

'Thou shalt speak My words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.'

Ezekiel 2:7.

You are warmly invited to meetings arranged by the Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony, to be held, God willing, at
NEW LIFE BIBLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
44 SALUSBURY ROAD, LONDON, NW6 6NN

**Theme for 2017 – The Glory of God – Studies in the Book of Ezekiel
Spring Conference - April 28th, 4pm and 7pm**

Afternoon Subject: The Vision of the Sins of the Rulers of Jerusalem (11-14)

Evening Subject: The Visions of the Parables about Jerusalem's Condition (15-17)

Speaker: John Douglas

May 26th, 7pm

Subject: The Visions of the Siege and Judgment of Jerusalem (20-24)

Speaker: Paul Toms

June 23rd, 7pm

Subject: The Visions of the Judgment of the Nations around Israel (25-28)

Speaker: Ivan Foster

It is hoped that each message will be recorded and friends should be able to listen to and download messages from our website. Applications for cassettes and/or CDs should be made to the secretary. Full lists of S.G.A.T. recordings and of publications can be found on our website (WWW.SGAT.ORG) or may be obtained from the S.G.A.T. secretary.

Representative in Australia: Mr D Matthews, Unit 8/71, Exeter Road, Croydon North, 3136.

Representative in Canada: Mr Andrew Foster, 12-1020 Cedar Street, Okanagan Falls, British Columbia, V0H 1R0 (E-mail: atcfoster@gmail.com).

Representative in New Zealand: Miss E R Wilson, 27 Walshs Road, Ashburton, 7700

To our subscribers and friends: Please send subscriptions, gifts to Sustentation Fund, for Bible circulation and orders for publications to the S.G.A.T. secretary, Mr Stephen A Toms, 1 Donald Way, Chelmsford, Essex, CM2 9JB. Cheques, etc. should be made payable to 'Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony.' In order to save postage, receipts will be sent with the next issue of the magazine.

To those not residing in the United Kingdom: In view of the high charge for exchanging foreign currency, it would be appreciated if, where possible, friends send in sterling. Supporters in Australia, Canada, or New Zealand may send to their respective representatives. Payments can be made over the S.G.A.T. web-site.

S.G.A.T. Council: Stephen R Evans, Peter Fleming, Paul J Flory, Martin Humphrey, David McMillan, Richard Monteith, Andrew P Toms, Paul Toms, Stephen A Toms.

ISSN 1351-4768

Watching and Waiting

LIGHT FOR PERILOUS TIMES

SCRIPTURAL

Reformed, Protestant, Puritan, Prophetical, Expository, Doctrinal

Volume 29, No 2

April-June, 2017

Quarterly, £4 per annum

**This magazine is issued by the
SOVEREIGN GRACE ADVENT TESTIMONY**

(Registered Charity No. 261489)

Website: WWW.SGAT.ORG

Secretary: Stephen A Toms 1 Donald Way Chelmsford Essex CM2 9JB

(Tel: 01245 268815. E-mail: satoms@hotmail.co.uk)

The objects are:

1. To teach the nearing approach of our Lord's return. James 5:8
2. To hold forth the Truth and to expose and resist error. Jude 3
3. To note passing events in the light of 'the Scripture of Truth.' 2 Peter 1:19
4. To unfold the Word of God by comparing Scripture with Scripture. Acts 17:11
5. To encourage missionary endeavour, and all service for Truth. Acts 1:8
6. To comfort and strengthen those who seek to stand with the Lord, apart from abounding lawlessness. 2 Timothy 2:19
7. To call for separation from false ecumenism. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

CONTENTS

JEROBOAM – A TYPE OF THE ANTICHRIST 18
By Paul Toms

ABRAHAM'S HISTORY IN GENESIS 12..... 24
By Benjamin Wills Newton

CHRISTENDOM 30
By Benjamin Wills Newton

NOTICES 31

Jeroboam – A Type of The Antichrist

By Paul Toms

(This is a summary of a message given at a Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony meeting held in London on Friday, 26th February, 2016. The message was recorded and CDs and cassette tapes are available; or it may be downloaded from our website).

Our theme for the year relates to various characters who foreshadow the Antichrist, that last great evil person who will appear on the earth and be a great adversary to God, and also to the people of God. He will be against our Saviour and seek to cause much hurt to the cause of Christ; hence he is called the Antichrist. As with the types of the Lord Jesus Christ which never fully set forth all the Saviour's person and work, so it is with the foreshadowings of this Man of Sin; they only show in part what he will actually be. No person throughout the whole of history has yet reached the wickedness of this one man. There certainly have been some wicked men, as history records; and our newspapers and various media channels remind us that there are such men about today. We have men who are so anti-God that they will commit all manner of evil and perverseness to evidence their hatred for the Divine Godhead. However, this man, the man yet to be revealed in person, is as it were Satan's final throw of the dice. God, in His mercy and grace, has revealed to us the characteristics and behaviour of this man so that we may be ready. We are exhorted to search the Scriptures, to be a praying people, watching and waiting to see the signs, and to be awake when these things come upon the earth.

We come to consider Jeroboam, and we see things recorded of his life that give us an insight into the character of the Antichrist. There are parts of his life for which he could be commended, but there is nothing about the Man of Sin that God commends.

The Entrance of Jeroboam

The first reference to this man is in 1 Kings 11:11. His name is not mentioned in this verse but Solomon was given a very solemn word from the Lord. God had given the kingdom to David; it had been rent from Saul because of his disobedience to the command of God, but Solomon, despite all the wisdom given to him, walked in foolish ways. He went after other gods, which were no gods. For this, God said that he would rend the kingdom from his house, and give it to his servant. This servant was Jeroboam. When we come to verse 26 we see the name of this man - Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite from Zereda. He was an industrious man so that Solomon placed him over the two families of Joseph - Ephraim and Manasseh. Solomon looked upon the outward appearance of the man; he saw that he was industrious, but did not see what kind of person he actually was in the inner man, where his heart really was. We are told that Jeroboam 'lifted up his hand against the king.' We do not know exactly

WATCHING AND WAITING

19

how he did that, but it was something to do with Solomon's building of Millo. It seems, however, that Jeroboam had set his heart on higher things than just being the ruler over two tribes, for Ahijah later said, 'Thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth' (verse 37). The pride of man never brings joy and fulfilment; it brings division and sorrow and pain.

The meeting between Ahijah the prophet and Jeroboam was to have a profound effect upon the nation of Israel for many years. Ahijah had a message from God for Jeroboam that he would be king over ten tribes of Israel leaving only two tribes to Rehoboam and the house of David. The message was really a message of judgment upon Solomon because he had sought after other gods. There is a list of the gods after which he went a whoring, gods of the nations that were round about them, whom God had defeated on so many occasions. We see the folly of Solomon, because when he heard of the judgment that God pronounced, instead of repenting like his father would have done, he sought to turn around God's judgment by seeking to kill Jeroboam. However, there is nothing that man can do to reverse the sovereign and eternal purpose of God. What He has said will come to pass. His word is sure. If, as many believe, this event occurred in the 25th year of the reign of Solomon, he would have had 15 years to repent, yet it seems that at no time did he think of doing so. Jeroboam fled into Egypt and for those 15 or so years nothing is heard of him.

The Error of Jeroboam

At the death of Solomon, Jeroboam came back onto the scene, being called by the children of Israel to be their spokesman. Some have thought that Jeroboam lifted his hand against the king when he saw the heavy handedness of Solomon getting the people to labour for him and to do his bidding to his enlargement. Whatever, according to the word of the prophet Ahijah from the Lord, the kingdom of David was split in two. This was sad. The nation had yearned for a king and God had given them Saul who reigned for 40 years and much trouble he brought upon the kingdom. Then there was the 40 years of comparative stability as the kingdom grew under King David. It was increased in the days of Solomon, who also reigned for 40 years. Where there had been so much promise all came to nothing – just the division of the nation. So Jeroboam, after his showdown with Rehoboam, took the ten tribes as had been foretold and the northern kingdom of Israel was born and the southern kingdom of Judah came into formation.

Then we see the true heart of Jeroboam and how wicked he really was, instituting man-made religion. So quickly Jeroboam became not only king of the northern kingdom, but ringleader in sin, sin that stretched down the generations after him. This religion was specifically man-made; it had its origin in the human heart (chapter 12:26). The heart is the place that Jeremiah so rightly calls desperately wicked; how can anything good proceed from such a place? 'Can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit?' was the question that the Saviour asked and the answer comes as a resounding, 'No!' When it comes to religions in this world there really are only two, the 'I will' of God and the 'I think' of

man. For God says that His thoughts are not our thoughts neither are His ways our ways. His thoughts and ways are so much higher than anything we think or do. This will epitomise the way of Antichrist. God has clearly stated in His word the way of salvation, the way of life. It is through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Man of Sin will come and will say, 'No, this is the way, walk ye in it' - and it will be the wrong way, a way that leads to hell. The Antichrist will come and set up a form of religion, joining all religions in a confederacy against true religion. The peak, as it were, of the 'I thought' of man against the 'I will' of God.

We next see the **purpose** of this false religion; it was for his own selfish ends. He was scared that the people would go to Jerusalem and eventually turn against him and away from his kingdom. God had promised him this kingdom, so that would not happen; but he did not want the hearts of the people to be turned against him and back to the house of David. He wanted all for himself. It became a religion centred on self-honour and self-aggrandisement. This is so often the cause of all godless religion. The promotion of self takes God out of religion and self always will put itself there, such is the pride of the human heart. This attribute found in man comes from the pit itself. Does not Satan himself want to be the centre of all worship? Was not this behind his tempting of Christ in the wilderness? And is not Antichrist that one who will come from the devil, and receive his power from the devil, and want the whole world to fall down and worship him (Revelation 13:15-18)?

We next see that it was a religion built on **deceit**. We read in verse 28 that he made two calves and placed them in Bethel and in Dan and told the people that these calves had brought them out of Egypt. How did men believe such folly and deceit? Yet men will believe anything rather than trust in God. Do we not see that in our day and generation? The devil has never changed; he was a liar from the beginning. He sought in the Garden of Eden to change and deny God's Word, and he is still trying to do it in our time. In the closing days of this age, when the Son of perdition appears, he will be deceitful about the Word of God in order to turn men's hearts against God. We are thankful that the Saviour promised in Matthew 24:24 that though false Christs and prophets, of which Antichrist will be the pinnacle, arise and seek to spread deceit, the elect will be kept by His power and will not be deceived. Jeroboam set up a religion that seemed to be for the good of the people, yet he led them astray. Men will be drawn to the Antichrist in the hope that he has the answer to all the problems of this world.

We next see that this man-made religion was **contrary** to the Word of God. God had said that in Jerusalem was the place where He should be worshipped (1 Kings 8:29, Psalm 132:13-14). Yet Jeroboam set up worship in two different places, Bethel and Dan, and asserted that these two golden images were the gods that had delivered them in the past. What folly! The Israelites in the wilderness had sinned when Aaron had fashioned a golden calf while Moses was in the mountain. That ended in disaster as God judged those that had fallen into idolatry. One of the commands of God given to Moses on Mount Sinai was, 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.' Psalm

WATCHING AND WAITING

21

106:20 tells us of the sin of changing the glory of God into the similitude of an ox. And Jeremiah takes up the same theme (2:11). The people had forsaken the glory of the nation, the true Almighty God in heaven, and substituted for Him a thing made with mortal hands. This shows that the carnal mind will always walk by sight. You remember the old story written by John Bunyan that depicts Mansoul, at which the wicked Diabolus made his assault upon ear-gate, but he entered in through eye-gate. It is what a man sees that so often defiles him. We only have to read Matthew 6:22-23 to see in the sermon on the mount the premium the Saviour put upon keeping the eye free from seeing evil. Do we not see the same attitude in the Antichrist? He will set up a system of religion that is contrary to the will and command of God - the Abomination of Desolation in the Holy Place, that about which Daniel spoke (9:27 and 12:11), and that about which the Saviour warned in Matthew 24:15.

We go on to see that this became a **snare** to the people, for we read in verse 30 that they did as they were bidden and worshipped the golden idol at Dan. They paid heed to Jeroboam's words rather than the Word of God. It became a sin to them. Instead of directing their thoughts to the worship of the true God he caused them to worship an idol. It is true that anything which takes the place of God, however legitimate it may be, always is an idol, which becomes a snare. We see this so much in evidence in our own day and generation; and it is true of the times yet to be, when the Antichrist comes to set up his own religion, much like Jeroboam did in his day. We read in Revelation 13:4 and 8 that many will turn and worship the beast. We are thankful, however, that those written in the Lamb's Book of Life will not be found in that great number who fall into the snare and trap of the Antichrist. Elijah thought he was the only one in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal, yet God told him there were 7000 who had not done such a thing (1 Kings 19:18). God will, by His grace, mercy and strength, keep those who are His.

We then see that the natural development of this false religion was **impure**; the purity of the worship of God was rejected. In Leviticus we read how the priesthood was set up. It was to be a specific tribe, and there were special roles for the families within that tribe. There was to be the cleansing of the High Priest, the priests and the priestly garments. There were many God-given directives to ensure all was done according to His bidding and command. Numbers 3:6 and onwards gives God's commands for the priesthood. Yet Jeroboam made the lowest of the people to be priests. Not only were they the lowest of the people there was a direct breaking of the law of God for they were not from the Levitical tribe. They had no right to be in the priesthood. The purity of the worship of God, however much that may have been diminished in Solomon's days, was here made to be impure and unholy. God is a God of pure eyes that cannot behold evil, wickedness or impurity; Habakkuk 1:13 tells us this. That one yet to be revealed is described in Thessalonians as 'the Son of perdition.' That speaks of impurity, of all that is damnable and pernicious. He is called the Antichrist for the reason that he is everything that Christ is not. Christ is that pure light, and in Him is no darkness at all.

He said at the beginning of time, 'Let there be light,' and John tells us He is the Light of men, the Light which shineth in darkness. The Antichrist is of his father the devil who is darkness itself, and has no purity within him, but is full of evil.

Lastly, we see this religion was a sham, it was **shameful**. It had the appearance of being right, but was far from right. Jeroboam set up altars and a priesthood, and then he set up sacrifices and feast days like there were in Judah (verses 32-33). This was not the true thing; it was a fabrication. It was nothing like the God-given way of worship; it was truly a sham. The Saviour said there will, in the last days, be many great signs and wonders (Matthew 24:24).. The Antichrist will come with many great miracles. It will seem to be very real, but it will all be a sham, a shameful pretence of the real thing.

Antichrist will be a shameful imitation designed to deceive the people of God, but he will fail, for the elect will be kept. God keeps His own. Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 that he will put himself in the place of God; but it is all a shameful imitation. So we see that Jeroboam's false worship was a great error, and had some of the hallmarks of the rule of Antichrist.

The Ending of Jeroboam

In 1 Kings 14 we see the judgment of God upon Jeroboam. Jeroboam had been given the northern kingdom by God because of the sin of Solomon and he had turned away from the true worship of Jehovah. In this chapter we read that the son of Jeroboam fell sick, and this sickness was the thing that took him to his death. Jeroboam sent his wife in disguise to the prophet Ahijah, the prophet that had told Jeroboam years before of God's promise to him. Despite Ahijah not being able to see he recognised the woman as God had revealed to him who would be coming to see him, so he said as she came to the door, 'Come in thou wife of Jeroboam.' He told her that her son would die, and that she would never see him alive again as he would die as she re-entered the city. But more than this, he was the only good thing that came from the household of Jeroboam. God, by Ahijah, then foretold the death and future of Jeroboam. It was soon after this that Jeroboam died. He only reigned for 22 years and his son Nadab came to the throne to succeed him; and he was slain too. He reigned for 2 years. Only 24 years since the dividing of the kingdom and the throne was taken away from his house! He started evil and he bred evil.

The Epitaph of Jeroboam

As we come to this the epitaph of Jeroboam, I think we all know what the Bible has to say about him. There is a phrase that comes up a number of times in the succeeding chapters which is well known to us all. It is, 'Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.' What an awful legacy to leave! What an undesirable way to be remembered! God did truly judge Jeroboam, and brought his rule to an end, because of the sin that he committed in causing Israel to sin. His reign which had divided the kingdom came to an end, an end that was forecast and prophesied by the prophet Ahijah.

WATCHING AND WAITING

23

The Emblem of Anti-Christ

How does all this reveal to us something of the nature of the Antichrist and of his reign? We have already looked at some of the points that give us an insight into the Antichrist, but there are other aspects. It was the refusal of Rehoboam to heed to the wise counsel of the old men, but to rather take note and act on the counsel of the young men that brought Jeroboam to the throne. Similarly, it will be the refusal of men to listen to the wise counsel of the Scriptures that will bring in the reign of Antichrist who will come in, as Daniel 11:22-24 tells us, peaceably with flatteries. Jeroboam, who had worked under Solomon and seen the way he dealt with his people, must have promised to the people a better life if they came under his rule and so it was that they accepted him as their king. So too will it be with the Antichrist.

In 1 Kings 11:39, there is an interesting phrase indicating that he was used of God to 'afflict the seed of David.' Is this not the purpose of the devil right from the beginning of time? Christ was of the seed of David, and the Antichrist is the pinnacle of this war of the devil against Christ, and he will afflict David's royal Son and His people.

In Matthew 24:15, the Saviour speaks of the abomination of desolation that was spoken of by Daniel the prophet; Daniel spoke of this (9:27 and 12:11). The Lord was speaking of the Man of Sin setting up the false worship in the Holy Place. This is copying what Jeroboam did. Of all his acts this is the one defining thing about him, by which he is remembered throughout all history. And this is how Jesus marked the recognising of those at the end of the age. We spoke about this being a time of division and judgment, and the rule of Antichrist will be marked by division between true believers and all that is false and idolatrous. This will end, (Revelation 20:10) with the final judgment of the beast, his prophet and the devil. Paul tells of this in 1 Thessalonians 2:8-11. There will be none to help him, as Daniel said (11:45). Jeroboam's end was much the same. He was destroyed, as were his entire house, and there was none to save him as God had decreed the judgment upon him.

Just one final thing as we come to a close. In 1 Kings 13:2 we read the prophecy of the man of God from Judah against Jeroboam. The fulfilment of this we read in 2 Kings 23:15, when Josiah of the seed of David destroyed all the false worship and altars of Jeroboam. There is a greater than Josiah of the seed of David who will come and destroy all the false worship, all the evil, all the influence of the Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition, the Antichrist. For as we have already said there will be a day when Christ will return in power and in glory and destroy all that is associated with the devil and with Antichrist.

The Encouragement to Believers

And this should be an encouragement to believers.

In Daniel 11:32 we read of two classes of people. We read of those who do wickedly and are corrupted by the flatteries of the evil one. We also read of those who really know their God, and they shall do exploits and shall be strong, strong in the Lord and

in the power of His might. All Israel went after Jeroboam. They were deceived and taken in by him and times went from bad to worse, from the dividing of the nation to the judgment of the nation and captivity by the Assyrians. Let us not be like those of old, but let us be those who do know our God. He is revealed in the pages of Scripture.

He is the One Who will give strength and wisdom in time of need. We read in Scripture that the time of the end will be like unto the days of Noah. In the wickedness that surrounded him he was a preacher of righteousness; his life and his words spoke of the God he served. Therefore, he only of that generation found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Let us be those who stand for God in this day, to spread abroad the wonderful truth of the gospel and be found faithful at the coming of the Lord, watching and waiting for Him, as He exhorts in Matthew 24:42.

Abraham's History in Genesis 12

By Benjamin Wills Newton

(This is a chapter taken from Mr Newton's book, 'Narratives of the Old Testament,; which has recently been reprinted and is available from ourselves).

Scarcely had the waters of the flood departed from the recovered earth, when men, neither dismayed by judgment nor softened by mercy, began again to corrupt themselves. Even Abraham's family were found serving other gods. 'Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods' (Joshua 24:2). Universal corruption seemed again about to reign, when God, pursuing the secret counsel of His grace, interfered.

It was His purpose to separate or 'sever' unto Himself a peculiar people. 'I,' said God, addressing Israel, 'I the LORD am holy, and have SEVERED you from other people, that ye should be Mine' (Leviticus 20:26). At the call of Abraham, God began to carry into effect this purpose of separating or severing a people unto Himself: and on this principle He has ever since acted, and will continue to act until the necessity for such severation shall cease by all things in and around the redeemed being made perfect according to the perfectness of God.

'Now the LORD had said unto Abraham, 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: and I WILL BLESS them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.' Such were the

WATCHING AND WAITING

25

words of faithful promise with which the God of glory called Abraham.

He was separated not only *from* evil, but he was separated *unto* blessing – blessing sure and certain, because dependent not on himself, but on the love, and power, and faithfulness of God. Was Abraham to be led into another land? God said, ‘**I will** show it unto thee.’ Was he to be made a great nation? God said ‘**I will** make of thee a great nation.’ Was he to be blessed, and to be made a blessing? God said, ‘**I will** bless thee, and thou SHALT BE a blessing.’ God undertook to be the accomplisher of all these things. Abraham was the recipient – God the giver.

Promise, springing from grace and maintained by grace, was the distinctive characteristic of Abraham’s call. He was to prove, and to be an example of the blessed truth that ‘the gifts and calling of God are without repentance (*unrepented of*).’ The Olive-tree (to use the symbol of the apostle in Romans 11), the fatness of whose root is promise – *unconditional promise in the power of grace*, then first appeared; and although many of its branches have been sapless (for branches, however good the root, may through disease be sapless), and although many of those branches *have been* broken off, and many still remain to be broken off, yet the Olive-tree itself continues.

It stands, and will stand unto the end; nor has there ever been an age either during the past days of Israel, or the present days of Christendom, in which some of the twigs and lesser branches have not borne some fruit unto God. The true Church of God may have been feeble, and few, and scattered; yet they have never ceased to exist as inheritors of Abrahamic promise. They have ever been in God’s sight, and will be till the end, ‘a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people’ on whom His covenant blessing for ever rests – of whom He has said, ‘Blessed, yea and they shall be blessed.’

The words with which this chapter commences belong not, it will be observed, to the time to which the narrative of the chapter belongs; they refer to an antecedent period: ‘The LORD **had** said unto Abraham.’ ‘The God of Glory,’ said Stephen, ‘appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran (*he was in Charran when the narrative of this chapter commences*), and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country ... into the Land that I will shew thee.’

Many years had passed since Abraham, in obedience to these words, had quitted his Chaldean home. But he had not reached Canaan. He had tarried on the way; and whilst Terah lived, that tarrying continued. The land from which he had been called was left; so far God’s summons was obeyed; but the land of promise to which he was called, was not entered; nor was it entered whilst Terah lived.

Doubtless, when Abraham was (to use his own expression) ‘caused to wander’ as a pilgrim from his country, and kindred, and father’s house, it was a special and peculiar mercy that Terah, his father, and Lot, his brother’s son, were made willing to be the companions of his way. Yet natural mercies, when granted to those who are called into a foremost place in the conflicts of faith, require a proportionate increase of watchfulness, and wisdom, and grace, if they are really to become blessings in result.

One thing especially is to be remembered – that the claims of nature must always be

subordinated to those of grace. Age, station, relationship, may confer authority and influence in the natural sphere (and within that sphere their claims are to be carefully recognised), but they are not to intrude within the *spiritual* circle so as to control the order and arrangement there. Affection, kindness, and respect were due to Terah from Abraham his son; but when God had been pleased to call, not Terah but Abraham, into the distinct and peculiar path which His grace assigned to that 'heir of promise,' it was for Terah the father to own the precedence which grace had given to Abraham the son; it became Terah's place to follow, and Abraham's place to lead. But it seems to have been otherwise. We do not read in Genesis that Abraham took Terah, (which would have been the order according to the arrangement of grace): but we read, 'Terah took Abram.' In other words, the order of nature prevailed, and set aside the arrangements of God.

We cannot wonder, therefore, that whilst Terah lived, Canaan was never reached. It was not until Terah died that Abraham assumed his proper place of headship and control. Then 'Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him, and Lot went with him.' We read of no further difficulties delaying them. 'They went forth to go into the Land of Canaan; and into the Land of Canaan they came.'

But though Abraham had reached the Land of his destined inheritance, he was nevertheless still a stranger and pilgrim therein. The Canaanite was still there. Dangers and difficulties surrounded him. He was still a dweller in tents, having no abiding resting place: and his only security was close adherence to God as his guardian and guide. His was to be a prolonged life of faith. He had come forth when called, 'not knowing whither he went;' and now that he had reached Canaan, he was as dependent as ever on the daily guidance of his God. Nor was God unmindful of His servant. God again appeared unto him, and said, 'Unto thy seed will I give this land:' so that Abraham might cast his eyes around and look northward, and eastward, and southward, and westward, and say, all that I behold is mine, even whilst as yet I have nothing.

How like to the place still held by the family of faith – his children. Separated by the secret power of Truth in the midst of a world that knows them not, they are taught to say, 'All things are ours.' 'He that overcometh shall inherit ALL things' – things in heaven and things in earth – as made joint-heirs with Christ. A wider view is opened to our faith even than that vouchsafed to Abraham; for the time was not come to show unto Abraham then, all that he was destined to inherit. Yet although taught to say, 'all things are ours,' what have we at present? Tribulation, scorn, rejection, reproach. Just in proportion as our faith and faithfulness increases, we become more like to him who said, 'we are made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things unto this day.' Whilst the Canaanite yet abides and rules, the children of faith cannot reign. They look 'for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.'

Abraham then, although in Canaan, yet still needed God to be his daily sustainer and guide. And this, at first, he seems fully to have recognised; for twice we read of his building an altar unto the Lord on Whose Name he called. But when he journeyed the

WATCHING AND WAITING

27

third time – moving on towards the south, that is, in the direction of Egypt, we read no more of his building an altar, or of his calling on the Name of the Lord. He seems to have entered, unbidden, on a self-chosen path.

There is perhaps no moment in the life of a believer when he has more need to watch, than when he has been enabled to reach some point of desired and honoured attainment in the path of his pilgrimage. It was a great thing for Abraham to have left the land of his fathers, and to have followed on obediently until at last he entered the Land into which it was the object of God to bring him. His obedience was so far complete. He had left what he had been commanded to leave, and had gone to the very place to which he had been commanded to go. He felt, perhaps, that he had done great things.

Self-complacency not unfrequently attends successful obedience. He may have expected too, now that he had reached Canaan, to enjoy present rest. Could it be still needful that there should be the same anxious vigilance as during the days of his weary journeyings? Was the end of those journeyings to come without bringing with it any result of present good? Nature soon becomes impatient, disappointed, fretful – a condition very adverse to the calm, quiet exercise of faith. Patient endurance, and the sorrow of hope long deferred, were among the lessons to be taught to Abraham – and finally he learnt them. Now, however, he went journeying on, no longer waiting on the guidance of his heavenly Friend. ‘Abraham journeyed, going on still toward the south.’

And now a fresh and unexpected sorrow crossed his way. ‘There was a famine in the land.’ Was this then the issue of his painful wanderings? Had he left the land of his forefathers and come into this distant land, in order that he might there encounter not only perils from men, but sorrows sent immediately from the hand of God? This would have been a trial to Abraham’s faith even if he had continued to wait as aforesaid on God; but now that he had entered on a self-chosen path, and had ceased, as of old, to build an altar to the Lord and call on His Name, how could it be expected that he would stand?

Affliction, under any circumstances, has a tendency to depress the servant of God, but how much more when the conscience testifies that it comes as chastisement, and that the chastisement has been earned by carelessness or by disobedience. In such a case, grace – full, perfect, sovereign grace, is the only refuge. But when the heart is unduly depressed, or froward or fretful, it is very slow to turn to the resources of grace. Abraham did not. Grace was still watching over him, and was able to bring to him present comfort and present succour. But he did not turn to God’s grace. He turned to his own devising. If there was famine in the land, he would abandon the land and seek refuge in another land, even though that land was Egypt. ‘Abraham went down into Egypt to sojourn there.’

When the heart sets itself free from the restraints of God, it appears often to be given over to a daring and reckless impetuosity that seems to blind itself to the most obvious consequences, until confronted by their very presence. So was it with Abraham. He went boldly on towards Egypt until he reached its very confines; and when he stood

there, with Canaan behind and Egypt before, he at last bethought himself of a danger that was a very obvious danger, and that had in truth occupied his thoughts long before.

Would Sarai be safe in Egypt? If the Egyptians coveted Sarai would his life be safe? 'They will kill me,' said he, 'but they will save thee alive.' How strange – how sorrowful a position for the once faithful and obedient Abraham!

With the famine behind, and this yet more terrible danger before, where could he turn for succour? He had left his only true succour. Would he humble himself and return to God? He might have returned. It was not too late for him to return and he would have found grace in all fullness, even that grace that 'upbraideth not' for the past. But his heart was not humbled. He sought not to return, but resolved to brave the danger, not by casting himself on God, but by sacrificing Sarai, and by telling a lie. His life had become very precious in his own sight – more precious than Canaan, or Sarai, or the favour of his God. He was ready to barter all if he could only secure his life – and he succeeded. He secured his life. He obtained not only safety, but riches and honour. Sarai 'was taken into Pharaoh's house; and he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels.'

There was no danger of famine now. Wealth and splendour surrounded him, and he had attained a rest. But was his conscience at rest? Was his heart happy? How could it be? He had not only lost Sarai – her whom he loved – her who had been the companion of his wanderings, but he had imperilled her – placed her on the very edge of a precipice of lasting and deadly sin, after having involved her and himself in the guilt of a virtual lie. He had abandoned Canaan also – the Land of promise – the Land to which God had led him, and which had been shown to him as his inheritance. He had lost too the present guidance of his God. He no longer looked to Him as before; no longer communed with Him; no longer knew Him as the companion and guardian of his way. All this he had lost, and he had earned for himself a burdened conscience – a heart which, until it repented, could never again know peace. The outward scene around him might be bright; but how fearfully that outward brightness must have contrasted with the darkness that brooded within!

Yet Abraham turned not – repented not. His conscience, deaf to the appeals both of the past and of the present, was ready to dare all consequences. There was no hope, therefore, save in a direct interference of the power of God: and God did interfere, not indeed by touching Abraham's heart, but by chastening and arousing Pharaoh, and causing Pharaoh to rebuke and drive Abraham back into the way from which he had departed. Abraham himself, unstricken and unpunished, with Sarai restored to him, again found himself in the Land which he had abandoned, and there retracing all his steps, again reached the place whence his sinful wanderings commenced, where last he had built an altar, and where he again built one, and again called on the Name of the Lord. Such was the faithfulness – such the triumph of the GRACE of God. How truly abounding where sin abounded!

WATCHING AND WAITING

29

But let it not be supposed that Abraham was thus restored without deep contrition and abasement of soul. It is true indeed that we have, in his case, no recorded words of penitence like those of David: but we may be very sure that Abraham also learnt to say, 'Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness: that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice.' God is not accustomed to restore His servants to their proper privileges and blessings without first causing their hearts to bow and to make manifest, the fruits of a repentance not to be repented of.

Abraham's whole subsequent course, with one sad exception, abundantly proved that he had a heart tender and contrite, and well disciplined in the ways of the Lord. May we ever read then this wondrous narrative of grace with thankfulness indeed, but with awe – awe at the baseness of our own hearts, thankfulness for the superabounding grace and faithfulness of God. May we never turn His mercies into a curse by encouraging ourselves in carelessness or licentiousness – sinning that grace may abound. The Scripture teaches us these lessons respecting grace, not that we might wed ourselves to sin, but that we might, with holy fear, cleave the more closely unto God.

We must remember also, that although strict parallelism is seldom, if ever, found between the narratives of Scripture and our own history (whether individual or collective), yet that partial resemblances and analogies may frequently be traced, affording much profitable instruction. If, for example, they in whom ought to dwell a certain manhood and vigour of faith, capable of directing and sustaining others, should falter and fail, and betray those whom they ought to uphold in the separateness of Truth, into circumstances of worldliness and sin – is there no resemblance between this and the sin of Abraham in sacrificing Sarai and placing her in Pharaoh's house?

Surely, if we look back over the history of the Church, we must admit that with the apostles died that vigour and simplicity of faith which kept, for a time, the Church, as the Bride of Christ, separate in the power of Truth. But then other leaders arose who sought, and who gained the rest, and riches, and dignity of Egypt at the sacrifice of well-nigh everything that should have been counted precious. The past and present condition of Christendom abundantly testifies to the results. The proper place of separateness will never long be quitted by any, without the betrayal or giving up of something that ought to be dearer and more precious to us than life. And if the world be allowed to grasp and to hold that which we have betrayed, and to keep the children of faith in their (it may be golden) fetters, what can ensue but ruin? There may be an adulterous union between the Church and those who lead and direct the energies of the world.

'Tis Thy will that we should be separate from all around;
Let our will with Thine agree, let Thy people thus be found.

Thomas Kelly

Christendom

By Benjamin Wills Newton

(This is an excerpt from a booklet printed from notes taken when Mr Newton held Bible Readings at Newport in the Isle of Wight. The title of the work is 'Reminiscences, No. 2').

We must make up our mind now, to make earnest search into the Word of God day by day the business of our life, or there will be no progress. Engagements and lawful duties (all good in their way) must give place to reading and being instructed in God's Word, till we realise the place which Truth has held in the world ever since the Flood. Whatever has been given has all been prostituted. Only think of the idolatry Solomon sheltered, and though here and there God sent Israel a good king, the prophets – God's messengers – were against almost all the kings.

Then see what Christianity has been – **Catholic Christianity**. It has appointed two representatives of Christ for men. One in heaven they say – the Virgin Mary – through whom we may hope to find favour with Christ; and one on earth – the Church – which exercises an evil control over the consciences and minds of men, by assuming the power of granting and withholding eternal life! That is what is aimed at in the Confessional, which men are calmly suffering again to take place among us. The Church, by its ministers (priests they call them), forces confession of every sin, and, if one is kept back, forgiveness is withheld and that soul is damned. To aid in this confession, the whole evil of the soul is stirred up and questions are asked which suggest iniquity, to ensnare souls into feelings of evil which they are told must every one be confessed; or, if not, eternal ruin will be the result. Thus they make men and especially women their slaves and to writhe, through knowing of their secrets and being at any time able to ruin their character. Romans 1 is not too strong a picture of what men entering into this path will be given up to.

On the other hand, in **Dissent** we have political radicalism rife; than which, Satan has no more potent an agent! The Bible is full of declamations against radicalism. See Jude, where such are spoken of as speaking 'evil of dignities,' which even Michael the Archangel would not do of Satan. There are no more fearful words than those uttered by Jude and Peter (2:12) of those who despise dominion; forgetting that Governors represent God. In the midst of these corruptions God is about to send Antichrist, and it is to him Psalm 37 refers, as the evil doer – 'the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.' So you see he will prosper; but we are not to 'fret' but to 'wait;' and to dwell in the Land and feed on the faithfulness of God. (Revelation 21 will best describe that

