



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Genesis 3:8-19

“The Divine Philosophy of the Ages: Redemption”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Now perhaps you've been here but in case you have not been here, let me just for a few moments review what we have been seeing in God's word. Remember the first thing that we did was we discussed revelation, and we saw that God had revealed himself in a book which, or a work which had two volumes. *The Work of Revelation Volume One: God's Revelation of Himself in Nature*. We saw however that God's revelation of himself in nature is insufficient for man's needs, we can know that God is great, that he is all powerful, he is a supreme being, but we can not know him as Redeemer. And unfortunately as we look at ourselves in the light of our own actions and hearts, we know that we need something deeper than simply the knowledge of a supreme being. And so God has given us a second volume of his work of revelation in the Bible. And the Bible is the revelation of God in his grace and in his mercy toward us through Jesus Christ. We saw of course that we could not know God by ourselves because he is an infinite being and we do not have the capacity to investigate and discover an infinite being. If we are to know God, he must reveal himself to us because he is the infinite one and we are the finite creatures. But fortunately for us he has revealed himself in nature and he has revealed himself in the Bible. And so there is an

answer to the cry of Job, “O that I knew where I might find him that I might come even unto his throne.” And the answer is found in his special revelation, the Bible.

Now we also saw that we needed more than revelation for if while it is wonderful to have the revelation of God’s greatness in nature and his grace in the Bible, the Bible however is a spiritual book, and consequently, we need illumination. Now illumination is the work of the Holy Spirit who authored this Bible, but it is his work to take us and to bring us before the word of God and to cause us to understand it. Since the Bible is a divine book it can only be understood with a divine teacher. And fortunately the Holy Spirit is our teacher and he is a divine teacher, and since he authored the book he knows its meaning. And he promises that if we desire to have him as our teacher we may have him if we put our trust in Jesus Christ. And so through the work of the Holy Spirit we have the ability to understand God’s word. We can not understand the Bible apart from the Holy Spirit. And remember I quoted the text in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 14 in which the Apostle Paul writes, “For the natural man (that is the man who does not have the holy Spirit) the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” And so we are incapacitated from understanding God’s word until we have the Holy Spirit indwelling us. And he comes the moment we believe in Jesus Christ, then we have the teacher.

Now it is of course a great privilege to sit under teachers of the word of God who have studied the word of God, I am not speaking of myself, I am speaking generally, it is a great privilege to be able to sit under teachers, but teachers, human teachers can not ultimately teach us the truth. It is only as a human teacher is used by the Holy Spirit of God that we are able to understand God’s word. And furthermore, it is a wonderful thing to realize that when we have the Holy Spirit the third person of the Trinity as our teacher, we have the ability to understand God’s word and it is not necessary, though of course desirable, it is not necessary for us to have a theological training, it is not necessary for us

to attend a Bible institute, it is not necessary for us to have special intellectual equipment, although these things are desirable, but it is not necessary for us to have these things in order to understand God's word. We should never feel as individuals who have never been privileged to attend a Bible school or theological seminary that we do not have the possibility of understanding God's word. We do, we have God as our teacher and as we seek and listen to him, we shall discover the teaching of God's word. I know from personal experience, having taught many young men in theological seminary, that it is entirely possible for a person who has never seen the inside of a theological seminary to know a great deal more about the Bible and the truth of God's word than one who has spent a number of years in a theological seminary. If on the one hand we have some who have not listened to the Holy Spirit, but who have learned a lot about the Bible, and if on the other hand we have a simple person who has never been to theological seminary but who has nevertheless listened to the Holy Spirit as teacher. So, we have revelation in the word of God and we have illumination through the Holy Spirit who offers to us understanding of his word.

Now we were studying the fall last time and we did not finish the 3rd chapter of the Book of Genesis, so I want to turn there if you will. And as you are turning there, I want to say this that the study tonight, the Divine Philosophy of the Ages, begins with Genesis chapter 3, and so the conclusion of the last message will be the beginning of this one. And I think you will recognize that they do dovetail very well. Now we had just begun chapter 3 and had reached the place where Adam and Eve had fallen. Now remember that the Bible is a story of redemption. The Bible is not a book of philosophy though it does contain a divine philosophy. It is not a book of psychology though it does contain perhaps the finest psychology that can be found in any book. It is not a book of archeology, though there are many things of interest to the archeologist in the word of God. And it is not a book of history and it is not a book of science, but the things that it has to say concerning science and concerning history are true. It is essentially a book of

redemption, and so science and history and psychology and philosophy as they appear in the Bible, all blend to present us a story, primarily of redemption. And this story of redemption touches all of these fields, but it is not essentially that field or that particular field, it is the story of redemption.

Now we saw that God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden after he had created them, and he gave them one simple little test. Now this test was not designed to reveal their sin, it was designed to be a test upon which they might mount up to maturity of relationship to God. He had said in Genesis chapter 2 and verses 16 and 17, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Now you will notice that God did not make it easy for Adam to sin, he really made it very difficult for Adam to sin. He said you can eat of all of the trees that are in the garden but of one tree you can not eat. He did not say you may eat of one tree but the rest of the trees you can not. He gave him every opportunity to pass this test. And he gave him every opportunity to avoid the sin. But we know what happened from reading chapter 3, the tempter came, and he came, not as an evil, outwardly evil person, but he came into the Garden of Eden as a very religious person. He came saying now we want to have, children, a Bible class tonight and discuss the ultimate thing. And I think this is important to remember because as I pointed out last time, sin is not basically immorality, though immorality is sin. Sin is unbelief, lack of trust in God. When the creature does not trust God, he sins. Now this unbelief manifests itself in rebellion against God, and the rebellion against God ultimately manifest itself in immorality if it is not restrained by the Holy Spirit, or perhaps even by the environment in which we find ourselves. But sin is unbelief which results in rebellion and finally issues in immorality.

Now I want to repeat this over and over again, because we have the idea living in the twentieth century in the United States that sin exist only when we are guilty of adultery or perhaps when we are caught or arrested by the police, charged with thievery

or something of that kind. That type of sin is an out breaking sin that is a product that is a produce of an attitude of mind and heart which is sin. Sin is unbelief, sin is lack of trust, sin is the desire to be independent of God. He is the Creator, we are the creatures, and when we desire to be independent we desire to take his place to be as God. So Satan came into the Garden of Eden as a very religious person, he believed in God, and he was spiritual, he said let's talk about the ultimate thing. He said, “Yea has God said ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” And you'll remember that by a series of clever tests of Eve, he finally caused Eve to sin by taking of the fruit of the tree and then Eve gave to Adam and the two discovered that they had sinned before God. They then hid themselves in the Garden Eden. After having seen themselves to be naked that too is a product of sin, the shame that came to them with the lost glory, they after having made themselves the fig leaves, hid themselves and then God came into the garden and asked where they were. And remember I think, I've forgotten really whether we got this far but when God came into the Garden of Eden, he asked, “Where art thou?” of Adam, and Adam replied, “I heard Thy voice in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself.” And verse 11 we read,

“And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. (I might say of course that Adam blaming this upon the woman is not a new thing.) And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.”

And I've forgotten whether I said this or not, but I always do in Genesis so I'll say it again, someone said that, “Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent, and the serpent hadn't a leg to stand on.” [Laughter] Will Rogers once said that, “American

history can be divided into two eras; the first era is the era of the passing of the buffalo. The second era is the era of the passing of the buck.” And here we have it in the Garden of Eden. “It’s the woman’s fault!” and the woman says “it’s the serpent’s fault.”

And so now God is going to speak and he’s going to speak in judgment. Now before we look at the judgment specifically, I want to point out tonight what I want to try to do in the Philosophy of the Ages, because we’re going to see that in the judgment that God pronounces, there is also contained a promise. And the story of the Old Testament is the story of the development of the promise of God concerning a Redeemer, someone who would come to deliver man from the sin in which he now finds himself, and from the judgment under which he now lives and exists. So that the divine philosophy of the ages is the story of God’s plan of redemption through Jesus Christ, consequent upon the sin of man in the Garden of Eden. And really we come to understand this simple message that we are the descendants of our fathers in the Garden of Eden who sinned, and that we are the recipients of the promise of redemption and restoration through the coming of Jesus Christ we have in a nutshell, God’s philosophy of human history. And until we recognize that, we will never understand why we are here, why we live as we do, why we face the problems that we do and we will never be able to integrate our human personality into the life that is about us and the life that we must live.

But once we recognize this, that we are a creature under a Sovereign God, a creature that has sinned and is out of fellowship with God but that through Jesus Christ we may be returned to fellowship with God that we may through him have the right to call upon God and expect him through Jesus Christ to help us in our daily life. When that comes, then there is a restoration of the personality to its right relationship to God and life becomes understandable, meaningful and also fruitful. And until then I say we shall never realize why we’re here and we will never realize the purposes for which we are here.

But now God is going to speak and he's going to speak first in judgment and the judgment that he speaks of first is upon the serpent. Now we said last time that the serpent was an instrumentality of Satan. And this appears as we look at verses 14 and 15, for the judgment is first upon the serpent, verse 14 now of Genesis 3, “And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.” In other words, every time that you see a snake upon the ground, Franz Delitzsch, the great German biblical student said that the serpent is the only animal with a bony skeleton which moves upon its belly.

Now I am not enough of a scientist to know whether that is true or not, but that is what he said. And I can not think of any other bony skeleton that moves, only animal with a bony skeleton that moves upon its belly except the serpent. It is in a sense an illustration in biology of the fall. But every time we see a snake upon the ground, we should remember that the serpent was not originally that type of an animal. Because the first verse of chapter 3 says “Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field.” It was a beast of the field. So what we see today is the result of divine judgment. But of course the serpent was simply an instrumentality, for this was a speaking serpent, and I do not know of any serpents that speak. However, I must say that usually when I see them I don't wait to find out if they can talk. [Laughter] But nevertheless, I do not know of any that can talk. So this I would presume was if not a capacity that serpents possessed then that they do not possess now was some form of demoniacal miracle. But that's unimportant, the precise identification of what happened because we really don't know, we're too many thousands of years away. But nevertheless in the 15th verse he goes beyond the serpent and he says,

“And I will put enmity between thee (That is the serpent) and the woman, and between thy seed (That is your descendents) and her seed; (her descendents) it (or as we might

render the Hebrew text at this point for it is the Hebrew word “who”) he shall bruise thy head, (He shall crush thy head, serpent.) And thou shalt crush his heel.”

Now you can tell from this that there has been some individualizing, but let's stop. Let's leave that for just one moment and go on to the judgment that is pronounced upon the woman. We can just say that there is judgment pronounced upon the serpent, now judgment upon the woman in verse 16, and women, notice especially now the judgment that is pronounced upon you for you still suffer from what happened in Genesis chapter 3, “And Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception;” Labor pains are directly related to what happened in the Garden of Eden “in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband,” Now that clause is capable of two meanings, it may mean thy desire shall be to thy husband in the sense that you shall do what he wishes that you do, hence you are to be in submission to him. I rather like that interpretation [Laughter] and furthermore I think it is true to the New Testament. The next clause says and he shall rule over thee. But I like another interpretation even better. Some have said thy desire shall be to thy husband means that women shall find men irresistible [Laughter] And I like that. One found me irresistible. But the text goes on to say “and he shall rule over thee.” Now ladies, that's why you're never happy if you are wearing the pants in your home, you may think you are, but you're not really happy deep down within. Do you know why? Because that's not your place. You're happy when your husband is the man of the house. And you're really happy when he does his job of being the man of the house. And men you're never happy until you are in that place. You're not really happy when you let her rule the house. Well that's the woman's judgment, and now he speaks to the man. And he has something for him too,

“And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, (See he should not have done that he should have acted independently but he allowed Eve to persuade him.) Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; (Now men this is why you have to go to work every day, and this is why you find it very difficult to make that dollar. Now of course he was speaking in an agricultural economy but the facts are true in our economy today. He says) cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; (every time you reach down in your shrubbery beds and you put your hand back there and you pull it out quickly and you pull it out quickly because you just pushed it up against a thorn you can remember Genesis chapter 3 from now on.) Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, (I made you out of dust) and unto dust shalt thou return.”

Now will you turn back just a moment to Genesis chapter 2 and verse 17, we read, “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Now notice he said, “in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” But then in the judgment upon Adam he says that ultimately Adam shall die physically, “For dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return.” But he does not say that he has died physically yet. Yet Genesis 2:17 said, “I the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” From this we know that there are two types of death, or better there is really one type of death which has some consequences.

There is one type of death which is spiritual death. Now spiritual death is separation from God, it was what happened when Adam and Eve sinned and they hid themselves from God. They hid themselves by the way, God did not hide himself. He

still loved them just as much after they had sinned as he had before. That's something for us to remember too. That means that at any time we may approach a loving God whose arms are wide open to receive us. He loves us just as much now that we are sinners as he did Adam and Eve in the garden before they had ever sinned. And Christian, it means this too, that when you having believed in Jesus Christ, having become a Christian, when you then sin and we all do, it means that he still loves you just as much after you have sinned as before. And he wants you as a child then to come to him, he's ready to receive you. You must not feel that because you have sinned you can not go back to God, you can always, his arms are always open to receive you. So Adam died spiritually, he did not die physically. And yet he died the day he ate, so he must have died spiritually, that is his spirit was separated from God. He left God, and he hid himself. Now as a result of this God says that ultimately that Adam shall die physically, "For dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return." So, spiritual death leads to physical death. This is why every person who has ever lived, including Jesus Christ, but not because of his sin, but every person who has ever lived has died. In Jesus Christ's case, he did not die for his sin, he died for our sin. But every person has died, that's why we have an obituary section in the paper because of Genesis chapter 3. Everybody ultimately finds his name there.

Now the remedy, the remedy for spiritual death is faith in Jesus Christ. In the New Testament we read, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." The moment I believe in Jesus Christ I have life, this everlasting life. Now, I still die though physically. That is the remedy for spiritual death it is not the remedy for physical death immediately. But the moment I believe in Jesus Christ and possess spiritual life I possess Jesus Christ's life. And remember Jesus Christ's life is the life that overcame death. He died, they placed him in a tomb, but on the third day he came forth and the Apostle Peter said it was impossible that he should beholden of death. He has a life that death can not contain, and we have that life when we believe in Christ. So at the resurrection when

Jesus Christ comes again, we'll get to this later on, we shall receive a physical body, a resurrection body which is immortal, it can not die. And hence the remedy for physical death is the resurrection for believers. But if we should die in the state of spiritual death experiencing physical death not having believed in Jesus Christ, the Bible says that then we experience eternal death which is eternal separation from God.

Now, let's go back and look at the promise. And I want now for the remainder of our time to trace the promises of the Redeemer in the Old Testament to the time of Christ which is really the “Divine philosophy of the Ages: God's plan of Redemption through Christ.” Now the first promise of redemption is Genesis chapter 3 and verse 15. So let's take our Bible's and let's look carefully at this promise because it is the most comprehensive of all of the redemptive promises in the Bible. In effect, it says that the Redeemer is going to come from mankind. Now you know many years ago when we used to listen to radio programs we used to hear quiz shows, at least I did. And we would hear a show that and I'm just going to try to recreate as I remember a show something like this: There would be a tremendous prize and then this would involve a series of selections. And you would hear the announcer describe the choices that were being made and for example the first choice would be the state in which the individual lived. So they would turn something and somebody would reach in and pull out a slip of paper and you would discover which state the winner lived in.

And let's just say for a moment that we're listening to a show like this and we hear that the man has reached into the place and he's pulled out a slip of paper and the announcer opens it up and reads it and it's the State of Texas. Well my heart begins to beat a little faster at the big promise and then after some more carrying on in the program and second choice is made and this is the choice of the city and so all of the cities of Texas are put in something and the man reaches down and he pulls out a slip of paper and he reads Dallas. And I 'm a little more interested a little more excited my heart is beating a little faster. And then they call for the telephone book, I remember that the

telephone book used to be used quite a bit. They call for the telephone book of the city of Dallas, and then a choice is made and it might be page two hundred and seventy-five and the winner's name begins with "J." Now I'm very excited. And then the next choice is perhaps the telephone number let's just say. And the telephone number it turns out it's a diamond number! I'm more excited still, and I can hardly wait to hear the address and finally the choice is made and it's 9408 Dartcrest and I faint, 'cause it's me. Now you will notice that we have gone from the state to the city to the telephone number to the location, in other words there's been a narrowing down of the tests.

Now in the Bible we have a similar thing. Because when the Redeemer is promised in Genesis chapter 3 in verse 15, the Redeemer is said to come from mankind. Now I want to show you this, and each one of these promises that we're going to read is a narrowing down so that if we were spiritually alert, we would get more excited as the years went by. Of course if we had lived when the first promise was given we wouldn't be living when many of the others were given. But nevertheless, the first promise is that the Redeemer comes from mankind. Notice verse 15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he (that is the seed of the woman) he shall bruise thy head, (Satan, the serpent standing for him) and thou shalt crush his heel." This word bruise in the Hebrew text is the word that means really to crush.

Now notice what it says, the statement is made that there is enmity between the woman's descendants and the serpent's descendants. But the time is coming when this is going to be individualized because he talks not about a line but he talks about heel and head, so that the woman's seed has a heel which is going to be crushed, and the serpent's line has a head that is going to be crushed. Now if you crush a head, that's a fatal wound, but if you crush a heel, that is a wound, but it is not fatal. Now of course what we know now that we've read the Bible through, we know that what the Lord was referring to was the cross. Because it was on the cross that Jesus Christ took sins away

and thus delivered us from the power of Satan as the New Testament says. On the cross, Satan's head was crushed, he was defeated forever. Jesus Christ's heel was crushed for he died, but he was resurrected, came to life. The wound was not a fatal and final wound for by resurrection he was delivered. But now I want you to notice one other thing about this promise, this promise states that the Redeemer the one who shall win the victory over Satan is the seed of the woman. Well that seems strange doesn't it? Why not the seed of Adam? Why the seed of the woman? That's very unnatural especially if you were talking to Hebrews. Seed of the woman, well now of course we can not prove the virgin birth from Genesis 3:15, but it is obvious that the wording of this broad promise in Genesis chapter 3 and verse 15 is in harmony with the fact that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin. He was the seed of the woman but not the seed of the man. Joseph was his legal father; Joseph was not his natural father. Mary was his real mother, the mother of his human nature. "Conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary" the Apostles' Creed puts it and puts it correctly. So the first promise is simply that the Redeemer shall come from mankind, he shall come from the woman. The one who shall defeat Satan is to be a human being.

Now that has great significance. That tells us of course that Jesus Christ is a man. That he can only win victory by becoming a man. This is why we have an incarnation, now that word means a coming into the flesh. That is why Jesus Christ came as a man. He had to be just as much man as you and I are men, apart from sin. His human nature is the same nature that we have. As a matter of fact, he partook of you and me. We're all descendents of the same person. He has a little bit of you and he has a little bit of me and ultimately, that is why he called himself the Son of Man. He's related to every one of us, every one of us. You'd thought you'd had a little family didn't you? You can think about your grandmother and your great grandmother and your great great great grandmother and you've drawn up your family trees and your genealogies but listen,

you're really related to every other human being and you're related to Jesus Christ. Now this is the first promise, so let's move on now to the second promise.

Now the second promise is made in Genesis chapter 9 and verse 26, Genesis chapter 9 and verse 26. Now some of you look to me like maybe you're getting a little chilly, are you? A little chilly? Ladies? Now I'll put this down a little bit. Perhaps your desire shall be toward me as a result of this. Genesis chapter 9 and verse 26, but let's read verse 20 through verse 26. Now the flood has taken place and Noah and his family have come out and the new civilization is beginning and we read,

“And Noah began (verse 20) And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. (Apparently this made Noah do something that was very shameful, the next verse tells us only in general what it was.) And Ham, the father of Canaan, (notice) saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. (Shem and Japheth) And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. (Now we read of what happened.) And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. (Now that's a strange statement and I'm just going to translate it as the Hebrew text has it) And Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his son; the little one had done unto him. (Now the son, the little one, is obviously a reference not to Ham as you might think, but a reference to Canaan the son of Ham. And you will see why because as Noah speaks, he speaks by prophecy, and mind you he speaks by prophecy, God gives him these words he doesn't deserve to be a prophet after all, he has disappointed God and he has sinned. But nevertheless he stands as the prophet of God and we read in verse 26 and he said, after he said) Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. (In other words, Canaan shall be the servant division of mankind.) And he said, Blessed be the

LORD God of Shem; (Now Shem is that division of humanity from which Abraham and ultimately our Lord came the Semitic division) Blessed be the Lord God of Shem (In other words, the Lord is related to the Semitic division of mankind notice the name for God, it's Lord, the Lord God of Shem) and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, (Japheth from which the Gentile nations have come.) God shall enlarge Japheth and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; (In other words, he shall receive his blessing through Shem) and Canaan shall be his servant."

Now we don't have time to talk about all of the implications of this prophecy, but the thing we are interested in is the further revelation concerning the coming Redeemer. For in the statement, "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem" and that "Japheth shall dwell in his tents, and Canaan shall serve him," it is evident that Shem is to be blessed because from Shem there is to come the Lord God. "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem." So the second thing that we can say is that the Redeemer is coming from the Semitic division of mankind. Now mind you, I'm sure that as these prophecies were first given, they did not immediately realize what was involved. I think they must have pondered over these words quite a bit. The New Testament writers tell us that the prophets pondered over the very words that they wrote, wondering what they meant, that God had given them in prophetic revelation. So the second promise is that the Redeemer comes from the Semitic division of mankind.

Let's turn on to chapter 12, verses 1 through 3. Now you see that as you read through the Bible, the story of the Bible is the story of the preparation of the people for this Redeemer who is to come. Now Genesis 12 verses 1 through 3 record a new beginning in the Bible. As we read in verse 1,

"Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a

great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee (Abraham) in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”

Now it would be wonderful if we were able to stop and talk about the Abrahamic promises they are the foundation of a great deal of the Biblical revelation. But we only have twelve lessons. Can I do it? Let me just indicate in a few sentences some of the most important things about this. It's obvious that Abraham is a very important character, for fourteen chapters of the Old Testament are devoted to him. And when you turn to the New Testament, he is the most prolific illustration of spiritual truth for the apostles. He was a great man. As a matter of fact, believers in the New Testament are called sons of Abraham. I am a son of Abraham. If you have believed in Jesus Christ, you are a son of Abraham; you exercise a faith like Abraham's faith in his God, and you become a son of Abraham as Paul tells us in Galatians chapter 3 for one place. So Abraham is extremely important, the story of Abraham begins in chapter 11 and 12 here, and continues for about 14 chapters.

Now great promises were given to Abraham, the first promise is a personal one. He says, “I will make thy name great.” And isn't it striking that Abraham's name is great, among the Mohammedans, among the Jews and among Christians, perhaps the three greatest human religions. Christianity, and I'm speaking of it simply now as a human religion, later on I'll try to point out that it's not really a human religion, it's a relationship to a person, but let's just speak of it that way. Mohammedism and Judaism and all three of these faiths revere the man Abraham. God certainly did make his name great.

Not only was he given these personal promises, but he was also given national promises. He was told in the first verse that he should leave his father's house and his kindred and go to a land that I will show you. In other words, God gives Abraham a land. In the fifteenth chapter he defines that land. Voltaire once said, and Voltaire you

know was an atheist, but Voltaire once said, "You know the God of the Bible is certainly a petty God, he said he was going to call the children of Israel out unto a land that was great and rich" and he said, "he gave them a land, the land of Palestine which is about the size of Wales." Voltaire, like most infidels revealed his ignorance of the Bible. The fifteenth chapter of the Book of Genesis the land that God gave to Abraham and to his seed is described as extending from the river of Egypt all the way to the River Euphrates. It was not only bigger than Wales, but it was several times larger than all of Great Brittan, it really was a great and a rich land. So he gave him a land. And then finally, in verse 3 he gave him some universal promises. He said, "In thee shall all the families of the Earth be blessed." In thee all the families of the Earth be blessed. Everybody who is to be blessed is blessed through Abraham. Think of that, if you are blessed by God, your blessing has come through Abraham. Now of course as you can see, that is a further revelation of the Messiah. We are told in effect that the Messiah is, using my illustration, his first name begins with "J." In other words, we've narrowed it down now from mankind to the Semitic division to the Abrahamic family. So let's just put it up here, from, well or the Abrahamic people. Mankind, Semitic division, Abrahamic people or Abrahamic descendents.

Now this promise was confirmed to Abraham (Now I'm getting a little warm, sorry.) This promised was confirmed to Abraham in the 15th chapter. Let's see if I have time to tell that, I think maybe I do. It was confirmed in a very interesting way. For a long time Abraham didn't have any children, remember, Sarah didn't have any children. Finally they reached the age where it looked as if it was going to be difficult for them to have any children at all. And Sarah said, "Abram, why don't you have children by Hagar?" And so he did, and Ishmael was born. And God of course had to tell Abraham, "Ishmael's not your heir, one born of your own loins and of Sarah is to be the heir." But Abraham had gone to God to ask him about it, he, after a long time and no child had been born he said, "Lord, whose going to inherit the promises? The only person around is this Eliezer,

whose my servant." The Lord said it's not Eliezer. And he took Abraham out remember and it was dark and he caused Abraham to look up into the skies, and Abraham saw stars all over the skies. And God spoke and said, "Abraham can you number the stars?" And then he went on to say, "So shall thy seed be Abraham as many as the stars in the sky for multitude." And the text says, "And Abraham believed God and it was imputed to him for righteousness." In other words, he believed in the God of the resurrection. For he had reached the age where he could not have children and Sarah of course reached the age where she could not have children, her womb was dead the Bible says and Abraham was a hundred years old. And so in believing that, he believed in the God of the resurrection.

And then the Bible describes an interesting ceremony in the fifteenth chapter. Abraham is told to take some animals, we read in verse 9,

"And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, (this is the 10th verse of Genesis 15) and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one over against the other: but the birds divided he not."

In other words, the heifer he divided in half, he put one half of the heifer over here and one half of the heifer over here. He then divided the she goat, one half over here one half over here. Then took the ram, killed the ram, one half of the ram over here, one half over here. Why was he doing this? Well he was doing this because it was an ancient custom that when an agreement was contracted between people, they divided an animal and then together those who made the agreement walked down between the pieces signifying that they would be faithful unto death to the agreement that was made between them. And so Abram did this, now it was night time remember, and he waited. And apparently he waited all day because we read in verse 12, "And when the sun was

going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.” He had a nightmare I think. And then he heard some words,

“And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; (he tells about the Egyptian experience and the captivity there, the bondage.) And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: (the Egyptians) and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; (In other words, Abram your going to die before you receive the promises of the land.) thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. (And suddenly as Abram was listening to these words we read) And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold he looked off and he saw smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.”

And reading the Hebrew text, it appears that what he saw has an appearance of a cylindrical furnace that moved toward the pieces of the animals that had been slain and which were lying. And then in this smoking furnace from which fire was belching forth, Abram was amazed to discover that that furnace passed right down between those pieces, but Abram was not invited to follow. Why? Well for the simple reason that these promises were unconditional promises that God gave. Abram is not responsible for their fulfillment, God shall fulfill them and he alone passed between the promises in token of the fact that those promises were unconditional promises. Abram would have that land, Abram’s name would be great, and in him all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Even though Israel may wander in unbelief for many centuries, even though today Israel is still in unbelief, those promises still pertain and the faithfulness of the word of an

everlasting God stands underneath the promises made to Abraham. From the Abrahamic people.

Let's turn on to Genesis chapter 49 and verse 10, Genesis 49 and verse 10. Now I'm not going to go through all the promises. Do you know that there are about three hundred promises in the Old Testament that pertain to Jesus Christ, various things said about him. But here is one that is outstanding. Genesis chapter 49 and verse 10, in the midst of Jacob's dying blessing which is prophetic of the future of Israel, we read verse 10, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from beneath his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." Shiloh, most students of the Bible believe is a messianic term, it really may also mean him whose right it is. But I prefer just to leave it Shiloh. "Until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." Notice he says that the scepter shall not depart from Judah, Judah. In other words, the Redeemer is to come from the tribe of Judah. We have further narrowing down of the promise now. He comes from mankind. He comes from the Semitic division of mankind. He comes from the Abrahamic people of the Semitic division of mankind. He comes from the tribe of Judah of the Abrahamic people, of one specific tribe.

Now let's move on, let's turn to 1 Chronicles chapter 17 and verse 11, 1 Chronicles chapter 17 and verse 11. Where is that book? Oh, here it is, 1 Chronicles chapter 17 and verse, well let's begin reading at verse 7 because here we have the great Davidic Covenant. We must hasten a little bit now, I probably should not have told you about that ceremony. 1 Chronicles chapter 17 and verse 7,

"Now therefore thus shalt thou say unto thy servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, even from following the sheep, that thou shouldest be ruler over my people Israel: (By the way of course, David is from the tribe of Judah.) And I have been with thee whithersoever thou hast walked, and have cut off all thine enemies from before thee, and have made thee a name like the name of the great men that are in

the earth. Also I will ordain a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, and they shall dwell in their place, and shall be moved no more; (See the reiteration of the promises of the land.) neither shall the children of wickedness waste them any more, as at the beginning, And since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel. Moreover I will subdue all thine enemies. Furthermore I tell thee that the LORD will build thee an house. And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom.”

Now we don't have time I say to explain or to give all the ramifications of these promises, but I think you can see that this states that the Redeemer is to come from David's family. He is of David, of his sons. So he comes from David's family of the tribe of Judah of the Abrahamic people of the Semitic division of mankind. Now that is why when the Lord Jesus was here, he asked the Pharisees, “Whose son was the Messiah?” Oh he said, “Why he's David's son.” Then he said why does David call him Lord then?” In Psalm 110, “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet.” For you see while the Redeemer, the Messiah is to come from David's family, he is also, strangely, David's Lord. And just as Noah was told, “Blessed be the Lord God who comes from Shem” so David's son, David's Lord.

Let's move on to Isaiah chapter 7 verse 14, very quickly, Isaiah 7 verse 14, just move on a few more books, first of the great prophets, Isaiah 7 verse 14. Now were narrowing down the promises, were learning a lot about the promises. Listen here, you know if you had been a member of the Tribe of Judah, wouldn't it be wonderful to hear your father tell this story, “The Redeemer's going to come from mankind, he's going to come from the Semitic division” “Am I that Daddy?” “Yes you're that” “From the Abrahamic people.” “Am I a descendent of Abraham?” “Yes you are son.” “From the tribe of Judah,” “Well daddy I know that's my tribe.” “And from David's family,” “Am I

related to David?" "Yes son, you're right in the line." Every Jewish boy thought perhaps I'm related to the Messiah directly. David's family, now we read something else about him, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." The Messiah shall be born of a virgin. Do imagine that Joseph went through this with our Lord? Born of a virgin, further identification, born of a virgin.

Now let's turn on just a few more chapters to the Book of Micah, just a little book. I know it's unfair to call out a passage from the Minor Prophets. In some Bible classes you have to declare an intermission while people find one of the Minor Prophets. But turn on a few pages, just act like you know exactly where it is and sort of thumb along there and finally you'll find it. And as I said the other day, if you get to Nahum, you're warm, you've gone a little too far, and if you're at Jonah, you'll almost there. Micah chapter 5 and verse 2, I'm going to have to stop with this because it's one minute after nine now. Micah chapter 5 and verse 2, now notice the promise, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah" By the way, the Bible is not like a Delphic Oracle, it does not give a prophecy which can mean two things, it so happens there were two Bethlehems in the land, one was in Zebulun, and so the Bible is very specific, it says Bethlehem Ephrathah, not like Jean Dixon who arrived today with some suggestions about the future, suggestions that are always broad enough you know to cover various possibilities, we've had soothsayers down through the centuries, they can wonderfully phrase their remarks so they can protect themselves as much as possible by what happens. The Bible is very specific, not that other Bethlehem you see, could have said just from Bethlehem and might have been either one and the Bible would be right but, "Thou Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel" And so finally the Redeemer is to be born in Bethlehem.

This prophecy was so well known and so easy to understand that when the Lord Jesus was born Herod remember called for the Jewish scribes and said, "Where is the Messiah to be born, where is he that is born king of the Jews?" Mr. Spurgeon said no ones ever been born king, you're born a prince, but Here is one who was born king. And they knew exactly they said, "Why the prophet says in Bethlehem the Messiah is to be born." And so we have the Messiah is from mankind, from the Semitic division, the Abrahamic people, Tribe of Judah, from David's family, born of a virgin, born in Bethlehem, and hundreds of other identifications in the Old Testament which were fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ. Now I didn't read the last of that verse, did you notice what it says? "Unto me who is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." In other words, he's going to be born in Bethlehem in a manger but that's not the beginning of his existence, he has existed from eternity past. The one who is born on earth has lived in Heaven; the one who is David's son is David's Lord. The one who is at a particular time to rule in Israel and from Israel over the earth, has been ruling from all of eternity.

About three or four years ago, principle Burleigh of New College in University of Edinburgh was moderating a meeting of the Scottish Presbyterian Church, the Church of Scotland, and they had Sir Bernard Lovell speak to them whose one of the great astronomers of the world. And he gave them a lecture and all of the assembled Scottish preachers in their annual meeting, he gave them a lecture on astronomy as it related to spiritual things, and when he finished, he sat down and Mr. Burleigh got up and he said, "Sir Bernard, we are very very grateful for this magnificent lecture that you have given us about the world of astronomy, but we would like to say that our God rules over all of your world." And the God who rules over all of the world is the seed of the woman. Jesus Christ who should come, crush the serpent's head, make it possible for all of us to have everlasting life when we put our trust in the one who died for us. That is God's philosophy of the ages. Of course that's not the complete story, for if we put the cross

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here, the Bible also tells us that there is to be a second coming to the earth. There are two comings of the Lord Jesus. But we shall see these as we continue our studies.

Next time we shall look at the first Advent of the Redeemer in detail. Let's bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for the privilege of study. We thank Thee for the greatness of our Redeemer and the greatness of the plan of salvation. Help us Lord to understand and then appropriate in simple trust

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]