “My LORD, if now I have found favor in Your sight, please do not pass Your servant by. 4 Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree; 5 and I will bring a piece of bread, that you may refresh yourselves; after that you may go on, since you have visited your servant.” And they said, “So do, as you have said.” 6 So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah, and said, “Quickly, prepare three measures of fine flour, knead [it] and make bread cakes.” 7 Abraham also ran to the herd, and took a tender and choice calf and gave [it] to the servant, and he hurried to prepare it. 8 He took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and placed [it] before them; and he was standing by them under the tree as they ate.

The place where Abraham is when the LORD appears to him is “by the oaks of Mamre” while he sits “at the tent door”. The word for ‘oak’ is derived from a word that means ‘strong’ or ‘hard’. The oak is known for its long life and also for the shade it provides against the heat of the sun. “Mamre” means ‘fatness’ or ‘vitality’. Abraham resides in a place that speaks of life force to which a long life is attached.

His place at the tent door makes him notice immediately that he gets visitors. He has control over what is coming his way and can see if he should be hospitable or if he should consider the visit as dangerous and not allow

it. This place at the tent door indicates the place that each father has to take in his family. Every father is responsible for what he does and does not allow to enter into his house. The hottest part of the day is the moment when people prefer to hide as far as possible, but Abraham is at his post.

The LORD appears unto Abraham, together with two angels. Abraham knows the LORD and therefore recognizes Him. Instead of being scared, he runs to receive Him hospitably. He desires that the LORD refreshes Himself, of which the washing of the feet speaks, and offers Him a meal, which is a sign of fellowship and rest. He acknowledges and appreciates the enormous privilege of this visit.

We see how Abraham reacts to this visit from heaven with confidential freedom and at the same time with great reverence. He bows down to the ground and asks the LORD – Abraham speaks only to Him – not to pass him by (cf. Lk 24:28-29). He takes before Him the place of a servant. The LORD and the angels accept the invitation.

This is how the Lord Jesus would like to be invited to every family. Only those who live as Abraham in separation from the world and obedience to God's Word will enjoy this privilege (Jn 14:23).

Besides being an example of intimate fellowship with God, Abraham is also an example of hospitality. We, too, are called to be hospitable and that without grumbling (1Pet 4:9; Rom 12:13; Heb 13:2).

Verses 9-15 | Announcement of Isaac's Birth

9 Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "There, in the tent." 10 He said, "I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife will have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him. 11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing. 12 Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my Lord being old also?" 13 And the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I indeed bear [a child], when I am [so] old?' 14 Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son." 15 Sarah denied [it] however, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. And He said, "No, but you did laugh."

The LORD and the angels ask for Sarah. There is interest not only in Abraham, but also in Sarah. For she will be the mother of the promised son and heir. She is not far away, she is in the tent. It points to the woman's usual place in the family. This does not mean that the woman should not be allowed to work outside the home. At the announcement of Samson's birth his mother is on the field and receives a visit from the LORD there (Jdg 13:9). It is about the motif, what is reason why the woman works outside the home.

Although Sarah is not present during the conversation, she is a listener. Through the question asked about her where she is and Abraham's answer, she knows that the others know that she can hear them. Her stay is behind the LORD. She has, as it were, no face-to-face contact with Him, as Abraham does.

While they eat, the LORD announces that the promised son and heir will soon be born. If there is fellowship with God with us, He will also make known His thoughts about His Son and the coming of His Son to us, for "The secret of the LORD is for those who fear Him, And He will make them know His covenant" (Psa 25:14).

What is already known in a general sense, is now regarded as an event that is near. We may also know from Scripture that the Lord Jesus comes, even that He will come soon, but it is something else to hear from His mouth because there is fellowship with Him.

Sarah hears the announcement too, but does not believe it. She does not live in that close fellowship with God like her husband. She judges the circumstances and measures them against what is possible or impossible to people (cf. Lk 1:18). Her perceptions are correct, but her conclusion is not, because she does not take God's omnipotence into account.

At the same time, she calls her husband "my lord". This is to her credit, and in it she is set as an example for all believing women (1Pet 3:6). Peter does not cite this example to make it clear that a woman must address her husband with 'lord'. It is about Sarah not thinking it a shame to call her husband 'lord'. The intention is to show that the woman must show due respect to her husband (Eph 5:33).

The fact that she obeys him does not mean that she is his slave. The subjection or obedience of the woman does not mean that a man does not have to listen to his wife. Women have been given their husbands to help to keep them from foolishness. We also have an example of this from the life of Abraham. Sarah later tells him to do something. If he does not want to listen to her, God tells him to listen to her (Gen 21:12).

This example is an illustration of the relationships in the marriage of the Christian and here in particular about the attitude of the Christian woman. When believing women take the attitude towards their husband that Sarah takes towards Abraham, they look like Sarah spiritually and can therefore be called "her children". They then show her nature and attitude. Women who follow Sarah in this, will also show that by doing good. For whoever does good and does the Lord's will in it, may be protected by God.

It is important that a woman herself also lives in close fellowship with the Lord. Sometimes it is women who have a deeper fellowship with the Lord than men. Mary of Bethany (Lk 10:39) and Mary Magdalene (Jn 20:16) are telling examples of this.

The LORD, to Whom nothing and no one is hidden, knows what Sarah thinks to herself. He rebukes her for her unbelieving reasoning. Sarah denies that she laughed. At the same time we read that she is afraid. She fears. Therein we indirectly see her faith (Heb 11:11), for the fear of the LORD is the principle of knowledge and wisdom (Pro 1:7; 9:10; Psa 111:10).

The LORD rises in His grace far above Sarah's behavior by answering with the splendid, always encouraging word: "Is anything too difficult for the LORD? We hear the answer to this question from the mouth of Jeremiah: "Ah Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You" (Jer 32:17). The LORD repeats the promise that Sarah will have a son in a year.

Verses 16-22 | Considerations of the LORD

16 Then the men rose up from there, and looked down toward Sodom; and Abraham was walking with them to send them off. 17 The LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, 18 since Abraham will surely be

come a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? 19 For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him.” 20 And the LORD said, “The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave. 21 I will go down now, and see if they have done entirely according to its outcry, which has come to Me; and if not, I will know.” 22 Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham was still standing before the LORD.

These verses begin and end with a message about the departure of the two angels to Sodom. They “looked down toward Sodom” (verse 16) and they “went toward Sodom” (verse 22). In the verses in between we are made partakers of the deliberations of the LORD. He discusses with Himself whether He will make known to Abraham what He will do with Sodom and Gomorrah. He mentions the conditions Abraham meets to involve him in His plans. Everything in his house is ruled by God’s Word. If things are so, God can make His thoughts known. God cannot make such announcements to people like Lot.

To convince us of His absolute righteousness, the LORD informs us that He will descend to get confirmation of what has come to His attention. He knows everything that happens on earth. But also here He involves us in His way of working and describes this in a way that we can understand and follow. He doesn’t judge without having carried out a thorough investigation of the case.

When the time of departure has come, Abraham sees his guests off. He “send them on their way in a manner worthy of God” (3Jn 1:6). He wants to enjoy their company for as long as possible. This gives the LORD the opportunity to share His thoughts with Abraham (Pro 3:32b).

Verses 23-33 | Intercession of Abraham

23 Abraham came near and said, “Will You indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? 24 Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will You indeed sweep [it] away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it? 25 Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous

with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are [treated] alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" 26 So the LORD said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare the whole place on their account." 27 And Abraham replied, "Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the LORD, although I am [but] dust and ashes. 28 Suppose the fifty righteous are lacking five, will You destroy the whole city because of five?" And He said, "I will not destroy [it] if I find forty-five there." 29 He spoke to Him yet again and said, "Suppose forty are found there?" And He said, "I will not do [it] on account of the forty." 30 Then he said, "Oh may the LORD not be angry, and I shall speak; suppose thirty are found there?" And He said, "I will not do [it] if I find thirty there." 31 And he said, "Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the LORD; suppose twenty are found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy [it] on account of the twenty." 32 Then he said, "Oh may the LORD not be angry, and I shall speak only this once; suppose ten are found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy [it] on account of the ten." 33 As soon as He had finished speaking to Abraham the LORD departed, and Abraham returned to his place.

God's communications concerning Sodom and Gomorrah have an effect on Abraham which is worth to be imitated. Instead of retreating into complacency because judgment does not affect him, he becomes an intercessor for others. Before that he comes "near" (verse 23), he comes close to the LORD. This must also be the effect for us in everything the Lord reveals to us about the judgment that comes over the world.

This prayer of Abraham is the first prayer we find in the Bible and it is a prayer to spare Sodom. Abraham has already acted in favor of the city before and has freed its inhabitants from the hand of its enemies for the sake of Lot (Gen 14:11-16). Now he intervenes for her in a different way, as an intercessor, again for the sake of Lot.

Abraham undoubtedly abhorred the wickedness of Sodom. He never wanted to live there, like Lot did. Yet he prayed fervently and urgently for her. We must hate sin, but feel sorry for sinners and pray for them. God takes "no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Eze 33:11).

God's desire should also be our desire. That desire is expressed in the first place in our intercession (1Tim 2:1-4). Intercession does not require a gift, but a heart that shares in God's feelings. Or should He also be astonished about us, because He finds no spirit of intercession in us (Isa 59:16a; Eze 22:30; 13:5)?

Abraham's faith grows with every answer to his prayers. Each time he gets what he asks for. We see in him "the holy impudence" of prayer (Lk 11:8) that bridges the infinite distance between creature and Creator. This is the kind of prayer that constantly insists on God and doesn't indulge until He gives in. Each time the LORD confirms that He will spare the city for the sake of the righteous if they are found there. It is an encouragement to us that we must continue to ask, for God hears the prayer of the righteous.

Abraham prays with knowledge of God. He knows Him as "the Judge of all the earth" Who deals justly (verse 25; Job 34:10-11). That is the starting point and the basis of his intercession. He knows that God will never slay the righteous with those who do wrong. He also approaches God in the deep awareness of his own smallness before Him in the recognition that he is dust and ashes (cf. 2Sam 7:18; Job 42:5-6). As we approach in that attitude, we may know that our prayer is pleasing to Him (Pro 15:8b).

As long as Abraham asks, the LORD gives. We have here abundant evidence of prayer answering. When the LORD has finished speaking because Abraham asks not further, He goes away. It seems as if Abraham eventually does not get what he asked for, but in the next chapter we see that his prayer has been answered (Gen 19:29).

Genesis 19

Verses 1-3 | The Angels with Lot

1 Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw [them], he rose to meet them and bowed down [with his] face to the ground. 2 And he said, "Now behold, my LORDs, please turn aside into your seroant's house, and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way." They said however, "No, but we shall spend the night in the square." 3 Yet he urged them strongly, so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he prepared a feast for them, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

There is almost no greater difference imaginable between two believers than the difference between Abraham and Lot. Lot was a believer, he is called a righteous one (2Pet 2:7), but there is almost nothing to be seen of this in his history. Nor does the LORD come with him to Lot as he did with Abraham. This also shows the enormous difference. He could share His thoughts with Abraham during a meal, not with Lot.

Lot first lived *nearby* Sodom, later *in* Sodom and is now even *in the gate of* Sodom. Sitting in the gate means being part of the city council. He was, so to speak, perhaps chairman of the political party LS (Livable Sodom) and worked for a restoration of values and norms. His whole testimony, however, is connected with the living climate of Sodom and represents a mis-testimony to the LORD.

The LORD does not connect himself with such believers; He does not recognize them. He recognizes only those who are separated from worldly thinking and acting because they are guided by Him and His Word. He only acknowledges as His sons and daughters believers who do not go under one yoke with unbelievers, as it clearly says in 2 Corinthians 6: "Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols?"

For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. "Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE," says the Lord. "AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you. "And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty"" (2Cor 6:14-18).

It means that believers cannot take joint responsibility with non-believers in the pursuit of a particular goal. This can be applied, for example, to a marriage, a business purpose and political advocacy.

The angels don't even want to come into Lot's house. After long insistence of Lot, they do it anyway. The meal he prepares for his visit is also of much lower quality than that of Abraham in the previous chapter (verse 3b; Gen 18:6-8). Everything speaks of compulsion and lack of understanding to notice that he has visit from heaven, messengers of God.

Verses 4-11 | The Men of Sodom and Lot

4 Before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, surrounded the house, both young and old, all the people from every quarter; 5 and they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may have relations with them." 6 But Lot went out to them at the doorway, and shut the door behind him, 7 and said, "Please, my brothers, do not act wickedly. 8 Now behold, I have two daughters who have not had relations with man; please let me bring them out to you, and do to them whatever you like; only do nothing to these men, inasmuch as they have come under the shelter of my roof." 9 But they said, "Stand aside." Furthermore, they said, "This one came in as an alien, and already he is acting like a judge; now we will treat you worse than them." So they pressed hard against Lot and came near to break the door. 10 But the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. 11 They struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they wearied [themselves trying] to find the doorway.

The visit did not go unnoticed in Sodom. The complete depravity of the inhabitants, that dwells in every age group, is expressed in all its horror. They call upon Lot to bring out his visit, that they may indulge in their de-

grading passions upon them, and may act as “men with men committing indecent acts” (Rom 1:27). Their way of life becomes proverbial, so that audacious, unabashed sinners are said to “And they display their sin like Sodom; They do not [even] conceal [it]” (Isa 3:9; cf. Jer 6:15a).

This scandal is even characteristic of the whole region (Jude 1:7). What happens in Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around it leads the apostasy to a high point. It is about the most brutal shamelessness directed against all that is natural given by God. They have left their original nature. That is rebellion and apostasy. It is fornication and added to that the going after “foreign flesh”, which is completely contrary to the natural order of God.

The unbound, free lifestyle and legalization of homosexual practices propagated by liberals in our day and age is similar to the practices of Sodom and Gomorrah and the whole region around them. What God has done with these cities shows how He judges this behavior. This should be a warning to anyone who lives like this or accepts it as normal and may even be committed to general acceptance of this way of life. “The punishment of eternal fire” (Jude 1:7) shows that God’s judgment on this never comes to an end. All apostates will be affected by this judgment.

The unclean spirit manifesting itself goes too far for Lot. His name as host is at stake. He cannot allow this to happen with his visit and tries to keep them from their wrongdoing. In his approach to them he calls them “my brothers”. He has fallen to such a low moral level that he considers himself to be their family. In that position he really is, as we can see from the alternative he offers them. It’s really unbelievable – but it’s in the Bible, so it’s true – but Lot finds his name as a host more important than his name as a father. As a kind of compensation, he offers his two daughters to the vermin, with whom they can do what they want.

However, the men of Sodom do not want Lot to equate him with themselves. Lot may still be so integrated in their society and have worked so hard for a ‘Livable Sodom’, but he is and remains a stranger to them. This is a point of light in the midst of the spiritual darkness, even though it is that small.

Let's not make a hard judgement about Lot too quickly either. How many believers who have all their interests in the world sacrifice their children to preserve their so-called good name? Busy as they are with their own worldly interests, they don't care about the way their children spend their time. And without knowing it, those children become addicted to the Internet, surf the dirtiest sites around and get entangled in a web that completely destroys them mentally and physically.

The angels use their power to keep Lot from this folly. They pull him inside the house and strike the men of Sodom with blindness (Job 5:14-15). They did not want to hear, now the eyesight is also taken away from them. It is a harbinger of the darkness in which they will be eternal.

Verses 12-15 | Lot Must Run

12 Then the [two] men said to Lot, "Whom else have you here? A son-in-law, and your sons, and your daughters, and whomever you have in the city, bring [them] out of the place; 13 for we are about to destroy this place, because their outcry has become so great before the LORD that the LORD has sent us to destroy it." 14 Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, and said, "Up, get out of this place, for the LORD will destroy the city." But he appeared to his sons-in-law to be jesting. 15 When morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Up, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away in the punishment of the city."

The angels tell Lot why they came. Lot, perhaps because of what he has just seen, attaches so much importance to this message, that he warns his sons-in-law. They regard his warning as a joke. They don't take Lot seriously. They also don't know Lot as a serious guy. It's not a bad thing to tell a joke once, but anyone who always is playing the funny man shouldn't expect to be taken seriously when it counts.

Of course, it is also unbelievable when someone tells us that the world is going to be judged, while he does everything he can to make life in the world as easy as possible. He who feels politically responsible and does his utmost to enjoy the world as much as possible should not believe that he is plausible when he comes up with a message of judgment about all

this. Lot is someone whose whole attitude shows that life in the world fills his entire horizon, whereas nowhere in his life does faith appear to be a factor present.

Also, it doesn't seem that Lot himself is in a hurry to get away. The angels must urge him to hurry. How hard it is to let go of the stuff you may have worked for as hard as you can and the stuff means so much for you. His stuff is not part of his life, it *is* his life.

Verses 16-23 | Lot on the Run

16 But he hesitated. So the men seized his hand and the hand of his wife and the hands of his two daughters, for the compassion of the LORD [was] upon him; and they brought him out, and put him outside the city. 17 When they had brought them outside, one said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you, and do not stay anywhere in the valley; escape to the mountains, or you will be swept away." 18 But Lot said to them, "Oh no, my LORD! 19 Now behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have magnified your lovingkindness, which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, for the disaster will overtake me and I will die; 20 now behold, this town is near [enough] to flee to, and it is small. Please, let me escape there (is it not small?) that my life may be saved." 21 He said to him, "Behold, I grant you this request also, not to overthrow the town of which you have spoken. 22 Hurry, escape there, for I cannot do anything until you arrive there." Therefore the name of the town was called Zoar. 23 The sun had risen over the earth when Lot came to Zoar.

The angels take Lot and his wife and daughters by the hand and drag them with them. Wife and daughters are also given the opportunity to escape judgment because the LORD wants to save Lot. This shows the enormous grace of God. This grace is also abundant when Lot begs not to have to go to the mountains. That is so close to heaven. Only people like Abraham live there. A Lot doesn't feel at home there.

He would like to live in a city. It only has to be a small city – “Zoar” means ‘small’ or ‘insignificant’ – as long as it looks like a city. The thought of a tent, to be a pilgrim, does not appeal to him. He has breathed in the air of

the city and it is in the depths of his lungs. And again that enormous grace is shown. His request is granted: he may go to the city of his wish.

Verses 24-26 | Sodom and Gomorrah Overthrown

24 Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven, 25 and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. 26 But his wife, from behind him, looked [back], and she became a pillar of salt.

When Lot arrives in Zoar, the LORD “rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone” and “He overthrew those cities, and all the valley”. Lot’s wife did go with Lot, but she does not mind the order given not to look behind her (verse 17). She does look behind her and becomes a pillar of salt, a continuous memorial, a beacon of remembrance.

This is how the Lord Jesus applies it: “Remember Lot’s wife” (Lk 17:32). He says that as a warning not to put the heart on the things of the world and not to waste our time and attention and energy by filling our lives with food and drink and buying and selling, with planting and building. We can’t take anything of it with us in the day of judgment. It all comes to an end.

Thus saith the Lord in the verses which precede the warning example of the wife of Lot in Luke 17: “It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. On that day, the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house must not go down to take them out; and likewise the one who is in the field must not turn back” (Lk 17:28-31).

The Lord Jesus also said that if the miracles He did in Capernaum had happened in Sodom, Sodom would have converted and “it would have remained to this day” (Mt 11:23). Why, we might ask ourselves, did He not do that? Because according to the wisdom of God, Sodom and Gomorrah had a testimony of God’s revelation, perfectly fitting to them.

They have had God's testimony in creation (Rom 1:19-20). But they have not bowed before God. They acted according to their corrupt nature, and did not take any notice of God's revelation in creation. They will be judged on the basis of this rejection of God's testimony. Thus, each people are subjected to a test of their obedience to God in a way that fully matches their responsibility.

Verses 27-29 | Abraham and the Judgment

27 Now Abraham arose early in the morning [and went] to the place where he had stood before the LORD; 28 and he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the valley, and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land ascended like the smoke of a furnace. 29 Thus it came about, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot lived.

While the most terrible scenes take place in the plain, Abraham is at rest. The fact that he is at rest does not mean that he is not moved by what is happening below him. He prayed too intensively for that. And this prayer is not in vain. He goes to the place where he stood before the LORD and places himself there on his guard post (Hab 2:1). When we have prayed, we should look forward to the result. We should address our prayer, like a letter, and then expect an answer (Psa 5:3).

Here we read that Lot owes it to the prayer of his uncle Abraham that he did not perish in judgment. Lot will not have known. He comes to know when his life will also be revealed before the judgment seat of Christ.

Verses 30-38 | The End of Lot

30 Lot went up from Zoar, and stayed in the mountains, and his two daughters with him; for he was afraid to stay in Zoar; and he stayed in a cave, he and his two daughters. 31 Then the firstborn said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of the earth. 32 Come, let us make our father drink wine, and let us lie with him that we may preserve our family through our father." 33 So they made their father drink wine that night, and the firstborn went in and lay with her father; and

he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. 34 On the following day, the firstborn said to the younger, "Behold, I lay last night with my father; let us make him drink wine tonight also; then you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve our family through our father." 35 So they made their father drink wine that night also, and the younger arose and lay with him; and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. 36 Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father. 37 The firstborn bore a son, and called his name Moab; he is the father of the Moabites to this day. 38 As for the younger, she also bore a son, and called his name Ben-ammi; he is the father of the sons of Ammon to this day.

The history of Lot ends as sadly as his life has always been. We hear nothing about his death. The man has long been dead, that is, spiritually. The last thing we hear from him is surrounded by the darkness of a cave. His spirit is darkened, not primarily by wine, but already by the fact that he is getting drunk by his daughters, not just once, but twice.

Lot and his daughters are out of Sodom, but (the spirit of) Sodom is not out of Lot and his daughters. The daughters of Lot are so corrupted in their spiritual development by their living in Sodom that they bring about the disgusting proposal of getting their father drunk and then having sexual intercourse with him. They act deliberately. They know their father as a characterless man who will submit to their plan completely unsuspectingly, without any resistance.

It is going as they agreed. From the pitch-dark spiritual atmosphere of Sodom, who lives in Lot, he performs twice an act that requires no further explanation. The moral darkness is complete. In this completely dark scene, he becomes by committing incest the father of two children from whom the bitterest enemies of the people of Israel originated.

There is no more talk of Lot. Separated from Abraham externally and internally, he no longer has any meaning for the history of salvation. Even his death is not mentioned. That's how Lot disappears from history.

Genesis 20

Verse 1 | Abraham Sojourns in Gerar

1 Now Abraham journeyed from there toward the land of the Negev, and settled between Kadesh and Shur; then he sojourned in Gerar.

Without being told why Abraham leaves Mamre, where he has been for almost twenty years, we are told that he leaves from there. He goes back to the land of the Negev, that is to the south. What Abraham is doing now reminds us of Genesis 12, where he also travels south and ends up in Egypt (Gen 12:10-20). Here he doesn't go as far as that. He comes to Gerar, the border area. It was not a way of faith at that time, nor is it a way of faith at this time. At that time he had to learn a humbling lesson. Now he has to learn that again.

We too sometimes have to learn the same lesson a few times. This teaches us what slow learners we are. God allows these histories of great believers to be recorded to show that they too are ordinary, fallible people.

Abraham comes to Gerar, which is in the land of the Philistines. Egypt is a picture of the world. The Philistines are a picture of nominal Christians, people who confess that they are Christians, but do not take God into account (2Tim 3:5a). They do live in the land God promised His people and even claim it – as can be seen from the name Palestine derived from Philistia – but they have no right to it. Nominal Christians claim to know and do God's will, but distort the Scriptures and give them their own interpretation. Spiritually speaking, Abraham ends up with them.

Verse 2 | Abraham Loses Sara

2 Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." So Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.

The result of his stay there is that he denies his true relationship with Sara and loses her. From Galatians 4 we know that Sarah is a picture of grace (Gal 4:23-24a). Abraham represents here a believer who, through his dealings with nominal Christians, loses the sense of grace. The nominal Chris-

tian knows nothing about this. He abuses grace for his own pleasure and turns it into debauchery (Jude 1:4). Abraham's failure here is worse than in Genesis 12. Here he denies his relationship to the mother of the heir. It is a low point in the life of the believing Abraham.

Verses 3-7 | God Speaks to Abimelech

3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, "Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is married." 4 Now Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, "LORD, will You slay a nation, even [though] blameless? 5 Did he not himself say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my brother.' In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this." 6 Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also kept you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her. 7 Now therefore, restore the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not restore [her], know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours."

God intervenes in grace for His failing servant and appears in a dream to Abimelech. God will always speak up for His own against their enemies (Zec 2:8) and maintain them against the world (Num 23:7-10,18-23; 24:2-9). In the dream he rebukes Abimelech for his actions (1Chr 16:22; Psa 105:15). Nevertheless, the whole history is humbling for Abraham, as the sequel shows.

With Abimelech there is a certain respect for what God says, but in any case no confession of guilt. He justifies himself. Certainly, Abraham is much more responsible than Abimelech, but that does not acquit Abimelech. His talking about innocence and purity of hands is recognized by God in this case. But although he is before God, it does not bring him to acknowledge other sins which he has abundantly in his life.

God tells him that He has prevented him from sinning in this case. It would also have been a serious sin, for the woman he took is married. She belongs to a man. Taking her as a wife means adultery, but God prevents it. Sin is sometimes planned and intended in the heart of people that never is executed because God prevents people from committing that sin.

The same goes for those who belong to Him, as we see in the history of David, if he wants to punish Nabal for the treatment he has received from this man. To prevent this, God uses Abigail, but He has the honor: "Then David said to Abigail, "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me, 33and blessed be your discernment, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodshed and from avenging myself by my own hand" (1Sam 25:32-33).

Abimelech's wrong-doing is also evident from the punishment God imposes on the people of Abimelech (verse 18). There can only be liberation from this punishment when Abraham prays for him. He is not such a good boy. That is now the nominal Christian, who will always maintain himself against God and men. He doesn't know about bowing down. The mistakes of others are enhanced by him, those of himself are reasoned away by him. That is how we can be.

The word "prophet" appears here for the first time in the Old Testament. With 'prophet' we should not only think about predicting the future. It is not even the main idea. A prophet passes on the words from someone else (Exo 7:1), here from God. God uses a prophet to communicate to His people, or even to those who do not belong to His people, something that He considers necessary for the addressed person to know.

Verses 8-16 | Abimelech and Abraham

8 So Abimelech arose early in the morning and called all his servants and told all these things in their hearing; and the men were greatly frightened. 9 Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, "What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done." 10 And Abimelech said to Abraham, "What have you encountered, that you have done this thing?" 11 Abraham said, "Because I thought, surely there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife. 12 Besides, she actually is my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife; 13 and it came about, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said to her, 'This is the kindness which you will show to me: everywhere we go, say of me, "He is my brother."'" 14 Abimelech then took sheep and oxen and male and female servants, and gave

them to Abraham, and restored his wife Sarah to him. 15 Abimelech said, "Behold, my land is before you; settle wherever you please." 16 To Sarah he said, "Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver; behold, it is your vindication before all who are with you, and before all men you are cleared."

Abimelech calls Abraham come to him. That already indicates in what dependent position the great man of God has come against this man of the world. The reproaches from Abimelech to Abraham are right. Abraham's defense is weak. He has consulted within Himself, not with God. He has noticed that there is no fear of God in that place, and out of pure self-preservation, i.e. selfishness, he has denied his relationship to Sarah.

In so doing, he has resorted to half a truth, which is often worse than a whole lie. Here he gives an excuse for his insincerity. This insincerity also lies in what he says about God, that He "caused him to wander from my father's house" (verse 13). It is not God who has made him wander; he himself has started wandering. Here, the language of faith is completely lacking.

Abimelech lectured him and ended the conversation with words indicating that Abraham is free to leave. In another translation, the end of verse 16 reads: "And be taught." Let us also learn from it.

Verses 17-18 | Abraham Prays for Abimelech

17 Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his maids, so that they bore [children]. 18 For the LORD had closed fast all the wombs of the household of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

Abraham prays for Abimelech, after which the plague God had laid on the house of Abimelech is removed. Thus God healed Miriam as Moses prayed for her, after God punished her with leprosy for evil speaking against Moses (Num 12:13). The same is true of Job who has to pray for his friends because they have not spoken of God what is right (Job 42:8b-9).

After Abraham has been brought back into the right relationship with God and the wrong that has come between him and Abimelech through his fault has been cleared up, he can again be used as a blessing for others. In a way, he was the cause of this plague being imposed on the people of Abimelech. When believers become unfaithful to the Lord, they are no

longer a blessing to their surroundings, but rather a curse. If they clean up the wrong thing, they can be used again until they are ready for their environment.

Genesis 21

Verses 1-7 | Isaac Is Born

1 Then the LORD took note of Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had promised. 2 So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him. 3 Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac. 4 Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5 Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. 6 Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me." 7 And she said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

The son of the promise, the heir, is born "at the appointed time" (verse 2). God has the right time for everything (Ecc 3:1). Isaac is a picture of the Lord Jesus, as Abraham is of God the Father. The birth of Isaac is a picture of the introduction of the Firstborn, the Lord Jesus, by God into the world (Heb 1:6). God has "put all things in subjection under his feet" (Heb 2:8), He is the true Heir.

An application for our personal lives is that the Lord Jesus can only be "born" in our lives, which means become visible, when the Philistine influences we saw in the previous chapter have been discarded.

Abraham calls his son "Isaac", as God has said to him (Gen 17:19). "Isaac" means "laughter" (cf. Psa 126:2). Isaac brings joy to Abraham's family. Thus the Lord Jesus will always give us His joy when He is central to our lives.

By circumcising his son, Abraham places him under the covenant God has made with him and his physical descendants (Gen 17:1-14). For us Christians, circumcision is a picture of what happened to Christ on the cross (Col 2:11). Our life as a Christian is only valuable to God if we live from the meaning of the cross. There is the old man crucified with Christ (Rom 6:6).

This allows us to keep ourselves dead for sin and alive for God in Christ Jesus (Rom 6:11).

Sarah recognizes the good hand of God over her life. He has made her son's name, laughter, a reality for her. She also speaks of her joy being shared by all who will hear of it (cf. Lk 1:58). Others will rejoice in this example of God's power and goodness and will be encouraged to trust in Him (Psa 119:74).

At the same time, she expressed her surprise that God was so good for her. Who has ever been able to think that? This wonder about granted grace must also characterize our lives. Why were we chosen by Him to be His children and to rejoice in the Son of His love? It can only be attributed to God's infinite love.

Verses 8-21 | Abraham Drives out Hagar and Ishmael

8 The child grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. 9 Now Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking. 10 Therefore she said to Abraham, "Drive out this maid and her son, for the son of this maid shall not be an heir with my son Isaac." 11 The matter distressed Abraham greatly because of his son. 12 But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed because of the lad and your maid; whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her, for through Isaac your descendants shall be named. 13 And of the son of the maid I will make a nation also, because he is your descendant." 14 So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave [them] to Hagar, putting [them] on her shoulder, and [gave her] the boy, and sent her away. And she departed and wandered about in the wilderness of Beersheba. 15 When the water in the skin was used up, she left the boy under one of the bushes. 16 Then she went and sat down opposite him, about a bowshot away, for she said, "Do not let me see the boy die." And she sat opposite him, and lifted up her voice and wept. 17 God heard the lad crying; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter with you, Hagar? Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. 18 Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him by the hand, for I will make a great nation of him." 19 Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the skin with water and gave the lad a drink. 20 God was with the lad, and he grew; and he lived in the

wilderness and became an archer. 21 He lived in the wilderness of Paran, and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

After the circumcision comes the phase that starts with being weaned. This indicates that Isaac is becoming independent. He is no longer dependent on his mother's food, but is now able to take food himself. Herein he also is a picture of the believer who grows towards spiritual independence in order to grow further as an independent believer.

This does not mean that growth takes place separately from others, but from a personal relationship with the Lord. In this growth the help of others will be very much appreciated. Therefore the church is also compared with a body that God has composed in such a way that "the members may have the same care for one another" (1Cor 12:25b).

For faith, this growth is a reason for a celebration. For the law, of which Ishmael is a picture, this is not so. He makes a mockery of it. That Ishmael is a picture of the law and of people who place themselves under the law and want to live accordingly, we see in Galatians 4, where Paul says: "Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman. But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise. This is allegorically speaking, for these [women] are two covenants: one [proceeding] from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother. For it is written, "Rejoice, barren woman who does not bear; Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor; For more numerous are the children of the desolate Than of the one who has a husband." And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him [who was born] according to the Spirit, so it is now also. But what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, For the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman." So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman" (Gal 4:21-31).

In this section Paul refers to Isaac and Ishmael and their mothers. He does not mention their names. It is not about their names, but about their positions, because the mothers transfer them to their children. After exposing the position, he points to the origins of both sons. Ishmael is born by Abraham's own will, but Isaac he receives by a promise from God. The spiritual lessons to be learned by the Galatians and by us are clearly shown in that section.

At the end of that section we see the meaning of expelling Ishmael. That meaning is that what is born after the flesh always persecutes what is born after the Spirit (Gal 4:29). Whoever is according to the Spirit and wants to live consistently according to it, will experience persecution from the side of people who want to serve God in their own power. Prosecution is inevitable, because living by faith is one great indictment of any form of religion that highlights one's own performance.

He who wants to live according to the law, thinks of the things of the flesh and "the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God" (Rom 8:7). There is no connection between the flesh and the law on the one hand and the Spirit on the other. Nothing comes from the flesh that can be recognized and accepted and blessed by God. For Abraham all blessings are bound with the son of the promise. In him the offspring is promised and only that offspring receives the promised blessing (Rom 9:7; Heb 11:18). Thus, for man, the blessing of God is linked to faith in Christ, the Son of promise. Unbelief, the flesh, has no part in this.

Therefore Paul concludes the explanation of this history as follows: "But what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, For the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman" (Gal 4:30). The blessing of God can never be obtained through a kind of cooperation of law with grace. Everything that has to do with the law must disappear from the Christian's life and thought.

It is a hard lesson to acknowledge that there is no place for the flesh. Abraham thinks so too. He does not want to drive out Hagar and Ishmael. God Himself must be involved to convince him of the correctness of Sarah's decision. Then there is no more delay and Abraham sends Hagar and Ishmael away, after having provided them with the needs for the way.

Hagar represents the law (Gal 4:24-25). Her son Ishmael is a picture of Israel under the law. This people, who have no connection with the Son of promise, and even mocked and rejected Him, wander, as Hagar and Ishmael wander. But God is going His way with those people.

God hears the voice of the boy. We do not read that Ishmael has spoken a word to God, but he will have cried with his mother, and God has heard this loud crying. The place where he cries is near a well in the desert "Beersheba". 'Beersheba' means 'well of the oath'. So will God listen to his people when they mourn for the Firstborn, when they see the One Whom they have pierced (Zec 12:10b).

Hagar is instructed to lift her son up and hold her hand well. God's gracious intervention does not mean that man has nothing more to do. She is also promised that her son will become a great nation. After these words, God opens sources of provisions she has not seen before.

Verses 22-34 | Abraham and Abimelech

22 Now it came about at that time that Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying, "God is with you in all that you do; 23 now therefore, swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my offspring or with my posterity, but according to the kindness that I have shown to you, you shall show to me and to the land in which you have sojourned." 24 Abraham said, "I swear it." 25 But Abraham complained to Abimelech because of the well of water which the servants of Abimelech had seized. 26 And Abimelech said, "I do not know who has done this thing; you did not tell me, nor did I hear of it until today." 27 Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them made a covenant. 28 Then Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves. 29 Abimelech said to Abraham, "What do these seven ewe lambs mean, which you have set by themselves?" 30 He said, "You shall take these seven ewe lambs from my hand so that it may be a witness to me, that I dug this well." 31 Therefore he called that place Beersheba, because there the two of them took an oath. 32 So they made a covenant at Beersheba; and Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, arose and returned to the land of the Philistines. 33 [Abraham] planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the

LORD, the Everlasting God. 34 And Abraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines for many days.

Here the relationship between Abraham and Abimelech is completely reversed in comparison with the previous chapter. Abimelech acknowledges that God is with Abraham. This is a picture of what the nations will say in the future, when Israel has become the head of the nations (Zec 8:23).

A Christian can already get this recognition. If a Christian walks faithfully with God, it will be noticed. This is the result of the 'driving out' of the flesh, of not walking as the nations do. When Isaac – in our life: the Lord Jesus – gets its true place, this recognition comes from Abimelech – for us: from the world. However, Abraham is painfully reminded of his failure (verse 23).

Yet, as has been said, the relationship is completely different. Now Abraham reprimands Abimelech for a well and gives gifts to Abimelech. The well is named after the desert Beersheba. The covenant they make with each other is reinforced by a gift from Abraham's hand. After this Abimelech returns to his country.

Abraham calls upon "the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God". He expresses the awareness that God is beyond time and that all His promises will be fulfilled, even if there is nothing to be seen yet. That's why in this belief he plants a tamarisk near Beersheba ("well of the oath"). With this he indicates, as it were, the border between himself and the Philistines.

Genesis 22

Introduction

In this chapter God shows that His promises are based on the dead and risen Christ of Whom Isaac is a picture here. It is the fourth offering brought in Genesis. God brought the first offering. There the question is answered how He can accept a sinner in His presence. Abel brought the second offering. He shows the answer to the question: How can a man who is a sinner exist before God? The third offering is that of Noah. This answers the question: How can creation, where sinful people live, exist before God? As we often see in Scripture, a history can be highlighted from several angles:

1. First there is the literal meaning. In this chapter we see a father who is undergoing a severe test of his faith and how he deals with it. From this we can learn our lessons.
2. Then we can also view this history as an illustration of the way God the Father offers His Son.
3. There is also a prophetic application to make. We see this in the blessing that comes from the sacrifice of the Son.

Verses 1-2 | God Says to Abraham to Offer Isaac

1 Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 2 He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."

After the *experiences* of faith in the previous chapters Abraham now receives a *test* of faith. It is an enormous test of faith. It is a great test if you have to wait a long time to get what you have been promised and to be obedient to God's Word and to keep trusting Him. It is an even greater test to obey God's Word and trust Him if He reclaims the promised thing from you which you have received. The question then is whether you really believe that God will do what He promised.

God calls him by his name and Abraham immediately makes himself available to listen to what God has to say. What God asks is deeply moving and far reaching. The way in which God says who he must offer is moving. It is “your son”. But not only that. It is “your only son”. But that’s not all either. The description of who Isaac is for Abraham is not yet complete. It is “whom you love”. Finally, God calls the name of his son. It is “Isaac”, his laughter.

This is the first time that the word ‘love’ appears in the Bible. It is remarkable that this is done to describe the relationship between a father and his son, which indicates the relationship between the Father and the Son.

Any misunderstanding about which son it would be is excluded. It is the son he got together with Sarah as a miracle of God. They did not have other children together. It is the son who is his joy, whom he loves very much. God has promised him that he will have a great offspring in this son. Now God asks him to offer all that on the altar. The practical lesson that he and we too must learn is: Do you believe more in what I have given you or do you believe more in Me?

When Abraham has to drive out Ishmael, he has been given the reason. Now that he has to offer Isaac, we hear no reason to do so. Nor is Isaac a criminal who, like a rebellious son, must be brought by his parents to the elders of his city by virtue of justice and die by their hand (Deu 21:18-21). The only reason to do it is because God says it. The only thing that matters in this case is obedience to and trust in God.

The place Abraham has to go to is mount Moria. At that place David will later also make an offering and Solomon will build the temple (2Chr 3:1). The church, seen as a temple, which is as the house of God, is built on the basis of the offering of the Lord Jesus.

Verses 3-8 | Abraham and Isaac Go to the Place of Offering

3 So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. 4 On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. 5 Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will

go over there; and we will worship and return to you.” 6 Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. 7 Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” And he said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” 8 Abraham said, “God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” So the two of them walked on together.

Abraham is on his way to the place God has named him after he has made all the preparations. On the third day, he saw that place “in the distance. This is reminiscent of God’s counsel in which is included that the Lord Jesus would come once to be offered. God has always seen that place ahead (1Pet 1:20). But it is connected with “the third day”, which is the day that speaks of the resurrection. God also raised him up from the dead on the third day (1Pet 1:21; Mt 16:21; Lk 24:46; 1Cor 15:3-4).

During these three days, Abraham thought about what God asked of him. In Hebrews 11 are mentioned *deeds* that believers in the Old Testament have done in faith. Only of Abraham is mentioned what he *thought*: “He considered that God is able to raise [people] even from the dead” (Heb 11:19a). This proves the enormous faith of Abraham. He had no example of this in his surroundings, from which he could see that God raises up the dead.

He knows God and through this knowledge and by thinking about all that God has promised him, he can only come to one conclusion: ‘If I have to offer my son, to whom God has bound all His promises, God will raise him up from the dead.’ This is great. This is proof of how real Abraham’s faith is. Therefore it is written that Abraham was “justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar” (Jam 2:21). The conclusion drawn directly from this by James is: “You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected” (Jam 2:22). His faith is evident from his works.

In this faith he has made all the preparations. All initiative comes from Abraham. He is acting. In picture we see how all the initiatives go out from God to give His Son as an offering (Jn 3:16; Rom 8:3). In other places we

also read that the Son gave Himself (Gal 2:20), but for a moment it is about the picture that is presented here.

The considerations of Abraham's faith are reflected in what he says to the servants: "We will worship and return to you." We also hear his trust in God in what he says to Isaac: "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son."

In verses 6 and 8, and also later in verse 19, it says: "So the two of them walked on together." This is also a wonderful reference is to the walking together of the Father and the Son (Jn 8:29a).

Verses 9-10 | Abraham Offers Isaac

9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

Nowhere does it say that Abraham 'supposedly' offered his son. We always read that he offered Isaac. The detailed description of Abraham's actions impresses. Nothing happens hastily, but deliberately, purposefully, calmly. We no longer hear a word from the mouth of Isaac.

We know the outcome, which takes away much of the tension. But we can imagine to some extent what went through Abraham. Certainly, he trusted that God would raise him up from the dead. But to have to kill your son, who has let himself be bound as a willing victim; the son who sees his father lifting the knife to slay him ...

Verses 11-12 | Abraham Gets Isaac back

11 But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 12 He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

Then the voice of the angel of the LORD sounds, that is the Lord Jesus, Who himself will later be the true offering, and for Whom there shall come no voice. On the contrary, when He calls, heaven kept silent. Here He calls,

as it were in delight, twice the name of Abraham, because of his faith in Him. He tells us this because He wants to share it with us.

This test is not necessary to show the LORD if Abraham is believing, but to show us the faith in Abraham's heart. If we say we believe in the Lord Jesus, our faith will also be tested. God sees our faith, but He wants our actions to show others what we confess with our mouths.

Again Abraham is directly available. Then comes the word of deliverance: "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him." The proof has been provided that Abraham gave everything for the LORD. For him the LORD is greater than all promises and all possessions that are anchored in Isaac. Here Abraham gets everything in return. And what an experience has he gained from it! God is to believe through everything and against everything.

We must learn to put everything on the altar, really everything God asks of us. And does He ask less than everything? Then we will also gain the experience that Abraham gained: that God is the God of the resurrection.

Verses 13-14 | The Substitute Offering

13 Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind [him] a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. 14 Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the LORD it will be provided."

Isaac does not have to be offered literally. There is a substitute offering. That is so for every person who believes. Here too the faith of Abraham, which he has expressed in verse 8, is answered.

Abraham gives the mountain the beautiful name "The LORD Will Provide" Everything the LORD has intended, He will provide. The proof for this is furnished; the foundation for it is laid in the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Verses 15-19 | Blessing on the Basis of the Offering

15 Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, 16 and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have

done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." 19 So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham lived at Beersheba.

Now – in picture – the son of the promise has been in death and has risen, God swears by Himself (Heb 6:13-14) that the blessing will come, both for Abraham and his seed (verse 17) and by Abraham and his seed (verse 18). Both Israel, his physical offspring – “as the sand which is on the seashore” –, and the believers of the church, his spiritual offspring – “as the stars of the heavens” –, will be blessed through Christ, the dead and risen Son of God.

The gate of the enemies will be taken possession of by Abraham’s descendants when Israel enters Canaan under Joshua and conquers the cities in that country. There will also be blessing for all the nations of the earth. That shall be in the thousand years kingdom of peace. The nations will then be blessed through Israel.

Abraham goes to live near Beersheba, which is ‘well of the oath’, to be constantly reminded, as it were, of what God has sworn. Thus we may also live in the consciousness of all the promises of God, which are in Christ yes and amen (2Cor 1:20). Do we do that?

Verses 20-24 | Rebekah Is Born

20 Now it came about after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, “Behold, Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: 21 Uz his firstborn and Buz his brother and Kemuel the father of Aram 22 and Chesed and Hazo and Pildash and Jidlaph and Bethuel.” 23 Bethuel became the father of Rebekah; these eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham’s brother. 24 His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore Tebah and Gaham and Tahash and Maacah.

The chapter concludes with the mention of the sons of Nahor, the brother of Abraham. The reason is that from Bethuel, the son of Nahor, Rebekah

was born, the future wife of Isaac. Although the marriage only takes place in Genesis 24, Rebekah is mentioned here anyway, because we see here on the basis of which that marriage can be made. That basis is the death and the resurrection of Isaac. Thus the church, the bride of the Lamb, came into existence on the basis of the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Genesis 23

Verses 1-2 | The Death of Sarah

1 Now Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; [these were] the years of the life of Sarah. 2 Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan; and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.

Before the next chapter Isaac gets his wife Rebekah, the death of Sara is mentioned first. In typology this is an important event. For we see here in the picture that first Israel – of which Sarah is a picture – is set aside, and that then the Lord Jesus – of whom Isaac is a picture – gets His bride, the church – of which Rebekah is a picture.

Sarah is the only woman whose age is mentioned in God's Word. Her days are numbered by God. God also knows her faith. It seems as if she stood in the shadow of Abraham, but in Hebrews 11 there is also talk of her faith (Heb 11:11). It did not rely on Abraham's faith, like Lot. She travelled the whole pilgrimage with Abraham and for sixty-two years she was a stranger and a sojourner. Together they have reached the goal, also in loyalty to each other. In all this she is an example to the believing woman now (1Pet 3:5-6).

What she has meant to Abraham is shown by his reaction at her death. He mourns for her and spares no effort to give her a worthy funeral and a worthy grave. Here we find for the first time tears with Abraham. We do not read about this when he leaves Ur of the Chaldeans.

The natural feelings are not set aside by faith. Mourning and sorrow are not wrong, they have their place. There is a great distinction with those who have no hope (1Thes 4:13). The believer has sorrow when a beloved fellow believer falls asleep, but is not desperate. He will see his beloved again.

Verses 3-20 | A Burial Site and a Burial

3 Then Abraham rose from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying, 4 "I am a stranger and a sojourner among you; give me a burial site

among you that I may bury my dead out of my sight.” 5 The sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him, 6 “Hear us, my LORD, you are a mighty prince among us; bury your dead in the choicest of our graves; none of us will refuse you his grave for burying your dead.” 7 So Abraham rose and bowed to the people of the land, the sons of Heth. 8 And he spoke with them, saying, “If it is your wish [for me] to bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and approach Ephron the son of Zohar for me, 9 that he may give me the cave of Machpelah which he owns, which is at the end of his field; for the full price let him give it to me in your presence for a burial site.” 10 Now Ephron was sitting among the sons of Heth; and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the sons of Heth; [even] of all who went in at the gate of his city, saying, 11 “No, my LORD, hear me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. In the presence of the sons of my people I give it to you; bury your dead.” 12 And Abraham bowed before the people of the land. 13 He spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, “If you will only please listen to me; I will give the price of the field, accept [it] from me that I may bury my dead there.” 14 Then Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, 15 “My LORD, listen to me; a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that between me and you? So bury your dead.” 16 Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, commercial standard. 17 So Ephron’s field, which was in Machpelah, which faced Mamre, the field and cave which was in it, and all the trees which were in the field, that were within all the confines of its border, were deeded over 18 to Abraham for a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city. 19 After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field at Machpelah facing Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan. 20 So the field and the cave that is in it, were deeded over to Abraham for a burial site by the sons of Heth.

After mourning and weeping, “Abraham rose”. He doesn’t continue mourning. It is important not to be swallowed by grief, but after mourning and weeping to see what is needed then. There will come a time when we have to rise again. One cannot continue mourning. This is only possible if there is faith in the resurrection, a faith based on the work of Christ on the

cross and His resurrection. There is a resurrection of the believers because He is risen (1Cor 15:20-21).

Abraham knows what to do. He wants to buy a burial site. For that he goes to the owners of the land. He buys the burial site for four hundred shekels of silver, which is a huge amount. The price of a slave is twenty shekels of silver. In the time of Jeremiah an entire field is bought for seventeen shekels of silver. So much is it worth it to him that Sarah is buried there. He pays that price without negotiating.

He boldly confesses to them that he is with them as a stranger (Heb 11:13) and therefore has no right to any part of the land. The reaction of the sons of Heth shows the great respect they have for him and that during his stay he commanded among them by his behavior. A consistent attitude as a believer commands respect, unlike Lot, who was despised (cf. Gen 23:6; Gen 19:9).

The description of the purchase of the burial site for Sarah shows how much the place of burial matters. Abraham buried her in view of the resurrection. With the purchase of the burial site Abraham has acquired the only piece of Canaan he can call his property. With this purchase he confirms his belief in the resurrection. He knows that Sarah has received life from God. Therefore he assures himself of the rights at the place where the body of his beloved is laid until she will rise to receive the promised blessing.

Abraham does not bury 'only the remains', but buries "my dead" (verse 13), "his wife Sarah" (verse 19). When the Lord Jesus is buried, it does not say that His "remains" are buried, but that "Jesus" is placed in the tomb (Jn 19:40,42). The body, that is He.

Israel is now a dead people (Eze 37:1-11). But God has buried the people with care. He knows exactly where it is. He bought the field, that is the world. Abraham paid the full price. God also paid the full price: the blood of His Son.

It is the first time that Scripture mentions a burial. Nowhere we find a commandment to bury, nor do we find a prohibition to burn. By what we know from Scripture, it is clear that burial is according to God's thoughts. We must ask ourselves what the point is. Jacob and Joseph want to be bur-

ied in the promised land. God has buried Moses Himself. The Lord Jesus is buried in a new tomb.

Burial is related to the resurrection. This is shown by the long chapter about the resurrection in the Bible, 1 Corinthians 15. Paul begins that chapter making again known to the Corinthians what the gospel means. He has already done this once orally, when he came to the Corinthians. They accepted it then and they have been saved as a result. As he writes them his letter, he tells them again what the gospel is about: "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1Cor 15:3-4).

Here is twice the expression "according to the Scriptures". This divides the sentence into two parts. We then see that in the second part of the sentence 'buried' and 'raised' belong together. This is of great significance. Paul will return to this later in that chapter.

It is clear that it is not death and burial that belong together, but burial and resurrection belong together. Burying is sowing, and sowing is done with a view to a harvest. Burning always has to do with judgment (Jos 7:25; Lev 21:9).

Abraham pays a high price. He does not want to get anything from the inhabitants of the country. Earlier he refused an offer to get something (Gen 14:23). In the negotiations about the price he works correctly. Abraham is credible, also in his business. He pays the price among witnesses. People judge our religion in connection with our carefulness in earthly matters (2Cor 8:21; 1Thes 4:12).

The purchase of the field at Machpelah and the cave that is in it as a burial site for Sarah testifies to his unshakeable faith that Canaan will become his property, according to God's promise. God's promises do not end with death. With this purchase he takes, as it were, an advance on the possession of the whole. Later he himself also (Gen 25:10), and Isaac and Rebekah and Jacob and Leah will be buried there (Gen 49:29-31; 50:13). They and all other Old Testament believers died without receiving the promise, because God wanted them not to be made perfect without the New Testament believers (Heb 11:39-40).

Genesis 24

Introduction

In this chapter we have a striking picture of the work of the triune God for obtaining a bride for the Son. The initiative comes from the Father (verses 1-9), the servant is a picture of the Holy Spirit (verses 10-61), the bride is a picture of the church that is related with the Lord Jesus (verses 62-67).

Also practically there is much in this chapter that can help and encourage us in our lives with the Lord. As in the previous chapter, we do not hear a voice of God with a command. We don't see any miracles either. We become partakers of considerations of believers who seek the way of the Lord and we see how the Lord leads.

The lesson is not that we get an answer to our prayers as quickly as the servant and then the answer we want. The lesson is that we may consider and in confidence ask the Lord for His guidance and that He gives it.

Verses 1-9 | A Wife for Isaac

1 Now Abraham was old, advanced in age; and the LORD had blessed Abraham in every way. 2 Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he owned, "Please place your hand under my thigh, 3 and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I live, 4 but you will go to my country and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac." 5 The servant said to him, "Suppose the woman is not willing to follow me to this land; should I take your son back to the land from where you came?" 6 Then Abraham said to him, "Beware that you do not take my son back there! 7 The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me and who swore to me, saying, 'To your descendants I will give this land,' He will send His angel before you, and you will take a wife for my son from there. 8 But if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be free from this my oath; only do not take my son back there." 9 So the servant placed his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter.

Abraham states that the wife for his son may not come from the nations, but from his own family. It must be someone who suits him. The application for today is that a believer may not enter into a relationship with an unbeliever (2Cor 6:14). He may only marry 'in the Lord' (1Cor 7:39), that is to say, someone who also belongs to the Lord Jesus.

The bride must be taken from the country where Abraham comes from. Isaac remains in the land of promise. Thus the Lord Jesus remains in heaven, while the Holy Spirit prepares the church to meet her Bridegroom.

Finding such a wife requires effort. There are many factors to take into account. If we look at these factors humanly, it is an impossible task. However, if we count on the guidance of the Lord, it is a path of faith that we can confidently follow to a good end.

Verses 10-14 | The Prayer of the Servant

10 Then the servant took ten camels from the camels of his master, and set out with a variety of good things of his master's in his hand; and he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor. 11 He made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw water. 12 He said, "O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today, and show lovingkindness to my master Abraham. 13 Behold, I am standing by the spring, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water; 14 now may it be that the girl to whom I say, 'Please let down your jar so that I may drink,' and who answers, 'Drink, and I will water your camels also'—[may] she [be the one] whom You have appointed for Your servant Isaac; and by this I will know that You have shown lovingkindness to my master."

The servant sets out "with a variety of good things of his master's in his hand" (cf. verse 36). For all these good things ten camels are needed, so it is not small what he takes with him. In the same way, today the Holy Spirit wants to show all the glories of the Father and the Son to the church, to us, to persuade us to go with Him through the wilderness, on our way to the Lord Jesus. Those precious things are not few.

In everything the servant does, we see full dependence on God. This is an example for us to surrender our whole lives to His guidance (Pro 3:6). It is

important – and we must pray for this – that God shows us His will and guidance and that we also have an eye for it (Psa 32:8; 27:11).

The place where the servant prays is near a well of water. There he expects the answer to his prayer. Water is a picture of the Word of God (Eph 5:26). The Holy Spirit will never do anything without the Word of God. The servant asks the LORD if He will show him that the girl has characteristics which testify that she belongs to Abraham's family, that is to say that he can see from her behavior the characteristics of Godly life, the characteristics of a believer. "A prudent wife is from the LORD" (Pro 19:14b).

The servant asks the LORD to show him that the girl is doing more than he asks. He will ask her if she has water for him. If she consents and offers to draw water for the camels, it is the girl the LORD has destined for the son of his lord. The true believer is characterized by the fact that, without any request to that effect, he does more than is asked of him.

Verses 15-20 | The Servant Meets Rebeka

15 Before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebekah who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor, came out with her jar on her shoulder. 16 The girl was very beautiful, a virgin, and no man had had relations with her; and she went down to the spring and filled her jar and came up. 17 Then the servant ran to meet her, and said, "Please let me drink a little water from your jar." 18 She said, "Drink, my LORD"; and she quickly lowered her jar to her hand, and gave him a drink. 19 Now when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw also for your camels until they have finished drinking." 20 So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, and ran back to the well to draw, and she drew for all his camels.

The LORD heareth the prayer of the servant. He is done according to his faith. His prayer is answered quickly, even before he has finished speaking. The first one to come to draw water is the girl he prayed for. She responds to his prayer. That she also thinks of the camels, proves once again that she is a righteous one (Pro 12:10a).

Rebekah is not only handsome and pure, she is also helpful and diligent. She shows her desire to refresh others when they ask for it. As said, she does more than she has been asked to do. The servant has asked for "a

little water”, but she lets him drink until he has enough. After that she also draws for “your camels”. That is a huge job, because camels drink enormous amounts of water and it concerns ten camels (verse 10). She knows what she asks and does what she wants to do. This is how the Lord Jesus sees His church. How good is it, when we, as members of His church, are committed to what serves to refresh others.

Verses 21-25 | Closer Acquaintance

21 Meanwhile, the man was gazing at her in silence, to know whether the LORD had made his journey successful or not. 22 When the camels had finished drinking, the man took a gold ring weighing a half-shekel and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten shekels in gold, 23 and said, “Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room for us to lodge in your father’s house?” 24 She said to him, “I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor.” 25 Again she said to him, “We have plenty of both straw and feed, and room to lodge in.”

Before he comes to the conclusion that she is the wife for whom he has prayed, he observes her silently. He does not rush, but seeks the confirmation of what he has asked the LORD (cf. Hab 2:1). He doesn’t disturb her in her work, but also lets her take care of the camels. When the camels have drunk enough, he decorates Rebekah with the decorations he received from Abraham (verse 47).

Rebekah has shown her service. That is a decoration. Our practice as a Christian is an ornament of the teachings of Christ (Tit 2:10). In everything in which the believer makes the new life work, he is decorated, making his beauty even greater.

To convince himself that she is the woman for whom he has prayed the LORD, he asks who she is. At the same time he asks if he can spend the night in her father’s house. Rebekah tells that she is the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Nahor, the brother of Abraham (Gen 11:26). She belongs to the family of Abraham and thus meets the necessary condition to be the wife of Isaac. The servant’s second question, about the possibility of spending the night, is answered by her with a hospitable offer.

Verses 26-27 | The Servant Praises the LORD

26 Then the man bowed low and worshiped the LORD. 27 He said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His lovingkindness and His truth toward my master; as for me, the LORD has guided me in the way to the house of my master's brothers."

After he has received the assurance that Rebekah is the woman who responds to his order, he praises the LORD for His great fidelity to Abraham and the guidance he himself has experienced. He has prayed for prosperity, and now that he has obtained it, he thanks God for it. What we receive as an answer to our prayer should as a first reaction of be answered by us with thanksgiving (Dan 2:19).

Verses 28-31 | Laban

28 Then the girl ran and told her mother's household about these things. 29 Now Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban; and Laban ran outside to the man at the spring. 30 When he saw the ring and the bracelets on his sister's wrists, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, "This is what the man said to me," he went to the man; and behold, he was standing by the camels at the spring. 31 And he said, "Come in, blessed of the LORD! Why do you stand outside since I have prepared the house, and a place for the camels?"

Rebekah's brother, Laban, is a man who is only interested in adoration. He is a picture of an earthly- and worldly-minded Christian. Outwardly such a Christian belongs to the family of God, but like Laban, it is only about monetary gain (cf. Acts 8:13-24).

Verses 32-49 | The Report of the Servant and His Question

32 So the man entered the house. Then Laban unloaded the camels, and he gave straw and feed to the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him. 33 But when [food] was set before him to eat, he said, "I will not eat until I have told my business." And he said, "Speak on." 34 So he said, "I am Abraham's servant. 35 The LORD has greatly blessed my master, so that he has become rich; and He has given him flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and servants and maids, and camels and donkeys. 36 Now Sarah my

master's wife bore a son to my master in her old age, and he has given him all that he has. 37 My master made me swear, saying, 'You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live; 38 but you shall go to my father's house and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son.' 39 I said to my master, 'Suppose the woman does not follow me.' 40 He said to me, 'The LORD, before whom I have walked, will send His angel with you to make your journey successful, and you will take a wife for my son from my relatives and from my father's house; 41 then you will be free from my oath, when you come to my relatives; and if they do not give her to you, you will be free from my oath.' 42 "So I came today to the spring, and said, 'O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, if now You will make my journey on which I go successful; 43 behold, I am standing by the spring, and may it be that the maiden who comes out to draw, and to whom I say, "Please let me drink a little water from your jar"; 44 and she will say to me, "You drink, and I will draw for your camels also"; let her be the woman whom the LORD has appointed for my master's son.' 45 "Before I had finished speaking in my heart, behold, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder, and went down to the spring and drew, and I said to her, 'Please let me drink.' 46 She quickly lowered her jar from her [shoulder], and said, 'Drink, and I will water your camels also'; so I drank, and she watered the camels also. 47 Then I asked her, and said, 'Whose daughter are you?' And she said, 'The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bore to him'; and I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her wrists. 48 And I bowed low and worshiped the LORD, and blessed the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had guided me in the right way to take the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son. 49 So now if you are going to deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, let me know, that I may turn to the right hand or the left."

If food is set before the servant to eat, he will not eat until he has told his business. What occupies him internally – his lord's command – is more important to him than the needs of his body (verses 32-33). We see the same with the Lord Jesus in His life on earth (Jn 4:34).

The servant tells them in detail the wonderful confluence of circumstances, in which he clearly describes the guidance of God. First he introduces himself. He is the servant of Abraham. Then he tells about his sponsor and

how he is blessed by the LORD, and that there is a son to whom Abraham has given all that he possesses (verses 34-36).

Next, he announces with which commission his lord sent him on his way, how he reacted to it and what Abraham said about it (verses 37-41). He tells them how he prayed to ask for guidance through a sign (verses 42-44). Then he recounts how God has answered his prayer – which he has spoken in his heart – to the smallest details (verses 45-47). Finally, he reports how he bowed his knees before the LORD and worshipped Him for the goodness shown to him (verse 48).

The servant's report contains a wealth of data on the greatness of his lord and his son. He also talks about what his lord's plan is with regard to the bride. He also mentions the way he went.

In all this we can see a picture of the work of the Holy Spirit Who wants to tell us about the glory of the Lord Jesus and God's plans with the church: "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose [it] to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose [it] to you" (Jn 16:13-15).

When the servant has reported, he asks them for their reaction. Similarly, the Holy Spirit is waiting for a response from us when He has told us about the Father and the Son. Are we prepared to leave everything behind to be with the Bridegroom?

Verses 50-58 | Reactions of Laban, Bethuel and Rebekah

50 Then Laban and Bethuel replied, "The matter comes from the LORD; [so] we cannot speak to you bad or good. 51 Here is Rebekah before you, take [her] and go, and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the LORD has spoken." 52 When Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed himself to the ground before the LORD. 53 The servant brought out articles of silver and articles of gold, and garments, and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother. 54 Then he and the men who were with him ate and drank and spent the night. When they arose in the morning, he said, "Send

me away to my master.” 55 But her brother and her mother said, “Let the girl stay with us [a few] days, say ten; afterward she may go.” 56 He said to them, “Do not delay me, since the LORD has prospered my way. Send me away that I may go to my master.” 57 And they said, “We will call the girl and consult her wishes.” 58 Then they called Rebekah and said to her, “Will you go with this man?” And she said, “I will go.”

Brother Laban and father Bethuel acknowledge that the LORD is at work. They cannot say anything “bad or good”, that is to say that they cannot add or take away anything. They can’t change anything about it (cf. Num 24:13). Therefore they give permission to the servant to take Rebekah with them. Their consent, by the way, seems to be more forced than warm-hearted. This also appears to be the case further on, when attempts are made to delay Rebekah’s departure. The servant accepts the consent from the hand of the LORD and honors Him for it.

The preparations for the journey from Rebekah to Isaac include a new series of gifts. For Rebekah he brings out silver and gold jewelry and clothing. Laban and her mother receive precious gifts. When all is ready, the servant and those who are with him can eat and drink and sleep peacefully.

The next day the servant wants to return to his Lord. There is no reason to stay any longer. He knows how Abraham and Isaac are looking forward to the outcome of his mission. Rebekah’s brother and mother, however, do not share that desire. They want Rebekah to stay with them for another ten days or so. The servant, however, does not allow himself to be detained. Then Rebekah is asked if she wants to go “with this man”. Her answer is short and powerful: “I will go.”

When we grew up in a Christian family and have heard a lot about all the treasures of the Father and the Son, the question comes to us as to whether, under the guidance of God’s Spirit, we want to consecrate ourselves to the Lord Jesus in our journey to Him. The answer will be clear from our lives.

Verses 59-61 | Rebekah Goes with the Servant

59 Thus they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse with Abraham’s servant and his men. 60 They blessed Rebekah and said to her,

*“May you, our sister,
Become thousands of ten thousands,
And may your descendants possess
The gate of those who hate them.”*

61 Then Rebekah arose with her maids, and they mounted the camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and departed.

If Rebekah has made her decision known without any reservation, she may go. Her family wishes her numerous offspring and the victory over her enemies. Then she prepares herself and follows the man, that is the servant, who takes her and leaves for his lord and the son of his lord.

Verses 62-67 | Isaac and Rebekah

62 Now Isaac had come from going to Beer-lahai-roi; for he was living in the Negev. 63 Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening; and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, camels were coming. 64 Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from the camel. 65 She said to the servant, “Who is that man walking in the field to meet us?” And the servant said, “He is my master.” Then she took her veil and covered herself. 66 The servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. 67 Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent, and he took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her; thus Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.

The actual trip is not mentioned. Rebekah’s heart is full of her groom. The heart of Isaac is full of his bride. Isaac is at the well Lahai-Roi, there he lives. When Rebekah hears who he is, she covers herself with a veil. That is not for not to be seen by other men, but to be alone for him. The woman’s long hair, called a veil (1Cor 11:15), is a beautiful expression of the devotion of the church, the bride, to the Lord Jesus, the Bridegroom.

Then Isaac brings her into his mother Sara’s tent and marries her. Here, for the second time, there is talk of ‘love’ in the Bible. The first time it concerns the love between Abraham and Isaac, a picture of the Father and the Son (Gen 22:2). This is the love between Isaac and Rebekah, a picture of the Lord Jesus and the church. Sarah is replaced by Rebekah; so the church has replaced Israel.

This is not about the rapture of church to be with the Lord Jesus. The place of association is here a tent. That speaks of being a stranger. The picture we have before us is the desire of the Father and the Holy Spirit to already work on earth for the church to find her all in the Son and to have fellowship with Him already, to the joy of His heart.

Genesis 25

Verses 1-6 | Descendants of Abraham and Ketura

1 Now Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. 2 She bore to him Zimran and Jokshan and Medan and Midian and Ishbak and Shuah. 3 Jokshan became the father of Sheba and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim and Letushim and Leummim. 4 The sons of Midian [were] Ephah and Epher and Hanoch and Abida and Eldaah. All these [were] the sons of Keturah. 5 Now Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac; 6 but to the sons of his concubines, Abraham gave gifts while he was still living, and sent them away from his son Isaac eastward, to the land of the east.

Abraham has taken a second extra wife next to Hagar. Scripture is silent about it when that has happened. However, the Holy Spirit does not mention this connection and who came forth from it until now, after the connection between Isaac and Rebekah. In Abraham all the nations of the earth will be blessed (Gen 12:2-3). It has been said several times that his descendants will be like the sand which is on the seashore and like the stars of the heavens, which speaks of an earthly people (sand) and a heavenly people (stars).

Besides Isaac and Ishmael, we now find more sons. They represent the nations of the earth, all of which will also be blessed by what the LORD promised Abraham. The blessing for the whole earth will be enjoyed in the millennial kingdom of peace. That blessing will come through the son of the promise.

Abraham gives everything he has to Isaac, while there are gifts for the others. Thus God has given the Lord Jesus, as Heir of all things, all things into His hands. And He distributes it to others.

The others are sent away “eastward”, which in Genesis indicates being put aside. They are sent away from Isaac here, just like Ishmael before, but with gifts, just like Ishmael also got promises. There is also blessing for them. People who are bound to Israel by carnal bonds will be blessed in the kingdom of peace through Israel.

Verses 7-11 | Death and Burial of Abraham

7 These are all the years of Abraham's life that he lived, one hundred and seventy-five years. 8 Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age, an old man and satisfied [with life]; and he was gathered to his people. 9 Then his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, facing Mamre, 10 the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth; there Abraham was buried with Sarah his wife. 11 It came about after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac lived by Beer-lahai-roi.

When Abraham dies, he is buried by his two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, next to Sarah. They both, still, wait in the land of promise in the grave for the fulfilment of the promise.

God's blessing is for Isaac, who dwells at the well Lahai-Roi, the well that speaks of God's Word and His revelation therein.

Verses 12-18 | The Verseserations of Ishmael

12 Now these are [the records of] the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's maid, bore to Abraham; 13 and these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, in the order of their birth: Nebaioth, the firstborn of Ishmael, and Kedar and Adbeel and Mibsam 14 and Mishma and Dumah and Massa, 15 Hadad and Tema, Jetur, Naphish and Kedemah. 16 These are the sons of Ishmael and these are their names, by their villages, and by their camps; twelve princes according to their tribes. 17 These are the years of the life of Ishmael, one hundred and thirty-seven years; and he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people. 18 They settled from Havilah to Shur which is east of Egypt as one goes toward Assyria; he settled in defiance of all his relatives.

Before the history of Isaac begins, the descendants of Isaac are mentioned first. The natural comes first, then the spiritual (1Cor 15:46). The flesh, nature, always seems to win first, and the Spirit seems to lose. But in the end everything God has promised will be fulfilled. That is what faith relies on.

The descendants of Ishmael live "from Havilah to Sur" which is between Egypt and Assur. These are the greatest enemies of Israel, but ultimately God also takes care of them just as He does of Israel (Isa 19:23).

For the record, at the end of this section again the types, what the different persons represent:

1. Abraham represents the principle of faith;
2. Sarah the principle of grace;
3. Hagar the principle of law;
4. Isaac is the Son, died and risen;
5. Ishmael is Israel according to the flesh;
6. Rebekah the church;
7. Keturah the nations.

Verses 19-26 | Birth of Esau and Jacob

19 Now these are [the records of] the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham became the father of Isaac; 20 and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife. 21 Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived. 22 But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is so, why then am I [this way]?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. 23 The LORD said to her,

*"Two nations are in your womb;
And two peoples will be separated from your body;
And one people shall be stronger than the other;
And the older shall serve the younger."*

24 When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. 25 Now the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau. 26 Afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob; and Isaac was sixty years old when she gave birth to them.

When the birth of a son lacks with Abraham, he tries to conceive it in the power of the flesh. What is begotten, Ishmael, is not the son of promise. When the birth of a son lacks with Isaac, it leads him to prayer, despite the fact that he knows the promise of God. Infertility must bring the faith into action. The answer to his prayer was still twenty years away. But God is to be entreated. We find that God lets Himself to be entreated several times

in the Old Testament (Gen 25:21; 2Sam 24:25; 1Chr 5:20; 2Chr 33:13,19; Ezra 8:22-23; Isa 19:22).

Isaac hath prayed the LORD for his wife. Although God has promised to multiply his descendants, He prays for it. This is an important indication that God's promises encourage us to pray. God's promises form the basis of our prayer (Dan 9:2-3). Although Isaac prayed for this blessing for many years and the answer did not come, he did not stop praying. The Lord Jesus exhorts us to pray always and not to become discouraged (Lk 18:1). If we do, we will experience that we are not seeking God's face in vain (Isa 45:19).

Rebekah has her own dealings with the LORD and asks Him why she is expecting twins. She receives an answer from the LORD. The two boys are two peoples, each with their own place on earth, determined by Him.

It is not written here that God hated Esau. That is written in Malachi 1, that is to say, only fourteen hundred years later, after Esau in his descendants has shown his true nature of godlessness and revolt (Mal 1:2-3). If Esau had suited himself in the place God gives him here, even before his birth, he would have received the full blessing of it.

Jacob reveals already at his birth that he wants to master Esau in his own way, that he wants to receive the blessing of God in his own power (Hos 12:4a). Esau, the stronger one, comes out first, but Jacob's hand holds the heel of Esau. He wants to be as it were ahead of Esau. By doing so, he indicates that he wants to seize the birthright and the related blessing.

The name he gets alludes to this. "Jacob" means "heels holder", with the thought of holding the heel to bring someone down (cf. Gen 27:36). This name he would live up to many times in his life through his actions. Jacob is interested in the blessing of God, unlike Esau, but he wants to secure it by tricks.

Verses 27-28 | Isaac Chooses Esau; Rebekah Chooses Jacob

27 When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field, but Jacob was a peaceful man, living in tents. 28 Now Isaac loved Esau, because he had a taste for game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Isaac and Rebekah, as parents, do not set a good example. Everyone has their own sweetheart. He is chosen on the basis of their own taste. That is wrong. Children are not there for parents to satisfy their tastes, but parents are there for children to raise them up for the Lord.

We can have more respect for Rebekah than for Isaac. Isaac lets itself be guided by his lusts. Rebekah chooses Jacob and loves him, who indeed is chosen by God in the line of His promises. Esau is a hunter, a killer like Nimrod; Jacob is someone who lives in tents, a pilgrim, a shepherd.

Verses 29-34 | Esau Despises the Birthright

29 When Jacob had cooked stew, Esau came in from the field and he was famished; 30 and Esau said to Jacob, "Please let me have a swallow of that red stuff there, for I am famished." Therefore his name was called Edom. 31 But Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." 32 Esau said, "Behold, I am about to die; so of what [use] then is the birthright to me?" 33 And Jacob said, "First swear to me"; so he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. 34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew; and he ate and drank, and rose and went on his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

The first proof that Esau is an ungodly man and that Jacob himself wants to secure the blessing, is provided in this history with the lentil stew. The difference in character that appears here, will be expressed again and again in their future lives. Esau is only interested in here-and-now. He cares nothing about what God has promised him. He wants an immediate satisfaction of his needs. For later he does not care.

Esau is like all those people who serve their belly and not God. His eyes follow his heart. He wants to eat and when he sees "that red stuff there", he wants it immediately. The lentil stew is like the wine that "is red when it sparkles in the cup" and glides smoothly down, but "at last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper" (Pro 23:31-32).

In order not to become prey to the lusts of the flesh, it is necessary that we learn to live in self-judgement. This is only possible by looking at Christ and His work for us on the cross. Only then can we keep ourselves dead for sin (Rom 6:10-12).

For Esau life is short, he doesn't care what his children will have. He thinks only of himself. The blessings are of no value to him, nor are his parents. He squanders his birthright for immediate pleasure, why he is also called an "ungodly" (Heb 12:16).

Esau never repented this ungodly denial of the birthright. There is no place for this with him (Heb 12:17). Nor did he seek repentance, but blessing. Anyone who repents his sins and goes to God will receive forgiveness. However, Esau did not cry later on because he repented that he sold his birthright, but because he lost the blessings belonging to it. He cried, not because he is a sinner, but because he is a loser. Such tears will be in hell.

In short traits his attitude is described in verse 34: "He ate and drank, and rose and went on his way." That is his life, like that of more and more people today (1Cor 15:32). There is no room for God. His life is closed for looking upward and focused on what is down on earth. That is the tragedy of many people, especially those who grew up in a family where they heard about God and the Lord Jesus, but consciously rejected it. They have chosen the world and that is their life (Psa 17:14a).

Genesis 26

Verses 1-6 | The LORD Appears to Isaac

1 Now there was a famine in the land, besides the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham. So Isaac went to Gerar, to Abimelech king of the Philistines. 2 The LORD appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land of which I shall tell you. 3 Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham. 4 I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; 5 because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws." 6 So Isaac lived in Gerar.

Isaac never left the land like Abraham, he never went to Egypt. He has been in the neighborhood of it, in Gerar, that is the part of the land where the Philistines have a say. He goes to Gerar because there is hunger in the land. Hunger is often a trial from God to see how we react (cf. Gen 12:10; Rth 1:1), to see where our heart is. Blessings carry the danger of forgetting their source, which is God.

Isaac moves into the sphere of influence of the Philistines, who are a picture of the nominal Christians. With this he repeats the mistake of his father Abraham (Gen 20:1). If his trust had been in the LORD, he would not have gone there. Isaac stays in the border area. There the LORD appears to him and tells him what He will give him. He does not have to go to the Philistines. The LORD reminds him of the blessing he has in the land which he has sworn to Abraham to give him.

He also confirms the promise, and now to Isaac personally, that his descendants will be like the stars of heaven. The promise is based on Abraham's obedience to God's orders, above all that he offered his son, a picture of Christ's offer. Despite everything the LORD says, he remains in Gerar.

Verses 7-11 | Lie of Isaac

7 When the men of the place asked about his wife, he said, "She is my sister," for he was afraid to say, "my wife," [thinking], "the men of the place might kill me on account of Rebekah, for she is beautiful." 8 It came about, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out through a window, and saw, and behold, Isaac was caressing his wife Rebekah. 9 Then Abimelech called Isaac and said, "Behold, certainly she is your wife! How then did you say, 'She is my sister'?" And Isaac said to him, "Because I said, 'I might die on account of her.'" 10 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 brought guilt upon us." 11 So Abimelech charged all the people, saying, "He who touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death."

That Isaac is not in the right position is clear from his denial of his relationship with Rebekah. This is also the result with Abraham, if he is not there where God has sent him. The picture of Abraham denying his relationship with Sarah is the picture of someone who gives up the living by grace. Isaac's denial of his relationship with Rebekah gives the picture of someone who abandons the principles of the church.

Isaac who adapts to the life of Gerar, the Philistines, is the picture of someone who adapts to the life of the nominal Christians. Life on earth occupies a large place, while the heavenly life of the church is not lived.

Yet he is 'caught' in his true relationship with Rebekah. In his heart he has not given up that connection. A 'secret' confession is not appropriate for a Christian, nor is it appropriate for Isaac. Inner desires and outer behavior should match. What the mouth confesses should reflect what is present in the heart. Isaac is reprimanded for it, which means a reproach to him.

Verses 12-22 | Wells of Water

12 Now Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. And the LORD blessed him, 13 and the man became rich, and continued to grow richer until he became very wealthy; 14 for he had possessions of flocks and herds and a great household, so that the Philistines envied him. 15 Now all the wells which his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines stopped up by filling them with earth. 16 Then Abimel-

ech said to Isaac, "Go away from us, for you are too powerful for us." 17 And Isaac departed from there and camped in the valley of Gerar, and settled there. 18 Then Isaac dug again the wells of water which had been dug in the days of his father Abraham, for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham; and he gave them the same names which his father had given them. 19 But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of flowing water, 20 the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with the herdsmen of Isaac, saying, "The water is ours!" So he named the well Esek, because they contended with him. 21 Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over it too, so he named it Sitnah. 22 He moved away from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it; so he named it Rehoboth, for he said, "At last the LORD has made room for us, and we will be fruitful in the land."

It is remarkable that the LORD blesses Isaac in Gerar. He has His aim with that. It is His way of letting Isaac leave Gerar.

Because of his many possessions there is jealousy among the Philistines and battle for wells of water. The wells dug up by his father Abraham have been stopped up by the Philistines. Wells of water, a picture of the versatile Word of God, from which believers have drawn in the past, are stopped up by filling them with earth, the things of life. When life is full of all that the world has to offer, there is no desire to read the Bible, the well of water is stopped up. Also what believers in earlier days have dug up for us from God's Word and written down in comments, remains closed for us. There is no interest in God's Word or in books that explain and apply God's Word.

Isaac digs the stopped-up wells again. In this way it is also possible for us to reopen closed wells in personal faith. Then we must first remove from our lives 'the earth', with which the wells have been stopped up. That means that the earthly things that fill our lives no longer have that dominant place.

This opens the way to make use of what others have discovered and dug from the Word (Job 8:8,10). Although we have to make use of the light of previous times, that does not mean that we have dwell there. We will have to do our own research, by which the knowledge will increase (Dan 12:4). The discoveries we make then are new to us, but they are the same things

that believers have discovered in earlier times. The truths we learn from God's Word must always be mentioned by the same names – "he gave them the same names which his father had given them" – neither give them another meaning.

If the digging of wells takes place in the land of the Philistines, Christianity, where nominal Christians are in charge, quarrel is the result. Nominal Christians claim the truth, but then indeed *their own* idea about the truth, while they reject the truth of God's Word. If we come up with the truth of God's Word, they will quarrel over it.

In order not to have that quarrel anymore, separation is necessary. Isaac moves from there and goes somewhere else. As a result, he digs another well and they do not quarrel over it. He acknowledges in this the good hand of the LORD and gives the well a name that speaks of the room given to him by the LORD. Separate from evil means to break free from human bonds in order to serve the LORD in freedom by the power we may draw from His Word in ever new ways.

Verses 23-33 | Covenant of Isaac with Abimelech

23 Then he went up from there to Beersheba. 24 The LORD appeared to him the same night and said,

"I am the God of your father Abraham;

Do not fear, for I am with you.

I will bless you, and multiply your descendants,

For the sake of My servant Abraham."

25 So he built an altar there and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there; and there Isaac's servants dug a well. 26 Then Abimelech came to him from Gerar with his adviser Ahuzzath and Phicol the commander of his army. 27 Isaac said to them, "Why have you come to me, since you hate me and have sent me away from you?" 28 They said, "We see plainly that the LORD has been with you; so we said, 'Let there now be an oath between us, [even] between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you, 29 that you will do us no harm, just as we have not touched you and have done to you nothing but good and have sent you away in peace. You are now the blessed of the LORD.'" 30 Then he made them a feast, and they ate and drank. 31 In the morning they

arose early and exchanged oaths; then Isaac sent them away and they departed from him in peace. 32 Now it came about on the same day, that Isaac's servants came in and told him about the well which they had dug, and said to him, "We have found water." 33 So he called it Shibah; therefore the name of the city is Beersheba to this day.

When Isaac has separated himself from the Philistines, he leaves their country and goes to live in Beersheba, just across the border in the far south of the promised land. There the LORD appears to him, there he is encouraged by the LORD, there he builds an altar, there he pitches his tent, and there his servants dig a well. The appearance of the LORD and what He says to Isaac makes Isaac a worshipper (altar), a conscious pilgrim (tent) and a seeker of more of the truth (digging a well). What a special recovery after his deviation!

If Isaac lives with the Philistines, there are reproaches against him. His life does not testify there that the LORD is with him. After he has separated himself from the Philistines, there is recognition from the side of the Philistines that the LORD is with him (cf. Pro 16:7).

Verses 34-35 | Esau and his Wives

34 When Esau was forty years old he married Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite; 35 and they brought grief to Isaac and Rebekah.

Esau resembles Cain. Both state that they take themselves a wife. Both Adam and Isaac receive his wife from the LORD. Esau chooses his wife from one of the nations of the land of whom the LORD says He will destroy them and drive them out (Exo 23:23,28; 33:2; 34:11). This shows that the birthright does not play any role for him, he does not take it into account.

Esau's own will in the choice of his wife(s) is a great sorrow for his parents. Today it is also a great sorrow for many parents when their children in their partner's choice do not care about all they have heard about this from God's Word at home.

Genesis 27

Introduction

In this chapter Isaac is a picture of a believer who lives in the land, that is the believer who is blessed with all spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, but who seeks the things of the earth and is guided by them. In practical terms, we see the consequences of this in this chapter. We see a family that knows God, but where nothing of this knowledge and trust in Him is found. On the contrary, we see how desires, deceit and lies play a role. Every member of the family acts without asking God what to do.

It is a cautionary example for us that we will always be aware that the blessings we have received have been given us by grace. As soon as we forget that, we start looking for our own interests with all the sad consequences thereof.

Verses 1-4 | Isaac Wants to Bless Esau

1 Now it came about, when Isaac was old and his eyes were too dim to see, that he called his older son Esau and said to him, "My son." And he said to him, "Here I am." 2 Isaac said, "Behold now, I am old [and] I do not know the day of my death. 3 Now then, please take your gear, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me; 4 and prepare a savory dish for me such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, so that my soul may bless you before I die."

Isaac has become blind. In the application this means that his understanding of spiritual things has disappeared. He can no longer see the blessings of the land. That was different with Moses (Deu 34:7).

He wants to bless Esau, while knowing that the LORD has given Jacob the birthright. This is the result of his predilection for "a savory dish". That makes blind to see things as the Lord sees them. Isaac, who has started so well, fails when he gets old.

He talks about the day of his death, but it will take still forty-three years before he dies. He will be one hundred and eighty years old. Here he is one hundred and thirty-seven years.

Verses 5-17 | Conspiracy

5 Rebekah was listening while Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game to bring [home], 6 Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "Behold, I heard your father speak to your brother Esau, saying, 7 'Bring me [some] game and prepare a savory dish for me, that I may eat, and bless you in the presence of the LORD before my death.' 8 Now therefore, my son, listen to me as I command you. 9 Go now to the flock and bring me two choice young goats from there, that I may prepare them [as] a savory dish for your father, such as he loves. 10 Then you shall bring [it] to your father, that he may eat, so that he may bless you before his death." 11 Jacob answered his mother Rebekah, "Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man and I am a smooth man. 12 Perhaps my father will feel me, then I will be as a deceiver in his sight, and I will bring upon myself a curse and not a blessing." 13 But his mother said to him, "Your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get [them] for me." 14 So he went and got [them], and brought [them] to his mother; and his mother made savory food such as his father loved. 15 Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau her elder son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. 16 And she put the skins of the young goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. 17 She also gave the savory food and the bread, which she had made, to her son Jacob.

Rebekah hears of Isaac's intention. That makes her worried. She thinks that the Divine blessing will pass Jacob by. Instead of going to Isaac and reminding him of God's intention to bless the youngest for the eldest, she resorted to deceit. It is one thing to know the thoughts of God, it is another thing how they are realized. It is terrible to help God by deceit.

Wouldn't God have answered her if she had gone to Him with this problem? She used to do that (Gen 25:22). She started with Isaac in such harmony. They have received one another from the LORD (Gen 24:1-4,12-15,57-67). Together they sought Him for having children (Gen 25:21). Now she is going to cheat on her husband. She thinks she can secure Jacob and the blessing for him by this, but she loses Jacob by it.

The cheating is done by two young goats and their skins. Later Jacob will be deceived in the same way (Gen 37:31-34). Jacob still objects first. He thinks along, but only in a negative sense. He only thinks about what the consequences would be if the fraud were discovered. There is no feeling of guilt, but only fear of the curse when discovered.

Rebekah declares that he is prepared to take on the curse. She does see a solution. The skins provide the solution. Then she prepares the savory food “such as his father loved” (verse 14b). She prepares the goats so that it looks like game, making it “deceptive food” (Pro 23:3).

It is very bad to misuse the knowledge that a man and a wife have acquired from each other in a marriage for their own plans. Here knowledge undermines their unity, while what spouses know about each other should serve to strengthen their marriage. There is no more openness. They play hide and seek for each other.

Verses 18-29 | Jacob Steals the Blessing

18 Then he came to his father and said, “My father.” And he said, “Here I am. Who are you, my son?” 19 Jacob said to his father, “I am Esau your firstborn; I have done as you told me. Get up, please, sit and eat of my game, that you may bless me.” 20 Isaac said to his son, “How is it that you have [it] so quickly, my son?” And he said, “Because the LORD your God caused [it] to happen to me.” 21 Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Please come close, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not.” 22 So Jacob came close to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, “The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.” 23 He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau’s hands; so he blessed him. 24 And he said, “Are you really my son Esau?” And he said, “I am.” 25 So he said, “Bring [it] to me, and I will eat of my son’s game, that I may bless you.” And he brought [it] to him, and he ate; he also brought him wine and he drank. 26 Then his father Isaac said to him, “Please come close and kiss me, my son.” 27 So he came close and kissed him; and when he smelled the smell of his garments, he blessed him and said,

“See, the smell of my son

Is like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed;

28 Now may God give you of the dew of heaven,
 And of the fatness of the earth,
 And an abundance of grain and new wine;
 29 May peoples serve you,
 And nations bow down to you;
 Be master of your brothers,
 And may your mother's sons bow down to you.
 Cursed be those who curse you,
 And blessed be those who bless you."

Jacob, disguised as Esau, comes to his father. Isaac touches him and says: "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." If we apply this to a believer, we can say: "He talks like a believer, but his deeds are those of the world. What we say should correspond to what we do.

When Isaac kisses Jacob, he smells the smell of the field. What a sad thing it is, when the 'scent' of the world hangs around a believer. What we eat determines how we scent. Do we eat the food of the world or the food of the Lord Jesus?

Up to three times Isaac expressed his suspicion, his uncertainty, whether he really has to do with Esau (verses 20,22,24). Because he depends on his sense of touch and smell, he does not find out the truth and believes the lie. If he had trusted God, he would never have been deceived despite his blindness (cf. 1Kgs 14:4-5).

Jacob plays the role of Esau well. That is clear from what he says when Isaac notices that he is back from the hunt so quickly. Jacob then speaks of "the LORD your God". That is what Esau would say. Esau has no connection with the LORD and would therefore never speak of 'the LORD *my* God', while Jacob would say so.

The blessing that Isaac pronounces on Jacob is a blessing as it would be meant for Esau. Isaac blesses Jacob with the abundance of heaven and the earth, with being the master of other nations and his brothers, and with curse upon all who curse him, and blessing upon all who bless him. It is not the blessing as God in its fullness intended for Jacob. That makes Isaac somewhat right in Genesis 28 (Gen 28:4), while God Himself describes the full blessing in Genesis 35 (Gen 35:11-12).

History as it is mentioned here does not show much evidence of faith. Yet Isaac is not a man who lives without God. In the blessing he passes on, faith is present (Heb 11:20).

Verses 30-40 | Isaac Blesses Esau

30 Now it came about, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had hardly gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. 31 Then he also made savory food, and brought it to his father; and he said to his father, "Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that you may bless me." 32 Isaac his father said to him, "Who are you?" And he said, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau." 33 Then Isaac trembled violently, and said, "Who was he then that hunted game and brought [it] to me, so that I ate of all [of it] before you came, and blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed." 34 When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me, [even] me also, O my father!" 35 And he said, "Your brother came deceitfully and has taken away your blessing." 36 Then he said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob, for he has supplanted me these two times? He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing." And he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" 37 But Isaac replied to Esau, "Behold, I have made him your master, and all his relatives I have given to him as servants; and with grain and new wine I have sustained him. Now as for you then, what can I do, my son?" 38 Esau said to his father, "Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me, [even] me also, O my father." So Esau lifted his voice and wept. 39 Then Isaac his father answered and said to him,

*"Behold, away from the fertility of the earth shall be your dwelling,
And away from the dew of heaven from above.*

*40 "By your sword you shall live,
And your brother you shall serve;
But it shall come about when you become restless,
That you will break his yoke from your neck."*

When Esau comes, Isaac trembles violently. He is not indignant about Jacob, but his conscience speaks. Suddenly he comes into the light of God. He sees that God has come in between. He does not turn back the blessing, but confirms the blessing given to Jacob. With this he submits himself to

the will of God. Therefore the blessing he gave Jacob can be seen as an act of faith (Heb 11:20).

Esau searches with tears for the blessing with which Jacob is blessed, but is rejected (Heb 12:16-17). The blessing is not taken from Jacob and given to Esau. In verse 36, Esau gives a misrepresentation of the situation. He seeks the blame with the other. We also sometimes do. This already happens at the time of the fall into sin. What is needed is straightforward confession.

Esau also receives a blessing, but one much less than Jakob received. The first blessing Jacob receives is that of the dew of heaven. Esau receives the fatness of the earth, for that is the most important thing for him, while he is excluded from the dew of heaven.

Verses 41-46 | Rebekah Wants Jacob to Flee

41 So Esau bore a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him; and Esau said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob." 42 Now when the words of her elder son Esau were reported to Rebekah, she sent and called her younger son Jacob, and said to him, "Behold your brother Esau is consoling himself concerning you [by planning] to kill you. 43 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice, and arise, flee to Haran, to my brother Laban! 44 Stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury subsides, 45 until your brother's anger against you subsides and he forgets what you did to him. Then I will send and get you from there. Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?" 46 Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am tired of living because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Heth, like these, from the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?"

The fact that Esau is an ungodly man is also evident from what he says to himself. He talks about killing his "brother Jacob". In this is revealed the spirit of Cain, who "was of the evil one and slew his brother" (1Jn 3:12).

Rebekah and Jacob both won when it comes to getting what they wanted, even though they got nothing more than what God wanted to give them. However, they have also lost a lot of what they have wanted to secure. We see that here.

Rebekah wants Jacob to flee. According to her, it will only take a few days (verse 44). The reality is that she will never see him again. Rebekah also suffers the consequences of their common deceit. The stolen blessing only brings grief and separation. Jacob will become a vagabond for twenty years. He owes that to himself.

It seems Rebekah uses another trick in verse 46. She talks to Isaac about the wives of Esau and sighs that Jacob will not “take a wife ... from the daughters of the land”. By noticing this she indirectly says that Jacob should leave. What is meant as running away from Esau, becomes in this way a permissible departure, with the blessing of Isaac. That in reality it is a fly, says the prophet Hosea (Hos 12:12).

That God, with Jacob, through all deceit and tricks, still fulfills His own plans with Jacob is a matter that arouses great admiration. Thus is God, Who can use the failure of man, also of His own, to fulfil His plans. This does not in any way reduce the responsibility of man, it increases in all cases the worship that God deserves for it. The history of Jacob begins with trickery and deception; the last thing we read of Jacob is that he worships.

Genesis 28

Verses 1-5 | Isaac Sends Jacob Away

1 So Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and charged him, and said to him, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. 2 Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and from there take to yourself a wife from the daughters of Laban your mother's brother. 3 May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples. 4 May He also give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you, that you may possess the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham." 5 Then Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Paddan-aram to Laban, son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.

Jacob's departure is not presented as on the lam here as in verse 43 of the previous chapter. His departure is presented here as an assignment that Isaac gives him to look for a wife. The wife of Jacob, like that of Isaac (Gen 24:2-3), may not come from the nations around him, but must come from the family that is in communication with God.

On his departure Jacob receives a blessing from Isaac that is greater than the one he has been given through his deceit. So he leaves the land, from which Isaac never left, to go to his mother's family. Rebekah is here called "the mother of Jacob and Esau". Jacob is mentioned first, not because he is his mother's darling, but because he is the heir.

Verses 6-9 | Reaction of Esau

6 Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram to take to himself a wife from there, [and that] when he blessed him he charged him, saying, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan," 7 and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Paddan-aram. 8 So Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan displeased his father Isaac; 9 and Esau went to Ishmael, and married, besides the wives that he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth.

At first sight, it seems as if Esau is concerned about everything he has heard about the choice of a wife. He takes someone from Abraham's family. But in the first place it is an additional wife. That is never God's purpose. Secondly, it is a wife from a family sent away by Abraham (Gen 21:10-14). Ishmael represents the works of the flesh. With that Esau connects himself.

Verses 10-15 | The Dream of Jacob

10 Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran. 11 He came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place. 12 He had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. 13 And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. 14 Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 15 Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

When Jacob is on his way, he gets his first encounter with God. That happens in a dream. It is intended as an encouragement. While Jacob lies there lonely, possibly regretting his past conduct, he sees how the earth and the heaven are connected by means of a ladder. At the top of the ladder stands the LORD, who says Who He is and what He will do for Jacob.

What he sees and hears makes it clear to him that heaven oversees him and goes with him wherever he goes on earth. Angels rise up to bring the needs for living on earth to God, after which God's help and protection for man is given from heaven.

About the connection between heaven and earth that Jacob sees, the Lord Jesus speaks to Nathanael (Jn 1:51). This connection will become a reality in the kingdom of peace when the Son of man, the Lord Jesus, is on earth. The Lord Jesus also says there, as Jacob sees in the dream, that the angels of God first ascend to heaven and then descend from heaven. The earth shall

be united with heaven, the Son of man shall reign, and his servants, the angels, shall maintain the connection between the earth and the heaven.

The LORD appears unto Jacob, and makes him four promises:

1. He will give him and his descendants the land on which he lies.
2. His descendants will be like the dust of the earth.
3. In him and his descendants will all nations be blessed.
4. He will be with him and bring him back into the land.

God does not say that His offspring will be like the stars of the heaven. He said this to Isaac. He said both to Abraham. Because the fulfillment of the promises lies in the far future, the LORD assures Jacob that until that time He will save him by being with him and not departing from him. We may also apply the promise Jacob receives here to ourselves, especially if we are tested in our living conditions (Heb 13:5).

Verses 16-19 | Jacob's Reaction to the Dream

16 Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." 17 He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." 18 So Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on its top. 19 He called the name of that place Bethel; however, previously the name of the city had been Luz.

When Jacob wakes up, he is frightened. This is the reaction of someone who is not accustomed to the presence of God and who is not standing right before Him. He realizes that he is in the presence of God. He even says he is in God's house. That is why he also calls this place "Bethel", which means "house of God".

Today the church is the house of God (1Tim 3:15). In the house of God there is no place for the flesh. For the flesh, the presence of God is a terrible place. Only faith feels at home there.

Jacob wants to hold on to this meeting with the LORD. At the place where he was, he erects the stone that served as a pillow. He makes it a sacred place by pouring oil on it. It is good if we too erect spiritually such stones as a memorial. All that the Lord has said to us should be held by us. This

is only possible through the power of the Holy Spirit, of which the oil is a picture.

Verses 20-22 | The Vow of Jacob

20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear, 21 and I return to my father's house in safety, then the LORD will be my God. 22 This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."

After God made His promises to Jacob, Jacob still presents his conditions. He is "so good" to recognize God as his God if God will behave in the way Jacob thinks it is proper.

In this way, many Christians enter into 'negotiations' with God. They are reluctant to accept God's gift in His Son in faith and offer God to earn His favor through their works. Jacob bases himself on the law: if God keeps His conditions, Jacob will also do what he has promised.

Genesis 29

Verses 1-12 | Jacob Meets Rachel

1 Then Jacob went on his journey, and came to the land of the sons of the east. 2 He looked, and saw a well in the field, and behold, three flocks of sheep were lying there beside it, for from that well they watered the flocks. Now the stone on the mouth of the well was large. 3 When all the flocks were gathered there, they would then roll the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place on the mouth of the well. 4 Jacob said to them, "My brothers, where are you from?" And they said, "We are from Haran." 5 He said to them, "Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?" And they said, "We know [him]." 6 And he said to them, "Is it well with him?" And they said, "It is well, and here is Rachel his daughter coming with the sheep." 7 He said, "Behold, it is still high day; it is not time for the livestock to be gathered. Water the sheep, and go, pasture them." 8 But they said, "We cannot, until all the flocks are gathered, and they roll the stone from the mouth of the well; then we water the sheep." 9 While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess. 10 When Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, Jacob went up and rolled the stone from the mouth of the well and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. 11 Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted his voice and wept. 12 Jacob told Rachel that he was a relative of her father and that he was Rebekah's son, and she ran and told her father.

There is a big difference between the search for a bride for Isaac and the way Jacob does it. In the search for Rebekah (Gen 24:12-14,21,26,27,42-48,52,63) prayer takes a large place. We don't read anything about that here. The servant in Genesis 24 has all the treasures of his lord with him. Jacob has nothing. But just like the servant, the meeting takes place at a well. However, the well is closed here and in Genesis 24 it is not. And while the servant goes directly back with Rebekah, Jacob abides in the foreign land for a total of twenty years.

Jacob comes to a well on his journey to his mother's land. Three herds are stationed there. On the well is a large stone. It is difficult to dilate it alone,

therefore several shepherds are needed. That's why the shepherds wait with their flocks at the well until they're all there and then take the stone from the well together. When the cattle have drunk, the stone is put back.

Jacob asks the shepherds if they know Laban. Through the affirmative answer Jacob knows that he is on the right way. Then he asks if Laban is doing well. The answer is also affirmative. At the same time, the shepherds add that they see Rachel, Laban's daughter, coming with her flock. Rachel is a shepherdess. Then Jacob proposes that they water their cattle and that they can go. Then, as the background to his proposal seems to be, he can stay with Rachel alone. The agreement between the shepherds, however, is that they wait for each other to remove the stone together, after which they can water the sheep.

Meanwhile, Rachel has come to the well. When Jacob sees her, it gives him so much power that he takes away the stone on his own. He also makes sure that the sheep of Laban are watered. In Jacob the shepherd reveals himself. This is a sign that he is the man with whom God is going to get His way.

God goes with him, although he is not yet going with God. The school he has to go through is a school that we also have to go through. God is the God of Jacob for a very good reason. God is busy forming this Jacob. Jacob is a picture of a believer who, through the discipline of God, will increasingly respond to God's intention with him.

Verses 13-20 | Jacob Serves Seven Years for Rachel

13 So when Laban heard the news of Jacob his sister's son, he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his house. Then he related to Laban all these things. 14 Laban said to him, "Surely you are my bone and my flesh." And he stayed with him a month. 15 Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?" 16 Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. 17 And Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful of form and face. 18 Now Jacob loved Rachel, so he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." 19 Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than to give her to

another man; stay with me." 20 So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her.

When Laban hears that Jacob is there, he runs to meet him, greets him warmly and takes him home. It does not seem that this is done out of love for a member of the family, but more out of the self-interest he already showed in Genesis 24 (Gen 24:29-31). Jacob's stay at Laban confirms this. In Laban's house Jacob tells him "all these things", which most likely means that he tells what happened at the well. By this Laban acknowledges him as his family, "my bone and my flesh".

The way Jacob is treated by Laban says a lot about Laban. When Jacob has served with him for a month and he has seen what a valuable force Jacob is, he proposes to Jacob, under the guise of justice and fairness, to work for him in return for payment. He also appeals to the family feeling. He may know what Jacob's heart is all about, and may skillfully respond to it.

Jacob's love for Rachel makes sure that he likes to work for her for seven years. The prophet Hosea reminds God's people of this service (Hos 12:12). First Hosea says that *Jacob*, because he acted like Jacob, had to flee like Jacob. But then Hosea talks about *Israel* and does so in connection with his serving for a wife. There we see Jacob's faith and faithfulness come to the fore and then he is called 'Israel'. Israel means 'prince of God' or 'warrior of God' (Gen 32:28).

The way Jacob serves to marry Rachel has been a faithful service. Later, when he fled from Laban and was overtaken by him, he can testify of it. In so doing he gives God the honor (Gen 31:41-42). There he acts and speaks like Israel. Hosea wants to speak to the people of God with this example, that they may repent and serve the LORD faithfully again. In this respect the faithful service of Jacob is also an example for us.

In this he is a weak picture of the Lord Jesus, Who also worked for the acquisition of His bride. If our love for the Lord Jesus is as great as Jacob's love for Rachel, it will not be difficult for us to serve Him.

Verses 21-26 | Jacob Cheated

21 Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give [me] my wife, for my time is completed, that I may go in to her." 22 Laban gathered all the men of the place and made

a feast. 23 Now in the evening he took his daughter Leah, and brought her to him; and [Jacob] went in to her. 24 Laban also gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid. 25 So it came about in the morning that, behold, it was Leah! And he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Why then have you deceived me?" 26 But Laban said, "It is not the practice in our place to marry off the younger before the firstborn.

After Jacob has served for seven years, he asks for the wife for whom he has worked all this time. Laban makes it an official affair. He invites guests and prepares a meal. The wedding is a public affair (verse 22). That's how it should be. Only then does Jacob go in to his bride. That is the right order.

But Laban cheats Jacob. Instead of Rachel he brings Leah to Jacob. The next morning Jacob notices the deceit. Laban's deception takes place in the darkness, just as Jacob deceived his father in the darkness of the tent (Gen 27:19-24). Here we see Jacob reaping on his way what he sowed (Gal 6:7b). Jacob also took the birthright from Esau with tricks. Here he is cheated in connection with the firstborn Leah.

Laban's defense against what is customary in Haran is insincere. If it were so, he would have had to make Jacob familiar with it before. Laban is also prepared to use both his daughters in the pursuit of his own interests. He takes no account at all of the fact that he also incites a violation of God's decree that a man may have only one wife.

Jacob does not take this into account either. He goes to work for a second wife. The resulting misery in his family is clearly evident from the description of his future life. The transgression of God's statutes always brings misery. The fact that God uses all this to carry out His plan proves that His plan is based on grace and therefore is fulfilled.

Verses 27-30 | Seven Years Extra Service for Rachel

27 Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also for the service which you shall serve with me for another seven years." 28 Jacob did so and completed her week, and he gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife. 29 Laban also gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maid. 30 So

[Jacob] went in to Rachel also, and indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah, and he served with Laban for another seven years.

Laban is willing to give Rachel to Jacob as well, but then he has to serve him for another seven years. Jacob agrees. As far as Jacob's own responsibility is concerned, it has not been good to work for Rachel. His father's command is to take a wife (Gen 28:2) and not several wives. That is not God's will either. It is of a different order that God's counsel is fulfilled in this.

This convergence of man's actions and the fulfilment of God's counsel we often see in Scripture. The fact that the Lord Jesus has been delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23) does not reduce man's guilt. So it is in the case of Judas, who has betrayed the Lord. It is the same with the fall into sin.

Verses 31-35 | The First Children of Leah

31 Now the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. 32 Leah conceived and bore a son and named him Reuben, for she said, "Because the LORD has seen my affliction; surely now my husband will love me." 33 Then she conceived again and bore a son and said, "Because the LORD has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this [son] also." So she named him Simeon. 34 She conceived again and bore a son and said, "Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." Therefore he was named Levi. 35 And she conceived again and bore a son and said, "This time I will praise the LORD." Therefore she named him Judah. Then she stopped bearing.

The LORD compensates Leah for Jacob's lack of love for her. God is also the God of compensation. Leah is the first one to have children. The names of the children tell about her experiences.

The first she calls "Reuben", which means 'see, a son'. She is full of joy and thankfulness to the LORD. She sees in this boy a proof of the care of the LORD for her. That is good. She now also expects the love of Jacob. She is mistaken in this.

The second child she has, she calls “Simeon”, which means ‘heard’. With this she expresses that she has gone to the LORD with her need and that He has heard her.

The third son she calls “Levi”, which means ‘united’, ‘added’. This expresses her hope that she will now have won Jacob’s affection and that he will unite with her. She desires, as many women also desire, that the union should not be limited to a physical one, but that Jacob will now really attach himself to her, that he will show her that she really belongs to him.

In the name of the fourth son which she conceives, whom she calls “Judah”, she turns only to the LORD. Disappointed in men, in her husband, she knows that her strength is in the LORD. She will praise Him. That is what ‘Judah’ means: ‘He will be praised.’

Genesis 30

Verses 1-8 | The Sons of Bilhah

1 Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she became jealous of her sister; and she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die." 2 Then Jacob's anger burned against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?" 3 She said, "Here is my maid Bilhah, go in to her that she may bear on my knees, that through her I too may have children." 4 So she gave him her maid Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob went in to her. 5 Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. 6 Then Rachel said, "God has vindicated me, and has indeed heard my voice and has given me a son." Therefore she named him Dan. 7 Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. 8 So Rachel said, "With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, [and] I have indeed prevailed." And she named him Naphtali.

When Rachel sees that she remains childless, she becomes jealous of Leah. She sets Jacob an impossible ultimatum. Such a thing only happens when the Lord is not given a place in the difficulties. Then people, husbands, ask unreasonable things of each other, they expect things that are beyond the ability of the other. The cause is jealousy. As a result, much evil has already been done in world history, in society, in families, and in churches (Jam 3:16). Out of jealousy Cain killed Abel, the brothers sold Joseph, Saul pursued David, and the chief priests handed over the Lord Jesus.

Instead of following his father's example (Gen 25:21) and going with Rachel to the LORD – he himself was a child of prayer – Jacob bursts out against her. He does not take the place of God (cf. 2Kgs 5:7)! What he says is true, but why he says it and the way in which he does it, make it clear that he uses this truth only to silence Rachel. He does not take the time to pray with her, nor does he take the time to talk with her.

Jacob does not seem to be a strong personality. Rachel exploits that. Jacob accepts her proposal without objection that he should go in to her maid. This too is a repetition of a not so beautiful history (Gen 16:1-4). Rachel's

proposal is successful. She gives the child the name “Dan”, which means ‘to judge’. In so doing, she indicates that God has given her right.

It is the way of people who go their own way and see the blessing they receive as a justification that God gives for the self-willed way they go. Maybe it has also been our way to justify something wrong.

Bilhah has a second son. Rachel calls him “Naftali”. With this she expresses the wrestlings – Naphtali means ‘my wrestling – she has within herself with the blessing that her sister has had. She also thinks that she has emerged as the winner. She has strived for her right and believes that she has now been given this. She wants to stand above Leah and praises the fact that she has now succeeded. Later it turns out that it is the hollow joy of the moment. In reality, therefore, she has lost. In the name she gives to the child herself, she will be constantly remembered of it.

It is an important lesson that we do not call our children ‘Naphtali’, that our children are not burdened with the wrestling we may have with our husband or wife, or with our brothers and sisters.

With all the wrong things, we see with Leah and Rachel the longing for children (Psa 127:3). Today, this is sometimes different for modern women.

Verses 9-13 | The Sons of Zilpah

9 When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing, she took her maid Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife. 10 Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son. 11 Then Leah said, "How fortunate!" So she named him Gad. 12 Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. 13 Then Leah said, "Happy am I! For women will call me happy." So she named him Asher.

The relationship between Rachel and Leah is characterized by rivalry. That is the result if one goes against God's marriage institution of one man with one woman. That danger of rivalry is always great if we start to compare and think that the other one has more than we do. That may be material, or it may be spiritual.

Leah has mistaken it all and resorts to the same low practice as Rachel. It seems that she is successful. In any case, she experiences that the tide has

turned and that happiness has come into her life. She indicates this in the names she gives to the two children who give birth to her maid Zilpah: "Gad" means "happiness" and "Asher" means "happy".

Verses 14-21 | Leah 'Hires' Jacob

14 Now in the days of wheat harvest Reuben went and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes." 15 But she said to her, "Is it a small matter for you to take my husband? And would you take my son's mandrakes also?" So Rachel said, "Therefore he may lie with you tonight in return for your son's mandrakes." 16 When Jacob came in from the field in the evening, then Leah went out to meet him and said, "You must come in to me, for I have surely hired you with my son's mandrakes." So he lay with her that night. 17 God gave heed to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. 18 Then Leah said, "God has given me my wages because I gave my maid to my husband." So she named him Issachar. 19 Leah conceived again and bore a sixth son to Jacob. 20 Then Leah said, "God has endowed me with a good gift; now my husband will dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons." So she named him Zebulun. 21 Afterward she bore a daughter and named her Dinah.

Jacob, who seems to have a weak character anyway, can just be used as a bet in the quarrel between his two wives. Nowhere do we read of a powerful action to call them to order, he does not say a word. He neglects his position as head of the family. He avoids the problems in this whole unsavory history. If you do not take God's institution seriously, you also have no regard for other responsibilities.

The wives and children do not go to Jacob with their difficulties. They do everything themselves. Rachel applies a new trick. In her superstition, she believes that the mandrakes or love-apples help to achieve her coveted goal of having children. This is what Reuben, the son of Leah, brings home. It is possible that it has been thought that erotic feelings and fertility are created when eating these apples.

Who educated Reuben about this, what does he intend to do with it? Do we educate our children or do they get it on the street? Let us have an open ear for what our children come home with, with what kind of talk,

and take that as an opportunity to educate them. From Genesis 35 is the cautious conclusion to be drawn that Reuben has not been able to deal with his sexual feelings as God wants it (Gen 35:22). In his father's house he didn't have the good examples in this either.

Rachel 'buys' Leah's love-apples with the 'payment' that Leah can 'use' Jacob again. She superstitiously believes that these love-apples will free her from her infertility. Leah also acts out of superstition. Both women are working with tricks to acquire blessings.

When a son is born by Leah's 'hired' sexual intercourse with Jacob, she crookedly argues that God has rewarded her, for "Issachar" means 'reward'. At the same time God stands above this carnal act and follows His own path of grace. God hears, not because of her way of doing things, but despite her way of doing things. When Leah gets another son, she calls him "Zebulun", which means "dwell", in the expectation that Jacob will finally give in and dwell with her.

After six sons, Leah had a daughter as the seventh child. She calls her "Dinah", which means 'right'. We don't hear much about Dinah. She only appears in Genesis 34, in which she plays a leading role (Gen 34:1-34). She does not appear in the blessing of Jacob.

Verses 22-24 | Rachel Gets Joseph

22 Then God remembered Rachel, and God gave heed to her and opened her womb. 23 So she conceived and bore a son and said, "God has taken away my reproach." 24 She named him Joseph, saying, "May the LORD give me another son."

Rachel also eventually gets the child she so long expected and coveted. This is not the result of her 'bought' love-apples, but of a work by God. Rachel realizes this too, and she gives God the honor for it. She says: *He has taken away my reproach, God has done that.*

She calls the son who is born "Joseph", which means 'He will add'. He is also a child of prayer, for God "gave heed to" Rachel. This son occupies a special place. In many ways he is a beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus. We will see that later.

Verses 25-36 | Jacob Acquires His Flock

25 Now it came about when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, that I may go to my own place and to my own country. 26 Give [me] my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me depart; for you yourself know my service which I have rendered you." 27 But Laban said to him, "If now it pleases you, [stay with me]; I have divined that the LORD has blessed me on your account." 28 He continued, "Name me your wages, and I will give it." 29 But he said to him, "You yourself know how I have served you and how your cattle have fared with me. 30 For you had little before I came and it has increased to a multitude, and the LORD has blessed you wherever I turned. But now, when shall I provide for my own household also?" 31 So he said, "What shall I give you?" And Jacob said, "You shall not give me anything. If you will do this [one] thing for me, I will again pasture [and] keep your flock: 32 let me pass through your entire flock today, removing from there every speckled and spotted sheep and every black one among the lambs and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and [such] shall be my wages. 33 So my honesty will answer for me later, when you come concerning my wages. Every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats and black among the lambs, [if found] with me, will be considered stolen." 34 Laban said, "Good, let it be according to your word." 35 So he removed on that day the striped and spotted male goats and all the speckled and spotted female goats, every one with white in it, and all the black ones among the sheep, and gave them into the care of his sons. 36 And he put [a distance of] three days' journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

When Joseph was born, Jacob wants to return to his land. It is also spiritually the same in the life of the believer: when the Lord Jesus – of whom Joseph is a beautiful picture – comes to live in him, he wishes to enjoy the blessings of the heavenly land. Jacob experiences the child Rachel gets as a special blessing.

Laban acknowledges that God has done him well for the sake of Jacob. In prophetic terms this is also the case: whoever treats Israel, God's people, well, will experience the blessing of it from God.

When Jacob has indicated that he wants to leave, Laban asks Jacob what he wants as a reward. He does this to bind Jacob even longer to himself.

Someone that is such a blessing for you, you don't let just go. Jacob wants to keep working for a while. As wages for this he asks cattle. He determines what kind of cattle will be his. Laban agrees with this.

Laban, however, is cunning and takes measures to safeguard the cattle that Jacob asked for himself. He takes all striped and spotted male goats, and all speckled and spotted female goats, and all black sheep, which Jacob has stipulated as his wages, and put them under the care of his sons.

He also built in a safety zone of a three days' journey between himself and Jacob. In this way he prevents that there can be crossbreeding between the cattle he has separated and that which is under Jacob's care. Thus there will be no chance that in the flock of Jacob a striped and spotted goat or goat or a black sheep will be born, which he would have lost.

Verses 37-43 | The Trick of Jacob

37 Then Jacob took fresh rods of poplar and almond and plane trees, and peeled white stripes in them, exposing the white which [was] in the rods. 38 He set the rods which he had peeled in front of the flocks in the gutters, [even] in the watering troughs, where the flocks came to drink; and they mated when they came to drink. 39 So the flocks mated by the rods, and the flocks brought forth striped, speckled, and spotted. 40 Jacob separated the lambs, and made the flocks face toward the striped and all the black in the flock of Laban; and he put his own herds apart, and did not put them with Laban's flock. 41 Moreover, whenever the stronger of the flock were mating, Jacob would place the rods in the sight of the flock in the gutters, so that they might mate by the rods; 42 but when the flock was feeble, he did not put [them] in; so the feebler were Laban's and the stronger Jacob's. 43 So the man became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks and female and male servants and camels and donkeys.

When the negotiations are complete, the old Jacob comes back to the surface. He works cunningly to get as much of Laban's cattle as possible in his possession. Jacob is honest in a certain sense, because he does not steal. In another sense he is not sincere. He believes that peeled branches are a means of expanding his herd.

However, God shows him in a dream how he really came to his flock (Gen 31:10-12). Not the branches, but the goats were used by God. Jacob's su-

perstition did not make his herd grow a single piece of flock. God is with Jacob, but Jacob is not yet with God. God is on his way with Jacob to bring him to that goal.

Genesis 31

Verses 1-13 | Jacob Must Return to Canaan

1 Now Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, "Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and from what belonged to our father he has made all this wealth." 2 Jacob saw the attitude of Laban, and behold, it was not [friendly] toward him as formerly. 3 Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you." 4 So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to his flock in the field, 5 and said to them, "I see your father's attitude, that it is not [friendly] toward me as formerly, but the God of my father has been with me. 6 You know that I have served your father with all my strength. 7 Yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times; however, God did not allow him to hurt me. 8 If he spoke thus, 'The speckled shall be your wages,' then all the flock brought forth speckled; and if he spoke thus, 'The striped shall be your wages,' then all the flock brought forth striped. 9 Thus God has taken away your father's livestock and given [them] to me. 10 And it came about at the time when the flock were mating that I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the male goats which were mating [were] striped, speckled, and mottled. 11 Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob,' and I said, 'Here I am.' 12 He said, 'Lift up now your eyes and see [that] all the male goats which are mating are striped, speckled, and mottled; for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you. 13 I am the God [of] Bethel, where you anointed a pillar, where you made a vow to Me; now arise, leave this land, and return to the land of your birth.'"

Laban's sons are as greedy as their father. They are jealous of Jacob's property and see his property as a loss to themselves. They forget that God had done them well because of Jacob (Gen 30:27b). In the same way, the prosperity of the people of Israel has always been a reason for the hatred of brother peoples.

Laban's sons feel it like theft. They express their dissatisfaction, which can also be read on the face of their father. Jacob watches the face of his father-in-law. Faces often indicate the state of the soul (Neh 2:2). How does our face look? The expression on our face must be real and not hypocritical (Mt 6:16).

The LORD speaks to Jacob and reminds him of the promise he has made (Gen 28:20-22). Earlier He appeared to him in a dream and spoke to him in the dream (Gen 28:12-13). Here He speaks directly for the first time. In total God speaks seven times to Jacob (Gen 28:12-13; 31:3,11; 32:24-29; 35:1,9-10; 46:2).

Jacob discusses the matter with his wives. That is a good thing. In the same way a man must discuss with his wife what he intends to do and involve her in his considerations. Jacob points out how God has been busy with him and has taken care of him. He gives God the honor.

Verses 14-21 | Jacob Flees

14 Rachel and Leah said to him, "Do we still have any portion or inheritance in our father's house? 15 Are we not reckoned by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and has also entirely consumed our purchase price. 16 Surely all the wealth which God has taken away from our father belongs to us and our children; now then, do whatever God has said to you." 17 Then Jacob arose and put his children and his wives upon camels; 18 and he drove away all his livestock and all his property which he had gathered, his acquired livestock which he had gathered in Paddan-aram, to go to the land of Canaan to his father Isaac. 19 When Laban had gone to shear his flock, then Rachel stole the household idols that were her father's. 20 And Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean by not telling him that he was fleeing. 21 So he fled with all that he had; and he arose and crossed the [Euphrates] River, and set his face toward the hill country of Gilead.

Jacob gives his wives the opportunity to express their thoughts about what he has told them. He takes them seriously in this. That is an example for the married man today. He would do well to listen to his wife's considerations. Rachel and Leah urge Jacob to do what God has said. Herein they are his real help, although the motives are not of the noblest kind. They choose him because they know their father, while in fact they breathe the spirit of their father. They choose what is most beneficial to them.

As they leave, we see Jacob's care for his children and wives, whom he puts on camels, while he himself takes care of the flock. At the same time Jacob is not aware of what is going on in his family. He doesn't know that Rachel steals her father's idols. This indicates that Rachel still hangs

with her heart on the idols, something that is hidden from Jacob. The contact with Rachel does not seem to have been profound. It's a bad thing anyway when a wife does something she hides from her husband. It says something about the relationship, namely that man and wife live at cross purposes.

They leave quietly, secretly, according to the recipe of the 'old' Jacob. Scripture calls it 'deceive' (verse 20). There is always that changing between acknowledging God's hand in his life and acting according to his own insight. We can do something that is according to God's will while acting from selfish motives.

For example, if we lend to others because they need it, that's good. However, if we do so because we expect a return that will benefit us, it is wrong (Lk 6:35). This kind of action indicates a lack of trust in God that He will provide if we obey Him.

Verses 22-30 | Laban Pursues Jacob

22 When it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled, 23 then he took his kinsmen with him and pursued him [a distance of] seven days' journey, and he overtook him in the hill country of Gilead. 24 God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream of the night and said to him, "Be careful that you do not speak to Jacob either good or bad." 25 Laban caught up with Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, and Laban with his kinsmen camped in the hill country of Gilead. 26 Then Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done by deceiving me and carrying away my daughters like captives of the sword? 27 Why did you flee secretly and deceive me, and did not tell me so that I might have sent you away with joy and with songs, with timbrel and with lyre; 28 and did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters? Now you have done foolishly. 29 It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Be careful not to speak either good or bad to Jacob.' 30 Now you have indeed gone away because you longed greatly for your father's house; [but] why did you steal my gods?"

God knows Laban's purpose and comes to him in a dream. He warns him that he will speak to Jacob "either good or bad", which means that he should not say anything that should move Jacob to change his plan (cf.

Gen 24:50). God does not allow Laban to manipulate or threaten Jacob. God does not do this until Laban has already overtaken Jacob, so that it is still clear in his mind when he has reached Jacob.

From what Laban says, it appears that he is a hypocrite. He reproaches Jacob that he left without being given him the opportunity to lead him out in a dignified manner. People who have an evil mind, but are prevented from doing so, always turn the facts around. They claim to be full of good intentions and insinuate that the other has bad intentions. The so-called mistakes they perceive in the other person are enlarged and heavily exaggerated to cover up their own evil intent.

He also says that he did not even have the opportunity to give his children a farewell kiss. As if he was such a good father! He has always acted in his own interest, so much so that his daughters feel treated and sold by him as strangers (verse 15).

The deeper reason for the chase is that Laban has lost his house gods. This makes him feel unprotected and insecure (cf. Jdg 18:24). That Jacob took his daughters and cattle with him is one thing. It goes too far that he also took his house gods with him. Perhaps one day Jacob would return and take all his possessions from him. That could happen just like that, now that he is without protection. We see that later, because he can't find the idols, he makes a covenant with Jacob (verses 43-53) to keep this, in his eyes unpleasant, man far from his territory.

What folly it is to call something a god that can be stolen. Is there protection to be expected from gods who are not even able to protect themselves? Yet many people connect their happiness to an amulet they wear. They feel vulnerable if they don't have them with them or have even lost them. The real happiness is to experience the knowledge of the true God and His protection, which does not fail for anyone who calls upon it in faith.

Verses 31-35 | The Idols with Rachel

31 Then Jacob replied to Laban, "Because I was afraid, for I thought that you would take your daughters from me by force. 32 The one with whom you find your gods shall not live; in the presence of our kinsmen point out what is yours among my belongings and take [it] for yourself." For Jacob did not know that

Rachel had stolen them. 33 So Laban went into Jacob's tent and into Leah's tent and into the tent of the two maids, but he did not find [them]. Then he went out of Leah's tent and entered Rachel's tent. 34 Now Rachel had taken the household idols and put them in the camel's saddle, and she sat on them. And Laban felt through all the tent but did not find [them]. 35 She said to her father, "Let not my LORD be angry that I cannot rise before you, for the manner of women is upon me." So he searched but did not find the household idols.

Jacob tells the true reason for his flight. He was afraid that Laban would take his wives away from him, to force him to stay with him. This is how he got to know Laban. As for the gods Laban thinks he took them with him: Jacob curses that with whom he finds them shall not live. Here he speaks in great self-assurance, but with ignorance about the real situation in his family. It is a lesson for us not to hastily and thoughtlessly use big words, even though we are so convinced that we are right.

Besides the deceit of Jacob in his secret escape (verse 20), there is also the deceit of the household idols stolen by Rachel (verse 19). Rachel behaves like a real 'Jacob', a cheater. And Jacob does not know (verse 32). Once again Jacob is the failing head of the family, who does not know what has come into his house, this time by his favorite wife. Do we know what comes into our house? Do we have an eye for occult matters which can come in and be with us?

Besides theft and idolatry, Rachel is also guilty of deception. She says she has her period and cannot get up. So the theft remains covered and the evil in the house. One sin comes from another if the first sin is not confessed.

Verses 36-42 | Jacob Reproaches Laban

36 Then Jacob became angry and contended with Laban; and Jacob said to Laban, "What is my transgression? What is my sin that you have hotly pursued me? 37 Though you have felt through all my goods, what have you found of all your household goods? Set [it] here before my kinsmen and your kinsmen, that they may decide between us two. 38 These twenty years I [have been] with you; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried, nor have I eaten the rams of your flocks. 39 That which was torn [of beasts] I did not bring to you; I bore the loss of it myself. You required it of my hand [whether] stolen by day

or stolen by night. 40 [Thus] I was: by day the heat consumed me and the frost by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes. 41 These twenty years I have been in your house; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flock, and you changed my wages ten times. 42 If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had not been for me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my affliction and the toil of my hands, so He rendered judgment last night."

When Laban's search is unsuccessful, Jacob becomes angry. He defends himself and throws Laban's selfish behavior at him. This would not have been necessary if he had put everything quietly in God's hand. The Lord Jesus is our example. He has entrusted [Himself] to Him who judges righteously (1Pet 2:23). If we do not live with the Lord, we will vigorously defend ourselves against false accusations. We will blame the other.

Such reproaches can be justified in themselves, as here with Jacob, but our anger is mainly due to our own wounded pride. For the sake of convenience, we forget that we ourselves have not always acted correctly and have disadvantaged others. This disadvantage can be material, but also spiritual. We can say something bad about someone else to get out of it better ourselves.

From what Jacob says, and what Laban does not contradict, he turns out to have been a hard worker, someone who has made a lot of effort for the sake of his not easy boss. He hasn't been an easy-money boy nor deceived his boss. His great patience is also evident from the toleration of the often unjust actions of his boss Laban. He did not revolt, but subjected himself to injustice (cf. 1Pet 2:18). He also had the experience that God has given him right.

Jacob speaks of God as "the God of my father, the God of Abraham", that is the God Whom Abraham trusted. He also speaks of God as "the Fear of Isaac". At the moment Jacob says this, Isaac is still alive and his life shows respect for God.

Verses 43-55 | Alliance Between Jacob and Laban

43 Then Laban replied to Jacob, "The daughters are my daughters, and the children are my children, and the flocks are my flocks, and all that you see is

mine. But what can I do this day to these my daughters or to their children whom they have borne? 44 So now come, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between you and me.” 45 Then Jacob took a stone and set it up [as] a pillar. 46 Jacob said to his kinsmen, “Gather stones.” So they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there by the heap. 47 Now Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed. 48 Laban said, “This heap is a witness between you and me this day.” Therefore it was named Galeed, 49 and Mizpah, for he said, “May the LORD watch between you and me when we are absent one from the other. 50 If you mistreat my daughters, or if you take wives besides my daughters, [although] no man is with us, see, God is witness between you and me.” 51 Laban said to Jacob, “Behold this heap and behold the pillar which I have set between you and me. 52 This heap is a witness, and the pillar is a witness, that I will not pass by this heap to you for harm, and you will not pass by this heap and this pillar to me, for harm. 53 The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us.” So Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac. 54 Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and called his kinsmen to the meal; and they ate the meal and spent the night on the mountain. 55 Early in the morning Laban arose, and kissed his sons and his daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned to his place.

Laban points at his daughters and their children and the cattle and calls them all his own. As if he has some love or affection for them. People who are without natural love will emphatically express their love when it serves their interests. It is also completely unjustified, because Jacob worked hard for them and received them as a salary. But a worldly man does not easily renounce his possessions, even if they have been transferred to another. The heart remains attached to it.

Laban proposes to make a covenant and Jacob indicates the sign for it. Laban benefits from this covenant, for Jacob it is not necessary. Through this covenant Laban wants to obtain the certainty that Jacob will not return to him. He wants to be redeemed from him forever. He also commits himself never to pass this sign to go to Jacob. The many words Laban uses are a camouflage of his own unreliability. He asks Jacob for things he himself has not lived up to.

Laban gives the erected sign – which is a boundary post – a name, and Jacob also gives it a name, each in his own language. Laban gives it the name “Jegar-sahadutha” in Aramaic. Jacob gives it the name “Gilead” in Hebrew. The meaning is the same, ‘hope of the testimony’. Both speak their own language, which is different from each other. The language of the man of the world is different from that of the believer. And Jacob is a believer. Laban gives the heap an extra name. He does this in Hebrew, “Mizpah”, which means “watchtower”. Here is the boundary drawn, which they will not cross.

In yet another way the difference between the man of the world, Laban, and the believer Jacob appears. Everyone speaks of God in their own way (verse 53). Laban speaks of God as a god who answers his taste and Jacob confesses the true God, Who wants him to answer *His* taste. We also see that he confesses the true God in the sacrifice he offers (verse 54). He involves God in this agreement, while he is aware that this agreement can only be made on the basis of the sacrifice.

Once again he speaks of God as “the fear of his father Isaac”, that is the God Whom his father Isaac fears, who has never served other gods. It is important to remember that there is only one true God: that is the God Who revealed Himself in His Son Jesus Christ. This is important, among other things, when we come into contact with islam, which also invokes the God of Abraham, but rejects the Son of God.

Genesis 32

Verses 1-2 | An Army of God

1 Now as Jacob went on his way, the angels of God met him. 2 Jacob said when he saw them, "This is God's camp." So he named that place Mahanaim.

Jacob is on a journey back to his land. Then the past comes to his mind. The fear of seeing Esau comes back. But before he has that meeting, he has another meeting. He meets angels of God. These messengers were sent by God as an encouragement to Jacob. He may know that God is protecting him. Jacob sees them in reality. His eyes open for a look into the invisible world (cf. 2Kgs 6:17).

God searches Jacob again and again, while Jacob asks so little of Him. God has protected Jacob from Laban, when he came after him with evil intentions. Now there is a new danger and again there is God's protection. This appearance of angels on his return to the land recalls the ladder with angels he has seen on leaving the land. Also then the vision was an encouragement to him. God then told him that he would keep him wherever he went and that he would certainly bring him back to the land (Gen 28:15).

"Mahanaim" means "two camps" or "two companies". Jacob sees a company of angels in front of him and a company of angels behind him or he sees a company of angels to his left and to his right. In any case, he is surrounded by God's protection and he does not have to be afraid.

Verses 3-5 | Messengers to Esau

3 Then Jacob sent messengers before him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. 4 He also commanded them saying, "Thus you shall say to my LORD Esau: 'Thus says your servant Jacob, "I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed until now; 5 I have oxen and donkeys [and] flocks and male and female servants; and I have sent to tell my LORD, that I may find favor in your sight.'"

Jacob doesn't have Laban behind him anymore, but he still has Esau in front of him. To justify himself for and to test the attitude of Esau, Jacob

sends messengers to Esau. They must tell him that Jacob was not a vagabond, but that he has lived with uncle Laban all the time he was absent. He also says that he has become rich, so that he does not have to ask for Esau's favor. He does not come home as a 'lost son'.

Verses 6-8 | Jacob's Tactics

6 The messengers returned to Jacob, saying, "We came to your brother Esau, and furthermore he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him." 7 Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people who were with him, and the flocks and the herds and the camels, into two companies; 8 for he said, "If Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the company which is left will escape."

Despite the encouragement of God, we see how little trust there is with Jacob. When the messengers come back with the message that Esau is coming with four hundred men, he becomes very scared. His conscience speaks for he has tried his brother and he knows that Esau wants to kill him. The message from the approach of Esau seems to say that Esau has not changed his view of Jacob. Jacob takes his own measures again. He calculates his chances and attunes his strategy to them.

There is nothing against taking measures, as long as they are taken at the instigation of a command from God and not out of fear of what might happen. In the latter case, it is self-willed action, on which one relies more than on God. Faith does not plan plans, but trusts.

Verses 9-12 | Jacob's Prayer

9 Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O LORD, who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your relatives, and I will prosper you,' 10 I am unworthy of all the lovingkindness and of all the faithfulness which You have shown to Your servant; for with my staff [only] I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two companies. 11 Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, that he will come and attack me [and] the mothers with the children. 12 For You said, 'I will surely prosper you and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which is too great to be numbered.'"

Jacob uses God as a kind of emergency aid. He prays when need is high, but only after his own initiatives to avert evil. In the appeal he makes to God as the One Who has instructed him to go back to his country and his family, something of a reproach may lie to God. It may seem that it is God's guilt that he is in this situation.

His attitude in verse 10 is beautiful by the way. In it he acknowledges the favor and faithfulness of God in his life so far. He left as a lonely man and now he has become so rich that he has become two armies. He alludes to the two armies of angels he has seen in verses 1-2. For the expansion of his family and possessions, he gives God the honor.

In his fear of Esau, he called to God to save him. He told God what Esau was planning, that is, what he thought Esau would do. He foresees a ruthless slaughter among his family, in which the mothers and their children are not spared. The conscience of a person who does not fully trust God also sees the death in threats.

Verses 13-21 | A Gift for Esau

13 So he spent the night there. Then he selected from what he had with him a present for his brother Esau: 14 two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, 15 thirty milking camels and their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. 16 He delivered [them] into the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, "Pass on before me, and put a space between droves." 17 He commanded the one in front, saying, "When my brother Esau meets you and asks you, saying, 'To whom do you belong, and where are you going, and to whom do these [animals] in front of you belong?' 18 then you shall say, '[These] belong to your servant Jacob; it is a present sent to my LORD Esau. And behold, he also is behind us.'" 19 Then he commanded also the second and the third, and all those who followed the droves, saying, "After this manner you shall speak to Esau when you find him; 20 and you shall say, 'Behold, your servant Jacob also is behind us.'" For he said, "I will appease him with the present that goes before me. Then afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me." 21 So the present passed on before him, while he himself spent that night in the camp.

Even after his prayer Jacob continues to take precautions. This shows that he doesn't really trust that the LORD is able to protect him. Jacob and also the people must learn that salvation from danger is done by faith in God and not by giving a gift to an enemy to appease him.

The attitude he adopts towards Esau is that of a backstabber. This is the result of an impure conscience. He calls himself "your servant" before Esau (verses 4,18,20). If there had been fellowship with God, he would not have to be afraid. But for that to happen, there must be a Penuel in his life.

Verses 22-32 | Jacob Wrestles with God

22 Now he arose that same night and took his two wives and his two maids and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. 23 He took them and sent them across the stream. And he sent across whatever he had. 24 Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. 25 When he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he touched the socket of his thigh; so the socket of Jacob's thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him. 26 Then he said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." But he said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." 27 So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." 28 He said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed." 29 Then Jacob asked him and said, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And he blessed him there. 30 So Jacob named the place Peniel, for [he said], "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved." 31 Now the sun rose upon him just as he crossed over Penuel, and he was limping on his thigh. 32 Therefore, to this day the sons of Israel do not eat the sinew of the hip which is on the socket of the thigh, because he touched the socket of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the hip.

After all his preparations to escape from a (supposed) disaster, for which he fears at the meeting with Esau, Jacob remains alone. That is the moment for God to act with him personally. Jacob must learn that not Esau, but God is his real opponent. There occurs a wrestling (Psa 18:27). God – in the form of an angel – cannot win from him because Jacob does not want to bow. Until he dislocates the socket of Jacob's thigh. In the socket of the thigh is the power to walk.

In Hosea 12 we read how Jacob won: by weeping and seeking God's favor (Hos 12:4-5). A person only does this when he is at the end of his strengths. And that is the way God allows Himself to be overcome. It is like with the man we see in Romans 7. He also does everything in his own power, until he exclaims: "Wretched man that I am!" (Rom 7:24a). Then comes the victory: "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom 7:25a). The wrestling is over as soon as someone sees that God has long since prepared liberation, for it was brought about by Jesus Christ. Whoever sees this will immediately thank God for it.

God meets Jacob in the dark. When God comes to Abraham, it is during the day (Gen 18:1). That is not to wrestle, but to have fellowship with him. It is not Jacob's wrestling with God, but God's wrestling with Jacob. After God has touched the socket of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the hip (verse 32), Jacob's wrestling with God turns into a clinging to Him. Jacob does not want to let Him go, but to receive a blessing from Him. Jacob later remains the limping Jacob. That's how he goes to Esau, that's how he stands before Pharaoh. It is a constant reminder of his absolute dependency on the blessing of God.

In asking for a blessing, Jacob acknowledges his Superior in the Wrestler. The wrestling lasts until the dawn. When God's wrestling with us approaches its end, when we have finished our resisting, and when we are overcome by weeping and searching His favor, the dawn in our lives begins. Then we have found our "Penuel", like Jacob here. Penuel means 'face of God'.

Not only has the dawn come, but the sun rises upon Jacob's life – compare his departure from the land, where the sun has set (Gen 28:10-11). As the awareness of one's own weakness increases, so does the awareness of God's greatness. That is the wonderful result of Penuel. It is to be desired that this is or becomes the experience of every child of God.

At Penuel Jacob is given a new name, "Israel", which means 'prince of God' or 'warrior of God'. After this the names Jacob and Israel are used alternately in his history. If the name Jacob is used, it generally looks at the weak Jacob who arranges things himself. If the name Israel is used, we see him acting in the power of faith, depending on God. This is not the

case with Abraham. After Abram got his new name Abraham, there is no longer any mention of Abram.

When using the name Jacob, God reminds us that the believer needs His discipline as long as he lives on earth because he still has the flesh with him. His discipline can be corrective, but also preventive. In any case, His discipline is a proof of His grace.

The effect of God's wrestling with Jacob on his posterity is that they are impressed by the event at the Jabbok and therefore do not eat the sinew of the hip. However, they haven't learned the real lesson. The people of Israel as a whole still accounts entirely on their own – intellectual and military – strength. In this way we can also be impressed by a truth of God and show it in an outward attitude, without it really touching us from within and affecting our whole lives.

Genesis 33

Verses 1-3 | Preparation for the Meeting

1 Then Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two maids. 2 He put the maids and their children in front, and Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last. 3 But he himself passed on ahead of them and bowed down to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

Is Jacob, after his meeting with the LORD and the lesson he has learned, now so far that he renounces his own ingenuity? It turns out he is not that far yet. When he hears that Esau is coming, he divides the people in a way that Rachel and Joseph could escape during a possible revenge action of Esau.

The way Jacob approaches his brother does not bear witness to a quiet conscience either. Here he resembles “a righteous man who gives way before the wicked” (Pro 25:26).

Verses 4-11 | Jacob Meets Esau

4 Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. 5 He lifted his eyes and saw the women and the children, and said, “Who are these with you?” So he said, “The children whom God has graciously given your servant.” 6 Then the maids came near with their children, and they bowed down. 7 Leah likewise came near with her children, and they bowed down; and afterward Joseph came near with Rachel, and they bowed down. 8 And he said, “What do you mean by all this company which I have met?” And he said, “To find favor in the sight of my lord .” 9 But Esau said, “I have plenty, my brother; let what you have be your own.” 10 Jacob said, “No, please, if now I have found favor in your sight, then take my present from my hand, for I see your face as one sees the face of God, and you have received me favorably. 11 Please take my gift which has been brought to you,

because God has dealt graciously with me and because I have all." Thus he urged him and he took [it].

Jacob is still afraid of Esau. He calls himself "your servant" (verse 5) and Esau he calls "my lord" (verse 8). There is no question of any sense of dignity given to him by God. He did not behave accordingly. Because of his earlier sneaky behavior, he is now without strength.

Yet in what he says there is a hint that he counts with God. Thus he speaks of his children as given to him by "God in His grace" (cf. Psa 127:3). That is a different language than we hear today, when people talk about 'taking' a child.

The cordiality of Esau (verse 4) is an example, but let us not forget that it is the cordiality of the world. Esau never asked of God and Scripture calls him "a godless person" (Heb 12:16). Esau says he has "plenty" (verse 9). Jacob says that by the grace of God he has "all" (verse 11), although he had to work hard for it. He testifies that the truth of the word that Moses later speaks to Israel lives for him: "But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth" (Deu 8:18a). Jacob speaks here the language of faith, which says that he who has God has all.

This language of faith we do not hear in verse 10, when he compares the face of Esau to the face of God. And he has just seen, at the Jabbok, the face of God (Penuel). By saying this to Esau, he gives, as it were, God's honor to a man and still a godless man. As if Esau has turned it all around. However, it is also possible that Jacob, in the way Esau greets him, recognizes the good hand of God and gives Him the honor for this change in Esau's mind.

Verses 12-16 | Jacob Wants to Continue Alone

*12 Then Esau said, "Let us take our journey and go, and I will go before you."
13 But he said to him, "My lord knows that the children are frail and that the flocks and herds which are nursing are a care to me. And if they are driven hard one day, all the flocks will die. 14 Please let my lord pass on before his servant, and I will proceed at my leisure, according to the pace of the cattle that are before me and according to the pace of the children, until I come to my lord at Seir." 15 Esau said, "Please let me leave with you some of the people who are*

with me.” But he said, “What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord.” 16 So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir.

Jacob floats back and forth between faith in God and fear of people. He does not want the protection of Esau that he offers him. Instead of telling him straightforwardly that he trusts God for his protection, he told Esau that he would travel at his own pace and that they would meet in Seir. When Esau suggests that at least a few people from his company will travel with him, Jacob appeals to Esau’s affection, that he just leaves him.

Verses 17-20 | Jacob Goes to Live in Sukkoth near Shechem

17 Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built for himself a house and made booths for his livestock; therefore the place is named Succoth. 18 Now Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Paddan-aram, and camped before the city. 19 He bought the piece of land where he had pitched his tent from the hand of the sons of Hamor, Shechem’s father, for one hundred pieces of money. 20 Then he erected there an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel.

As they split up, Jacob invented another trick to escape a new meeting with Esau. He goes to Sukkoth, near Shechem, to live in a house. This is not what the LORD said to him, it is not Bethel. And who said to him that he should buy a property? And did God not tell him to build an altar in Bethel?

The altar he builds here, near Shechem, says more of Jacob than of God. He is not yet interested in God alone, but in God as “the God of Israel”. Jacob calls himself here with his new name, while his actions show that he is Jacob, the cheater.

Through our wrong way and actions, we also can well camouflage with the use of pious language. We say we do something in the Name of the Lord, but it is only to pursue our own will. The consequences of Jacob’s way will be made public in the next chapter.

Genesis 34

Verses 1-5 | Dinah Raped

1 Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the daughters of the land. 2 When Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he took her and lay with her by force. 3 He was deeply attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the girl and spoke tenderly to her. 4 So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me this young girl for a wife." 5 Now Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter; but his sons were with his livestock in the field, so Jacob kept silent until they came in.

The place Jacob chose to live has a disastrous effect on his family. Dinah, the only girl among eleven brothers, wants to see and get to know some other girls. That cannot but be girls of the world. She seeks to socialize with "the daughters of the land". But girls in the world are never without the attention of men. She attracts the attention of Shechem. He "saw her; he took her and lay with her by force".

The fact that a worldly man like Shechem wants to marry a girl like Dinah from a believing family also says a lot about the girl. She will have adapted herself to the world, so Shechem sees her as one of them. Nor do we get the impression that Dinah has offered strong resistance. Dinah will not have agreed directly with what Shechem did to her. Shechem will have exerted a certain amount of coercion, but she did not have the resistance to say no.

We must give our children space to develop, but that does not mean giving them the freedom to satisfy their curiosity in visiting a worldly surrounding. What do we allow them to view on the television and on the internet? Where do we take them? To what do we allow their eyes and ears to get used to? How do we teach them to deal with the satisfaction of their needs? If we let them go free, we should not be surprised that our children are 'raped'. Their bodies and/or minds are taken possession of by someone to whom we would never want to give our child.

Jacob is here again the absent father. He hears of the event, but there is no reaction from him to hear. For Shechem, rape is more than just an act. He loves Dinah and wants to marry her. That is in any case neat to him and in this he is an example for contemporary morality, which unfortunately is also found to be broad among Christians. Sexual intercourse gives an obligation (2Sam 13:14-16).

Verses 6-12 | Request for the Prenup

6 Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. 7 Now the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard [it]; and the men were grieved, and they were very angry because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing ought not to be done. 8 But Hamor spoke with them, saying, "The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter; please give her to him in marriage. 9 Intermarry with us; give your daughters to us and take our daughters for yourselves. 10 Thus you shall live with us, and the land shall be [open] before you; live and trade in it and acquire property in it." 11 Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, "If I find favor in your sight, then I will give whatever you say to me. 12 Ask me ever so much bridal payment and gift, and I will give according as you say to me; but give me the girl in marriage."

Hamor makes his son's request known to Jacob and his sons. Before he defends his son's cause and can record the benefits of becoming brothers-in-law, we see the reaction of Jacob's sons as they hear of the event. The sons are outraged. They rightly state: "Such a thing ought not to be done" (cf. 2Sam 13:12). Unfortunately, however, the same must also be said about the way in which they deal with this. Their attitude is downright bad.

In this mind they hear Hamor. Hamor presents the benefits this will have for both families. More commitments will follow. He also offers them the land to settle there. He wants to give them whatever they want as a bridal payment and gift. In this way the land of Canaan becomes a gift from the enemy to Jacob and his descendants, and is not taken possession of as the land promised by God that He gives them.

The enemy is still acting in the same way today. He proposes all kinds of advantages to the believer to persuade him to enter into an unlawful connection with (someone of) the world.

The fact that nothing of this offer comes to pass is not due to the spiritual attitude of Jacob's sons. God uses their evil mind here to destroy the foolish proposal of Hamor.

Verses 13-19 | The Condition

13 But Jacob's sons answered Shechem and his father Hamor with deceit, because he had defiled Dinah their sister. 14 They said to them, "We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a disgrace to us. 15 Only on this [condition] will we consent to you: if you will become like us, in that every male of you be circumcised, 16 then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters for ourselves, and we will live with you and become one people. 17 But if you will not listen to us to be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and go." 18 Now their words seemed reasonable to Hamor and Shechem, Hamor's son. 19 The young man did not delay to do the thing, because he was delighted with Jacob's daughter. Now he was more respected than all the household of his father.

Not Jacob, but his sons respond to the request of Hamor. Here too Jakob is handing over the initiative. The sons reveal the nature of their father and speak "with deceit" in the proposal they then make. They propose that all the men in the city be circumcised. That is to say, all these men accept the outward sign that they belong to the descendants of Abraham.

They abuse something that should be of special significance to them, something given by God as a sign of His covenant with Abraham and his descendants. But what have they seen of it in the life of their father? What do our children see in our lives from the truths we have come to know?

What the brothers do is comparable to learning a Christian behavior in order to be integrated into a Christian community. It has happened that parents gave permission for the marriage of their daughter on condition that the man would visit the church or be baptized. A change in the heart has not been mentioned, nor has the emphasis been placed on it. As long

as he adapts himself in his behavior. This lesson we can learn from what is happening here.

Verses 20-24 | Discussion of the Condition

20 So Hamor and his son Shechem came to the gate of their city and spoke to the men of their city, saying, 21 “These men are friendly with us; therefore let them live in the land and trade in it, for behold, the land is large enough for them. Let us take their daughters in marriage, and give our daughters to them. 22 Only on this [condition] will the men consent to us to live with us, to become one people: that every male among us be circumcised as they are circumcised. 23 Will not their livestock and their property and all their animals be ours? Only let us consent to them, and they will live with us.” 24 All who went out of the gate of his city listened to Hamor and to his son Shechem, and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.

Hamor and Shechem go with the condition to their city and present it to the men of the city. They defend the condition by pointing out the benefits this will bring to the city. They also speak of Jacob’s sons as men who are “friendly” to them, men who have no evil in mind. The men of the city agree with the proposal and they all let themselves be circumcised. They act out of greed and not out of any desire for the God of Israel to live with Him.

Verses 25-29 | The Revenge of Simeon and Levi

25 Now it came about on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of Jacob’s sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, each took his sword and came upon the city unawares, and killed every male. 26 They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem’s house, and went forth. 27 Jacob’s sons came upon the slain and looted the city, because they had defiled their sister. 28 They took their flocks and their herds and their donkeys, and that which was in the city and that which was in the field; 29 and they captured and looted all their wealth and all their little ones and their wives, even all that [was] in the houses.

Circumcision is an extremely painful matter for adult men. Simeon and Levi take advantage of the defenselessness of the men of the city to take

revenge for what has been done to their sister. After the deceit comes the violence. After completing their massacre, they go to Shechem's house to pick up Dinah and take her back home. They also plunder the defeated and the city. Everything that they consider to have any value, they looted. When Jacob lies on his deathbed, he gets back to it (Gen 49:5-7). The behavior of his sons is on the one hand Jacob's fault. On the other hand, these men are fully responsible for what they do.

Verses 30-31 | Reaction of Jacob

30 Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought trouble on me by making me odious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and my men being few in number, they will gather together against me and attack me and I will be destroyed, I and my household." 31 But they said, "Should he treat our sister as a harlot?"

Jacob's reproach has to do with being made "odious" himself. He is more concerned about what people will say than about the dishonor done to God.

Jacob has no answer to the brothers' defense. It is bad when parents have to be reprimanded by children. According to the order of God, that should be the other way around.

Genesis 35

Verses 1-5 | Jacob Must Go to Bethel

1 Then God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and live there, and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau." 2 So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods which are among you, and purify yourselves and change your garments; 3 and let us arise and go up to Bethel, and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone." 4 So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods which they had and the rings which were in their ears, and Jacob hid them under the oak which was near Shechem. 5 As they journeyed, there was a great terror upon the cities which were around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob.

After the humbling events of Genesis 34, God reminds Jacob of his promise (Gen 28:21-22) and tells him to go to Bethel. God intends to bless Jacob. He wants to do this in Bethel, which means 'house of God'. There is the house of God, there He dwells, and wants to have His own with him. Today the church is the house of God (1Tim 3:15).

When Jacob thinks of meeting God in His house, he realizes that he has to bring his own house into conformity with God's house. In his family there must be cleansing, the idols must be removed, and the garments – which speaks of behavior, which the people perceive of us – must be adapted to what is appropriate for God's holiness.

It may be that Jacob, through everything his family has entered that is not in harmony with God's thoughts, has lost sight of what he promised God. Wrong things in the life of a believer make him blind to what is due to God. "It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay" (Ecc 5:5). However, God can recall it.

God's house means that God wants to live with people and that people want to live with Him. He wants to bless them. The man who lives with Him may serve Him. But where He dwells, He determines the house rules.

In His house reigns His authority and everything must be to His glory (Psa 29:9b). The recognition thereof gives blessing.

God has not told Jacob to cleanse his own house, but Jacob feels it well. He orders his house to do so, he takes his responsibility. Only then there can be a going up. Apparently a lot more has entered Jacob's family than just the idols of Rachel (Gen 31:30-34). All the idols and also the earrings – in this case this speaks of listening to things we like to hear – are brought to Jacob and he buries them. This is the first burial of this chapter. Three more will follow (verses 8,19,29).

Here we can see the oak as a picture of the cross. That is where we should bury our idols. For us this means that we confess before God what in our lives has been given a place next to or instead of Him and see that the Lord Jesus has borne the judgment for it. Then it is gone (1Jn 1:9). The result for Jacob is that God protects him (verse 5; 2Chr 17:9-10; Jos 2:9).

Verses 6-7 | Jacob Comes in Bethel

6 So Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him. 7 He built an altar there, and called the place El-bethel, because there God had revealed Himself to him when he fled from his brother.

During his first stay in Bethel, Jacob called Bethel an “awesome” place (Gen 28:17). Now he is there again, but without fear. He builds an altar, that is, he worships God for Whom He is. Jacob made an altar at Shechem (Gen 33:18-20), but without a command from God to build an altar there. God does not appear to him there either.

God Himself indicates where and how He wants to be worshipped: “Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”” (Jn 4:21-24). When Jacob is ready, he calls this

place “El Bethel” (verse 7), which is the “God of the house of God” (cf. Gen 33:20).

Verse 8 | Debora Dies

8 Now Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the oak; it was named Allon-bacuth.

Then, just in between it seems, we read about a second burial in this chapter, that of Deborah. Deborah must have been an old woman. Before God can reappear to Jacob, she must first die. Is the meaning perhaps that first old traditions must disappear, the stories of the past, as if God of today can no longer show Who He is? Only when there is a personal relationship, a daily relationship with the Lord, He will reveal Himself to us. We cannot prey on the stories of father and grandfather, however stimulating these stories may be in themselves.

Verses 9-15 | God Appears to Jacob Again

9 Then God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan-aram, and He blessed him. 10 God said to him,

*“Your name is Jacob;
You shall no longer be called Jacob,
But Israel shall be your name.”*

Thus He called him Israel. 11 God also said to him,

*“I am God Almighty;
Be fruitful and multiply;
A nation and a company of nations shall come from you,
And kings shall come forth from you.
12 “The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac,
I will give it to you,
And I will give the land to your descendants after you.”*

13 Then God went up from him in the place where He had spoken with him.

14 Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He had spoken with him, a pillar of stone, and he poured out a drink offering on it; he also poured oil on it. 15 So Jacob named the place where God had spoken with him, Bethel.

When Jacob has put his personal relationship with God in order, God appears to him again in Bethel. That is thirty years after his appearance to him in Bethel, when he fled from Esau (verse 1; Gen 28:13). Here He confirms Jacob's new name. In connection with this He blesses him.

Jacob responds by setting up a sign. He also had set up a memorial stone at the previous apparition. Then he only poured oil over it. Now he first pours a libation of wine over it and then pours oil over it. He thus connects –in picture – to this sign both joy (wine) and the power of the Holy Spirit (oil).

The prophet Hosea reminds the people of this speaking of God. Hosea wants to point out the relationship between God and His people. This is reflected in the words “there He spoke with us”, which shows fellowship (Hos 12:4). It says “with us” and not ‘with *him*’. Jacob represents the whole people. Hosea says, as it were, to the people: “‘There He spoke to us through Jacob; what He said to Jacob there also applies to us.’

With this Hosea tells the people that a people who long for fellowship with God must discard the idols. That is what happened at Bethel. After Jacob had cleansed his house, he met God in Bethel. What Jacob did – throwing away the foreign gods – Ephraim and Judah should have done, but they did not. This event must also appeal to us if we desire to live in fellowship with God.

Verses 16-20 | Benjamin Born; Rachel Dies

16 Then they journeyed from Bethel; and when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth and she suffered severe labor. 17 When she was in severe labor the midwife said to her, “Do not fear, for now you have another son.” 18 It came about as her soul was departing (for she died), that she named him Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin. 19 So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). 20 Jacob set up a pillar over her grave; that is the pillar of Rachel's grave to this day.

When the house of God (Bethel) has got its true place in our lives, “Benjamin” can be born. That is to say that the Lord Jesus as the Son of God's right hand – Benjamin means ‘son of my right hand’ – gets his true place in our lives. Benjamin is a type of the Lord Jesus who rules in strength.

Rachel calls him “Ben-oni”, which means ‘son of my sorrow’. The two names of this son belong together. They concern the same person. They remind of the suffering (Ben-oni) and the glory (Benjamin) of the Lord Jesus which also cannot be separated from each other (1Pet 1:11).

Rachel dies in Bethlehem. That name is also reminiscent of the Lord Jesus. It is the place where He was born (Mt 2:1). Rachel is a picture of Israel. She gave birth to a son, but had no connection with him, as the Lord Jesus was born from Israel as a nation, but without Israel accepting Him.

Verses 21-22 | Scandal of Reuben

21 Then Israel journeyed on and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder. 22 It came about while Israel was dwelling in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father’s concubine, and Israel heard [of it]. Now there were twelve sons of Jacob—

Israel – not: Jacob – goes up. He continues in faith. It is also mentioned that he puts up his tent. He, the prince of God, dwells in a tent, while the city is reserved for him in the other world, that of faith.

When he dwells in the land, Reuben commits a terrible sin (cf. 1Cor 5:1). The consequences of this have effects in later generations (Gen 49:4; 1Chr 5:1). Reuben is the firstborn of Jacob, he is Jacob’s power. He will now be about nineteen years old and have longed for a woman. His desire was not wrong, but it was the way he satisfied it.

When Dinah is raped, we read that “Jacob” hears of it and keeps silent. The sequel shows that he is the passive father. When Reuben has committed his sin, we read that “Israel” hears of it. Again we do not read of a reaction. However, because there is talk of “Israel” he seems to face this sin in the right way and not as a passive father. Jacob has grown in his spiritual life and spiritual feeling in his getting along with God.

After Benjamin was born – he was the only one born in the promised land - Jacob’s family is complete.

Verses 23-26 | The Sons of Jacob

23 the sons of Leah: Reuben, Jacob’s firstborn, then Simeon and Levi and Judah and Issachar and Zebulun; 24 the sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin; 25

and the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maid: Dan and Naphtali; 26 and the sons of Zilpah, Leah's maid: Gad and Asher. These are the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paddan-aram.

Jacob left as a loner for Paddan-aram and now returns with a large family. For the first time the complete list of Jacob's sons is mentioned. They are the ancestors of the people of Israel who will become a great people.

Verses 27-29 | Death and Burial of Isaac

27 Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre of Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned. 28 Now the days of Isaac were one hundred and eighty years. 29 Isaac breathed his last and died and was gathered to his people, an old man of ripe age; and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

Isaac dies. Esau and Jacob bury him. Just like at the burial of Abraham there are two children at the grave of their father whose path and purpose of life are so completely different. Faith in God makes all the difference. Because of its absence one can only look into the grave, because of its presence the other can look over it.

Genesis 36

Verses 1-8 | Esau Goes Away from Jacob

1 Now these are [the records of] the generations of Esau (that is, Edom). 2 Esau took his wives from the daughters of Canaan: Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Oholibamah the daughter of Anah and the granddaughter of Zibeon the Hivite; 3 also Basemath, Ishmael's daughter, the sister of Nebaioth. 4 Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau, and Basemath bore Reuel, 5 and Oholibamah bore Jeush and Jalam and Korah. These are the sons of Esau who were born to him in the land of Canaan. 6 Then Esau took his wives and his sons and his daughters and all his household, and his livestock and all his cattle and all his goods which he had acquired in the land of Canaan, and went to [another] land away from his brother Jacob. 7 For their property had become too great for them to live together, and the land where they sojourned could not sustain them because of their livestock. 8 So Esau lived in the hill country of Seir; Esau is Edom.

When Isaac has died, history continues with his sons. First the oldest is mentioned, the son who does not follow the line of faith. The death of his father reveals what lives in the heart of Esau. It has not made a lasting impression on him. His heart has not changed: he goes away from his brother (verse 6), with which he indicates that he wants to have nothing to do with the line of God's thoughts. He has his own plans and follows his own path.

Esau has three wives. The sons they give birth to are all born in Canaan, while the sons of Jacob, except Benjamin, were all born outside the land. And while Jacob enters the land, Esau leaves it to live in the hill country of Seir.

Esau is Edom, the father of the Edomites, so it says several times in this chapter (verses 1,8,9,19,43). This people will reveal themselves as Israel's most bitter enemy. The judgment of them is written down by the prophet Obadiah.

Yet in this generation of curse, also an example of grace is present. In verse 15 we read about Kenaz. Caleb, about whom we read in Joshua 14, is called

“the Kenizzite” (Jos 14:6). Kaleb is a descendant of Kenaz. Being born as an Edomite is therefore not hopeless (Jdg 3:9).

Verses 9-14 | The Sons of Esau

9 These then are [the records of] the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir. 10 These are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz the son of Esau's wife Adah, Reuel the son of Esau's wife Basemath. 11 The sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho and Gatam and Kenaz. 12 Timna was a concubine of Esau's son Eliphaz and she bore Amalek to Eliphaz. These are the sons of Esau's wife Adah. 13 These are the sons of Reuel: Nahath and Zerah, Shammah and Mizzah. These were the sons of Esau's wife Basemath. 14 These were the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah and the granddaughter of Zibeon: she bore to Esau, Jeush and Jalam and Korah.

These generations built the Edomite people in the hill country of Seir. In the names mentioned here, we see a piece of God's accountancy. Nothing escapes Him. Among these almost all unknown names, a name like “Amalek” (verse 12) stands out. This name we encounter more often in the course of the history of Israel (Exo 17:8-16; Deu 25:17-20). It is the declared enemy of God's people, a picture of the flesh of the believer. This cannot be otherwise as a descendant of Esau.

All these names are about the persons, not about their history or their actions. God calls their names because of the connection that exists between the generation of Esau and His people. Unfortunately not as friends, but as enemies.

Verses 15-19 | The Chiefs

15 These are the chiefs of the sons of Esau. The sons of Eliphaz, the firstborn of Esau, are chief Teman, chief Omar, chief Zepho, chief Kenaz, 16 chief Korah, chief Gatam, chief Amalek. These are the chiefs descended from Eliphaz in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Adah. 17 These are the sons of Reuel, Esau's son: chief Nahath, chief Zerah, chief Shammah, chief Mizzah. These are the chiefs descended from Reuel in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Esau's wife Basemath. 18 These are the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah: chief Jeush,

chief Jalam, chief Korah. These are the chiefs descended from Esau's wife Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah. 19 These are the sons of Esau (that is, Edom), and these are their chiefs.

It seems that the Edomites, like the Israelites, are divided into tribes, after the names of the sons.

Verses 20-30 | The Sons of Seir

20 These are the sons of Seir the Horite, the inhabitants of the land: Lotan and Shobal and Zibeon and Anah, 21 and Dishon and Ezer and Dishan. These are the chiefs descended from the Horites, the sons of Seir in the land of Edom. 22 The sons of Lotan were Hori and Hemam; and Lotan's sister was Timna. 23 These are the sons of Shobal: Alvan and Manahath and Ebal, Shepho and Onam. 24 These are the sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah—he is the Anah who found the hot springs in the wilderness when he was pasturing the donkeys of his father Zibeon. 25 These are the children of Anah: Dishon, and Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah. 26 These are the sons of Dishon: Hemdan and Eshban and Ithran and Cheran. 27 These are the sons of Ezer: Bilhan and Zaavan and Akan. 28 These are the sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran. 29 These are the chiefs descended from the Horites: chief Lotan, chief Shobal, chief Zibeon, chief Anah, 30 chief Dishon, chief Ezer, chief Dishan. These are the chiefs descended from the Horites, according to their [various] chiefs in the land of Seir.

Of the sons of Seir, the inhabitants of the land to which Esau went, the chiefs are mentioned. They live there, before Esau comes there (Deu 2:12,22).

Sometimes a particular event is mentioned between the enumeration of the names. This may have to do with a find (verse 24) or a military act (verse 35). Ana is mentioned as making a special discovery: he finds hot springs in the wilderness. In a hot desert, the discovery of a spring promises refreshment and life. However, if hot water comes from that source, it worsens the condition of the thirsty desert traveler. Finding a warm spring in a desert indicates the experience of great disillusionment, while a great pleasure was expected.

Inventors and politically influential figures have shaped mankind without God. They always promise to improve living conditions. The people be-

lieve in it and therefore choose them as their leaders, but time and again it turns out to be a bitter disappointment.

Verses 31-39 | Kings in Edom

31 Now these are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the sons of Israel. 32 Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom, and the name of his city was Dinhabah. 33 Then Bela died, and Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah became king in his place. 34 Then Jobab died, and Husham of the land of the Temanites became king in his place. 35 Then Husham died, and Hadad the son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the field of Moab, became king in his place; and the name of his city was Avith. 36 Then Hadad died, and Samlah of Masrekah became king in his place. 37 Then Samlah died, and Shaul of Rehoboth on the [Euphrates] Jdgver became king in his place. 38 Then Shaul died, and Baal-hanan the son of Achbor became king in his place. 39 Then Baal-hanan the son of Achbor died, and Hadar became king in his place; and the name of his city was Pau; and his wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, daughter of Mezahab.

It seems as if Esau is more successful in life than his brother. In his posterity honorable men are mentioned sooner than in the descendants of Jacob (verse 31). With the Edomites everything goes much faster. But God deals with their entire history in one chapter. The history of Jacob is seen from Genesis 37 onwards in connection with Joseph. In that history we see how suffering precedes glory.

Verses 40-43 | The Chiefs

40 Now these are the names of the chiefs descended from Esau, according to their families [and] their localities, by their names: chief Timna, chief Alvah, chief Jetheth, 41 chief Oholibamah, chief Elah, chief Pinon, 42 chief Kenaz, chief Teman, chief Mibzar, 43 chief Magdiel, chief Iram. These are the chiefs of Edom (that is, Esau, the father of the Edomites), according to their habitations in the land of their possession.

Here again the same persons are mentioned that we have also seen in verses 15-19. Only there the names of the persons are mentioned, while here their localities are mentioned.

Genesis 37

Verse 1 | Jacob Lives in Canaan

1 Now Jacob lived in the land where his father had sojourned, in the land of Canaan.

Unlike the mighty Esau who has conquered his possessions, Jacob lives as a guest in Canaan. He has no kings like Esau and no land to rule over and no great tribes. Worldly power is acquired faster than spiritual greatness. A promised spiritual blessing requires patience and faith.

Jacob stays in the land for a long time, until he goes to Egypt. He has come to the end of his experiences and has come to rest. However, he still has to learn that God is not only entitled to Rachel, but also to Joseph and Benjamin. That is again for him via a long way. Abraham learned this lesson faster (Gen 22:1-12).

Verses 2-4 | Beginning of the History of Joseph

2 These are [the records of] the generations of Jacob. Joseph, when seventeen years of age, was pasturing the flock with his brothers while he was [still] a youth, along with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought back a bad report about them to their father. 3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic. 4 His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and [so] they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms.

The history of Joseph begins with a remarkable remark. It is said “these are [the records of] the generations of Jacob” and then the history of Joseph begins. From this we can conclude that the generations of Jacob are interwoven with the history of Joseph. The continued existence of Jacob and his descendants depends on Joseph. Joseph is a beautiful and almost perfect picture of the Lord Jesus. No sin is mentioned of him. However, we see that at the end of his history he is mistaken when he thinks Jacob is mistaken in blessing his sons (Gen 48:17-19).

Joseph, like other men of God, for instance Abel, Moses and David, is a shepherd. Leaders learn leadership behind the sheep. He performs his task together with the sons of the female slaves of Jacob. This is reminiscent of the days of the Lord Jesus, when the people are in slavery, subject to Roman dominion – and even more so to the dominion of sin – and in that situation He performs His service.

The Lord Jesus is the separated One. In this Joseph resembles Him. He does not join the wrong of his brothers. Jacob also calls Joseph “the one distinguished among his brothers” (Gen 49:26). Joseph brings back a bad report about them to his father. He is not a squealer. Everything we know about Joseph, that is known to us from his history, shows that he is someone who hates evil and does not participate in it. What his brothers do hurts him. Who better to talk to than his father? In the same way, the Lord Jesus spoke to His Father about everything.

Jacob loves Joseph more than his other sons. That is not procrastination. Does not a child walking with the Lord give us more joy than a child who is willful? Jacob also loves his other sons, but Joseph gives him a special joy. With him he can share the things of his heart.

Jacob expresses his love for Joseph by making him a varicolored tunic. This arouses the brothers’ jealousy and hatred. Do we find this hatred understandable? We can only understand their hatred if we realize that the brothers are boys who care nothing about their father. This is evident from the rest of this history. The further course of history also shows how they too are ultimately brought into the right relationship with their father. But it takes a lot of discipline.

What happens to Joseph here, shows in picture what happened to the Lord Jesus as the Beloved of the Father. How is He hated and watched with jealousy. God loves His people, but the people disobey Him. The Lord Jesus is the only One Who does what the whole people should do: Honor God and serve Him. That is why the Father loves Him and why His testimony sounds: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased” (Mt 3:17).

Joseph’s *brothers* hate him, not strangers. The faithful believer is always hated by fellow Christians who do not take the truth so seriously.

Verses 5-11 | The Two Dreams of Joseph

5 Then Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. 6 He said to them, "Please listen to this dream which I have had; 7 for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf rose up and also stood erect; and behold, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf." 8 Then his brothers said to him, "Are you actually going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. 9 Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, "Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me." 10 He related [it] to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?" 11 His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying [in mind].

Because Joseph lives with God, God can also tell him what will happen in the future. In Joseph's two dreams, there is encouragement for him. After all the suffering he has to endure, there will eventually be glory for him. It is an encouragement for every believer to know that after suffering the glory follows. Let's look at our great example "Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb 12:2).

The first dream about the sheaves in the field shows an earthly scene, the second dream about the heavenly bodies shows a heavenly scene. We see here in the picture that to the Lord Jesus all things in heaven and on earth will be subject. To Him already "all authority has been given ... in heaven and on earth" (Mt 28:18). "But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him" (Heb 2:8b). However, God has purposed "the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth" which will happen in "the fullness of the times" (Eph 1:9-10).

That the dream has a meaning is shown by the reaction of his father and his brothers. They realize that the dream applies to them. Similarly, the adversaries of the Lord Jesus have realized that He has spoken some things in view of them (Mt 21:45).

When the Lord Jesus stands before His earthly judges, He testifies of the truth that they will “see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN”. On this basis He is condemned: “Then the high priest tore his robes and said, “He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; what do you think?” They answered, “He deserves death!”” (Mt 26:64-66). The deep reason He is surrendered is their envy (Mt 27:18), as do the brothers envy Joseph (verse 11). There is no jealousy with Jacob. He keeps all these things in his heart (cf. Lk 2:51).

Verses 12-17 | Jacob Sends Joseph to His Brothers

12 Then his brothers went to pasture their father’s flock in Shechem. 13 Israel said to Joseph, “Are not your brothers pasturing [the flock] in Shechem? Come, and I will send you to them.” And he said to him, “I will go.” 14 Then he said to him, “Go now and see about the welfare of your brothers and the welfare of the flock, and bring word back to me.” So he sent him from the valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem. 15 A man found him, and behold, he was wandering in the field; and the man asked him, “What are you looking for?” 16 He said, “I am looking for my brothers; please tell me where they are pasturing [the flock].” 17 Then the man said, “They have moved from here; for I heard [them] say, ‘Let us go to Dothan.’” So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.

Although “Israel” (verse 13) knows his sons, he sends Joseph, the son of his love, to his brothers. This proves that Jacob does not neglect his other sons in favor of Joseph. Here too we see a beautiful picture of the Father Who sends His Son. As Joseph says, if his father wants to send him, “Behold, here I am”, the Lord Jesus says at His coming into the world, “Behold, I have come ... To do Your will, O God” (Heb 10:7,9). Jacob is concerned about the welfare of his sons and also about the welfare of the flock (Pro 12:10). Thus God is concerned about the welfare of His people and His creatures.

Jacob thinks his sons are in Shechem. When Joseph comes there, he cannot find them. Then he meets a man who asks him what he is looking for. Joseph gives the wonderful answer: “I am looking for my brothers.” Joseph knows his brothers aren’t considering him as such, but he sees them that

way. Thus the Lord Jesus also came to “His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him” (Jn 1:11).

The man tells him where he can find his brothers. Then Joseph goes there. His obedience goes beyond what his father told him to do. He could have gone back with the announcement that he did not find his brothers at the place Jacob sent him to.

Of course God knows the condition of His people when He sends His Son. The Son’s obedience did not go beyond what the Father asked of Him, for the Son acted in all things out of obedience to the Father. During His life on earth He does nothing more and nothing less than to be perfectly and fully obedient. He cannot do otherwise, for it is His food to do the will of Him Who has sent Him (Jn 4:34). In His obedience is no gradation.

Verses 18-22 | The Plan to Kill Joseph

18 When they saw him from a distance and before he came close to them, they plotted against him to put him to death. 19 They said to one another, “Here comes this dreamer! 20 Now then, come and let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; and we will say, ‘A wild beast devoured him.’ Then let us see what will become of his dreams!” 21 But Reuben heard [this] and rescued him out of their hands and said, “Let us not take his life.” 22 Reuben further said to them, “Shed no blood. Throw him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but do not lay hands on him” — that he might rescue him out of their hands, to restore him to his father.

When the brothers see Joseph coming, they immediately think of his dreams. These dreams are also the reason for their murder plans. They want to do everything they can to prevent their brother’s dreams from coming true. They want to kill him especially because he has said they will bow before him. And they never want that! In the same way, the Lord Jesus has been consciously killed because He will rule as heir, and that is what the leaders themselves want to do (Mt 21:38). “Men of bloodshed hate the blameless” (Pro 29:10a).

In the consultation there is still a protest through Reuben. Similarly, there is a Nicodemus who objects to the course of events surrounding the con-

demnation of the Lord Jesus (Jn 7:50-51). With his proposal, Reuben prevents the murder of Joseph.

Verses 23-30 | Joseph Rejected and Sold

23 So it came about, when Joseph reached his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the varicolored tunic that was on him; 24 and they took him and threw him into the pit. Now the pit was empty, without any water in it. 25 Then they sat down to eat a meal. And as they raised their eyes and looked, behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing aromatic gum and balm and myrrh, on their way to bring [them] down to Egypt. 26 Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it for us to kill our brother and cover up his blood? 27 Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our [own] flesh." And his brothers listened [to him]. 28 Then some Midianite traders passed by, so they pulled [him] up and lifted Joseph out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty [shekels] of silver. Thus they brought Joseph into Egypt. 29 Now Reuben returned to the pit, and behold, Joseph was not in the pit; so he tore his garments. 30 He returned to his brothers and said, "The boy is not [there]; as for me, where am I to go?"

Joseph is thrown into the pit. They do not care about the distress of their brother's soul and his pleading for mercy (Gen 42:21). The coldness of their hearts becomes clear when they sit down and eat after this act. The thought that they are free from his possible rule provides them with peace and joy (cf. Rev 11:10).

The prophet Amos also refers in his prophecy to what the brothers are doing here. He uses their example to denounce the attitude of the people towards God. He does not use a soft language: "Who drink wine from sacrificial bowls While they anoint themselves with the finest of oils, Yet they have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph" (Amos 6:6).

Amos points out with these words that, while Israel sighs under the consequences of sin, its inhabitants surrender to carelessness, lust and indolence. All the gifts God has given them, they use for themselves. The pursuit of one's own pleasure allows the situation among God's people to be pushed

into the background. Israel is in need, the greatest need being that the people do not see their need. It laughs and dances ahead of its downfall.

Also today, Christians are indifferent to how the whole church is fragmented into countless pieces. It is even justified by terms such as “the multicolored nature of God”. The pursuit of our own convenience makes us insensitive to the decline in the church and the divisions that exist.

When Ishmaelites come, Judah proposes to sell Joseph. The Ishmaelites are descendants of Abraham via Hagar (Gen 16:15). The Midianites are descendants of Abraham via Keturah (Gen 25:1-2). The brothers sell Joseph to related merchants. They sell him for even less money than a slave is worth (Exo 21:32). This is where the Judas spirit comes to the fore, which the Lord Jesus has handed down for money (Mt 26:14-16).

Reuben has stipulated that Joseph is not killed, but thrown into a pit. With this he thinks he saved Joseph’s life, because he wants to take him out of it later and bring him back to his father. He will have been absent for a moment when the other brothers sell Joseph. When he discovers that Joseph has been sold, he desperately tears his garments and blames his brothers for making his life unbearable. Here we see that inventors of evil follow their own plans and do not take any account of each other.

Verses 31-35 | Jacob Deceived

31 So they took Joseph’s tunic, and slaughtered a male goat and dipped the tunic in the blood; 32 and they sent the varicolored tunic and brought it to their father and said, “We found this; please examine [it] to [see] whether it is your son’s tunic or not.” 33 Then he examined it and said, “It is my son’s tunic. A wild beast has devoured him; Joseph has surely been torn to pieces!” 34 So Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days. 35 Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, “Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son.” So his father wept for him.

The brothers add the sin of lie to their violent acts against Joseph. They lie to their father about the absence of Joseph. As for Jacob, once again he will have to deal with the consequences of his own cunning actions. He is deceived by his sons. He has been deceiving his father with the skins of

young goats (Gen 27:16). Now he himself is being deceived with the blood of a goat.

The heartlessness of the brothers is shocking. Thus is man, so am I, without God. Jealousy makes every human feeling disappear (Pro 27:4). This is made all the worse by their attempts to comfort their father, when they are the cause of his grief. This is hypocrisy at its summit.

Verse 36 | Joseph Sold to Potiphar

36 *Meanwhile, the Midianites sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer, the captain of the bodyguard.*

While Jacob thinks his son is dead, Joseph is on his way to Egypt to finally take his place on the throne. But first he must go a way of suffering. He had already suffered this suffering from his brothers. Now his suffering begins on the part of the nations. In all this the counsel of God is fulfilled. In Egypt he is first humiliated, to come to the greatest glory thereafter.

In practical terms, the way of suffering is the way God uses to form His servants. Prophetically, the way of suffering is God's way to come to glory. Thus the Lord Jesus first suffered and then was glorified (Lk 24:26). This principle also applies to the believer (Rom 8:17).

Genesis 38

Verses 1-2 | Judah Departs from His Brothers

1 And it came about at that time, that Judah departed from his brothers and visited a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. 2 Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua; and he took her and went in to her.

Joseph's history is interrupted by what happens to Judah. Besides many practical lessons, this history has a prophetic application. Joseph is a picture of the Lord Jesus. In the previous chapter he is rejected by his brothers and sold to Egypt. In the next chapter his history in Egypt continues.

This chapter prophetically represents the present time, the time since the Lord Jesus is rejected. The Lord Jesus was rejected by His brothers, the people of Israel, who were mainly Jews, Judeans, names derived from Judah. Judah is seen here separated from his brothers, the other tribes. Israel has rejected its Messiah and then committed fornication with the world. This we see in the connection of Judah with the daughter of the Canaanite Shua. In the history here we see in Judah a people who have strayed from God.

Judah's history contrasts sharply with that of Joseph. Joseph refuses to sin and walks in purity (Psa 119:9). Judah is a man who does not control his lusts, but is guided by them. The deep destruction of human nature is shown unabashedly by the Holy Spirit in this history. It is a chapter full of sins. It is as if here the background is made clear for the necessity of the death of the Lord Jesus, so that fortunately today, in the time of grace, every sin can be forgiven (Mt 12:31a).

When someone leaves the company to which God connects His presence and blessing, he can only follow a way full of misery. There is no longer looking at the Lord, but at what is in sight. Judah is led by his eyes. He "saw" (verse 2) and marries a Canaanite woman. That is what Abraham has forbidden his servant in the case of his son (Gen 24:3).

Verses 3-11 | Judah, His Sons and Tamar

3 So she conceived and bore a son and he named him Er. 4 Then she conceived again and bore a son and named him Onan. 5 She bore still another son and named him Shelah; and it was at Chezib that she bore him. 6 Now Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name [was] Tamar. 7 But Er, Judah's firstborn, was evil in the sight of the LORD, so the LORD took his life. 8 Then Judah said to Onan, "Go in to your brother's wife, and perform your duty as a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother." 9 Onan knew that the offspring would not be his; so when he went in to his brother's wife, he wasted his seed on the ground in order not to give offspring to his brother. 10 But what he did was displeasing in the sight of the LORD; so He took his life also. 11 Then Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Remain a widow in your father's house until my son Shelah grows up"; for he thought, "[I am afraid] that he too may die like his brothers." So Tamar went and lived in her father's house.

From the corrupt connection Judah has entered into, only corruption can arise. Er, his firstborn son, is killed by the LORD. The reason given is that he is evil in the sight of the LORD. The exact action of his wickedness is not mentioned. In any case it is so evil that the LORD kills him. God rules and punishes all evil.

Onan is also killed by the LORD. He does not do this because of the alleged self-gratification of Onan – self-gratification is wrongly also called 'onanism', after Onan.* With Onan it is not about self-gratification, but about refusing to conceive offspring for his brother, because this would not be accounted to him. This custom, that the brother marries the widow to raise up offspring for his deceased brother, is later made law (Deu 25:5).

Judah promises Tamar that she will be allowed to marry his youngest son – when he has arrived at a marriageable age – to have offspring. He does not fulfil this promise for selfish reasons (verse 11).

* Read more in 'Sexuality, a gift from God' on www.oudesporen.nl, other articles, English flag.

Verses 12-19 | Judah Commits Fornication with Tamar

12 Now after a considerable time Shua's daughter, the wife of Judah, died; and when the time of mourning was ended, Judah went up to his sheepshearers at Timnah, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite. 13 It was told to Tamar, "Behold, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep." 14 So she removed her widow's garments and covered [herself] with a veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in the gateway of Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah had grown up, and she had not been given to him as a wife. 15 When Judah saw her, he thought she [was] a harlot, for she had covered her face. 16 So he turned aside to her by the road, and said, "Here now, let me come in to you"; for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. And she said, "What will you give me, that you may come in to me?" 17 He said, therefore, "I will send you a young goat from the flock." She said, moreover, "Will you give a pledge until you send [it]?" 18 He said, "What pledge shall I give you?" And she said, "Your seal and your cord, and your staff that is in your hand." So he gave [them] to her and went in to her, and she conceived by him. 19 Then she arose and departed, and removed her veil and put on her widow's garments.

When Tamar sees that Judah is not keeping his promise, she resorts to a low trick: she will act as a harlot. She sees in the shearing of the sheep the opportunity to seduce Judah. Sheepshearing is always accompanied by celebration and frivolity.

Tamar's sin cannot be justified. She demands her right and sees no other way to do so than the way of fornication. However reprehensible the way is that Tamar goes, Judah is the one who, as the Scriptures call it, is the stumbling block to her, bringing her to this fall into sin. Tamar knows Judah. She knows that he will not refuse a woman who offers herself. It marks the low moral status of Judah. We can ask ourselves a personal question: How am I known? Judah is deceived by his daughter-in-law, dressed as a harlot, just as he had deceived his father with a tunic, Joseph's tunic (Gen 37:31-32).

Judah's sin begins with the eye, he sees her. He has a heart and eyes full of adultery (2Pet 2:14). When Judah wants to go in to her, she asks what he wants to pay for her 'service'. His answer is that he will send her a young

goat. She then asks him for a pledge, so that she can be sure that he will keep his promise. When asked what she wants as a pledge, she says she wants his seal and his cord, and his staff.

These things represent symbolically what someone spiritually loses when he goes into sin. His seal is a picture of fidelity and property (printing your seal on something): he throws it away. His cord (or: line) stands for an inheritance (Psa 16:6): he loses the enjoyment of his inheritance. His staff is a picture of what supports him: he also surrenders it to an unknown woman. Judah relinquishes everything: his fidelity, what is his own, his personality, his habitat, his world, and finally that which gives him strength to walk.

Tamar knows not only Judah's infidelity, but also his insincerity. He cannot be trusted on his word. That's why she asks for a pledge. Unfaithfulness in the home and unfaithfulness in other relationships (e.g. business) go hand in hand.

Verses 20-23 | The 'Payment' of Judah

20 When Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite, to receive the pledge from the woman's hand, he did not find her. 21 He asked the men of her place, saying, "Where is the temple prostitute who was by the road at Enaim?" But they said, "There has been no temple prostitute here." 22 So he returned to Judah, and said, "I did not find her; and furthermore, the men of the place said, 'There has been no temple prostitute here.'" 23 Then Judah said, "Let her keep them, otherwise we will become a laughingstock. After all, I sent this young goat, but you did not find her."

The kind of friendship Judah has with the Adullamite is that of sinners among themselves. This friendship consists of supporting and covering of sin. A true friend points out the wrong to his friend and will try to prevent evil or, if evil has already happened, help his friend to confess his sin.

When his friend returns without being successful, Judah no longer cares about the loss of his belongings. To continue to solve the matter means that he is ridiculing himself. He does not want to suffer this loss of face. He has done his best to keep his appointment. Thus he speaks to keep his conscience clean, but he does not take into account God Who in His time will confront him with his sin.

Verses 24-26 | The Sin of Judah Discovered

24 Now it was about three months later that Judah was informed, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar has played the harlot, and behold, she is also with child by harlotry." Then Judah said, "Bring her out and let her be burned!" 25 It was while she was being brought out that she sent to her father-in-law, saying, "I am with child by the man to whom these things belong." And she said, "Please examine and see, whose signet ring and cords and staff are these?" 26 Judah recognized [them], and said, "She is more righteous than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Shelah." And he did not have relations with her again.

When Judah hears of his daughter-in-law's pregnancy, he passes a harsh judgement on her. That judgment also suits him, because then he certainly doesn't have to give her to his son Shelah anymore. People who commit a serious sin with ease and without regret, are often very strict in judging the sins of others. By so doing, however, they condemn themselves (Rom 2:1).

All the sins that are done in secret will one day be revealed. One day everything will come to light. That is when the Lord Jesus will reign. Here Judah is confronted with his sin in a way that makes it impossible to deny it. He acknowledges his sin and states that Tamar is in her right. He also acknowledges that his sin came from another sin, namely withholding his son Shelah from Tamar. If sin persists, it paves the way for even more sins. That Judah's confession is real, he shows by having no relations with Tamar again.

Verses 27-30 | Perez and Zera Born

27 It came about at the time she was giving birth, that behold, there were twins in her womb. 28 Moreover, it took place while she was giving birth, one put out a hand, and the midwife took and tied a scarlet [thread] on his hand, saying, "This one came out first." 29 But it came about as he drew back his hand, that behold, his brother came out. Then she said, "What a breach you have made for yourself!" So he was named Perez. 30 Afterward his brother came out who had the scarlet [thread] on his hand; and he was named Zerah.

The grace of God triumphs and rises above the sin of Judah and also above Tamar, who is descended from the cursed race of the Canaanites and is also guilty of harlotry. Judah becomes the ancestor of the Messiah. Tamar

and the sons Perez and Zerah, who were born from the fornication between her and Judah, are mentioned in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus, whereby Perez comes into the genealogy of the Lord Jesus (Mt 1:3).

Genesis 39

Verses 1-6 | Joseph with Potiphar

1 Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the bodyguard, bought him from the Ishmaelites, who had taken him down there. 2 The LORD was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. 3 Now his master saw that the LORD was with him and [how] the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hand. 4 So Joseph found favor in his sight and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge. 5 It came about that from the time he made him overseer in his house and over all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; thus the LORD'S blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field. 6 So he left everything he owned in Joseph's charge; and with him [there] he did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.

Just as Joseph is among his brothers in Genesis 37, so he is among the nations here. He is also rejected by them and ends up in prison. Thus is the Lord Jesus rejected by His people and by the peoples (Acts 4:27).

While Joseph serves as a slave in the house of Potiphar, the LORD is with him. We read these words several times. This is also recorded of the Lord Jesus (Acts 10:38). If God is with you, what do the circumstances matter? Our problem is that we often only see the circumstances and are guided by them in our feelings. But if we are aware that God is for us, what can frighten us about the things that are against us (Rom 8:31)? All that Joseph does, all that he comes into contact with, is blessed. This is also the case with the Lord Jesus, Who in His walk on earth has only spread blessing around him. How is that with us?

Joseph is “handsome in form and appearance”. His whole appearance and the radiance of his face are beautiful and in harmony with his performance. His outward reflects the spiritual beauty of his inner being. This

also applies to the Lord Jesus, with Whom faith perceives a glory as the glory of the only begotten from the Father (Jn 1:14). This beauty of form and prestige is also perceptible for faith when it is has to be said of Him externally: "His appearance was marred more than any man And His form more than the sons of men" (Isa 52:14), and: "He has no [stately] form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him" (Isa 53:2b).

Verses 7-12 | Resist the Temptation

7 It came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me." 8 But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, with me [here], my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. 9 There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?" 10 As she spoke to Joseph day after day, he did not listen to her to lie beside her [or] be with her. 11 Now it happened one day that he went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the household was there inside. 12 She caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside.

Satan is doing everything possible to bring down this clear representative of the LORD. In Potiphar's wife he has a suitable and willing instrument. She looks with desire at Joseph. Again sin begins with seeing (Gen 38:2,15-16). She wants to seduce the handsome Joseph to fornication. But Joseph refuses to accept her offerings. He has the strength to do this through his constant contact with God.

Through his contact with God, he is aware of the great trust his lord has in him and he does not want to abuse that trust. He knows in his position that there is no one greater in the house than he is. Such a position is a reason for many people to seek their own interests, but not for Joseph. He knows the responsibility that goes with his position and acts accordingly. Then you are really great.

Also, through his relationship with God, the blessing promised by him stands before his attention. This blessing – promised to him by God in his

dreams— he does not give in for a temporary enjoyment of sin with an oh so bitter aftertaste.

His defense lies in realizing how horrible sin, and especially this sin of fornication (1Cor 6:18), is to God: “How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?” (verse 9). God, Who helps him so much, and blesses him so much, will he sin against Him? If the proofs of the constant goodness of God, the greatest of which is the gift of His Son, are more in our minds, we will also have more strength to resist temptation of any kind.

And don't think the woman tries it only once. It says that she speaks “to Joseph day after day”. Again and again Joseph said: ‘No.’ You have to have spiritual strength to do this. Joseph is an ordinary young man, with ordinary, natural feelings, also sexually. He is also a slave, someone who only has to obey. But this is about the temptation to sin. Whatever a superior asks of us, we will have to do, except in the case of sin, to perform actions that go against God's Word. In such cases, “we must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

Then there comes a moment when the woman seizes her chance. There is none in the house except her and Joseph . Joseph does not seek danger; he is in the house to do his work (verse 11). If the woman wants to force him to go to bed with her, Joseph puts Paul's call in 1 Corinthians 6 into practice: “Flee immorality! (1Cor 6:18a). He leaves his garment in her hand and flees outside. You better lose your garment than a good conscience.

The example of Joseph can be taken to heart by all young people, especially those who, for example, can no longer live at home due to their study. It then comes down to the choices that are made. It must start with an inner conviction: ‘Even if the whole world sins, I at least do not.’ So Joseph says it as it were.

The real power to say ‘no’ to sin lies in having a living relationship with the Lord Jesus and obedience to God's Word. If that is found, temptation will not be sought, and if he comes, he will be parried properly. “How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping [it] according to Your word” (Psa 119:9).

Verses 13-18 | The False Accusation

13 When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside, 14 she called to the men of her household and said to them, "See, he has brought in a Hebrew to us to make sport of us; he came in to me to lie with me, and I screamed. 15 When he heard that I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside me and fled and went outside." 16 So she left his garment beside her until his master came home. 17 Then she spoke to him with these words, "The Hebrew slave, whom you brought to us, came in to me to make sport of me; 18 and as I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside me and fled outside."

The woman cannot be trusted in her marriage. Nor does she see any point in turning things around completely. She is degraded, but she wants an axe to grind. Joseph will have to pay for his refusal to satisfy her lusts. Sinful love always changes into hatred.

The woman keeps Joseph's garment with her. It must serve as proof of the accuracy of her story. It is the second time that a Joseph robe is used as 'evidence' for twisting facts to cover a crime (Gen 37:31-33).

People who want to make 'love' like this woman, are in reality the most ruthless people walking around. John the baptist was also thrown into prison and finally beheaded because a woman, Herodias, could not stand him and his preaching. This Herodias also lives in a relationship that is to be condemned and John did so (Mk 6:17-18,24,27).

Verses 19-20 | Put into the Jail

19 Now when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spoke to him, saying, "This is what your slave did to me," his anger burned. 20 So Joseph's master took him and put him into the jail, the place where the king's prisoners were confined; and he was there in the jail.

Potiphar in his reaction looks like the indifferent Pilate. The man believes his wife. What else can he do? If he believes Joseph's story, it is at the expense of his prestige. Once again Joseph is the object of terrible iniquity, against which he cannot defend himself. Without a thought he is put into the jail.

He undergoes what the Lord Jesus also underwent. “They laid hands on Him and seized Him” (Mk 14:46); they tried “to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death” (Mt 26:59). Pilate testifies of Him: “I find no guilt in this man” (Lk 23:4), yet he “handed Him over to them to be crucified” (Jn 19:16).

Verses 21-23 | Joseph in the Jail

21 But the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer. 22 The chief jailer committed to Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in the jail; so that whatever was done there, he was responsible [for it]. 23 The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph's charge because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made to prosper.

It seems as if faithfulness only gives misery. But the LORD will teach Joseph, and also us, that the place of the deepest humiliation is necessary to come to the greatest glory. The jail, the place of rejection and humiliation, becomes a place where the blessing of the LORD is experienced (Psa 105:17-19). There too is the LORD with Joseph.

Joseph is also faithful in his humiliation. Therefore the LORD gives him “favor” in the sight of the chief jailer. In the jail, he gets to care for all the prisoners. This makes him a source of blessing for all who are there.

Joseph receives strength to endure this new trial by thinking of what the LORD has shown him in his dreams about the future. We too receive strength as we look forward to the coming of the Lord. “Those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength” (Isa 40:31). His faithfulness in the jail is a preparation for his government later. David also has much hardship to endure before he becomes king of Israel.

Genesis 40

Verses 1-4 | The Cupbearer and the Baker

1 Then it came about after these things, the cupbearer and the baker for the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt. 2 Pharaoh was furious with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker. 3 So he put them in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, in the jail, the [same] place where Joseph was imprisoned. 4 The captain of the bodyguard put Joseph in charge of them, and he took care of them; and they were in confinement for some time.

The cupbearer and the baker both sin against Pharaoh and are both put in confinement. They end up with Joseph and are entrusted to his care. Joseph is also busy serving in the jail. Joseph is not moping around, full of self-pity about the injustice he has suffered; nor do we hear of rebellion.

Joseph enlightens his own destiny by enlightening the destiny of others. Instead of being busy with himself, he works for others who are in the same situation as he is, although he is wrongly there and those others because they deserve punishment.

This is the best way to avoid suffering and bitterness. Moreover, he is here again an example of the Lord Jesus, Who has always thought of others and never of Himself. We see that in His life and we see it on the cross when He hangs between two criminals. The difference between the two criminals on the cross can be seen in the case of the criminals who are in the jail with Joseph.

Verses 5-8 | The Cupbearer and the Baker Dream

5 Then the cupbearer and the baker for the king of Egypt, who were confined in jail, both had a dream the same night, each man with his [own] dream [and] each dream with its [own] interpretation. 6 When Joseph came to them in the morning and observed them, behold, they were dejected. 7 He asked Pharaoh's officials who were with him in confinement in his master's house, "Why are your faces so sad today?" 8 Then they said to him, "We have had a dream and

there is no one to interpret it." Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell [it] to me, please."

The cupbearer and the baker both have a dream. Each one of them has his own dream with its own meaning. In this way God has revealed to them future events (Dan 2:28; Job 33:15-16). They will have dreamed more often, but they understand that this dream is different. The dream each one of them has had makes a great impression on both. They told each other the dream and understood that there is a connection between the dreams and at the same time a difference. They tell Joseph that there is no one who can interpret him. They are in the jail and devoid of the wisdom of the Egyptian dream interpreters.

Joseph sees that the two men are worried. Do we have an eye for the need that can sometimes be read on someone's face? Joseph must have already won their trust, because they tell him what worries them: their dreams. Would others tell us about what they're worried about?

His first reaction is a reference to God (Dan 2:28). On His behalf he says: "Tell [it] to me, please". Joseph lives in such fellowship with God that he knows God will answer him. Joseph always gives God the honor. Not he, but God can make clear what is hidden.

Verses 9-13 | The Dream of the Cupbearer

9 So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, "In my dream, behold, [there was] a vine in front of me; 10 and on the vine [were] three branches. And as it was budding, its blossoms came out, [and] its clusters produced ripe grapes. 11 Now Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; so I took the grapes and squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I put the cup into Pharaoh's hand." 12 Then Joseph said to him, "This is the interpretation of it: the three branches are three days; 13 within three more days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office; and you will put Pharaoh's cup into his hand according to your former custom when you were his cupbearer.

First the chief cupbearer tells his dream. In his dream he sees a vine with three vines that very quickly produce clusters of ripe grapes. The cupbearer was unable to do anything about the ripening of the grapes. With bread it is different, as we will see soon. He takes the grapes and squeezes them

into Pharaoh's cup, which he puts into Pharaoh's hand. Joseph interprets that within three days Pharaoh will lift up the cupbearer's head. This is done by taking him out of the depths of the jail and restoring him to his office.

Verses 14-15 | Request from Joseph

14 Only keep me in mind when it goes well with you, and please do me a kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh and get me out of this house. 15 For I was in fact kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing that they should have put me into the dungeon."

The cup of wine is reminiscent of the cup of the Lord's Supper. That cup speaks of the blood of the Lord Jesus which He shed for the forgiveness of sins for those who believe in Him. It is striking that Joseph asks the cupbearer to keep him in mind and to do him a kindness by telling Pharaoh about him.

Thus the Lord Jesus, in connection with the Supper, asks His disciples – and He also asks us this question through Paul – that we keep Him in mind: "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way [He took] the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink [it], in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1Cor 11:23-26). He also loves to hear how we tell God, the Father, out of gratitude about Him, about His work that He accomplished for us on the cross.

Verses 16-19 | The Dream of the Baker

16 When the chief baker saw that he had interpreted favorably, he said to Joseph, "I also [saw] in my dream, and behold, [there were] three baskets of white bread on my head; 17 and in the top basket [there were] some of all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh, and the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head." 18 Then Joseph answered and said, "This is its interpretation: the

three baskets are three days; 19 within three more days Pharaoh will lift up your head from you and will hang you on a tree, and the birds will eat your flesh off you."

The chief baker is hopeful after the explanation to the cupbearer and also tells his dream. In his dream he sees three baskets of white bread on his head that are eaten by the birds and not that Pharaoh takes them out of his hand. He did not prevent the birds from eating what was meant for Pharaoh. It represents his infidelity in his service. Birds are also often a picture of evil powers (Rev 18:2). In this picture we see that the baker does not prevent evil powers from taking away what is meant for his lord (cf. Gen 15:11).

Joseph interprets that Pharaoh will also lift up his head. This is done by taking him out of the depths of the jail and hanging him on a tree. He who has been unfaithful in his service to God – and every man has the duty to serve Him – will be judged.

The bread does not speak of death, like wine, but of life and to live life as one sees fit. Unlike wine, before a loaf of bread is baked, a lot of work has to be done. It speaks of the effort of man. That is eaten away by birds, a picture of evil powers. What this history teaches is that those who plead by grace are saved, while those who try to build their own righteousness are lost.

Verses 20-22 | The Dreams Come True

20 Thus it came about on the third day, [which was] Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants. 21 He restored the chief cupbearer to his office, and he put the cup into Pharaoh's hand; 22 but he hanged the chief baker, just as Joseph had interpreted to them.

It happens, as Joseph interpreted. Pharaoh lifts up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker. On Pharaoh's birthday, when he has made a feast for all his servants, he restores the chief cupbearer to his office and hangs the chief baker.

Then the question arises: why is the cupbearer received in grace and why is the baker judged? They both have sinned (verse 1). We have already seen

that only those who take the basis of grace are saved and those who want to be saved by their own works are judged and lost.

However, that is not yet the answer to the question why one person realizes that he can only be saved by grace, while the other continues to build up his own justice. There is no logical answer to this question, an answer that we can understand with our human and therefore limited understanding. Here we come across God's sovereign dealing, which we cannot understand. Why does one of the two crucified criminals believe in the Lord Jesus and the other does not?

This question runs through the whole Bible from the beginning. Why did God place two trees in paradise, one of life and the other of the knowledge of good and evil? Why Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain? Why did God choose Jacob and reject Esau? And so on and so forth. Why, as someone I know, repeatedly asks himself in amazement, me and my brother not? This amazement can also be supplemented today with countless examples.

The only way we can see this mystery is to remember that it is about two sides of the truth. One side is the election of God, the other side is the responsibility of man. These two sides cannot be brought together by us. Only God can do that. We must leave both sides side by side and not try to connect them. If we try to do that, we will end up with heresy. We should not be so arrogant as to want to understand God in everything. If we really trust God, we will know that He is not doing injustice.

There is also an additional thought. The cupbearer and the baker both have sinned. Likewise, all people have sinned. All deserve the judgment. If God in His mercy chooses some to be saved forever and we may know to belong to them, that is something to thank Him for now and forever. Then, as far as we are concerned, the amazement remains, because in ourselves we are nothing better than others.

That does not mean that God has predestined those others to perish. He who perishes is to blame for this because he or she did not *want* to repent (cf. Mt 23:37b) in obedience to God's call to do so (Acts 17:30).

Verse 23 | The Chief Cupbearer Does Not Remember Joseph

| *23 Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.*

Joseph asked, “keep me in mind” (verse 14), but the chief cupbearer forgets him. Isn’t it often the case in our lives? How often do we not think of the Lord Jesus? And also: do we remember Him by heeding His wish and proclaiming His death? But also: when we proclaim His death in the breaking of bread and the drinking of wine, do we really think of Him? Aren’t we often busy with other things in our minds? Then we are the same as the disciples. When the Lord Jesus institutes His Supper, they are busy deciding which of them is the most important (Lk 22:24).

Genesis 41

Verses 1-7 | The Dreams of Pharaoh

1 Now it happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had a dream, and behold, he was standing by the Nile. 2 And lo, from the Nile there came up seven cows, sleek and fat; and they grazed in the marsh grass. 3 Then behold, seven other cows came up after them from the Nile, ugly and gaunt, and they stood by the [other] cows on the bank of the Nile. 4 The ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven sleek and fat cows. Then Pharaoh awoke. 5 He fell asleep and dreamed a second time; and behold, seven ears of grain came up on a single stalk, plump and good. 6 Then behold, seven ears, thin and scorched by the east wind, sprouted up after them. 7 The thin ears swallowed up the seven plump and full ears. Then Pharaoh awoke, and behold, [it was] a dream.

Dreams play an important role in Joseph's life. Two full years have gone by and Joseph is still in the jail. Did he ever think that God had forgotten him? God determines the duration of everything. He sets a limit to our lives. He also sets a limit to the duration of our suffering (cf. Mt 24:21-22). He does not tempt beyond what we are able, "but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it" (1Cor 10:13). Time is a factor He uses to teach us patience, to teach us to persevere. This perseverance must have a perfect work (Jam 1:3-4).

When the time of God has come, He begins to work. He determines the duration of the humiliation of Joseph. When that time of suffering is full, he goes to work to bring his servant to glory (Psa 105:19-21). Here we see again a beautiful picture of what God works for the glorification of the Lord Jesus. That is what it is always and only about in everything God does.

God begins His work for Joseph's benefit by making Pharaoh dream dreams that cause him trouble (verse 8). Pharaoh understands that these are not ordinary dreams, dreams that people have naturally (Ecc 5:3). They are two dreams with the same meaning. One dream is about seven sleek cows grazing in the marsh grass, and seven ugly and gaunt cows eating

up the seven sleek and fat cows. After waking up for a while he falls asleep again and dreams another dream. It is about seven ears of grain on a single stalk, plump and good, and seven ears, thin and scorched by the east wind.

Verses 8-13 | The Chief Cupbearer Thinks of Joseph

8 Now in the morning his spirit was troubled, so he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh. 9 Then the chief cupbearer spoke to Pharaoh, saying, "I would make mention today of my [own] offenses. 10 Pharaoh was furious with his servants, and he put me in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, [both] me and the chief baker. 11 We had a dream on the same night, he and I; each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his [own] dream. 12 Now a Hebrew youth [was] with us there, a servant of the captain of the bodyguard, and we related [them] to him, and he interpreted our dreams for us. To each one he interpreted according to his [own] dream. 13 And just as he interpreted for us, so it happened; he restored me in my office, but he hanged him."

When Pharaoh wakes up, he wants to know what the dreams mean. He tells them to "all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men", so no one excepted. Not one of them can tell him what the dreams mean. Only when it has become clear that all the wisdom of Egypt, all the wisdom of the world, has no answer to the problem of Pharaoh, Joseph is thought of. To understand the thoughts of God, someone like Joseph is needed.

So it is with the Lord Jesus. Without Him a person doesn't come a step further with regard to the questions and problems of life. First, the wisdom of the wise must be destroyed before God's wisdom in Christ is accepted by men (1Cor 1:19-20,30). Only when a person has completely failed on everything and everyone, does he come to ask the Lord Jesus (cf. Lk 8:43-44).

Through the dreams of Pharaoh, the cupbearer is reminded of his sins and of Joseph. We hear from the cupbearer an acknowledgment of his sins. The cupbearer cannot think of Joseph without thinking of his past, where he met Joseph and what Joseph did for him.

He tells about what happened in the jail, how Joseph interpreted the dreams and how it went exactly as Joseph has interpreted. Surely, we can

never think of the Lord Jesus, without thinking about what and where we were and what He did for us, so that we now live in freedom, can we?

Verses 14-16 | Joseph out of the Dungeon

14 Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph, and they hurriedly brought him out of the dungeon; and when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came to Pharaoh. 15 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." 16 Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer."

Verse 14 gives a brief and beautiful picture of what we read in Philippians 2 about the exaltation of the Lord Jesus after His humiliation in the verses before (Phil 2:9). They hurry to get Joseph out of prison. What is reminiscent of the prison is disposed of. Here Joseph gets the third garment.

His first garment, the varicolored one, his brothers took from him and dipped it in blood (Gen 37:31-33). His second garment is his slave garment which he left in the hand of Potiphar's wife when she caught him by his garment to force him to commit adultery (Gen 39:10-18). This garment may be his jail clothes. In any case, his slave garment and his jail clothes speak of his humiliation. His jail clothes are changed for clothes in which he can go to the Pharaoh. They are the clothes of his exaltation by and with the Pharaoh.

After his appearance has changed so much that it is suitable to be in the presence of Pharaoh, he is brought from the dungeon into the palace. Pharaoh expects Joseph to interpret his dream to him, because it has been said of him. Joseph, however, rejected any expectation directed at him, and gave God the honor. Just like the wise men of Egypt, Joseph himself is not capable of interpreting the dream. He also speaks even before he has heard the dreams about the fact that God, through the dream, makes known to Pharaoh what is for his good.

Verses 17-24 | Pharaoh Tells His Dreams

17 So Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, "In my dream, behold, I was standing on the bank of the Nile; 18 and behold, seven cows, fat and sleek came up out of the

Nile, and they grazed in the marsh grass. 19 Lo, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such as I had never seen for ugliness in all the land of Egypt; 20 and the lean and ugly cows ate up the first seven fat cows. 21 Yet when they had devoured them, it could not be detected that they had devoured them, for they were just as ugly as before. Then I awoke. 22 I saw also in my dream, and behold, seven ears, full and good, came up on a single stalk; 23 and lo, seven ears, withered, thin, [and] scorched by the east wind, sprouted up after them; 24 and the thin ears swallowed the seven good ears. Then I told it to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me.”

In the representation of the dream, Pharaoh says something additional to what is not mentioned in the first account (verses 1-7). He noticed, possibly after thinking about it, that the lean cows have not become thicker, after they have devoured the fat cows. He also checked whether he has ever seen such ugly and gaunt cows in his country as in his dream. He tells Joseph that he told all this to his magicians, but that they cannot tell him its meaning.

Verses 25-32 | Joseph Explains the Dreams

25 Now Joseph said to Pharaoh, “Pharaoh’s dreams are one [and the same]; God has told to Pharaoh what He is about to do. 26 The seven good cows are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one [and the same]. 27 The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven thin ears scorched by the east wind will be seven years of famine. 28 It is as I have spoken to Pharaoh: God has shown to Pharaoh what He is about to do. 29 Behold, seven years of great abundance are coming in all the land of Egypt; 30 and after them seven years of famine will come, and all the abundance will be forgotten in the land of Egypt, and the famine will ravage the land. 31 So the abundance will be unknown in the land because of that subsequent famine; for it [will be] very severe. 32 Now as for the repeating of the dream to Pharaoh twice, [it means] that the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about.

Joseph explains – and thus underlines what he said earlier (verses 16,28) – that God has revealed to Pharaoh through dreams what He is about to do. There is no doubt whatsoever with Joseph about the explanation he gives.

Doubt is glorified today, but in whom the Spirit of God works (verse 38) and who lives with God judges all things (1Cor 2:15).

In this way we too can speak with certainty about what God is about to do in and with the world in which we live. The book of Revelation, for example, makes that clear. To understand and pass it on we must be slaves of Jesus Christ (Rev 1:1). The mind of a slave – that is obeying and serving – is a condition for learning to know God’s thoughts.

First there will come seven years of abundance, and then seven years of famine. The famine will be so great that all abundance will be forgotten. The people of the world also have their vision for the future. On this basis, they determine their policy. However, they do not take God into account, while only God can tell us how things will go. As in Revelation 1, this is a matter that will soon (Rev 1:1) or “quickly” (verse 32) be performed by God.

Verses 33-36 | Advice from Joseph

33 Now let Pharaoh look for a man discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. 34 Let Pharaoh take action to appoint overseers in charge of the land, and let him exact a fifth [of the produce] of the land of Egypt in the seven years of abundance. 35 Then let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and store up the grain for food in the cities under Pharaoh’s authority, and let them guard [it]. 36 Let the food become as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which will occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land will not perish during the famine.”

Unsolicited, but with dignity, the slave Joseph gives advice to the mighty Pharaoh. There is nothing of revenge on the injustice suffered by him. We see that he offers a helping hand. His advice is to look for one man over Egypt with a view to the things to come. This must be a “discerning and wise” man, who must have overseers who can manage the abundance in the right way in view of the coming famine.

Not through parliaments, cabinets or ministers or other earthly dignitaries will God rule, but through one Man, Who is discerning and wise: Jesus Christ (Isa 11:2).

Verses 37-44 | Joseph Viceroy

37 Now the proposal seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his servants. 38 Then Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is a divine spirit?" 39 So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are. 40 You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you." 41 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." 42 Then Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put the gold necklace around his neck. 43 He had him ride in his second chariot; and they proclaimed before him, "Bow the knee!" And he set him over all the land of Egypt. 44 Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, "[Though] I am Pharaoh, yet without your permission no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."

There is only one man who meets the 'profile' outlined and that is Joseph. Pharaoh acknowledges that God has revealed everything to Joseph and that Joseph owes his discernment and wisdom to God. That is why he places Joseph over everything he has. Herein is Pharaoh a picture of God Who submits all things to the feet of the Lord Jesus (1Cor 15:27) and calls to honor Him.

Joseph receives his fourth garment (verse 42). This garment is connected with the public glory that he has as ruler over all that belongs to Pharaoh. In this he is a picture of the Lord Jesus in the glory He has as the King of kings and Lord of lords. That glory radiates from Him when He accepts His public reign over all things in heaven and on earth (Eph 1:10).

Verses 45 | A Name and a Wife for Joseph

45 Then Pharaoh named Joseph Zaphenath-paneah; and he gave him Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On, as his wife. And Joseph went forth over the land of Egypt.

The name given by Pharaoh to Joseph, "Zaphenath-paneah", means "revealer of mysteries" or "savior of the world". Pharaoh gives him not only a name, but also a wife. She is a picture of the bride that the Lord Jesus received after His exaltation: the church from the nations.

Verses 46-49 | Joseph at Work

46 Now Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt. 47 During the seven years of plenty the land brought forth abundantly. 48 So he gathered all the food of [these] seven years which occurred in the land of Egypt and placed the food in the cities; he placed in every city the food from its own surrounding fields. 49 Thus Joseph stored up grain in great abundance like the sand of the sea, until he stopped measuring [it], for it was beyond measure.

When Joseph was seventeen years old, the way down began. Now that he is thirty years old, he has been made viceroy by Pharaoh. The way to glory always goes through suffering. The Lord Jesus is now in glory. The world is still experiencing a time of abundance, as it were, an abundance of grace. Unfortunately the world doesn't know about it, they don't realize it.

We do not read that the Egyptians themselves provide a supply. It is Joseph who takes care of this. It is important that we too gather food for our souls in the years of spiritual abundance. We can do this by visiting meetings where the Word is preached and explained and also by personal Bible study. In this way we can fill the treasuries of our hearts and thoughts. This is especially important when we are young. "Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth" (Ecc 12:1).

Verses 50-52 | The Sons of Joseph

50 Now before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On, bore to him. 51 Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh, "For," [he said,] "God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." 52 He named the second Ephraim, "For," [he said,] "God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."

In the time of abundance, the two sons of Joseph are born. The meaning of the names is significant. "Manasseh" means "forgetting", "Ephraim" means "double fertility". Rejected by his brothers, Joseph is in a position to "forget" all the suffering that is done to him (Job 11:16), while he takes care for others that they bear "much fruit".

So it is in a way also with the Lord Jesus. Rejected by His earthly people, His brethren, He is now in glory, and has received the church as a bride, by which He can forget the reproach done to Him. From glory He makes sure that those who know Him, who are in connection with Him, bear fruit.

Verses 53-57 | The Famine Begins

53 When the seven years of plenty which had been in the land of Egypt came to an end, 54 and the seven years of famine began to come, just as Joseph had said, then there was famine in all the lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. 55 So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried out to Pharaoh for bread; and Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, you shall do." 56 When the famine was [spread] over all the face of the earth, then Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to the Egyptians; and the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. 57 [The people of] all the earth came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the earth.

The years of abundance are coming to an end. The years of famine begin. In that time Joseph deals with Egypt and with his brothers. It is the time which can be compared with "the hour of testing, that [hour] which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth" (Rev 3:10) and upon Israel in particular (Jer 30:7). During the years of abundance, we hear nothing from the brothers. That will happen now.

When hunger begins and the land calls for bread, Pharaoh says: "Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, you shall do." This is again a beautiful picture of the gospel. God says to people in need about their sins and calls to him: "Go to Jesus, do whatever He says to you" (cf. Jn 2:5).

Genesis 42

Introduction

After the wisdom that Joseph shows to Pharaoh in the previous chapter, we see in this chapter and the following chapters his wisdom to his brothers. Throughout the whole event with Joseph we are not told anything about the fate of Jacob and his sons. It is as if the Spirit of God thus says: "After their crime, and now that Joseph is no longer among them, I have nothing more to say about them."

It is the history of Israel after the rejection of the Lord Jesus. Israel is now "Lo-Ammi", which means "not My people" (Hos 1:9). That is not to say that God has forgotten them and His promises to them. He waits until the favorable moment has come to take up the thread with them again. And all this happens in connection with the true Joseph, the Lord Jesus.

Verses 1-6 | Ten Brothers Are Going to Buy Grain

1 Now Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, and Jacob said to his sons, "Why are you staring at one another?" 2 He said, "Behold, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down there and buy [some] for us from that place, so that we may live and not die." 3 Then ten brothers of Joseph went down to buy grain from Egypt. 4 But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said, "I am afraid that harm may befall him." 5 So the sons of Israel came to buy grain among those who were coming, for the famine was in the land of Canaan [also]. 6 Now Joseph was the ruler over the land; he was the one who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down to him with [their] faces to the ground.

There is a great difference in the way Joseph deals with the Egyptians who are hungry and how he deals with his brothers. The brothers are to blame for the rejection of their brother. Therefore a deep work of repentance must take place in them before they can receive the blessing. This also applies to the Jews in the future, just before the coming of the Lord Jesus. That repentance will be worked through what they experience in great tribulation.

For the brothers, repentance is worked through the way Joseph treats them. Just as the prodigal son is driven home by hunger (Lk 15:17-18), so the hunger drives the brothers to Joseph. They no longer have a special place among the peoples, for they are “among those who were coming” to buy grain. Yet the Spirit of God keeps their separate place they have for faith by speaking of “the sons of Israel” and not “the sons of Jacob”, which we would have understood.

In our lives too, God sometimes allows periods of ‘hunger’, trials, by which He wants to lead us to resort to the Lord Jesus or to return to Him. He wants Christ, the true Joseph, to have His true place in our lives.

Jacob doesn’t let Benjamin go with the brothers. He knows his sons. He may still have doubts about their story about Joseph. Maybe they will also sacrifice Benjamin to safeguard their own interests. Benjamin became his favorite son instead of Joseph, the remaining son of his favorite wife Rachel.

More than twenty years have passed since the brothers appeared before Joseph and bowed down before him, without recognizing him. The circumstances have changed completely. Joseph is the second most powerful man in Egypt after Pharaoh. The whole world depends on him for food.

Verses 7-14 | Accused of Espionage

7 When Joseph saw his brothers he recognized them, but he disguised himself to them and spoke to them harshly. And he said to them, “Where have you come from?” And they said, “From the land of Canaan, to buy food.” 8 But Joseph had recognized his brothers, although they did not recognize him. 9 Joseph remembered the dreams which he had about them, and said to them, “You are spies; you have come to look at the undefended parts of our land.” 10 Then they said to him, “No, my LORD, but your servants have come to buy food. 11 We are all sons of one man; we are honest men, your servants are not spies.” 12 Yet he said to them, “No, but you have come to look at the undefended parts of our land!” 13 But they said, “Your servants are twelve brothers [in all], the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and behold, the youngest is with our father today, and one is no longer alive.” 14 Joseph said to them, “It is as I said to you, you are spies;

The brothers, who at first were so powerful and also ruthless towards Joseph, are now powerless at his feet. As soon as he sees them, he begins the work that is needed to put their hearts in the right attitude to him. It is as with the Lord Jesus Who, in the consciousness of His dominion over all things, is about to wash the feet of the disciples (Jn 13:3-5).

Instead of putting his foot on them while they are kneeling before him – as they did with him – the wise Joseph treats them in love. At first his attitude does not look much like love (cf. Mk 7:24-30). Yet he deals in love with them. He has learned to accept everything from the hand of God (cf. Gen 45:7). Then there are no feelings of revenge. He sees them, knows them, and loves them.

He wants to see if they have changed inwardly, whether they are not just kneeling for the sake of the benefit. He is tough, but not to take revenge. This is not difficult for him in his position, but Joseph is not like that. He is still morally far above them. Nor does he go to the opposite, by very generously forgetting everything that has been done to him. This does not really serve the brothers.

In the future God will also act in this way with Israel. He will not reveal Himself directly to them when they are in trouble. In the book of Psalms, we read that the remnant says that God is hiding Himself or His face (Psa 10:1; 13:1b; 88:14; 89:46). God is looking in everything for a transformation into His image. He will work that transformation Himself. Then the past must be confessed. This is only possible if they understand what is wrong. Then there will be room for enjoyment of the blessing.

The brothers want to buy grain. They must also learn that there is something that is not for sale: grace. In their defense, they mention their honesty. While saying this, they do not realize that they are facing him who can prove the opposite. All that is needed for this is to name them his name. He doesn't, because his work with them isn't finished yet, it's only just started. They must also learn that they have not shown much of their honesty in their dealings with Joseph and deceiving their father.

Many people boast of their honesty or piety or compassion, but they do not realize that they are guilty of the death of the Son of God. The broth-

ers say of Joseph: "One is no longer alive" (verse 13). As for them, Joseph disappeared for good.

Verses 15-20 | The Test

15 by this you will be tested: by the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go from this place unless your youngest brother comes here! 16 Send one of you that he may get your brother, while you remain confined, that your words may be tested, whether there is truth in you. But if not, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies." 17 So he put them all together in prison for three days. 18 Now Joseph said to them on the third day, "Do this and live, for I fear God: 19 if you are honest men, let one of your brothers be confined in your prison; but as for [the rest of] you, go, carry grain for the famine of your households, 20 and bring your youngest brother to me, so your words may be verified, and you will not die." And they did so.

Only by bringing Benjamin to Joseph can they prove that they are honest people. Joseph and Benjamin belong together. Prophetically this points forward to the acceptance by Israel of the Lord Jesus, not only as Benjamin, but as Joseph, the picture of Him as the one they rejected, and Benjamin, a picture of Him in His reign in power.

Joseph decides to put them in the jail. He makes them feel a bit of what he has been through. He was innocent there, they are rightly there. Yet they only experience a fraction of it. There they can also think about their fate for three days (Job 36:8-9). When they get out, they are told how they can prove the accuracy of their statements.

To bring his brothers to a sincere confession of guilt, Joseph deals with them in different ways. Sometimes he uses severity, sometimes goodness; sometimes he threatens them, sometimes he encourages them; sometimes he accuses them, sometimes he makes a feast for them. This is not an arbitrariness, but actions of great wisdom. This is how the Lord works with us when He wants to reach our heart and conscience.

The accusation of espionage, which Joseph makes four times (verses 9,12,14,16), is not right. The brothers are not spies. Joseph, however, is concerned with their reaction to this. Their response to this accusation shows that they no longer intend to defend themselves. They notice that God is

dealing with them. Instead of getting upset about injustice being done to us, we should ask ourselves more what God has to say to us with this. Do we have an eye for God's hand in our lives?

Verses 21-24 | Awareness of Guilt

21 Then they said to one another, "Truly we are guilty concerning our brother, because we saw the distress of his soul when he pleaded with us, yet we would not listen; therefore this distress has come upon us." 22 Reuben answered them, saying, "Did I not tell you, 'Do not sin against the boy'; and you would not listen? Now comes the reckoning for his blood." 23 They did not know, however, that Joseph understood, for there was an interpreter between them. 24 He turned away from them and wept. But when he returned to them and spoke to them, he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes.

The treatment they undergo brings the event with Joseph back into their remembrance. There may be events in our lives that forcefully remind us of things we have done that have not yet been cleared up, or which we remember with shame and are humiliated by (cf. 1Kgs 17:18). The awareness of guilt begins to awaken. The jail has done its work. They say: "Truly we are guilty concerning our brother" (verse 21).

When Joseph hears how they speak about it, he must weep (verse 24). He will do this several times in the following chapters (Gen 43:30; 45:2,14; 46:29; 50:1,17). It shows how much the Lord Jesus is moved by the development someone experiences to come to terms with Him. As said, the work in their hearts has only just begun; more needs to be done about it. Simeon is bound. Will they come back because of him?

Verses 25-28 | The Money in the Bag

25 Then Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain and to restore every man's money in his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. And thus it was done for them. 26 So they loaded their donkeys with their grain and departed from there. 27 As one [of them] opened his sack to give his donkey fodder at the lodging place, he saw his money; and behold, it was in the mouth of his sack. 28 Then he said to his brothers, "My money has been returned, and

behold, it is even in my sack.” And their hearts sank, and they [turned] trembling to one another, saying, “What is this that God has done to us?”

Joseph has not yet made himself known. Yet the money in the bag is proof of his grace. This proof of grace is not experienced by them as such. It places them in the presence of God. However, it does not give a feeling of gratitude, but of fear and doubt. They discover that *God* is acting with them.

Joseph’s goodness is meant to make them happy, but a guilty conscience has no joy. It is a dismay of grace. It proves that they do not yet know God well. But God is with them on the way, that they may know Him as Giver.

Verses 29-34 | Back to Jacob with Report

29 When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them, saying, 30 “The man, the lord of the land, spoke harshly with us, and took us for spies of the country. 31 But we said to him, ‘We are honest men; we are not spies. 32 We are twelve brothers, sons of our father; one is no longer alive, and the youngest is with our father today in the land of Canaan.’ 33 The man, the lord of the land, said to us, ‘By this I will know that you are honest men: leave one of your brothers with me and take [grain for] the famine of your households, and go. 34 But bring your youngest brother to me that I may know that you are not spies, but honest men. I will give your brother to you, and you may trade in the land.”

Back at Jacob’s they give an honest report. In any case, they no longer try to deceive their father. They realize that they do not control events themselves. That is a lesson the Lord also wants us to learn. There may be certain circumstances in our lives that we do not know how to deal with, that we cannot influence and can only face honestly.

Verses 35-38 | Benjamin Shall Not Go down

35 Now it came about as they were emptying their sacks, that behold, every man’s bundle of money [was] in his sack; and when they and their father saw their bundles of money, they were dismayed. 36 Their father Jacob said to them, “You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and you would take Benjamin; all these things are against me.” 37 Then Reuben spoke to his father, saying, “You may put my two sons to death if I do

not bring him [back] to you; put him in my care, and I will return him to you.”
38 *But Jacob said, “My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he alone is left. If harm should befall him on the journey you are taking, then you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow.”*

Then it turns out that all of them have received the money back in their sacks. The brothers' fear increases (verse 28). Jacob is also overcome by fear. In the words “you have bereaved me of my children”, it is also heard that Jacob suspects that the brothers had a hand in the disappearance of Joseph. There is no rest with him about what happened to Joseph.

Jacob cannot (yet) speak the language of faith: “We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God” (Rom 8:28). He experiences it all as against him. He only sees what he has already lost (Joseph, Simeon) and also what he is about to lose (Benjamin). Reuben is a picture of the people of Israel as it is now, in its present state, a people that sacrifices its own sons and thinks it will thereby not lose ‘Benjamin’ (the Messiah).

Jacob has no intention of giving up Benjamin. As long as this is not the case, Joseph cannot make himself known. As long as we do not intend to give up everything, God cannot reveal Himself to us.

Genesis 43

Verses 1-14 | The Second Journey to Egypt

1 Now the famine was severe in the land. 2 So it came about when they had finished eating the grain which they had brought from Egypt, that their father said to them, "Go back, buy us a little food." 3 Judah spoke to him, however, saying, "The man solemnly warned us, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.' 4 If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food. 5 But if you do not send [him], we will not go down; for the man said to us, 'You will not see my face unless your brother is with you.'" 6 Then Israel said, "Why did you treat me so badly by telling the man whether you still had [another] brother?" 7 But they said, "The man questioned particularly about us and our relatives, saying, 'Is your father still alive? Have you [another] brother?' So we answered his questions. Could we possibly know that he would say, 'Bring your brother down?'" 8 Judah said to his father Israel, "Send the lad with me and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, we as well as you and our little ones. 9 I myself will be surety for him; you may hold me responsible for him. If I do not bring him [back] to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame before you forever. 10 For if we had not delayed, surely by now we could have returned twice." 11 Then their father Israel said to them, "If [it must be] so, then do this: take some of the best products of the land in your bags, and carry down to the man as a present, a little balm and a little honey, aromatic gum and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds. 12 Take double [the] money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was a mistake. 13 Take your brother also, and arise, return to the man; 14 and may God Almighty grant you compassion in the sight of the man, so that he will release to you your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."

Joseph and Benjamin together are a picture of the Messiah. In Joseph we see the suffering servant of the LORD, rejected and in this time glorified. In Benjamin we see the Messiah Who will soon reign in power and majesty (Gen 49:27), the Son of the right hand of the Father (Gen 35:18). The ortho-

dox Jews expect the Messiah today, but only as Benjamin. The brothers have rejected Joseph, but they love Benjamin.

The most terrible thing for Jacob is not famine, but that he has to give Benjamin away. Forced by the famine Jacob and the brothers now have to bring Benjamin to Joseph, that means to unite Benjamin and Joseph. Judah, who urged the rejection of Joseph (Gen 37:26), now shows himself as the one who seeks the interest of his father and Benjamin. There is a work of recovery going on in him and the brothers. Jacob finally admits. First he arranges everything again to appease “the man”. Only then does he give the matter into the hands of God, the Almighty. Here we see for a moment the old Jacob again.

Yet there is also the memory of the mercy of God, upon which he wants to trust. We can entrust ourselves to this in the way we have to go; there is no other way. Sometimes we have to be forced to experience that mercy. Jacob thinks he loses everything, but he gets everything back and that to a greater extent than he has lost it. Thus is God’s way to bless us.

Verses 15-23 | Reception in Egypt

15 So the men took this present, and they took double [the] money in their hand, and Benjamin; then they arose and went down to Egypt and stood before Joseph. 16 When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to his house steward, “Bring the men into the house, and slay an animal and make ready; for the men are to dine with me at noon.” 17 So the man did as Joseph said, and brought the men to Joseph’s house. 18 Now the men were afraid, because they were brought to Joseph’s house; and they said, “[It is] because of the money that was returned in our sacks the first time that we are being brought in, that he may seek occasion against us and fall upon us, and take us for slaves with our donkeys.” 19 So they came near to Joseph’s house steward, and spoke to him at the entrance of the house, 20 and said, “Oh, my lord, we indeed came down the first time to buy food, 21 and it came about when we came to the lodging place, that we opened our sacks, and behold, each man’s money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full. So we have brought it back in our hand. 22 We have also brought down other money in our hand to buy food; we do not know who put our money in our sacks.” 23 He said, “Be at ease, do not be afraid. Your

God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money." Then he brought Simeon out to them.

They are on their way, with Benjamin. But it remains to be proven whether they go alone because of hunger and therefore take Benjamin with them, or whether there is real care for Benjamin. When Joseph sees that the brothers have Benjamin with them, his heart opens further for them. He wants them to come to his house and eat with him. Joseph desires to bless the brothers, but all the benefits only make the brothers more afraid and suspicious. They don't trust it. Again they try to calm their consciences by giving all kinds of explanations and apologies.

Then they hear from the mouth of Joseph's house steward: "Be at ease, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks." They already have been paid for what they want to buy, without knowing it. They are on their way to learn that no one's own merit can provide for the need in which they are, but that everything is provided for by the grace of God. We must also learn that lesson and we must also repeat it at times.

Verses 24-34 | Second Meeting with Joseph

24 Then the man brought the men into Joseph's house and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their donkeys fodder. 25 So they prepared the present for Joseph's coming at noon; for they had heard that they were to eat a meal there. 26 When Joseph came home, they brought into the house to him the present which was in their hand and bowed to the ground before him. 27 Then he asked them about their welfare, and said, "Is your old father well, of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?" 28 They said, "Your servant our father is well; he is still alive." They bowed down in homage. 29 As he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, he said, "Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me?" And he said, "May God be gracious to you, my son." 30 Joseph hurried [out] for he was deeply stirred over his brother, and he sought [a place] to weep; and he entered his chamber and wept there. 31 Then he washed his face and came out; and he controlled himself and said, "Serve the meal." 32 So they served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat bread with the Hebrews, for that is loathsome to the

Egyptians. 33 Now they were seated before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth, and the men looked at one another in astonishment. 34 He took portions to them from his own table, but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs. So they feasted and drank freely with him.

When they arrive at Joseph, they bow down before him for the second time. Joseph does not ask for their money, but acts according to his own heart. He cares for them. The brothers think they should bring a gift now that they will dine with the viceroy. However, Joseph does not seem to pay any attention to the gift. In the same way, we too do not need to come to God with gifts if we believe that we should make Him happy as a result.

Joseph has said: "The men are to dine with me at noon" (verse 16). Accepting this just like that goes too far for someone who is not convinced of his goodness. Even today it still applies to anyone who, out of false humility, refuses to accept the offer of the Lord Jesus: "Come; for everything is ready now" (Lk 14:16-17).

Joseph is not interested in their gifts, but in themselves. He asks about their welfare and how their old father is doing. With the question about their welfare, his father had sent him to the brothers more than twenty years ago (Gen 37:14). Their answer is that he is well. But is it true? In their answer they do not mention anything of the grief of their old father.

When Joseph sees Benjamin, he has to cry again. He separates himself for that. Sometimes it is good that others see our tears (Acts 20:19; 2Tim 1:4), but sometimes it is also good that others do not see our tears (cf. Jer 13:17; Lk 22:62). How much he would have liked to have made himself known! But the work in the brothers is not finished yet. In the same way the Lord Jesus deals with the woman at the well of Sychar in John 4. He does not reveal Himself directly to her either, but only after her conscience has come into the light (Jn 4:25-26).

Joseph controls himself. Although he has not yet made himself known, he shows through the arrangement at the table that he knows them and their history. This again impresses the brothers, who notice from this dealing that their high-ranked host possesses supernatural knowledge about their family relationships. They can only look at each other in amazement. By

giving Benjamin five times more than the brothers, Joseph tests their attitude towards Benjamin. Will they become jealous or will they grant it to him?

At the end of the chapter we read for the first time after all the sadness about cheerfulness. The brothers' joy is not yet about Joseph himself, but only about what they receive from Joseph.

Genesis 44

Introduction

This chapter contains the full confession of guilt of the brothers, pronounced by Judah. God brings the brothers, through the wisdom given to Joseph, as it were back to the field of Dothan, where they threw Joseph into the pit and sold him (Gen 37:17-24). At the time, Joseph's cries of fear did not work out anything (cf. Gen 42:21). What will they do with Benjamin, who is loved by his father (verse 20)? Will they sacrifice him too?

Verses 1-13 | The Cup in Benjamin's Sack

1 Then he commanded his house steward, saying, "Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money in the mouth of his sack. 2 Put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, and his money for the grain." And he did as Joseph had told [him]. 3 As soon as it was light, the men were sent away, they with their donkeys. 4 They had [just] gone out of the city, [and] were not far off, when Joseph said to his house steward, "Up, follow the men; and when you overtake them, say to them, 'Why have you repaid evil for good? 5 Is not this the one from which my lord drinks and which he indeed uses for divination? You have done wrong in doing this.'" 6 So he overtook them and spoke these words to them. 7 They said to him, "Why does my lord speak such words as these? Far be it from your servants to do such a thing. 8 Behold, the money which we found in the mouth of our sacks we have brought back to you from the land of Canaan. How then could we steal silver or gold from your lord's house? 9 With whomever of your servants it is found, let him die, and we also will be my lord's slaves." 10 So he said, "Now let it also be according to your words; he with whom it is found shall be my slave, and [the rest of] you shall be innocent." 11 Then they hurried, each man lowered his sack to the ground, and each man opened his sack. 12 He searched, beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest, and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. 13 Then they tore their clothes, and when each man loaded his donkey, they returned to the city.

Again, the brothers receive an overflowing size of grain, while they also receive the money back with them. Throughout their trial the LORD remains the Same in showing His grace.

The cup must be put into Benjamin's bag. He is the only one of the brothers who is innocent of Joseph's rejection, but all the guilt was imputed to him. This is also what happened to the Lord Jesus. The Just has suffered for the unjust (1Pet 3:18). The brothers (and we) must learn that.

We can see the house steward as a picture of the Holy Spirit. He does everything Joseph says. He follows the brothers and 'discovers' the cup in Benjamin's sack. Because of this, the brothers come into great dismay. They have no more excuses. To this end, the Holy Spirit always wants to bring a soul to an acknowledgement without excuse.

As for the cup, they are indeed innocent. For their consciences however, this has no meaning. Judah does not even mention it. Once conscience is awakened and convinced of sin, it only deals with the real question of guilt. They tear their clothes, as Jacob once did when they brought him the hypocritical news of Joseph's death (Gen 37:32-34).

Verses 14-17 | Confession for Joseph

14 When Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, he was still there, and they fell to the ground before him. 15 Joseph said to them, "What is this deed that you have done? Do you not know that such a man as I can indeed practice divination?" 16 So Judah said, "What can we say to my lord? What can we speak? And how can we justify ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants; behold, we are my lord's slaves, both we and the one in whose possession the cup has been found." 17 But he said, "Far be it from me to do this. The man in whose possession the cup has been found, he shall be my slave; but as for you, go up in peace to your father."

When they come back to Joseph, this time they don't only bow, but they throw themselves down before him. The brothers acknowledge the righteousness of God. They say that He brought their guilt to light, by which they perhaps mean the evil they did to Joseph. They experience what happens to them now, as the righteous reckoning of God. There will be no more comebacks over their lips. All they can do is offer themselves as

slaves, together with Benjamin. The brothers show solidarity with Benjamin.

But Joseph continues to test their mind. He leads them further and further towards the goal, which is a complete confession and restoration of communion with him. Joseph knows they are innocent as far as the cup is concerned, but have they also confessed the past? Therefore, he has put them in a situation similar to that of the past. What will they do now? Will they leave their brother in slavery, knowing he is innocent? Will they deceive their father Jacob again with an invented story, now with regard to Benjamin? Then it turns out that grace has done its work in their hearts.

Verses 18-34 | Judah Pleads for His Father

18 Then Judah approached him, and said, "Oh my lord, may your servant please speak a word in my lord's ears, and do not be angry with your servant; for you are equal to Pharaoh. 19 My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Have you a father or a brother?' 20 We said to my lord, 'We have an old father and a little child of [his] old age. Now his brother is dead, so he alone is left of his mother, and his father loves him.' 21 Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me that I may set my eyes on him.' 22 But we said to my lord, 'The lad cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.' 23 You said to your servants, however, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you will not see my face again.' 24 Thus it came about when we went up to your servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. 25 Our father said, 'Go back, buy us a little food.' 26 But we said, 'We cannot go down. If our youngest brother is with us, then we will go down; for we cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us.' 27 Your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons; 28 and the one went out from me, and I said, "Surely he is torn in pieces," and I have not seen him since. 29 If you take this one also from me, and harm befalls him, you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow.' 30 Now, therefore, when I come to your servant my father, and the lad is not with us, since his life is bound up in the lad's life, 31 when he sees that the lad is not [with us], he will die. Thus your servants will bring the gray hair of your servant our father down to Sheol in sorrow. 32 For your servant became surety for the lad to my father, saying, 'If I do not bring him [back] to you, then let me bear the blame before my father

forever.’ 33 Now, therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers. 34 For how shall I go up to my father if the lad is not with me—for fear that I see the evil that would overtake my father?”

In this section we listen to a heart-moving plea of Judah. Joseph has achieved the goal. He notices how Judah has changed. There is nothing left of insensitivity towards his father, as in the announcement of Joseph’s rejection. His plea also expresses his love for Benjamin, the son of the old age of Jacob. He has learned to empathize with the feelings of his father and his youngest brother.

This is also important in the relationships between believers. It is especially important with regard to the relationship between the Father and the Son, that we get a sense of what the Father felt when His Son was suffering, both from the human side and from the side of God. Are we not often insensitive to this?

This change in the heart of Judah has only been able to bring about God. Judah does not plead to be released, but to get Benjamin back with his father. There is also no strong defense to prove Benjamin’s innocence. He does not seek words of justification, but appeals to Joseph’s compassion. Judah does not argue to exonerate Benjamin, but asks for mercy (Job 9:15).

There is nothing left in Judah’s feelings about his father that indicates that he wants to cheat on his father, as was the case with Joseph in the past. Judah has been the driving force behind the rejection of Joseph. His personal life is also reprehensible (Gen 38:1-26). Here we hear the confession that God has brought their crime to light (verse 16).

He describes in an impressive way Jacob’s love for Benjamin and how hard it was to get Benjamin along. He expresses the grief that Jacob will have when Benjamin does not return – fourteen times he calls the name ‘father’; twelve times he speaks about his ‘brother’. Finally, he offers himself to be a slave instead of Benjamin.

Here Judah represents the whole people. As a tribe Judah is most responsible for the rejection of the Messiah. They are, like the returnees from Babylon, at the time of the public service of Lord Jesus in the land.

Genesis 45

Verses 1-3 | Joseph Makes Himself Known

1 Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried, "Have everyone go out from me." So there was no man with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. 2 He wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard [it], and the household of Pharaoh heard [of it]. 3 Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence.

Judah concluded his moving speech without any interruption from Joseph's side. Then the time has come for Joseph for which he waited so long. After the striking proof of God's work of grace in the hearts of the brothers that came out of Judah's mouth, Joseph can no longer control himself and makes himself known to his brothers.

Nothing but his announcement to them can satisfy his heart. He wants them to know him. He wants conscious fellowship with them based on the just-proven work of grace. Nothing else can also give rest to the hearts of the brothers.

This is also the way in which God acts with the sinner and to which He wants to lead him: that the Lord Jesus can make Himself known to him. This is also the way in which God deals with His own: He wants them to see none but Jesus alone (Mt 17:6-8). This is an announcement for each soul individually. No one else can be present when that happens.

Again we read that Joseph weeps, even weeps loudly, so everyone hears it. The outcome of the work that has been done in the brothers by the wisdom with which he has treated them, does not leave him unmoved. He is deeply involved in this work. When he then sees what the effect is, he lets his emotions run free. We can be sure that this is an example of the Lord Jesus' involvement in every work of conversion and repentance in a human being, whether unbelieving or believing.

The announcement is so far-reaching for the brothers that they are dismayed. Similarly, the Lord Jesus reveals Himself to Saul, to whom He says,

"I am Jesus." Saul is also overwhelmed there and thrown to the ground by the realization that the One Whom he has declared dead, still lives (Acts 9:4-5).

Verses 4-15 | Joseph Opens his Heart

4 Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come closer to me." And they came closer. And he said, "I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. 5 Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. 6 For the famine [has been] in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. 7 God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. 8 Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt. 9 Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. 10 You shall live in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children and your flocks and your herds and all that you have. 11 There I will also provide for you, for there are still five years of famine [to come], and you and your household and all that you have would be impoverished." ' 12 Behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin [see], that it is my mouth which is speaking to you. 13 Now you must tell my father of all my splendor in Egypt, and all that you have seen; and you must hurry and bring my father down here." 14 Then he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. 15 He kissed all his brothers and wept on them, and afterward his brothers talked with him.

The announcement "I am Joseph" fills the brothers' hearts with fear and trembling. Here they see their brother, who they thought was dead, whom they hated, rejected and basically murdered. He does not live alone, but he is lord over everything. Here too he is a picture of the Lord Jesus (Heb 2:8).

Joseph opens his heart in goodness and love for the brothers. He tells them that their evil deeds have led him to that place! Their rejection has been the means to give him that position. God has so governed it. There is no vengefulness at all with him.

The certainty that the will of God, not of mankind, governs everything, will keep us from vengefulness or bitterness and, on the contrary, will make us ready for reconciliation. The spiritual man can recognize the hand of God in all events and is therefore able to forgive him who wrongs him.

That in no way reduces the evil they have done. But “the LORD is greater than all the gods; indeed, it was proven when they dealt proudly against the people” (Exo 18:11). God has used what man meant to be evil for good. This is also the case with the Lord Jesus, Who was delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God on the one hand and killed by the hands of murderers on the other (Acts 2:23).

Here we see what will remain a mystery for man forever. On the one hand we see the responsibility of the human being, which can and will be fully charged to him. On the other hand, we see the counsel of God, in which He gives a place to what man does in evil, without declaring man less accountable to it.

The joy that fills Joseph’s heart is the joy of the shepherd who has found his lost sheep (Lk 15:6). The brothers were given the joyful task of going to get their father and telling him “of all my splendor in Egypt, and all that you have seen”. That is also a task for us: to tell God the Father all we have seen of the glory of the Lord Jesus.

Joseph rewards his brothers good for evil (Mt 5:44). He takes care of them and their families for the remaining five years of famine. Above all, they may be close to him.

Joseph points out that they see and hear him. They did not see and hear a vengeful brother, but one who showers them with blessings and promises them many more. He does everything to take away their fear. Their eyes see his glory, their ears hear his promises, their hearts feel his warm love when he falls around their necks and kisses them warmly. “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear” (1Jn 4:18a). Of his former hardness nothing is noticeable anymore.

When they are so overwhelmed by all his proofs of love and goodness, their tongues come loose. That’s how it works with us. A heart overwhelmed by the love of the Lord Jesus cannot remain silent. Where the heart is full,

the mouth of it runs over, both toward God to honor Him and toward the people to tell them what He has done to our souls.

Verses 16-24 | Pharaoh Commands to Bring Jacob

16 Now when the news was heard in Pharaoh's house that Joseph's brothers had come, it pleased Pharaoh and his servants. 17 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say to your brothers, 'Do this: load your beasts and go to the land of Canaan, 18 and take your father and your households and come to me, and I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you will eat the fat of the land.' 19 Now you are ordered, 'Do this: take wagons from the land of Egypt for your little ones and for your wives, and bring your father and come. 20 Do not concern yourselves with your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.'" 21 Then the sons of Israel did so; and Joseph gave them wagons according to the command of Pharaoh, and gave them provisions for the journey. 22 To each of them he gave changes of garments, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred [pieces of] silver and five changes of garments. 23 To his father he sent as follows: ten donkeys loaded with the best things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and sustenance for his father on the journey. 24 So he sent his brothers away, and as they departed, he said to them, "Do not quarrel on the journey."

To be with Joseph, everything must be given up. They don't have to regret that (verse 20). It is said by Pharaoh, who is a picture of God here, that he will give them the best of the land of Egypt. Earlier they came to Joseph with a bit of the best of the land of Canaan (Gen 43:11), but through Joseph they get the best of Egypt. With such a promise the Lord Jesus has encouraged His disciples and with it He also encourages us (Mk 10:29-30).

They don't just get a land. Joseph, a picture of the Lord Jesus, also gives them everything they need to get there. *Wagons*, on which they can drive, can be seen as a picture of the Holy Spirit Who gives the believers power and guidance on the journey; they do not have to go by their own power. *Food* can be seen as a picture of the Word of God that the believers may eat and that gives them strength for the journey. *Clothes* can be seen as a picture of Christ with whom the believers are clothed and Who through them becomes visible in the world (Gal 3:27).

Thus the brothers are sent away by Joseph, with the final admonition: “Do not quarrel on the journey.” It is very easy for them to blame each other during the journey, when they discuss their experiences with each other, about their performance in their entire treatment of Joseph. One may point out that he said it in advance (Gen 42:22), another may say that he did not throw Joseph himself into the well and so on. But Joseph has forgiven them all, so they should not blame each other.

We too desperately need the exhortation not to quarrel. Despite everything the Lord Jesus has given us, we all forget that exhortation so every now and then. The disciples also quarreled once about who is the most important one and that, while the Lord Jesus is busy with His suffering and talking about it with them (Lk 22:24).

Verses 25-28 | Joseph Is Still Alive!

25 Then they went up from Egypt, and came to the land of Canaan to their father Jacob. 26 They told him, saying, “Joseph is still alive, and indeed he is ruler over all the land of Egypt.” But he was stunned, for he did not believe them. 27 When they told him all the words of Joseph that he had spoken to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. 28 Then Israel said, “It is enough; my son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.”

When Jacob sees his son’s blood-baptized tunic, there is no doubt in his mind: his son has been torn apart by a wild animal (Gen 37:33). Now that he is told that Joseph is still alive, he does not believe it. We believe bad news rather than good news, we believe the lie rather than the truth. Only through the work of grace do we believe the truth.

Jacob’s “was stunned” or “his heart grew numb” – which is the literal translation – when his sons tell him that Joseph is still alive. Life comes back to him after they have “told him all the words of Joseph that he had spoken to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him”. In this we can see a picture of the living power of the Word of God (the words of Joseph) and the Holy Spirit (the wagons that Joseph sent).

Now Jacob is called Israel, for his power of mind is coming back. Jacob does not speak of Joseph’s glory, but of the fact that he is still alive. That’s

enough, that's what it's all about. The only thing he wants is to see him. After that, he can die peacefully.

The Lord Jesus has said that only when someone is born again, born of water and Spirit, can he see and enter the kingdom of God (Jn 3:3,5). Water is a picture of the Word of God (Eph 5:26). This means that only the Word of God, under the activity of the Holy Spirit, is capable of creating new life. That is, in the picture, what revives Jacob's numb heart.

When our hearts are numb, new life only comes when we start reading God's Word again. In it we hear the words of the true Joseph, the Lord Jesus. Through the Holy Spirit, Who dwells in us, these words start to live for us.

Genesis 46

Verses 1-7 | Jacob Leaves for Egypt

1 So Israel set out with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. 2 God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here I am." 3 He said, "I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there. 4 I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will close your eyes." 5 Then Jacob arose from Beersheba; and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob and their little ones and their wives in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. 6 They took their livestock and their property, which they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and came to Egypt, Jacob and all his descendants with him: 7 his sons and his grandsons with him, his daughters and his granddaughters, and all his descendants he brought with him to Egypt.

To meet Joseph, Jacob must leave behind everything he is familiar with and dear to him. We too must forget what is behind and reach out to what lies ahead: Christ (Phil 3:14). On the way to Joseph, Jacob offers sacrifices to God on the border of the country, near Beersheba. Beersheba means 'well of the oath'. It reminds us of God's promises.

Before leaving the land, he wants to honor God. It is as if he does not want to continue now without the conviction that God is going with him. The answer is not lacking. God remembers Jacob there with His promise to make him a great people.

God is called here the God of his father Isaac. This reminds us that God is the God of the resurrection. It reminds us of the Lord Jesus as the One Who passed through death and rose up. Jacob finds himself on the basis of the resurrection, the ground of new life. All blessing is connected with Christ as the risen One.

Verses 8-27 | With Jacob to Egypt

8 Now these are the names of the sons of Israel, Jacob and his sons, who went to Egypt: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn. 9 The sons of Reuben: Hanoch and Pallu

and Hezron and Carmi. 10 The sons of Simeon: Jemuel and Jamin and Ohad and Jachin and Zohar and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman. 11 The sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. 12 The sons of Judah: Er and Onan and Shelah and Perez and Zerah (but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan). And the sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul. 13 The sons of Issachar: Tola and Puvvah and Iob and Shimron. 14 The sons of Zebulun: Sered and Elon and Jahleel. 15 These are the sons of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob in Paddan-aram, with his daughter Dinah; all his sons and his daughters [numbered] thirty-three. 16 The sons of Gad: Ziphion and Haggi, Shuni and Ezbon, Eri and Arodi and Areli. 17 The sons of Asher: Imnah and Ishvah and Ishvi and Beriah and their sister Serah. And the sons of Beriah: Heber and Malchiel. 18 These are the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to his daughter Leah; and she bore to Jacob these sixteen persons. 19 The sons of Jacob's wife Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. 20 Now to Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara, priest of On, bore to him. 21 The sons of Benjamin: Bela and Becher and Ashbel, Gera and Naaman, Ehi and Rosh, Muppim and Huppim and Ard. 22 These are the sons of Rachel, who were born to Jacob; [there were] fourteen persons in all. 23 The sons of Dan: Hushim. 24 The sons of Naphtali: Jahzeel and Guni and Jezer and Shillem. 25 These are the sons of Bilhah, whom Laban gave to his daughter Rachel, and she bore these to Jacob; [there were] seven persons in all. 26 All the persons belonging to Jacob, who came to Egypt, his direct descendants, not including the wives of Jacob's sons, [were] sixty-six persons in all, 27 and the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt were two; all the persons of the house of Jacob, who came to Egypt, [were] seventy.

These are the names of those with whom Jacob goes to Egypt. In verse 26, the number sixty-six is mentioned. Six is the number of man. Man always falls short and never reaches the perfection of which the number seven speaks. In verse 27 it is a total of seventy souls. That number includes Jacob, Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh. The imperfection of man (sixty-six) is removed and changes in perfection (seventy) when Joseph (picture of the Lord Jesus) is added.

In Acts 7 we read about seventy-five souls (Acts 7:14). Both numbers are correct. Stephen – or Luke as the author of Acts – bases himself on the Septuagint or LXX, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. The Septuagint

counts seventy-five by mentioning in verse 20 another son and grandson of Manasseh and two sons and a grandson of Ephraim.

Verses 28-34 | Jacob Sees Joseph Again

28 Now he sent Judah before him to Joseph, to point out [the way] before him to Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen. 29 Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel; as soon as he appeared before him, he fell on his neck and wept on his neck a long time. 30 Then Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face, that you are still alive." 31 Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, "I will go up and tell Pharaoh, and will say to him, 'My brothers and my father's household, who [were] in the land of Canaan, have come to me; 32 and the men are shepherds, for they have been keepers of livestock; and they have brought their flocks and their herds and all that they have.' 33 When Pharaoh calls you and says, 'What is your occupation?' 34 you shall say, 'Your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth even until now, both we and our fathers,' that you may live in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is loathsome to the Egyptians."

Jacob yearns to see Joseph again, but Joseph also yearns to see his father again. He goes up to meet him. As we are on our way to meet the Lord, we will see that He is on His way to meet us. What Jacob says (verse 30) reminds us of what Simeon says (Lk 2:29).

We see in Joseph's whole behavior how he, as a son, honors his father. It is the duty of the children to honor their parents (Eph 6:1-3). This obligation remains, even if the children are in a better social position than their parents. Joseph's love for his father has not diminished over the years. For Jacob, seeing Joseph again is the fulfillment of his greatest desire. He is satisfied and may die. However, he would live another seventeen years.

Joseph wants to introduce his family to Pharaoh. He tells them what to say when Pharaoh asks about their profession. It seems to be a usual question of Pharaoh to those who come to him. Joseph prepares them for this. The answer must be that they have always been keepers of livestock.

God, of whom Pharaoh is a picture here, also asks us: 'What are you doing?' Can we then also answer, 'With taking care for the livestock, with

taking care for what has been entrusted to us, with making sure that everything we do is to Your honor” (Col 3:17)?

The word for “occupation” is the same word that is translated with “verses” in Psalm 45: “I address my verses to the King” (Psa 45:1b). In the answer Joseph puts in the mouth of the brothers, the brothers say that their occupation are verses about the King, about His glory, which is further described in Psalm 45. This is also what the Lord Jesus wants to bring about in our lives, what He wants to put in our mouths, as it were. He wants our life to be the verses of a song in which the glory of God is sung.

It is not surprising that it says: “For every shepherd is loathsome to the Egyptians” (verse 34). Therefore the family of Jacob is assigned a separate part of the land of Egypt so it will prevent that they will connect with the Egyptians. By mixing with the Egyptians, they will lose their identity, which is not the case now. They remain separated from the Egyptians and thus retain their national and religious independence.

There is also a spiritual application of the loathsomeness of the Egyptians of the shepherd. The Egyptians are a picture of the world. To someone of the world the life of a Christian living for the glory of God is loathsome.

Genesis 47

Verses 1-6 | The Brothers with Pharaoh

1 Then Joseph went in and told Pharaoh, and said, "My father and my brothers and their flocks and their herds and all that they have, have come out of the land of Canaan; and behold, they are in the land of Goshen." 2 He took five men from among his brothers and presented them to Pharaoh. 3 Then Pharaoh said to his brothers, "What is your occupation?" So they said to Pharaoh, "Your servants are shepherds, both we and our fathers." 4 They said to Pharaoh, "We have come to sojourn in the land, for there is no pasture for your servants' flocks, for the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. Now, therefore, please let your servants live in the land of Goshen." 5 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Your father and your brothers have come to you. 6 The land of Egypt is at your disposal; settle your father and your brothers in the best of the land, let them live in the land of Goshen; and if you know any capable men among them, then put them in charge of my livestock."

Joseph tells Pharaoh about the arrival of his family and the place he assigned them in the land of Goshen. He is not ashamed of them (cf. Heb 2:11). Joseph took five of his brothers with him. The names are not mentioned. The emphasis is therefore on the number five. Five is the number of responsibility, what a person does. Pharaoh's question is: "What is your occupation?" They say they are shepherds. It means caring for what is weak and unable to ward off danger. The Lord Jesus is "the Good Shepherd" (Jn 10:11,14), "the Great Shepherd" (Heb 13:20) and "the Chief Shepherd" (1Pet 5:4). He cares for all believers, whom He calls "My sheep" (Jn 10:27).

The brothers say that they have come to live in the land as sojourners. It is not their intention to settle there, because their actual residence is in Canaan. They want to stay in Egypt as long as the hunger lasts.

Pharaoh tells Joseph that his family can live in the land of Goshen. The consent of Pharaoh is in accordance with Joseph's wish. Thus the Father accepts every request the Son makes to those who belong to Him. The best

of the land is for his family. With their request to live in the land of Goshen, the brothers are following on from what Pharaoh has already promised Joseph. In this way God wants to give us what He has intended to give us in His counsel on the basis of our prayer.

Pharaoh asked Joseph to ensure that capable shepherds from his family are put in charge of his livestock. The Lord Jesus has given the church “shepherds” (Eph 4:11). They have a responsibility to look after the livestock (1Pet 5:2; Acts 20:28).

Verses 7-10 | Jacob with Pharaoh

7 Then Joseph brought his father Jacob and presented him to Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. 8 Pharaoh said to Jacob, “How many years have you lived?” 9 So Jacob said to Pharaoh, “The years of my sojourning are one hundred and thirty; few and unpleasant have been the years of my life, nor have they attained the years that my fathers lived during the days of their sojourning.” 10 And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from his presence.

Joseph introduces not only his brothers to Pharaoh, but also his father Jacob. He is not ashamed of his old, crippled father. This is a lesson for all young people who have risen higher in life than their parents. Jacob may be an old poor greybeard, but he is rich in God.

As for the years of his life, he is beaten by his fathers, who have all grown older than he: Terah–205; Abraham–175; Isaac–180; Jacob–147. But he is aware of the preserving grace of God in his life. He is also aware that he has been a sojourner all his life and confesses this before Pharaoh (Heb 11:13).

Jacob is, by the promises made by God, the superior of Pharaoh. He is aware of this and as such blesses Pharaoh, at the time the most powerful man on earth. “Without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater” (Heb 7:7). We see the same scene when Paul, a prisoner standing before Festus, addresses King Agrippa (Acts 26:29).

Verses 11-12 | Joseph Takes Care of His Family

11 So Joseph settled his father and his brothers and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh

had ordered. 12 Joseph provided his father and his brothers and all his father's household with food, according to their little ones.

Joseph takes care of his father and his brothers. He gives them the best part in the land of Egypt. This is according to the command of Pharaoh. Everything the Lord Jesus does for His own is in perfect accordance with the Father's will. His care goes out to old and young, great and small, that everyone gets what he needs. No one is forgotten.

Every member of his family experiences the care of Joseph. There is personal attention for each member. This is an important lesson for the care in the church.

Verses 13-21 | Joseph Buys Everything for Pharaoh

13 Now there was no food in all the land, because the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine. 14 Joseph gathered all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan for the grain which they bought, and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. 15 When the money was all spent in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, "Give us food, for why should we die in your presence? For [our] money is gone." 16 Then Joseph said, "Give up your livestock, and I will give you [food] for your livestock, since [your] money is gone." 17 So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them food in exchange for the horses and the flocks and the herds and the donkeys; and he fed them with food in exchange for all their livestock that year. 18 When that year was ended, they came to him the next year and said to him, "We will not hide from my lord that our money is all spent, and the cattle are my lord's. There is nothing left for my lord except our bodies and our lands. 19 Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for food, and we and our land will be slaves to Pharaoh. So give us seed, that we may live and not die, and that the land may not be desolate." 20 So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for every Egyptian sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them. Thus the land became Pharaoh's. 21 As for the people, he removed them to the cities from one end of Egypt's border to the other.

Joseph uses his position as lord over everything to bring everything into complete submission to Pharaoh. He does this by submitting everything to himself: first the money (verse 15), then the livestock (verses 16-17), finally the people themselves and their land (verses 18-20). Thus, everything becomes subservient to Pharaoh. In the same way, the Lord Jesus will soon submit all things to God (1Cor 15:24-28). He bought everything for God (Rev 5:9; Mt 13:44; 2Pet 2:1).

Joseph's actions are not at the expense of the welfare of the Egyptians, but are in fact for their benefit (verse 25). The blessing of man lies in fact in delivering himself with everything he has to the Lord Jesus.

Verse 22 | The Priests

22 Only the land of the priests he did not buy, for the priests had an allotment from Pharaoh, and they lived off the allotment which Pharaoh gave them. Therefore, they did not sell their land.

There is a group of people who are not subjected to Joseph: the priests. That reminds us of the believers of the church now. They are priests (1Pet 2:5). When soon everything will be submitted to the Lord Jesus, the church will be excluded. The church may reign with Him: "And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church" (Eph 1:22,10-11).

Verses 23-26 | The Part for Pharaoh

23 Then Joseph said to the people, "Behold, I have today bought you and your land for Pharaoh; now, [here] is seed for you, and you may sow the land. 24 At the harvest you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh, and four-fifths shall be your own for seed of the field and for your food and for those of your households and as food for your little ones." 25 So they said, "You have saved our lives! Let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's slaves." 26 Joseph made it a statute concerning the land of Egypt [valid] to this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth; only the land of the priests did not become Pharaoh's.

Following the salvation that Joseph worked on and through which their lives were saved, he now gives the people what they need to stay alive. Thus is the Lord Jesus also for all who belong to Him. He not only saves,

but gives everything needed to live for Him. “His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness” (2Pet 1:3).

We have been given life and everything necessary to live for God. To this end He has given us seed, which is the Word of God, which we may sow and which means nourishment for us. First the part for Pharaoh must be set aside. We must always be aware that God has the first rights to everything (Pro 3:9).

Verses 27-31 | Jacob’s Last Years of Life

27 Now Israel lived in the land of Egypt, in Goshen, and they acquired property in it and were fruitful and became very numerous. 28 Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years; so the length of Jacob’s life was one hundred and forty-seven years. 29 When the time for Israel to die drew near, he called his son Joseph and said to him, “Please, if I have found favor in your sight, place now your hand under my thigh and deal with me in kindness and faithfulness. Please do not bury me in Egypt, 30 but when I lie down with my fathers, you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place.” And he said, “I will do as you have said.” 31 He said, “Swear to me.” So he swore to him. Then Israel bowed [in worship] at the head of the bed.

Jacob said of the first hundred and thirty years of his life to Pharaoh: “Few and unpleasant have been the years of my life” (verse 9). That is because he had not accepted the guidance of the LORD, but had gone his own way. For this reason his life years have not “attained the years that my fathers lived during the days of their sojourning”.

Isaac has not left the land and, as far as Scripture tells us, has had no particular difficulties. Abraham’s life was for the most part in the favor of and fellowship with God. Jacob did not understand that God wanted to lead him in love and did not experience that leadership. He did not rely on God, but thought he had to take care of himself to get what God promised him. So he came to Egypt after one hundred and thirty years.

However, in the last seventeen years of his life, years he spent with Joseph in Egypt, he grew towards an end that was more glorious than that of his fathers. In the way of faith he stays behind with Abraham and Isaac, but his end is better. We have no record of the deathbed of Abraham or Isaac.

We read extensively about the deathbed of Jacob. That is to show how ultimately the grace of God triumphs over this man. It is the culmination of God's patient work of discipline.

"When the time for Israel to die drew near" (verse 29). The end of his walk is nearby (cf. Heb 13:7). He calls Joseph and tells him to lay his hand under his thigh. At his thigh he is beaten at Penuel (Gen 32:25) and since then he walks crippled. He is constantly reminded in his walk of his struggle with God. Now he is where God wants him to be.

Jacob makes Joseph swear that he will be buried in the land. He wants to be buried with a view to the resurrection and to all the vows made by God in connection with the land of promise. The Lord Jesus also answers the question of the resurrection by referring to God as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He adds: "He is not God of the dead, but of the living" (Mt 22:31-32). By this He says that the patriarchs live for God although they have died and that they will live in the resurrection and inherit the promises.

Joseph declares with an oath that he will fulfill his father's wish. Here too Joseph is a picture of the Lord Jesus, for through Him all the promises of God will be fulfilled.

"Then Israel bowed [in worship] at the head of the bed" (verse 31). He pledged Joseph at his word. This gives him peace and he can worship. This verse is quoted in Hebrews 11. There it is translated with: "And worshiped, [leaning] on the top of his staff" (Heb 11:21). The staff speaks of the support he needed on his way of life. He did not want to accept this support at first. He wanted to do everything himself. Since God struck him at the thigh, the staff has been an indispensable part of his life. Here he acknowledges that God has been his support and that leads him to worship. His death is marked by worship of God and the distribution of blessing to his descendants. The latter we see in the following chapters. Is there a better ending imaginable?

Genesis 48

Verses 1-7 | Joseph and His Sons with His Father

1 Now it came about after these things that Joseph was told, "Behold, your father is sick." So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim with him. 2 When it was told to Jacob, "Behold, your son Joseph has come to you," Israel collected his strength and sat up in the bed. 3 Then Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, 4 and He said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and numerous, and I will make you a company of peoples, and will give this land to your descendants after you for an everlasting possession.' 5 Now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are. 6 But your offspring that have been born after them shall be yours; they shall be called by the names of their brothers in their inheritance. 7 Now as for me, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died, to my sorrow, in the land of Canaan on the journey, when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)."

Joseph is informed that his father is sick. He understands that this sickness will lead to death. He takes both his sons to his sick father, expecting them to receive the blessing of their dying grandfather. Joseph, more than any of his brothers, was full of love for his father. Therefore he has reason to expect special favor from him.

It is a privilege for young people who are just starting their careers in the world to be in contact or to come into contact with their grandparents who have lived with the Lord and are about to leave the world. Old believers can witness the goodness of God and of His ways He has gone with them in His wisdom. That will be a great encouragement for the upcoming generation.

When *Israel* (verse 2b) hears that Joseph is coming, he collects his strength and sits up straight in bed. Hearing the name of Joseph gives him strength. As *Jacob* (verse 3) he begins to tell about the blessing God has given him

and the promises made to him. He now wants to pass on the blessing he has received to his offspring.

Jacob deprives Reuben and Simeon of the blessing of the birthright and gives that blessing to Joseph's sons. For this he adopts both of Joseph's sons, who were given to him by a pagan woman, to be his own sons (1Chr 5:1). Reuben has lost the birthright; Jacob himself has bought it and appropriated it for himself with deceit, by pretending to be Esau (Gen 25:31-33; 27:19). The Lord Jesus is also called the Firstborn, because He is worth the title, while the first Adam forfeited it. Jacob first mentions Ephraim.

Jacob is reminded by Joseph's sons of the death of Rachel, his favorite wife. In her death he learned – in pictures – that everything the flesh relies on must be taken away. God has taken Rachel from him, Rachel whom he wanted to spare at all costs. God also took Joseph and Benjamin from him. But God gives him back Joseph and Benjamin and he even sees Joseph's sons.

A burial also speaks of new life. The death of Rachel was accompanied by the birth of Benjamin. Bethlehem is the turning point in the life of Jacob, Bethlehem is also the turning point in the history of the people of Israel, because the Lord Jesus, their Messiah, was born there: "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, [Too] little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity" (Mic 5:2; Mt 2:1). They don't see it yet, but they will see it.

Verses 8-16 | Jacob Blesses Joseph and His Sons

8 When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, "Who are these?" 9 Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given me here." So he said, "Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them." 10 Now the eyes of Israel were [so] dim from age [that] he could not see. Then Joseph brought them close to him, and he kissed them and embraced them. 11 Israel said to Joseph, "I never expected to see your face, and behold, God has let me see your children as well." 12 Then Joseph took them from his knees, and bowed with his face to the ground. 13 Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right, and brought

them close to him. 14 But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, crossing his hands, although Manasseh was the firstborn. 15 He blessed Joseph, and said,

*"The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked,
The God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day,
16 The angel who has redeemed me from all evil,
Bless the lads;
And may my name live on in them,
And the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac;
And may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."*

When Joseph brings his sons to his father, his father asks who they are. The answer is the same as the answer Jacob once gave to Esau (Gen 33:5). Although Jacob cannot see the sons of Joseph, his grandsons, he embraces them. He loves them, as a grandfather loves his grandchildren. They are his crown (Pro 17:6). He acknowledges God's goodness that he was able to see not only Joseph, but also his children, while he thought Joseph was dead for so long. He says that God has blessed him abundantly.

"By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph" (Heb 11:21). It has been said that Jacob has never walked as powerfully as here where he is sick in bed, and has never seen as clearly as here while his eyes have become weak. It is possible that when blessing the youngest before the eldest he thought of the deceit he committed as the youngest to get the blessing of the eldest (Gen 27:19).

Jacob also blesses Joseph himself in Joseph's sons (verse 15), confessing God as his Shepherd. He knows that God has led him, even though he has not thought of Him so often. He knows that God has saved him from all need (2Tim 4:18), in which he has ended up through his own fault.

In the blessing which Jacob pronounces, he uses three indications for God:

1. First he speaks of "the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked". With this he indicates that he knows God as the God of the covenant.

2. He then speaks of “the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day”. In this he indicates that God took care of him all his life and has never let him be wanting for anything.
3. Finally, he calls God “the angel who has redeemed me from all evil”. Jacob is also aware of God’s protection and liberation from all the tribulation he has experienced.

With these three special names for God he prays for God’s gracious blessing for both boys.

Verses 17-20 | Jacob Blesses the Youngest First

17 When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on Ephraim’s head, it displeased him; and he grasped his father’s hand to remove it from Ephraim’s head to Manasseh’s head. 18 Joseph said to his father, “Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn. Place your right hand on his head.” 19 But his father refused and said, “I know, my son, I know; he also will become a people and he also will be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.” 20 He blessed them that day, saying,

*“By you Israel will pronounce blessing, saying,
‘May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!’”*

Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh.

Joseph thinks his father is wrong. It is the only imperfection we read of Joseph in the Bible, which shows that he too is a fallible human being. Only the Lord Jesus has always been perfect, without any imperfection. Jacob blesses by faith. His eye of faith sees God’s intention to bless the youngest before the oldest here too, just as He did with him and Esau. He expressed his confidence in God by saying twice, “I know”.

God overlooks natural privileges and chooses those who otherwise would not be eligible for the blessing of the birthright. The *blessing* of the birthright is for Joseph – in his sons. Judah gets the *position* associated with the birthright (1Chr 5:1-2).

In the books of the prophets, after the division of the empire into ten and two tribes, the ten tribal empire is regularly referred to by the name Ephraim. Manasseh has not become as great as Ephraim and is also divid-

ed in two. Half a tribe lives in the land and the other half lives at the other side of the Jordan river.

Verses 21-22 | An Extra Blessing for Joseph

21 Then Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers. 22 I give you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."

Joseph receives an extra blessing from Jacob. It is a portion, literally a mountain ridge, that Jacob with his sword and his bow has conquered from the enemy. He made an effort for that. The sword is a weapon used when the enemy is near. The bow is used when the enemy is far away. The sword is a picture of the Word of God that we use in faith to defeat the enemy. The bow represents the hope by which we are already acquiring what is yet to come (2Kgs 13:15-17).

It may be that what Jacob says here is to be seen as prophetic present tense. It is not known that Jacob has conquered a piece of land in Canaan. It may therefore be that he is referring here to the conquest of it by his descendants. It may also be that he refers to the piece of land he first bought (Jos 24:32), but that this land was later, when he has left for Egypt, taken over by the Amorites. In any case, it is a piece of land that has been fought for. He gives this land to Joseph (cf. Jn 4:5).

We may live in the light of the future, when all enmity is destroyed. By sword and bow we take possession of a mountain ridge to give it to the true Joseph. A mountain ridge is a height, a place elevated from the earth and therefore closer to heaven. It speaks of fellowship with God, of having enough with Him.

Habakkuk can sing while everything is lacking him: "The Lord GOD is my strength, ... And makes me walk on my high places." (Hab 3:17-19). We too can pass on blessings to our children, blessings we have obtained through the conquests we have made on the enemy. If we pass it on, it is good to tell how we have conquered this blessing, so that our children will work in the same way for their offspring. The blessing is: fellowship with God.

Genesis 49

Verses 1-2 | Jacob Summons His Sons to Come to Him

1 *Then Jacob summoned his sons and said, "Assemble yourselves that I may tell you what will befall you in the days to come.*

2 *"Gather together and hear, O sons of Jacob;
And listen to Israel your father.*

The words of Jacob show that this chapter is prophetic in character. He will tell his sons what "will befall you in the days to come", or better: "will befall them in the last of the days". It is the history of the people of Israel in the end times. Jacob calls his sons to come and listen, both in verse 1 and in verse 2. He demands their full attention. That shows how important it is what he has to say.

He speaks to his sons as "sons of Jacob" and he addresses them as "Israel your father". He knows his sons in their behavior, the behavior he himself has shown so often. However, he has learned through his struggle with God and the victory he has achieved, to which he owes his name 'Israel'. He speaks like a father who finally became a victor. In that power he will tell his sons how things will go with them in the future.

Verses 3-4 | Reuben

3 *"Reuben, you are my firstborn;
My might and the beginning of my strength,
Preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power.
4 "Uncontrolled as water, you shall not have preeminence,
Because you went up to your father's bed;
Then you defiled [it]—he went up to my couch.*

Reuben (meaning 'see, a son') is the eldest son. Jacob first addresses the word to him. First Jacob speaks at length about the blessings which will be Reuben's as the firstborn. Jacob first established his natural expectation on him, but he was deceived in his expectation. Reuben does not know how to

control his lusts and indulges his father's wife in lust (Gen 35:22). The high position of Reuben makes his fall all the deeper. He forfeits his birthright. Jacob recalls this incident that took place about forty years ago. Any sin, including sin of a sexual nature, can be forgiven. Nevertheless, the sin of adultery and fornication often sticks to someone's life as an indelible stain (Pro 6:32-33).

How much has already been lost in blessing by believers by giving free rein to sexual evil! The blessing of the firstborn is, among other things, strength, a high position (prestige) and a lot of wealth (a double part). It all disappeared with the eruption of its indomitable nature. In Reuben we see the corruption of man. Reuben keeps his rights as a son, but he loses the privilege of the first-born son.

Thus the people of Israel have lost their blessing by letting their corrupt nature run free. They have not as a people respected God but have followed the lusts of their flesh. They have turned their backs on God and committed themselves to the idols.

Verses 5-7 | Simeon and Levi

5 *"Simeon and Levi are brothers;
Their swords are implements of violence.*
6 *"Let my soul not enter into their council;
Let not my glory be united with their assembly;
Because in their anger they slew men,
And in their self-will they lamed oxen.*
7 *"Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce;
And their wrath, for it is cruel.
I will disperse them in Jacob,
And scatter them in Israel.*

Jacob has a word about Simeon (meaning 'heard') and Levi (meaning 'attachment'). After Reuben's sin, which shows the characteristic of corruption, Jacob speaks of the sin of his next two sons. Another characteristic of sin emerges: violence. Jacob refers to the violence of Simeon and Levi in Genesis 34 (Gen 34:5-29). He clearly distances himself from the actions of his sons.

He does not speak *to* them, but *about* them in the presence of all his sons. All of us, including ourselves, must learn from it. These two have been brothers in evil. Jacob rejects any connection with them. He does not want to be involved in their thinking. Jacob will not be in such company, nor do we belong there (Psa 1:1).

He does not protect his children and does not justify their sin, but calls it by its name. He curses their anger and wrath, not them personally. The consequences of their actions are not withheld (Gal 6:7-8). Instead of staying together – they have been together in evil – they will be divided and scattered among Israel.

Not much will remain of Simeon as a tribe (Num 1:23; 26:14; Jos 19:1-9). They will live in the land largely among Judah. The scattering of Levi is changed into a blessing by the grace of God. By their scattering they come amidst the whole people, so that they can teach the whole people the laws of God.

Verses 8-12 | Judah

8 *“Judah, your brothers shall praise you;
Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;
Your father’s sons shall bow down to you.*
9 *“Judah is a lion’s whelp;
From the prey, my son, you have gone up.
He couches, he lies down as a lion,
And as a lion, who dares rouse him up?
10 “The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
Nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet,
Until Shiloh comes,
And to him [shall be] the obedience of the peoples.
11 “He ties [his] foal to the vine,
And his donkey’s colt to the choice vine;
He washes his garments in wine,
And his robes in the blood of grapes.
12 “His eyes are dull from wine,
And his teeth white from milk.*

Jacob speaks about Judah (meaning ‘praise’) in a very different tone than about his oldest three sons. He mentions only praiseworthy things about Judah, a great contradiction with the first three sons. This is because Judah’s future is closely connected with the Messiah, Who will come forth from Judah. We can see Judah himself here as a type of the Lord Jesus as the Messiah. Therefore Jacob also says more words to him than to the other sons – with the exception of Joseph, for the same reason. All his brothers will praise him, he will take first place which his eldest brother has lost. Thus Christ takes the first place among His brethren (Rom 8:29; Heb 2:12).

Judah has conquered the enemies. Therefore his brothers praise him. His victory-strength is clearly visible in the picture of the lion. Christ is “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” (Rev 5:5). Judah’s rule will not be temporary, but eternal: his scepter or ruler’s staff will not depart. When Shiloh (meaning ‘rest bringer’ or ‘peacemaker’) comes, that is, when the Lord Jesus comes as Messiah, his reign will reach its peak. Then even nations will obey him. That will happen in the kingdom of peace.

The scene with the donkey (verse 11a) is reminiscent of the Lord Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem, where that time is experienced for a moment, as it were: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout [in triumph], O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (Zec 9:9). That time itself, which is the time of the kingdom of peace, will be characterized by an abundance of joy, of which the wine is a picture (Isa 25:6).

The blessing of Judah is concluded with a description of the personal lordship of the Lord Jesus (verse 12; cf. Song 5:10-16).

Verse 13 | Zebulun

13 *“Zebulun will dwell at the seashore;
And he [shall be] a haven for ships,
And his flank [shall be] toward Sidon.*

Jacob does not speak a word about Zebulun (meaning ‘dwelling place’) personally. He says only where Zebulun will dwell. We must place what Jacob says about Zebulun in the prophetic perspective Jacob has in mind

according to verse 1. After the failure of the three oldest sons, the Messiah appears in Judah. The dominion is given to Him. But when He comes, He is rejected, and Israel is scattered among the nations. This is represented in the picture in Zebulun. The sea is a picture of the nations (Rev 17:15; Isa 17:12-13).

Israel is scattered among the nations, with which the people trade, which is presented in the “ships”. Israel focuses on the nations, which is represented in being “toward Sidon” (Isa 23:2). In this fate of Zebulun, and of Israel as a whole, will come a reversal. This reversal has come in a certain sense, when the Lord Jesus goes to dwell there (Mt 4:12-16). Zebulun is also connected with the nations by Matthew. The coming of the Lord Jesus has brought blessing to Israel and the nations. The blessing for Israel has been postponed because of the Lord’s rejection, but will certainly come when He appears the second time.

Verses 14-15 | Issaschar

14 *“Issachar is a strong donkey,
Lying down between the sheepfolds.
15 “When he saw that a resting place was good
And that the land was pleasant,
He bowed his shoulder to bear [burdens],
And became a slave at forced labor.*

What Jacob says about Issaschar (meaning ‘wage’), characterizes this son as someone who seeks convenience and advantage, but has to pay a price for it. So it is with Israel after the rejection of the Lord Jesus. Israel went to dwell by the sea, the nations (Zebulun). But it did not stop there. The people have become dependent on the nations. They have become a beast of burden, they are slaves of them (Neh 9:36), while it is God’s intention that the nations are their slaves (Deu 28:1,13).

Verses 16-18 | Dan and the Salvation

16 *“Dan shall judge his people,
As one of the tribes of Israel.
17 “Dan shall be a serpent in the way,*

*A horned snake in the path,
That bites the horse's heels,
So that his rider falls backward.
18 "For Your salvation I wait, O LORD.*

At Dan (meaning 'judge') Jacob speaks about salvation. In Dan a judge, a leader, will rise up to deliver the people from the yoke of the nations. He will use an insidious tactic. This leader, the future king of the Jews, will be inspired by satan, "the serpent of old" (Rev 12:9). This is the antichrist, to whom the word Paul quotes from the mouth of David: "Poison of a viper is under their lips" (Psa 140:3b; Rom 3:13b) applies in full.

Jacob does not express a wish here, but an event. By this we also understand the sigh that Jacob breathes (verse 18). He does not expect "salvation" from Dan, for he is deceitful, but from the LORD Himself. When we consider what we read of Dan in the Scriptures (Lev 24:10-11; Jdg 18:1-31), there seems to be much to say for that the antichrist will indeed come forth from the tribe of Dan, or perhaps already came forth; who knows, he already lives.

Verse 19 | Gad

*19 "As for Gad, raiders shall raid him,
But he will raid [at] their heels.*

Gad (meaning 'raiders', among other things) represents the bravery of the remnant of Israel, which suffers much from the terror exercised by the antichrist. When the Lord Jesus comes to bring salvation, He will use this remnant to chase and defeat the enemies, "raiders", who have made his life so difficult.

Verse 20 | Asher

*20 "As for Asher, his food shall be rich,
And he will yield royal dainties.*

With Asher (meaning 'happy') only blessing is connected. In the kingdom of peace that will come when the Lord Jesus has appeared and destroyed the enemies, there will be an abundance of blessing, of rich food (Psa 72:16; 85:12; Hos 2:21-22). Israel will also distribute that blessing to others.

Verse 21 | Naphtali

21 *“Naphtali is a doe let loose,
He gives beautiful words.*

With Naphtali (meaning ‘(my) struggle’) the main idea is freedom, while with Gad and Asher the main idea is respectively victory and abundance of the most delicious food. This freedom is a big difference from Issaschar, who goes under a slave yoke. Naftali is a doe let loose, which testifies to the greatest possible freedom of movement. A doe let loose is not hindered by anything in her fast movement and feels completely free. It is quite a struggle to achieve that freedom.

Spiritually this is also the case. In Romans 7 we see the struggle of the believer and in Romans 8 his freedom. It is also not surprising that this freedom leads to “beautiful words”. See the end of Romans 8 (Rom 8:31-39). Freedom is based only on the work of Christ on the cross. The result is that we want to honor Him with “beautiful words”. Psalm 22 shows both one, the work of Christ (Psa 22:1-21), and the other, the song of praise (Psa 22:22-31). Once Israel has been freed from its enemies, they will let hallelujah be heard.

Verses 22-26 | Joseph

22 *“Joseph is a fruitful bough,
A fruitful bough by a spring;
[Its] branches run over a wall.
23 “The archers bitterly attacked him,
And shot [at him] and harassed him;
24 But his bow remained firm,
And his arms were agile,
From the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob
(From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel),
25 From the God of your father who helps you,
And by the Almighty who blesses you
[With] blessings of heaven above,
Blessings of the deep that lies beneath,
Blessings of the breasts and of the womb.*

26 *"The blessings of your father
Have surpassed the blessings of my ancestors
Up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills;
May they be on the head of Joseph,
And on the crown of the head of the one distinguished among his brothers.*

Jacob says most of his words to Joseph (meaning 'He will add'). It is not surprising that the blessing given by Jacob to Joseph is the greatest of all in content and length. Jacob speaks about all that God has laid aside for Joseph. It is not difficult to see the picture of the Lord Jesus behind Joseph.

Jacob uses some equations in connection with Joseph. The first is that of a fruit tree, whose branches grow over a wall. That is Joseph. He bears fruit because he stands by a spring. By drinking from the spring, God Himself, and knowing himself dependent on Him, he bears rich fruit for God (Jer 17:8; Psa 1:3).

Fruit is where there is "a spring" of community and a "wall" of separation. We see this perfectly with the Lord Jesus. Not only does He bear fruit within the walls of the people of Israel, but His fruit is also for everyone outside Israel who believes in Him (Mk 7:24-30; Jn 4:39-42). He also lives in perfect fellowship with His Father.

The second equation is that of the archer. The 'deadly arrows' were shot at him (Jer 9:8; cf. Eph 6:16b). Remember the treatment of his brothers and the wife of Potiphar. Such arrows were also shot at Christ, whom He answered with arrows from God's Word: "It is written" (Mt 4:1-10). All our strength to withstand temptations and bear trials comes from God. His grace is enough for us, and His strength is accomplished in our weakness.

Joseph answers these arrows with accurate arrows. He reacts in the power of God, Who with His hands strengthens Joseph's hands. It has sometimes been compared to a small child who wants to carry his father's heavy suitcase. He cannot lift the suitcase himself. Yet he manages to lift the suitcase because his father's strong hand goes around his hand and lifts it with his hand.

The names Jacob uses for God show that he has learned a lot about God. By this he knows God's thoughts about the blessing He wants to give and is also able to give. After all, he is also the "Almighty"!

The blessing is threefold:

1. from the sky from above,
2. of the water tide down and
3. on earth.

Jacob sees that the blessing he gives his son goes far beyond the blessings promised to the patriarchs. Everything will come “on the head of Joseph, And on the crown of the head of the one distinguished among his brothers”. “Distinguished” is literally “separated” or “Nazarite”. This is the third equation Jacob uses. Here we find for the first time the concept of “Nazarite”. From Numbers 6 we learn that this is someone who voluntarily devotes himself to God (Num 6:1-21).

The Lord Jesus is the true Nazarite. By Him shall His brethren, His people, and all the earth be blessed in the kingdom of peace.

Verse 27 | Benjamin

*27 “Benjamin is a ravenous wolf;
In the morning he devours the prey,
And in the evening he divides the spoil.”*

Benjamin (meaning ‘son of the right hand’) is a picture of Christ who returns and destroys all His enemies when He appears in glory. Joseph and Benjamin belong together. We have seen this in the previous chapters. Joseph is a picture of Christ in His humiliation and His exaltation as the Bearer of all the favor of God; Benjamin is a picture of Christ coming back in power and majesty and reigning on earth. We also see a double picture like this in David and Salomon. “Morning” and “evening” cover the whole day or the whole period of the kingdom of peace.

Verse 28 | Every Tribe Has Its Own Blessing

28 All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them. He blessed them, every one with the blessing appropriate to him.

“Every one with the blessing appropriate to him.” This also applies to Reuben and Simeon and Levi. It may seem strange to speak of blessing in their

case. Yet it is a blessing to be pointed to our failure. We can then confess that and then continue with the Lord to be blessed by Him.

Verses 29-33 | Jacob Dies

29 Then he charged them and said to them, "I am about to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, 30 in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought along with the field from Ephron the Hittite for a burial site. 31 There they buried Abraham and his wife Sarah, there they buried Isaac and his wife Rebekah, and there I buried Leah— 32 the field and the cave that is in it, purchased from the sons of Heth." 33 When Jacob finished charging his sons, he drew his feet into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.

Jacob repeats what he said earlier about his burial (Gen 47:30). This clearly shows his faith in the resurrection and that God is the God of the resurrection. His heart is not with what he leaves behind, but with what awaits him in the resurrection. Death does not destroy the promise of life. When Jacob dies, he is gathered to his people. If God's people are our people, we will be gathered with them by death.

Genesis 50

Introduction

In this chapter we see more the character and the beautiful qualities of Joseph, than his position and the dignities that go with it. He is also here a wonderful reference to the Lord Jesus.

Verse 1 | Joseph Weeps over His Father

| *1 Then Joseph fell on his father's face, and wept over him and kissed him.*

Joseph weeps over his father. Here we see Joseph weeping for the sixth time. He kisses the dead Jacob and thereby expresses his affection for his father. The bond with his father is broken by death, but Joseph's love for his father remains. In the resurrection that bond will be restored. Thus the love of the Lord Jesus for His people remains, even though the bond with them has been broken for a time (Hos 1:9). That bond will be restored (Hos 3:4-5).

Verses 2-3 | The Embalming of Jacob

| *2 Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel. 3 Now forty days were required for it, for such is the period required for embalming. And the Egyptians wept for him seventy days.*

The extensive embalming of Jacob shows that he is considered one of the greats of Egypt. He dies, according to the meaning of his name, as a prince of God and receives a royal funeral. If he or Joseph would have wished so, a pyramid would certainly have been built for him. But Jacob wished for no place in his honor.

Prophetically, the embalming tells that God will keep His people, whom He has to reject for a time, over time, until the time has come that He will take them again as His people.

Verses 4-9 | Jacob Is Buried in the Promised Land

4 When the days of mourning for him were past, Joseph spoke to the household of Pharaoh, saying, "If now I have found favor in your sight, please speak to Pharaoh, saying, 5 'My father made me swear, saying, "Behold, I am about to die; in my grave which I dug for myself in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me." Now therefore, please let me go up and bury my father; then I will return.'" 6 Pharaoh said, "Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear." 7 So Joseph went up to bury his father, and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his household and all the elders of the land of Egypt, 8 and all the household of Joseph and his brothers and his father's household; they left only their little ones and their flocks and their herds in the land of Goshen. 9 There also went up with him both chariots and horsemen; and it was a very great company.

Joseph gets permission from Pharaoh to bury his father in Canaan because Jacob's heart was there. Jacob has spoken more than once about his death as a result of his grief at the robbery of children (Gen 37:35; 42:38). That is in the time that he has gone his own way. Now the time of his death has come and God has come with him to His purpose, he dies in honor and is accompanied at his burial by all his children and all the distinguished men of the land of Egypt.

Verses 10-11 | A Very Great and Sorrowful Lamentation

10 When they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, they lamented there with a very great and sorrowful lamentation; and he observed seven days mourning for his father. 11 Now when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, "This is a grievous mourning for the Egyptians." Therefore it was named Abel-mizraim, which is beyond the Jordan.

The lamentation is also a lamentation that suits a great man. A testimony goes out from this. Thus, any burial of a believer can be a testimony to all those who see or hear it. The thorns – Atad means thorn bush – that the earth produced after the fall (Gen 3:18) and therefore speak of the consequences of sin, point out that Jacob had much to do with the consequences

of the sins he committed in his life. What a man sows, he will reap (Gal 6:7b-8).

It is not just thorns, however. To the thorns the threshing floor is connected. On the threshing floor the wheat is separated from the chaff. The threshing floor therefore points to the discipline in Jacob's life, by which God has removed the chaff from Jacob's life. What remains is the wheat as fruit for God. This fruit is revealed at the death of Jacob.

Verses 12-14 | Burial and Return to Egypt

12 Thus his sons did for him as he had charged them; 13 for his sons carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre, which Abraham had bought along with the field for a burial site from Ephron the Hittite. 14 After he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers, and all who had gone up with him to bury his father.

Jacob refused the tribute associated with a burial in Egypt and chose to be buried in a cave in Canaan. Canaan is the land of promise. His sons take him there and give their Godfearing father a dignified burial (cf. Acts 8:2). The inhabitants of Egypt and Canaan did not understand this.

Verses 15-21 | Joseph Comforts his Brothers

15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him!" 16 So they sent [a message] to Joseph, saying, "Your father charged before he died, saying, 17 'Thus you shall say to Joseph, "Please forgive, I beg you, the transgression of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong." ' And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. 18 Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." 19 But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? 20 As for you, you meant evil against me, [but] God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. 21 So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

When Jacob's father is buried, the brothers are afraid that Joseph will revenge himself for what they have done to him. They think he treated them well for the sake of their father. He took care of them for seventeen years. Now that their father is no longer there, they believe that Joseph will change. How badly they know Joseph! It is as if they say, 'We know what he has done for us, but we don't know what he feels for us.'

Once again, the exceptional character of Joseph is evident. He doesn't blame the brothers that they must know him better in the meantime. He shows them the unpretentious love he has for them and reassures them with words of comfort. He is not in the place of God. He did not determine the course of events, God did. If there should be any retaliation, then he leaves it to God (Rom 12:19). Joseph submits himself completely to the will of God.

Sometimes we are like the brothers of Joseph. We know that the Lord Jesus has undergone God's judgment on the cross for us. We know that He cares for us, we have experienced that. However, when a problem arises in our lives, it may suddenly become apparent how little we really trust Him. If there is no direct outcome, we think He is turning against us. We can be very busy with Scripture and know a lot about the Lord, but if it is not combined with a personal, living fellowship with Him Himself, we will react just as Joseph's brothers do.

Joseph weeps – we read this of him for the seventh time – when he hears what the brothers say. It is a great sadness for him to notice that his love in that way is answered by the brothers. He shows through his tears that their attitude hurts him (cf. Jn 14:9). Their attitude betrays the lack of trust in him.

There is another lesson to be learned from the behavior of the brothers. When someone around us falls away, it becomes clear whether our faith is only directed at the Lord Jesus or whether we have attached too much to the other in the experience of our faith.

Verses 22-26 | Joseph Dies

22 Now Joseph stayed in Egypt, he and his father's household, and Joseph lived one hundred and ten years. 23 Joseph saw the third generation of Ephraim's

sons; also the sons of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were born on Joseph's knees. 24 Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob." 25 Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here." 26 So Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt.

Joseph's last words are not about his position in Egypt, but about God's promise to his ancestors regarding the land of Canaan. Joseph dies, but God abides. Joseph entrusts the brothers to Him. When he dies, all the glory of Egypt is placed in a coffin with him, as it were. Joseph's faith looks forward to the land of promise. In view of this, he gives command concerning his bones: "By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones" (Heb 11:22).

The oath sworn by the sons of Israel is fulfilled by Moses (Exo 13:19). For forty years they carry Joseph's body through the desert to bury him in the land at the place he mentioned (Jos 24:32). There he is still waiting for the moment that God fulfills His promises.

Joseph does not let his bones to be transferred to Canaan. He wants to emphasize that his bones will be in the midst of the people. He knows that the people will one day move up to the promised land. Until then, the coffin with its bones will be as a testimony with the people. If they will be oppressed – and that time will come – the presence of Joseph, even though he died, will remind them of his words that God will look after them and save them.

The last words Joseph says to his brothers are about the future. They live in the best part of the land and are in the full favor of the king. Their brother Joseph is the second ruler of the land. There is nothing to indicate that a change will occur in this extremely privileged position.

Joseph himself is also happy. He sees his children until the third generation. Yet he says: "God will surely take care of you." He foresees days of care, days when God alone will be their Helper. In faith Joseph sees the day of Israel's tribulation. He also sees that God will free them to bring

them to the land of promise. Above all, this taking care by God of His people is to be seen in the coming of the Lord Jesus to free His people from the great tribulation and to bring them into the blessing of the kingdom of peace. Just as we have seen with his father (Gen 49:29-32), his heart is not concerned with what he leaves behind, but what he will receive in the resurrection.

Then Joseph dies. He is embalmed and placed in a coffin. Of a burial we don't hear. He remains as a dead man among the people. Joseph, who died among the people, is reminiscent of what Paul says: "Always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body" (2Cor 4:10).

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