

Synthetic Bible Studies

Containing an outline study of every book of the Bible
with suggestions for Sermons, Addresses and
Bible Expositions

By

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LESSON TWO

GENESIS, CHAPTERS 12:1-28:15

These opening chapters of Genesis are historical, but the events are so far away that some people think they never really occurred, and that they are only myths and legends. To offset this foolish wisdom, GOD has been sending some of His servants with pickaxes and spades to dig up the old buried cities of Bible lands, and let men see what their excavated records have to testify about the truth of these things.

These records include rock inscriptions found sometimes on high roads, and sometimes on the faces of great mountains, also inscriptions on the walls and columns of famous temples, funeral tablets like slabs in our own cemeteries, papyrus rolls taken from great libraries, coins, seals, pottery, etc. Learned men have interpreted these inscriptions at great pains and with much cost of time and money, and the results of their researches are given in more books than there is space to mention.

We thus obtain corroborative testimony to a primeval revelation, the Mosaic account of creation, the fall of man, the deluge, the dispersion of the nations, and the facts in the lives of the patriarchs about which we are now to study, as surprising as it is confirmatory to faith.

The Word Outline

Now for our lesson. What is the next great fact in Genesis after the dispersion of the nations? At

once you reply, "The call of Abraham."

Right, but suppose we simply say, "Abraham," including in the name the whole story of his life that follows and which we will analyze in a moment.

If then "Abraham" states in a word the fifth great fact in Genesis, what is the sixth? Whose life follows his, constituting the limit of our present lesson? Isaac? Let us then write down one word outline of Genesis 1-28, like this:

Creation;
Fall;
Deluge;
Nations;
Abraham;
Isaac.

The History of Abraham

We thought out and stated the great outline facts one by one, and then went over them again in lesson one, to see whether, as the result of our synthetic reading, they would naturally recall the secondary facts that were grouped around them.

We will do this with our present fact, Abraham.

Can you recall the leading circumstances in his life that are called up by his name? We have:

- (1) his call into Canaan which naturally includes his answer thereto and entrance thereupon (12:1-9);
- (2) his sojourn in Egypt, together with what happened there (12:10-20);
- (3) his separation from Lot including his subsequent deliverance of the latter from his foes (chaps. 13, 14);
- (4) his reception of the covenant and justification by faith (chap. 15);
- (5) his concubinage with Hagar (chap. 16);
- (6) the circumcision of his household as a sign of the covenant (chap. 17);
- (7) his intercession for Sodom (chap. 18);
- (8) his sojourn at Gerar (chap. 20);
- (9) his blessing in the birth of Isaac (chap. 21);
- (10) his sacrifice of Isaac (chap. 22);
- (11) his choice of a bride for Isaac (chap. 24);
- (12) his offspring by Keturah (chap. 25);
- (13) his death (chap. 25).

Notice, that the call of Abraham and the nation of Israel of which he was the founder, was for purposes of blessing, not upon him or them alone, but through them upon the whole world. In chapter 11 we saw all mankind practically turning their backs upon GOD as before the flood. They had forgotten Him, and His truth and name were likely to be lost to humanity.

Israel, through Abraham, is chosen as a repository of His truth, and a channel through which the promised seed of the woman, the Redeemer of the world, could be born and identified when He came. Definite views about this will prevent our charging GOD with partiality; they will aid us the more to appreciate His grace, and give us a better estimate of the regard we should have for the race thus highly honored by GOD, and which has been made so useful to us.

Notice particularly Abraham's dealings with Melchizedek in the light of what we read of him as a type of CHRIST in Psalm 110, and Hebrews, chapter 7.

Notice the ground on which Abraham was accounted righteous, and compare carefully the New Testament teaching on the subject in Romans 4.

Notice that the word "Lord" in chapter 18 is printed in small capitals, indicating that this is Jehovah. One of the three who there appeared to Abraham was He. But as we gather from a study of other portions of the Bible it is the second person of the Trinity who thus in the Old Testament appears to men - JEHOVAH-JESUS.

These appearances are sometimes spoken of as "theophanies" or "Christophanies," manifestations of GOD or of CHRIST.

Notice the remarkable illustration of the doctrine of substitution we have in the ram offered in the stead of Isaac, and how Abraham seemed by faith to anticipate such a substitute in the reply to his son, "**God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.**"

How to Prepare Bible Readings

Now we know the facts in Abraham's life. What shall we do with them? This suggests another line of benefit it is hoped these lessons will subserve, viz: the preparation of Bible readings.

Biographical subjects are always interesting, and if we were about to give a Bible reading or address on Abraham, the first thing to do would be to rehearse the story of his life just as we have done, only a little more at length. It would not be very difficult for one to keep the dozen great facts of his life in mind, and state them in such a way as to hold the attention of an audience.

The next thing is to show what these facts suggest, either as to the character of the man, or the character of GOD in dealing with him, or both.

And finally, apply their practical teachings to the different classes of hearers. "Yes, but how shall I go to work to do this?"

First, write down the facts on a sheet of paper, put equal marks against each one of them, and then think and lift up your heart to the HOLY SPIRIT for help.

- what does his "call" suggest as to his character? Obedience, growing out of faith.
- what does his experience in Egypt suggest? Fear growing out of unbelief.
- his dealings with Lot? Unselfishness, and generosity and personal courage.

Follow this process through the whole list, and then on another sheet of paper place a summary of his good points and bad points in two parallel columns.

You will thus find that his good points outbalance his bad ones, and will be curious to know the secret of strength and weakness in each case. But with these two lists before you it will not be difficult to see that the secret of one was faith and the other unbelief.

Every good feature in Abraham's life was the direct result of his faith in GOD, and every bad feature equally the direct result of unbelief.

This corroborates what Paul says by the HOLY GHOST, in Romans 4:20. And now when you have gotten this far, can you not easily go on to make the application?

Isaac a Type of CHRIST

We will now analyze the second great fact in our lesson suggested by the name Isaac. But for the sake of variety let us adopt another plan.

Isaac has sometimes been called a type of CHRIST, and there are many points of similarity in the lives of the two. Shall we then carefully recall the different incidents we have read about him, and as each one comes into mind, consider if in any way it suggests the person or work of our Lord?

Singularly enough, the first fact in Isaac's life is his name.

Unlike most of us, he was named before he was born. Who gave him his name, and what does it suggest as to JESUS CHRIST? Compare Genesis, chapters 17-19, with Matthew 1:21. What is the meaning of his name? See the margin of your Bible, and compare it with Luke 2:10.

The next fact is his birth. What similarity impresses you? It was a supernatural birth, and also a predicted birth. Compare 17:17 with Luke 1:30-35, and 17:16 with Acts 10:43.

The next fact is his sacrifice, because although he did not actually die, yet in the mind and intent of his father he was really offered on the altar. And what are the features of his sacrifice that bear a likeness to JESUS CHRIST?

These suggest themselves to me, and others may come to you; for example,

- he was offered by his father,
- he was an only son, compare John 3:16, and
- he voluntarily submitted himself (Isaiah 53:7, Hebrews 10:5-7, etc).

His restoration to life suggests Jesus' resurrection and ascension, while his marriage with Rebecca is regarded by many as a striking type of the union of CHRIST and His church.

These particulars will fasten themselves on your minds with reference to this latter incident:

- his bride was selected by his father (compare such passages as John 6:44, and Ephesians 1:3, 4);
- the invitation, or offer of marriage was brought to her by a third person, the steward or messenger of Abraham, representing the work of the HOLY SPIRIT in testifying of CHRIST (see John 15:26, and 16:13-15).

Isaac's going out to meet his bride and bringing her into his mother's, Sarah's, tent, is emblematical of CHRIST coming out from Heaven to meet the church, and the rapture of the latter in entering with Him into millennial glory, as we find in such places as John 14:1-3, and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

We will not pursue the story of Isaac further, as some of the later facts in his life will be referred to in the next lesson, but let us notice how the HOLY SPIRIT applies that part of his history in which he first comes into relation with Ishmael, in Galatians 4:21-31. Some very helpful thoughts on the subject will be found in *Notes on Genesis*, by C. H. M., chapter 21, in which he shows how perfectly it illustrates the truth of the two natures in the Christian believer. These Notes on the whole of the Pentateuch will be a great blessing to any who will read them. While not very critical they are nevertheless deeply spiritual. **[NOTE: CHM's Notes on Genesis and Deuteronomy are posted on our site).**

Notice the incidental evidence to the truth of the Bible narrative in that it spreads before us the sins of GOD's people as well as their virtues. Abraham and Isaac were sinners saved by grace. This is comforting to us as well as glorifying to GOD.

Notice that when it reads, "**God did tempt Abraham,**" i. e., to offer Isaac, it simply means that GOD tried his faith, tested it. He tested him to see whether his love toward Him was all-including, or whether he loved his son more. And this was a great honor to Abraham. As C. H. M. says, "We never read that the Lord did tempt Lot; no, Sodom tempted Lot," and tempted him, we may add, with a different motive and purpose.

Notice the employment of this act of Abraham by the apostle James (2:20-24). This does not contradict what Paul says (Romans 4), but only supplements or explains it. Paul gives us the inward principle in Abraham, and James the outward development of it.

~ end of Lesson 2 ~
