

The Herald of God's Grace

The Bride At The Well

by J. Philip Scranton

Introduction

In the books of Genesis and Exodus are three passages which tell the story of a bride being met at a well. The brides of Isaac, Jacob and Moses were all met at wells. These scenes create a motif, a pattern of events, which represents Christ, the bridegroom, coming to His people and being received by them. When we come to the gospel of John, we will find this motif intertwined with the opening chapters of the book. But what is most captivating and interesting about this pattern of events, is that it gives us in pictorial form the story of the gospel. The story of the gospel is hidden within these scenes about the bride at the well. And from there we will venture on to other scenes which will expand on the story.

Chapter 1: The Bride at the Well

(Genesis 24; 28:10-29:30; Exodus 2:15-22; John 2-4)

“Jacob...went towards Haran. And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night...Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it!”

“...Then Jacob made a vow, saying, ‘If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God’...” (Gen. 28:10-21).

“Then Jacob went...to the land...of the east. As he looked, he saw a well in the field, and...three flocks of sheep lying beside it...The stone on the well’s mouth was large...Jacob said to them...‘Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?’...‘We know him’...‘Is it well with him?’...‘It is well; and see, Rachel his daughter is coming with the sheep!’

“Now as soon as Jacob saw Rachel...Jacob came near and rolled the stone from the well’s mouth and watered the flock of Laban his mother’s brother. Then Jacob kissed Rachel and wept aloud. And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father’s kinsman, and that he was Rebekah’s son, and she ran and told her father.

“As soon as Laban heard the news about Jacob...he ran to meet him and embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his house...and Laban said to him, ‘Surely you are my bone and my flesh!’

“...Rachel was beautiful in form and appearance. Jacob loved Rachel. And he said, ‘I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel’ (Gen. 29:1-18).

This abbreviated reading from Jacob’s story gives details that are very similar to those recorded of Isaac and Moses. The brides of Isaac, Jacob and Moses all were met at wells by their grooms, except in Isaac’s case, where Abraham’s servant met Rebekah in Isaac’s behalf. But even with Isaac, the picture is maintained, because there is mention of a well from which Isaac had come when he met Rebekah later (Gen. 24:62-64). These three initial events have several points in common, as given below.

1. the man was on a journey;
2. a meeting at a well;
3. a proof of suitability;
4. an introduction of parties—family ties;
5. a watering of livestock;
6. the bride leaves the scene; (emphatically with joy, except in Moses’ case)
7. the bride returns and takes the groom/servant to her home; (emphatic joy)
8. a meal is served;
9. wedding arrangements are made;
10. theophanies or revelations from God are closely associated with each scene;

Now we will give these points again with brief details from each account.

1. Abraham’s servant and Jacob traveled from Canaan to Haran, the city of Nahor, Abraham’s brother. Moses traveled from Egypt to Midian, fleeing from Pharaoh.

2. Rebekah was met at a well outside her city by Abraham’s servant, and she met Isaac, coming from a well, when she returned to him with the servant. Rachel was met at a well in the fields. Zipporah, Moses wife, was met at a well in the land of Midian.

3. Abraham’s servant waited to see whether God had indeed directed him to meet Isaac’s bride in answer to his prayer. Jacob had to remove a large stone from the mouth of the well to water the flock. Moses saved Reuel’s daughters from bullying by other herdsmen and the loss of water they had drawn. These events showed Rebecca, Jacob and Moses able to suitably meet a need.

4. Abraham’s servant and Jacob were looking for family members of Abraham’s clan. Moses was not apparently looking for anyone, but happened upon the family of the priest of Midian. The Midianites were descended from Abraham and Keturah (Gen. 25:2). All these people were in Abraham’s family, the lineage of the promised seed.

5. Rebekah watered the camels of Abraham. Jacob watered the flock of Laban, tended by Rachel. Moses watered the flock of Reuel, tended by his seven daughters.

6/7. Rebekah ran home with joy, bringing back her brother, Laban, to bring Abraham’s servant to their home. Rachel ran home with joy to her father, Laban, who ran back and brought Jacob to their home. With Rebekah, Rachel and Laban the joy is

emphatic in the context. There was running and excitement. The seven daughters of Reuel returned home early, because of Moses' deliverance, and were instructed by their father to bring Moses to their home. In Moses' account the spontaneous joy is missing, due to his role as lawgiver.

8. A meal was prepared for Abraham's servant and his attendants, a meal he deferred to eat until his business was finished. Reuel ordered his daughters to return to the well and bring Moses so he might at least receive a meal for the service he rendered. With Jacob the meal is omitted. Instead we are told that he stayed with them a month, and then he contracted to work for seven years for Rachel, a term which ultimately became 20 years. But in Jacob's account, one of the themes was his abuse by Laban, and the omission of the welcoming meal is in keeping with characteristics of the narrative.

9. Abraham's servant stated his business even before eating supper. Jacob stayed with his uncle, Laban, for a month before agreeing to work for him for 7 years for the hand of Rachel in marriage. We are simply told that Reuel gave his daughter, Zipporah, to Moses as wife. Despite the differences in timing, the arrangements for marriage all fall immediately in the contexts of the meetings at a well.

10. Abraham's servant saw his prayer answered in the actions of Rebekah. Jacob had the vision of the stairway to heaven, resulting in his vow to God, just before the scene of meeting Rachel. Moses encountered God at the burning bush just after the mention of his marriage to Zipporah and birth of Gershom.

Chapter 2: Jesus at the Well

The first chapter gave us the background that will enable John's account of the gospel to unfold its scenes about Christ, as the Bridegroom. The words of Christ to Nathanael in John 1:47-51 bring the character and vision of Jacob to mind. Nathanael, so different from his forefather Jacob, was the Israelite in whom was no guile, who would see Christ as the stairway to heaven.

The next scene is the wedding in Cana. The miracle of the wedding wine was a symbol of Christ's future acceptance by Israel with joy. But He told His mother, who had been living in anticipation for 30 years, that it was an event whose hour had not yet come (Jn. 2:4). The water pots which held the transformed wine were made of stone, and it was a great stone that Jacob moved from the mouth of the well to water Laban's flock. The watering of the flock is now replaced by the abundant provision of the wine for the wedding guests, which figures the boundless supply of joy for the bride of Christ when united with Him. Israel's kings were often described as shepherds, and Israel as God's flock, so the change from watering a flock to providing drink for people is very natural. The stone water pots, serving a purpose of purification (v. 6), also suggest the stone tablets of the law. Water changed to wine shows joy, in contrast with Moses, the lawgiver, who changed water to blood. Christ came, as Israel's bridegroom, under the law, filling the law full to the brim (v.7). And, beyond that, He brought a transformed means of serving and pleasing God. The wine speaks of this. The crushed grapes die, and the blood of the grapes is transformed into wine. The wine is new resurrection life. The transformed grape juice speaks of the Spirit coming into believers. Wine carries this symbolism of a Spirit within, in a number of contexts (Acts 2:12-18; Eph. 5:18; Jdg. 9:13).

The account of the wine miracle carries a prophecy pertaining to the Lord's ministry. When considering Christ as the Bridegroom, the leaders of the Jews were the masters or rulers of the feast. The leaders of the Jews did not know where Christ

(the wine) came from. John's account emphatically repeats this theme—"This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him...he was even calling God his own Father"—"Is the Christ to come from Galilee?"—"This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath" (5:18; 7:41; 9:16; etc.,). Repeatedly John shows the leaders of the Jews stumbling at the origin of Christ, but His disciples, and many common people who believed in Him, knew from where He had come. The fact that the ruler of the feast did not know the origin of the wine, prophetically implies that the Jewish leaders would not receive Christ as the Bridegroom of their nation because of His questioned origin.

John 2:13-25

This section recounts Christ cleansing the temple, an event that is recorded late in Matthew, Mark and Luke, but its purpose here is right in context. At the wedding feast in Cana, the idea of cleansing was presented by the mention of purification with the water pots. And the mention of the wine suggests the entrance of the Spirit. The reception of the Bridegroom by Israel had to be coupled with a cleansing and an outpouring of the Spirit. The temple passage emphasizes the need for the cleansing, and at the same time, it tells the means by which the cleansing will be accomplished: by the destruction of *His temple*—the sacrifice of Christ (v.19). When Christ said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (v. 19), He was speaking of more than His resurrection. He was also making a subtle accusation that their current practices were destroying any true worship in the temple, and that their destruction of Him would lead to the destruction of the temple, as well as Jerusalem. Also, the closing verses (23-25) hint that the temple of man needed cleansing, since Christ could not entrust Himself to them. The crucifixion of Christ was the destruction of the temple—the crushing of the grapes, needed to bring forth the wine of the Spirit that could cleanse the temple of man, so that man could become the temple of the Spirit of God.

John 3:1-21

If Christ had been received as the Bridegroom of the nation, how would the events of that scene transpire? We realize that the cross had to precede the gift of the Spirit, but as we look at the examples of the motif, and as we consider the Jewish expectations of the Messiah, we suggest a hypothetical scheme of events. Later on, when we come to Chapter 3, The Story Within the Story, we will see how these events could have played out in full keeping with the pattern.

Christ would have met with leaders, or a leader, of the nation. There would have been an introduction, as with the brides at the wells, identifying that Christ was indeed the Messiah/Bridegroom. Proof of His Messianic identity would be verified, as we can see it was proven by the miracles He performed. The representatives meeting with Christ would, with joy, herald Him and bring the nation to Him, or present Him to the nation. Christ would then water that flock with the joyous new life of the Spirit. Then Christ would take the place of Headship over the nation. This is what we would expect, following the motif illustrated with the brides of Isaac, Jacob and Moses.

And this is what John begins to show in the third chapter. There Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews, came to Christ, acknowledging His identity as from God, as proven by the works He had done. On behalf of the bride, he discusses with the Bridegroom the key issue facing every bride and groom: the new life together. How will they live

together (kingdom government)? When will new life be generated within the bride (the outpouring of God's Spirit)?

Jesus told Nicodemus that there must be a spiritual renewal among the Jews if He is to wed Himself to the nation. But Nicodemus has come by night, fearing the Jewish leaders who want no husband other than Roman government, or their social position, or their wealthy, prestigious career. Nicodemus struggles to understand the means by which this renewal could be accomplished. Nicodemus believed in Christ, but he knew the system in which he was living and he struggled with the feasibility of the current administration of Jewish government humbling itself and submitting to Christ. Nicodemus knew the opposition. He lived in the midst of it every day.

John's verses following in the third chapter emphasize the theme by repeating what has been said with different terms. Take, for example, verses 16-21. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son"—the Bridegroom has come. The bride and Bridegroom relationship is a relationship of love. The coming of the Bridegroom is an expression of divine love. God did not send the Bridegroom to judge, but to save (v. 17). But there is a judgment, and this is what it is: light—the Bridegroom, has come into the world, but "people loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil" (v. 19). Because the Bridegroom was not loved, people would not repent and cleanse their human temples of greed and selfishness nor cleanse the temple in Jerusalem of corrupt practices. Because of this, instead of entering into a wedding feast—the kingdom, they brought upon themselves the destruction their acts and the lusts of their hearts warranted. The rejection of the Bridegroom causes the weaving of a new theme into the fabric of the text—the theme of judgment.

The conversation with Nicodemus gives way to the topic of baptism and John the Baptist. The purpose of the ministry of the Baptist was to bring about a national, spiritual renewal that would prepare the Jews to accept their Messiah/Bridegroom. Baptism here is the same issue discussed by Nicodemus and Jesus. The same thread of thought on cleansing is being continued. Since John's baptism was accepted by the common people but shunned by the leaders, it hints at the same problem of rejection by the leaders that the wedding feast has already foreshadowed.

In this section, which stands between the meeting with Nicodemus and the meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well, John the Baptist calls Christ the Bridegroom (v. 29). The third chapter closes with the statement that whoever believes in the Son will have the promised life of the kingdom—the life of the wedding feast, but whoever rejects God's Son will miss that glorious life and have God's wrath instead (Jn. 3:36). This statement marks a change from 3:7, where the plural "you must be born again" (ye in the KJV) represents the Jewish nation. Here it is the *one* who believes that has the Son. This change from a nation to individuals has been developing throughout chapter 3 (vv. 15, 16, 18, 20, 21), but v. 36 makes it emphatic. This change introduces chapter 4.

John 4:1-45

Like Jacob, Moses, and the servant of Abraham, the Lord Jesus was on a journey and stopped at a well where He met a woman. Abraham's servant arrived at the well in the evening, the time when young women went out to draw water for the needs of the evening and the following morning. Christ's arrival was at noon, in the midday heat under the brightest of light. His meeting with the woman is in contrast with His meeting with Nicodemus, who came under the cover of darkness. This woman probably avoided the popular time of gathering at the well to avoid the *under the*

breath comments and slurs she would receive from the local crowd. Her presence under the brightest light suggests the light of a revelation from God.

Of Rebekah it was said, "...the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her" (Gen. 24:16). Rachel's beauty was also noted, and of Zipporah it was said that she was one of seven daughters of a priest. These features of the flesh represent the spiritual purity expected in the bride of the Messiah, represented by Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a separatist, a ruler of the people, and one who looked for the coming Messiah. In contrast, the Samaritan woman's appearance is not noted, but we're told she had had 5 husbands, and was now living with another man. Her six men match the number of water pots for purification at the wedding in Cana. She was anything but the picture of a chaste bride for the Messiah, but she was a good representation of the spiritual caliber of the Messiah's nation. She was also more typical of those who availed themselves of the grace He offered.

We can be sure the woman sized up the Lord Jesus within a half-second. It was the heat of the day; He was sitting at a well; He had nothing with which to draw water—He was going to ask her for a drink. And she would give Him a drink—not too quickly, not too easily, and not before she would have some conversation and diversion from her loneliness. He was her captive, and she would not tolerate any of the sly derogation she suffered from the looks and lips of the local ladies who would be there in the evening.

As the woman expected, and as the servant of Abraham asked of Rebekah, Jesus asked her for a drink of water. With the Lord's request, the woman thought she had Christ where she wanted Him. "The woman said, 'I am surprised that you ask me for a drink, since you are a Jewish man and I am a Samaritan woman'" (Jn. 4:9 NCV). Two things from the pattern are beginning here: (1) the introductions, identifying who the woman and Christ are; and, (2) the watering of the flock. The introduction will identify Christ as the one who brings the gift of God—living water—the same thing represented by the wedding wine. And the introduction identifies the woman in the most thought provoking way: she is *one who has no husband* (v.17). How fitting that description is in light of the pattern in which this meeting is cast. Her great need is a husband who can deliver her from her life of sin.

As the woman responds to Christ's mention of living water, we are met with another thought of the Man's journey. She said that the well was deep, and He had nothing with which to draw. How deep is the well of the water of life? It is as deep as the distance from the heights and glory of heaven to the depths and shame of hades. Christ had one thing with which to draw: faith in God the Father. That alone can reach such a distance and resist the stresses imposed by the environs through which it passes.

In the process of the introductions the Lord brushes aside prejudices of sex, race, and religion. He avoids the prejudice of morality by dealing openly and objectively with that problem. The woman again brings up religious prejudice, stating what *the fathers* had taught them. She was changing the subject. This occasioned the statement from Jesus that true worshipers worship in spirit and truth, regardless of location and outward forms. With this conversation Christ was opening the well and drawing the water. With His plain statement that He was the Christ, the Lord finished the introductions and resolved the tensions and conflicts of the scene. He banished the prejudices and guilt that separated Jew and Samaritan, and those that separated this woman from the community in which she lived. After the provision of wine at the

wedding in Cana, John relates the cleansing of the temple. In Sychar it was not a temple of stone that was to be cleansed, but the temple of the Spirit—a living body.

Like Rebekah and Rachel, overcome with joy and news, the Samaritan woman went into the city, bringing back others to meet Christ. It has been suggested that the woman came to the well in the heat of the day to avoid the people of her community. But now, leaving her water vessel behind, she had a heart for the needs of her community. She who had been a social outcast was now the town crier and courier of good news. Christ did not go to her home like Jacob, Moses and the servant, but He did stay in that city for two days. Many came to believe on Him because of the woman's testimony and because of the things He told them.

The meal is especially important in John's account. The disciples had gone into the town to buy food (v. 8). When they returned with food, Jesus told them He had already eaten. "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work" (Jn. 4:34). Jesus needed and desired nothing more.

The testimony of the Samaritans regarding their belief shows that there was a revelation from God in that city. The Samaritan woman's belief in Christ represents union with the Bridegroom and coming under His authority. Nicodemus did not reach that point as quickly as she, but he also would join the flock of those watered by the Bridegroom and blessed by the realization of worship in spirit and truth.

The name of the city where this took place was Sychar. Sychar is from the Hebrew word, *shekar*, meaning *strong drink*. The thought of drunkenness or merriness is often associated with it. It is a fitting thought to relate to the new wine provided at the marriage feast in Cana, and of the joy associated with the coming of the kingdom. It is also a thought suggested at Pentecost when the disciples were filled with the spirit. How fitting of a name for this town and well!

Chapter 3: The Story Within The Story

There are so many details in the episode at Sychar that match or contrast perfectly with the well scenes in Genesis and Exodus. We cannot doubt that the Scriptures intend for these passages to be compared, and for us to learn from their similarities and differences. But there is still another side to this story—another complete view of the picture—that we have not explored. We have seen that similar events and expressions have linked different passages together. Following that lead let us seek further.

First let's consider the well as a different kind of symbol. In Psalm 69:15 the well is used as a figure for death: "Let not the flood sweep over me, or the deep swallow me up, or the pit [well] close its mouth over me." Verse 21 of this Psalm was fulfilled at the crucifixion: "They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink." Since we have references to Christ's crucifixion in the context, it requires little meditation to see verse 15 as a prayerful desire from the heart of Christ during his passion in Gethsemane. Let us think for a moment of Christ's death as His being cast into, or locked in a well. Later we will see Joseph as a type of Christ in this way. If His casting into a pit or well can be seen to represent death, then how do we picture His resurrection? Could it not be seen as the water of life, drawn from the tomb or well of His death? Truly His resurrection is the fountainhead of our good news about life.

Flesh and Bone

Now let's consider the interplay of different but related contexts. Adam needed a mate before he could fulfill God's commission to fill and rule the earth. God caused a deep sleep to fall upon him, removed some body tissues from him, and formed the woman from them. When Adam was awakened and presented with Eve, he said, "This at last is *bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh*; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Gen. 2:23). It is widely accepted and taught that this episode from creation represents the death of Christ and the creation of the church, or body of Christ. Paul speaks of this, calling it a profound mystery (Eph. 5:32). *Bone* and *flesh* are noteworthy terms here that will tie in with other texts.

When Jacob met Rachel at the well and was taken to her father's home, Laban looked at his sister's son and said, "Surely you are *my bone and my flesh*" (Gen. 29:14). When Jesus appeared in the midst of His disciples after His resurrection, they were terrified, thinking He was a spirit. His words of comfort were, "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see. For a spirit does not have *flesh and bones* as you see that I have" (Lk. 24:39). All these passages are linked together by the two words, *flesh* and *bone*. And their contexts tie together the idea of bride, church and resurrection.

Roll Away the Stone

Here is another correlation. "Now as soon as Jacob saw Rachel...Jacob came near and *rolled the stone from the well's mouth* and watered the flock of Laban, his mother's brother" (Gen. 29:10). In Joshua 5, after a miraculous crossing of the Jordan River, the Israelites were circumcised to renew their covenant with the LORD. Then the LORD said to Joshua, "'Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.' And so the name of the place is called Gilgal [*rolling*] to this day" (Josh. 5:9). Circumcision represents the death of the flesh. And so the death of Christ is called circumcision (Col. 2:11). It is by the death of Christ that we enter new life. On the resurrection morning several women—family and friends—were walking to the tomb of Jesus to complete his burial preparations, "And they were saying to one another," "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" (Mk. 16:3). The death of Christ was for our sins. Only He, by His death and resurrection, can roll away for us the tremendously heavy burden of our sins. His resurrection is the proof of our justification—the proof that the reproach of our sins has been rolled away (Rom. 4:25).

Happy Feet

The texts about meeting Rebekah and Rachel at the wells are charged with excitement and enthusiasm. This is conveyed to us primarily by the statements that they *ran* home to tell their family of the news. Then they and their family members *ran* back to the well to meet their kin—people from whom they had been removed for many years—near and dear members of their family. The running shows urgency and excitement. This enthusiasm is conspicuously lacking in the account of Moses at the well, but he was only recognized as "an Egyptian," even though he too was a distant relative. Also, Moses' position as lawgiver accounts for the lack of joy, because the law cannot give life. "For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law" (Gal. 3:21). But since the law can only

condemn our failures, we are all restricted to entering life through the single door of Jesus Christ's faith.

The same joy and exuberance that are seen at the wells fill the accounts of Christ's resurrection. Just as it was when the brides were met at the wells, the first ones to be running were women. "So they departed *quickly* from the tomb *with fear and great joy, and ran* to tell his disciples" (Matt. 28:8). "And they *went out and fled* from the tomb, *for trembling and astonishment had seized them*" (Mk. 16:8). "...Mary Magdalene...*ran* and went to Simon Peter, and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved...Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going towards the tomb. *Both of them were running together; but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.* And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed" (Jn. 20:1-8). Isaiah prophesied: "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Isa. 12:3). It is the joy of Christ's resurrection that was being represented by the running at the well scenes.

Meals on Resurrection Ground

There was a meal of welcome, or thanksgiving associated with the meetings, except, as was explained, for Jacob's meeting with Rachel and Laban. There are also special meals associated with Christ's resurrection. First, there was the last supper, the covenantal meal, which represents the new, resurrection life being provided through His sacrifice. Also, after His resurrection, Jesus ate food before the disciples to convince them that He was real and flesh and not just a spirit (Lk. 24:36-43). And there was an early morning meal of grilled fish on the shore of the sea, during which Peter's and the disciples' commission was renewed (Jn. 21).

The Journeying Man

We've considered primarily four passages about wells. In all these scenarios, the Man was on a journey. Genesis says the man—not the woman as we might suppose—but the man, will leave father and mother and cling to his wife, and the two of them will be one flesh (Gen. 2:24). It says the man leaves, so it may be a representation of Christ: leaving His heavenly home, forsaking the glory and joy of life in the form of God, emptying Himself, taking the form of a slave, coming to be in the likeness of humanity, being found in fashion as a man, and being obedient even to the death of the cross (Phil. 2:6-8). The Man leaves and journeys so that the bride may become one with Him. "For, as it is written, 'The two will become one flesh.' But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him" (1 Cor. 6:16-17).

A Revelation of God

Perhaps the most precious of the events associated with these episodes are the revelations of God. Abraham's servant saw his prayer answered completely before his wondering eyes. Jacob had the vision of the stairway from heaven. Moses saw the burning bush. The woman at the well had One tell her all the things she had done. And on the pages of Scripture and with eyes of faith, we have seen Christ conquer

death. Christ meets us at the tomb, or pit of His death. But the pit is transformed. Through His resurrection, the tomb of His death has become a well of the water of life. Our sins are graciously forgiven, and we exult in our freedom as sons of God. We tell others, and the whole flock of believers drink deeply and are satisfied at the well of Him Who cried out in thirst for our sakes (Jdg. 15:18, 19; Ps. 22:15; Jn. 19:28). In all of this we have a theophany, an enlightenment of God, a revelation of Who God is. “For God, Who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness’, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6).

The resurrection is the proof of Christ’s qualifications as Savior. He “...was declared to be the Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:4). He was “...in every respect...tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15).

We are His bone and His flesh. He is the Firstborn of all creation, making us related to Him. As we have borne the image of the earthly, so we will also bear the image of the Celestial One. The flesh and blood of this mortal life cannot enjoy the allotment of incorruptible life in God’s kingdom, but we are identified in Him with His flesh and bone of resurrection life (1 Cor. 15:42-50).

“Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3). We stand amazed at such love and grace. The opened, empty tomb is an opened well of the water of life. The great joy shown by the brides at the well flows from the realization that for them there is a Savior. He is a Savior Who travelled far to meet them—to meet us. He is a Savior Who is rich and brings blessings beyond our imagination. To know we are loved by Him is a great fountain of joy. Jesus said, “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water’” (Jn. 7:38). Out of the place of one’s satisfied thirst shall flow satisfaction to others. “The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take of the water of life without price” (Rev. 22:17).

Chapter 4: Christ, the Well Digger The Variation in the Scenes

In our first look at these scenes we have viewed them as a group, and used them to unfold the portrait of Christ they put on canvas. Now we would like to look at the scenes individually and see that each one has its own unique portrait of Christ and its own special teaching about the well and about the people who make up the bride. Now that the baseline scenario has been described, we can go further and see that the Scriptures hold many more variations of the scene. God has delighted to give us a panorama of views on this great theme.

Isaac The Well Digger: A Type of Christ

(Genesis 24)

One of the most dominant features recorded in the Scriptures of the life of Isaac is his occupation with wells. Repeatedly we find him digging wells, dwelling by wells, and reopening wells that his father, Abraham, had dug. In these events, just as in his being offered on Mt. Moriah, Isaac is a type of Christ. “And Isaac dug again the wells of water that had been dug in the days of Abraham his father, which the

Philistines had stopped after the death of Abraham. And he gave them the names that his father had given them” (Gen. 26:18).

Jesus Christ, the promised Seed and greater Isaac, came and found that the wells of truth God had given to Israel had been stopped up. They were stopped with lies and ignorance and the traditions of men. Listen to Christ, the great Well Digger, unstopping the wells: “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be liable to judgement.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgement...You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt. 5:21, 22, 43, 44). Do your good deeds before God, not before men. Stop using your involvement in *good things* as an excuse for not taking care of your parents who need your help. “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees—hypocrites! You go to the extreme of even paying tithes of the spices you raise in your garden, but you have neglected the important things: justice and mercy and faith!” (Mt. 23:23 paraphrase). The Pharisees and lawyers of Jesus’ day were the Philistines of Isaac’s day. The Lord Jesus had to remove tons of religious and traditional debris to show His disciples the sparkling and refreshing truth. He called things by the same name His Father called them.

When we can see Christ as the Digger of the well of life and truth, we are ready to see new significance in the events recorded of Isaac. In Genesis 22, Abraham, in obedience to God’s command, took his son Isaac to Mt. Moriah to offer him as a sacrifice to God. When Abraham reached the final moment of raising his knife to kill Isaac, God stopped him and provided a substitute offering, which Abraham offered in Isaac’s stead.

There are many details in the account which are worthy of meditation and comparison with Christ’s sacrifice. We will mention only two. A blessing from Yahweh was pronounced upon Abraham after the offering of the sacrifice. Part of that blessing was, “your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies” (Gen. 22:17). Following the blessing Abraham returned to his encampment and shortly thereafter entertained a visitor. Evidently a relative, or someone who knew Abraham’s family in Haran, came and told Abraham the news of his family. In this update the Scriptures give the first mention of Rebekah, Isaac’s future wife. Rebekah’s relationship to Isaac represents the relationship of the Church to Christ. Remember Christ’s words, “on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mt. 16:18). How like is this to the blessing on Abraham of his seed possessing the gates of its enemies! The gates of hades and first mention of the church are paired in a context where Christ speaks of His sufferings on the cross. And the gates of enemies and first mention of Rebekah are paired in a context which speaks of the sacrifice of Isaac, which represented the cross of Christ.

In Genesis 23 is recorded the death and burial of Sarah. Sarah was the vessel through whom the line of the promised seed was to come. Israel was the vessel through whom the promised Seed came. Sarah’s death follows the offering of Isaac on Mt. Moriah. Following the offering of Christ on the cross, Israel passed into a typical death, being set aside in God’s dealings with humanity until a future time. So Sarah’s death, by being recorded at this point, represents the casting off of Israel.

Genesis 24 sets before us the purpose of God, the Father, to provide a complement, or bride, or wife for His Son. We use a variety of terms here because some wish to restrict the term bride only to future Israel, thinking this careful division of terms more closely follows the scriptures. Others use the term *bride* for the church

at large. Paul speaks of the relationship of Christ to the ecclesia in the marital terms of the example of Adam and Eve (Eph. 5), and he spoke of presenting the Corinthians to Christ as “a chaste virgin” (2 Cor. 11:2), so we choose not to be overly strict in our use of these terms. The Father’s purpose is set before us in the instruction of Abraham to his servant.

Chapter 5: The Father’s Purpose

“...Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he had, ‘Put your hand under my thigh, that I may make you swear by the LORD, God of heaven and God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell, but will go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac’” (Gen. 24:2-4).

The means of making an oath described here was not uncommon in that day. The mention of Abraham’s thigh is a euphemism for the organs of procreation. The significance of this oath is that it was binding upon the servant, even if Abraham should die before it was fulfilled. In effect, the servant was swearing to Abraham and his descendants. As long as the servant and his descendants lived, they were obligated to fulfill the oath, as long as Isaac was alive. The Jews also maintained that swearing in this manner related the oath to the covenant of circumcision.

Of first importance about the servant is that he remains unnamed throughout the entire chapter. It seems likely that it was the same Eliezer who is named in 15:2. But the absence of a name is significant here to correspond with his typical role as the Holy Spirit. Christ said that the Spirit would not speak of Himself, but only of Christ. That is why the servant is unnamed. “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for He will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak...He will glorify me” (Jn. 16:13-14). This is verified in the believer’s experience. To the believer Christ is of first importance, and the believer’s relationship to God is all through Christ. When Abraham’s servant arrived at the home of Rebekah and Laban, he only spoke of Isaac and Abraham.

The servant asked Abraham if he should take Isaac to the old homeland if the bride refused to come without meeting him. This was a most reasonable question for the servant to ask, but Abraham was adamant that Isaac was to stay in the land that God had sworn to give them. If a bride was unwilling to come, then the servant would be released from the oath. This relates directly to our situation today. Christ is in heaven. He does not return to assure us of what He is like, or how great His authority and power are. He came once and gave His life, and now the Father retains Him in honor and glory until His glorious coming. He will not return until the body of believers is completed, and God’s time is right (Rom. 11:25; Acts 1:7).

Believers begin a journey to meet Him under the guidance and care of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus said to Thomas, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (Jn. 20:29). Our life consists in this: a journey of time and experience to meet our Lord Who is in the heavens. It is remarkable that believers find in their faith this life-changing and life-long goal of a person they have never seen. Their perseverance in this faith is an evidence of the invisible Servant, the Spirit, leading them.

“Then the servant took ten of his master’s camels and departed, taking all sorts of choice gifts from his master; and he arose and went to Mesopotamia to the

city of Nahor. And he made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at the time of evening, the time when women go out to draw water” (Gen. 24:10-11).

The servant, like the Spirit, brings an earnest of Isaac’s possessions as a testimony of the greatness of his master and of the glories that lie ahead. These things will be gifts for the bride. In seeing them she gets a glimpse of what is waiting for her.

Drawing water was hard work, and was sensibly left for the cooler part of the day. The servant prayed that God would direct him to the correct choice of a bride for Isaac by a response from her that went well beyond common courtesy. Not only was the correct candidate to give him a drink of water, but she would also volunteer to water his camels. It would be natural for anyone to spare a drink of water for a stranger, but to water ten thirsty camels would be considerable work, requiring repeated trips up and down the stairs to the well, carrying a pottery jar of water. We have seen from the examples of Jacob and Moses that the watering of flocks was replaced in the New Testament by bringing the gospel to people. So the sign chosen by the servant corresponds to the behavior the believer learns. “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn. 13:34-35).

“...Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham’s brother, came out with her water jar on her shoulder. The young woman was very attractive in appearance, a maiden whom no man had known. She went down to the spring and filled her jar and came up. Then the servant ran to meet her and said, ‘Please give me a little water to drink from your jar.’ She said, ‘Drink, my lord’...‘I will draw water for your camels also, until they have finished drinking’” (Gen. 24:15-19).

We might wonder how Rebekah’s beauty and moral purity can represent sinners coming to faith. If they are considered as sinners, obviously the comparison fails. But *in Christ* the sinner is transformed and seen in his or her completed state. “And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him” (Col. 1:21-22 CV).

“The man gazed at her in silence to learn whether the LORD had prospered his journey or not.

“When the camels had finished drinking, the man took a gold ring weighing a half shekel, and two bracelets for her arms weighing ten gold shekels, and said, ‘Please tell me whose daughter you are. Is there room in your father’s house for us to spend the night?’...Then the young woman ran and told her mother’s household about these things” (Gen. 24:21-23, 28).

The servant did not jump to the conclusion that Rebekah was the intended bride. It could very well have happened that Rebekah, seeing a man of obvious substance with servants and camels, realized that this was an opportunity to earn money. The gifts he gave, though extravagant for the service rendered, should have been expected in a smaller degree. There may even be a hint or two that things were

not as prosperous for Bethuel's household as for Abraham's. Notice that in verse 28 Rebekah told these things to *her mother's household*. Why it is not called her father's household we do not know, but it may be that her father was an invalid or suffering from age at this time. Also, it will be mentioned that gifts were given to Rebekah, Laban and her mother, but there is no mention of gifts for her father (v. 53). Laban will show himself to be as involved in the decisions about Rebekah as her father, Bethuel. Later details will also show that Laban had an eye for wealth, though he seemed somewhat lacking in the wisdom for controlling it. Rebekah could have been prompted to water the camels by a need to earn money.

The weight of the gold ring is of special interest. The beka, or, half shekel, was the weight of the money that was to be paid for each person to the LORD as an atonement offering (Ex. 30:14-15; 38:26). This detail of the story suggests the thought of salvation, and complements its application to believers.

Chapter 6: Rebekah's Change

Next the servant came to stay at Rebekah's home. This was the beginning of a new life for Rebekah. The visitor that comes brings many changes, and will take her on a journey to meet the one with whom she will become one. Similar to this is the Spirit's entrance into the believer's life. "You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you...For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God" (Rom. 8:9-11, 14).

With the invitation to the servant to come and stay in Rebekah's home, is the running and excitement of preparations for a highly honored guest to come in—a guest representing Abraham, someone very dear to them. Rebekah ran home, only to come running back with her brother Laban. Previously we have shown that this excitement found its fulfillment in the running to and from the tomb on resurrection morning. It also finds fulfillment in the joy of the believer when he or she comes to faith in Christ. Christ's empty tomb became the well of the water of life and salvation.

After the servant received an invitation to Rebekah's home, he bowed and worshipped in gratitude. In keeping with the character of the Holy Spirit, the servant would not even eat until he had related the purpose of his journey to their city, his prayer for God's guidance and provision, and Rebekah's fulfillment of that prayer. His opening words deserve special comment:

"So he said: 'I am Abraham's servant. The LORD has greatly blessed my master, and he has become great. He has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male servants and female servants, camels and donkeys. And Sarah, my master's wife, bore a son to my master when she was old; *and to him has he given all that he has*'" (Gen. 24:34-36 italics mine).

All of Abraham's wealth would belong to Isaac. Laban, especially, seemed to have a keen eye for wealth. Notice the order in which things are mentioned in the following verse: "Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban...As soon as he saw the ring and the bracelets on his sister's arms, and heard the words of Rebekah...he

went to the man...” (vv. 29, 30). Laban’s eye for wealth would later cause grief for his nephew Jacob, but there is another reason for calling attention to Isaac’s wealth. As a type of Christ, Isaac’s wealth corresponds to the authority and wealth of Jesus Christ. Jesus said: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Mt. 28:18). The author of Hebrews wrote: “...God...has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things...” (Heb. 1:1-2). Paul said the Father of glory exercised the might of His strength “...in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all” (Eph. 1:17-23). “...we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.” (Rom. 8:16-17).

This is the One to Whom faith joins us! This is the One Who lives within us! If only Christians today were half as amazed that they can be one with Christ, as Rebekah was amazed that she could become the wife of such a rich man as Isaac! What a difference it could make!

As the servant concluded his speech, he showed his selflessness by asking if their intentions were to respond favorably to his master’s request. If not, he would continue his mission elsewhere. Bethuel and Laban, Rebekah’s father and brother, were both favorably impressed with the obvious providential blessing upon the circumstances and the apparent wealth of Abraham, and they agreed for the servant to take Rebekah for Isaac’s wife. Upon receiving this answer, the servant again paused to worship the LORD for prospering him on his errand and journey. Then he presented costly gifts to Rebekah, her brother and mother. After the dispensing of gifts, they settled down to eat and visit.

As soon as they arose in the morning, Abraham’s servant asked for their dismissal, that he might return to Abraham. He could easily have availed himself of their hospitality, especially after bringing such expensive gifts and good news, but he understood his purpose and would be no burden. This is behavior that conforms to God’s Spirit and leading. Remember the humility of Christ and His concern to be about His Father’s business. Rather than basking in the gratitude and admiration of those he had healed and blessed, He moved on to help and bless others. But Rebekah’s mother and brother wished to have several last days with Rebekah before she left. At the gentle insistence of Abraham’s servant, and the reminder that God had prospered the journey thus far, they decided to ask Rebekah. Rebekah’s answer was simple and straightforward—she would go.

Her willingness to make such an abrupt change brings to mind some verses from the Messianic Psalms: “Hear, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear, forget your people and your father’s house, and the king will desire your beauty. Since he is your lord, bow to him” (45:10, 11); “Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power” (110:3). We might ask, what is it that makes a sinner change so abruptly when he or she comes to faith in Christ? The enlightenment of the truth brings in a whole new set of values. Faith is not always required to systematically defeat an army of Reason or break down bulwarks of Objection. Faith can be as simple as a step out of the darkness and into the light. And enough light is there for the next step.

Rebekah left her home with a blessing that harks back to Genesis 22:17 and looks forward to Matthew 16:18: “Our sister, may you become thousands of ten

thousands, and may your offspring possess the gate of those who hate them!” (Gen. 24:60).

There is as little said about the return journey to Canaan as was said about the journey to Haran. The next thought of the narrative concerns Isaac. This is especially interesting, because this is the first mention of Isaac—other than just by name—since Genesis 22 where he was prepared for sacrifice. In fact, that episode closes with this comment: “So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beer-sheba; and Abraham lived in Beer-sheba” (Gen. 22:19). Notice there is no mention of Isaac! Why is this? Sometimes the Scriptures omit something to make an insinuation. A good example of this is Melchizedek. He appeared on the scene with no history or lineage (Gen. 14). The writer of Hebrews understood this to mean that Melchizedek’s appearance was for the purpose of showing us the reality of a better priesthood. In Genesis 22 it appears that Isaac is left on the mountain—he is left in an *ascended* locale. The next mention of him places him at the well, Lahai-roi (Gen. 24:62). The wells speak of the work of the Spirit and the gift of life and truth. So after his sacrifice, Isaac appears to be ascended and connected with the well of life. Or, to spell it out more clearly, after His crucifixion, Christ ascended to the throne of heaven and sent forth the Spirit of God to meet us and bring us to Him. Like Isaac remaining in Canaan, Christ remains in heaven until the time He comes to meet us. In the meantime the Spirit of God is our Guide.

“Now Isaac had returned from Beer-lahai-roi [*Beer* means *well*] and was dwelling in the Negeb. And Isaac went out to meditate in the field towards evening. And he lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold, there were camels coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she dismounted from the camel and said to the servant, ‘Who is that man, walking in the field to meet us?’ The servant said, ‘It is my master.’ So she took her veil and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. Then Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah his mother and took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death” (Gen. 24:62-67).

Apparently Isaac went into the field to be alone with his thoughts, which could hardly have been anything other than the bride who might even then be coming to him—a bride he had never met. Rebekah saw him and *dismounted*, or *lighted off* (AV), her camel. The word here is frequently rendered *fall*, and in this tense often as *prostrating in worship or submission*. The Bible makes considerable use of synonyms for the purpose of amplifying and suggesting additional ideas. Rebekah may not have actually prostrated herself on the ground before Isaac, but the thought of showing due respect is certainly present. Rebekah did not look down upon her fiancé. And she covered herself with her veil, showing humility before her new husband and lord.

The servant replies to her inquiry that the man is his lord, and she understands it to be Isaac. The name of Abraham had been frequent through the early part of the chapter, but it is conspicuously absent in these later verses, emphasizing Isaac’s position of authority. Rebekah was given Sarah’s tent, which surely would have been the best available, and the new bride and groom came to love each other. Paul speaks of the church, or body of Christ, being grafted into the olive tree from which the unbelieving branches were broken out. This makes a lucid correspondence to Rebekah being placed in Sarah’s tent.

We do not wish to go beyond the Scriptures, but the picture painted in this last scene is so suggestive that we will take it a little further and feel justified in doing so.

Isaac's residence in Canaan parallels Christ's residence in heaven while His complement is being assembled. Isaac went out into the field to meet his bride. In some of the interpretations of the parables the field is a figure for the world. Isaac's walk in the field then could easily be seen as representing a coming of Christ to the world to receive His bride. Rebekah's residence in Sarah's tent is suggestive of a new generation taking the place that Israel, the vessel of the Seed, was supposed to fill. Rebekah's camel is a ceremonially unclean animal, and is much like our human bodies in that way. Our bodies are the vehicle that carries us on our journey through this world to meet our Lord. Rebekah alights from the camel and is dressed in proper attire to meet Isaac. This could be understood as representing the transformation of our glorification.

Christ, the greater Isaac, the greater promised Seed, is our expectation. He waits in heaven while His bride-body is assembled under the guiding care of the Spirit of God. To be presented to Him at His coming is our joy. This was the desire of Paul's heart, even above being resurrected. "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:1-4).

Chapter 7: Jacob: Christ's Spirit of Service (Genesis 29 ff.)

In the previous section about Isaac, we saw the unnamed servant going to Abraham's old homeland to find a bride. The scenes all transpired at the destinations of the journeys to and from Haran; nothing that occurred during the journeys was recorded. In the life of the believer this is summed up in three points: (1) God the Father has a purpose; (2) the Holy Spirit meets the believer and becomes the believer's guide; (3) the believer travels with the Spirit to be with Christ. Jacob's scenario, on the other hand, is concerned with the toil and struggle of the believer's life. Jacob represents the Spirit of Christ operating through and within believers—the church—to gain brides and flocks and children, and then to take them on an exodus away from their world to the heavenly land of Canaan. So Jacob's episode with the bride at the well is focused on areas Isaac's episode omitted.

Jacob's Family and His Journey for Wives

Jacob's journey, on which he met Rachel, was brought about by the dysfunctional relationships in his family. Each of the parents favored one of the twins. "When the boys grew up, Esau was a skilful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob" (Gen. 25:27-28). During her pregnancy, Rebekah had inquired of God concerning the twins fighting in her womb. She was informed that they would become two nations, and the elder would serve the younger. Esau became a hunter and was at home in the field. He was Isaac's favorite, and Isaac would try to give him greater blessings. These blessings included domination over his brother, a blessing that was contrary to God's word. Jacob was Rebekah's favorite. His natural element was the home place, rather than the field. It was Rebekah's scheme that brought Jacob into possession of his father's blessing. And it was Rebekah's scheme that sent Jacob to Haran where he met Rachel.

In the later years of their marriage, it seems that Rebekah was more in tune with God's will than Isaac. She may not have been what some consider the *ideally submissive wife*, but she was concerned to follow God's revelation that the elder would serve the younger. This conflict of elder and younger would follow Jacob throughout his life in his experiences with his wives and sons.

Before Jacob traveled to Haran, he tricked his father into giving him the blessing that Isaac had intended for Esau. Esau became angry and was plotting to kill Jacob, but was waiting for his failing father to die. Esau had taken two wives from the neighboring Canaanite people. This was an evidence of his lack of concern for the covenant promises, and his wives had become a source of grief for both Isaac and Rebekah. Rebekah used this problem for her justification to send Jacob to Haran. There he could find a proper wife—one who believed in the LORD, and one who was not ingrained with the Canaanite religion. This excuse enabled her to get Jacob away from Esau while his anger cooled down.

Jacob valued the birthright and blessing, things that were of secondary importance to Esau. But he may have been wondering if the ownership of these blessings was truly transferred to him in God's sight. His journey to Haran included a stopover at Bethel. We can expect that Jacob would have known of Abraham's encampments there (Gen. 12:7-8; 13:4), and the stone he used for a pillow may have been taken from Abraham's altar. Jacob may well have been seeking confirmation that he had indeed taken his place in the line of succession of God's promise.

Jacob's dream and the sevenfold promise from God (Gen. 28:10-15) confirmed Jacob's place in the line of the promise. The dream showed heaven and earth linked together, and the earth being serviced by heavenly ministers (Heb. 1:14). When Christ told Nathanael that he would see the fulfillment of this vision (Jn. 1:47-51), the Son of Man replaced the stairway and the location of Abraham's altar. Indeed, the Son of Man is the true Bethel—the true House or Temple of God—regardless of geographic location. And the heavenly messengers did minister, and were seen ministering to Him: informing Mary that God had chosen her and she would conceive the Son (Lk. 1:26-33), announcing His birth to the shepherds (Lk. 2:8-14), guiding the Infant's father by dreams (Mt. 1:20; 2:13, 19-23), in the wilderness (Mt. 4:11; Mk. 1:13), in Gethsemane (Lk. 22:43), attending the betrayal and crucifixion (Mt. 26:53), rolling away the stone and attending the resurrection (Mt. 28:2; etc.), and more heavenly ministers will be seen at His coming and the harvest at the end of this age. Jacob's laboring for brides and flocks, represent these labors of Christ, and the continuing labors of the church in the Spirit of Christ.

Jacob Meets Rachel at the Well

“As he looked, he saw a well in the field, and behold, three flocks of sheep lying beside it, for out of that well the flocks were watered. The stone on the well's mouth was large, and when all the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would roll the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place over the mouth of the well.

“Jacob said to them, ‘My brothers, where do you come from?’ They said, ‘We are from Haran.’ He said to them, ‘Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?’ They said, ‘We know him.’ He said to them, ‘Is it well with him?’ They said, ‘It is well; and see, Rachel his daughter is coming with the sheep!’ He said, ‘Behold, it is still high day; it is not time for the livestock to be gathered together. Water the sheep and go, pasture

them.’ But they said, ‘We cannot until all the flocks are gathered together and the stone is rolled from the mouth of the well; then we water the sheep.’” (Gen. 29:2-8).

These verses describe the scene for us. Some commentators suggest that Jacob wished to meet Rachel in privacy, and this prompted him to ask the shepherds why they didn’t water their herds or flocks and take them to graze. That thought of privacy may have been in Jacob’s mind, but he may have been prompted by something else. The saga of Jacob’s life is one of continual shepherding. He would shepherd Laban’s flocks, and his own, and his family would grow into a flock as well. Later, when being reconciled to Esau, he would refuse to journey with him, justifying his action because of the frailty of his children and the flocks with their young. Clearly he feared Esau, but the mind of the shepherd shows through.

Those who were tending the flocks at the well may have been younger boys, unable to move the stone without help. But one would think that three or more of them together could manage what Jacob did by himself. The text seems to suggest that these shepherds had the hearts of hirelings. The area around the well would receive such constant and heavy traffic by many herds and flocks that any grass would have long been eaten and trampled out of existence. Waiting there until a time when more were gathered would leave the livestock without food and without water. One with a shepherd’s heart would not wish to leave them so long without these necessities. Christ came and found the Jewish people only under the care of hirelings, thieves, and robbers (Jn. 10). None of the false shepherds could do what Christ did. No one but He could be raised from the dead to roll the stone away that we might drink of the Spirit.

“While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father’s sheep, for she was a shepherdess. Now as soon as Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother’s brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother’s brother, Jacob came near and rolled the stone from the well’s mouth and watered the flock of Laban his mother’s brother. Then Jacob kissed Rachel and wept aloud. And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father’s kinsman, and that he was Rebekah’s son, and she ran and told her father” (Gen. 29:9-12).

Jacob’s actions seem to be prompted by the sudden release of great anxiety. He had left home and family, perhaps for the first time in his life, traveled many miles, and finally reached his destination. God’s blessing and promise to Jacob at Bethel were much more far-reaching than the supply of temporal needs Jacob had bargained for (Gen. 28:13-22). He bared his fear that he might never see his home again. His vision was short-sighted, but he experienced a great relief when he found someone who was family. Notice above the three-fold repetition of the phrase *Laban his mother’s brother*. Laban himself was important to Jacob only as an extension of his mother. Because of Isaac’s favoritism of Esau, Rebekah was the center and focus of home for Jacob, and we can expect that she was his mentor in faith as well. Probably Jacob could recognize family and character resemblances in Rachel. His mother was one who had quickly taken up the task of watering camels, and Jacob met Rachel in the activity of being a shepherdess. As we look to this passage for a thought that would apply to Christ, this family relationship stands out. Christ “came to his own” (Jn. 1:11). He came as a Human to humans and as an Israelite to Israelites. And He came to these as the good Shepherd.

Chapter 8: Jacob's Reception by Laban

“He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him” (Jn. 1:11). Laban received Jacob joyfully, or at first glance it seemed so. Earlier, when Abraham's servant came and met Rebekah, the record says, “Laban ran out towards the man, to the spring. As soon as he saw the ring and the bracelets on his sister's arms...” (Gen. 24:29, 30). Following this the camels were fed and cared for, the feet of Abraham's servants were washed, and food was set before them. But Jacob came without gifts and told the things his mother had directed him. Nothing is said of Jacob's feet being washed or of him being given any food. This paints a far different picture of his reception from that received by Abraham's servant. Similarly, there was no one to wash the feet of the One Who washed the feet of others.

“And he [Jacob] stayed with him [Laban] for a month. Then Laban said to Jacob, ‘Because you are my kinsman, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?’” (Gen. 29:14-15). Laban's statement is presented in such a way as to sound as if he is concerned for the welfare of his nephew. But what it actually does is make Jacob nothing more than a hired servant—much less than a nephew. Jacob was treated as much less than Lot, Abraham's nephew, whom Abraham treated like a brother. The price that Israel paid Judas for Christ was just that—the price paid for a servant—the price paid for a servant that had been killed (Ex. 21:32; Mt. 27:3-5).

“Jacob was loving Rachel, and he said: I shall serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel...So Jacob served for Rachel seven years; and they came to be in his eyes like *several days* because of his love for her” (Gen. 29: 18, 20 CV). The phrase, *several days*, is an interesting repetition. It occurred before on the lips of Rebekah: “Now my son, hearken to my voice. Get up! You have to run away to my brother Laban, to Charan [Haran]. You must dwell with him *several days* until your brother's fury is relenting, until your brother's anger turns away from you...” (Gen. 27:43-45 CV). This repetition comes in the narrative just before Jacob receives Leah as a bride instead of his beloved Rachel, and it marks the coming of another repetition. The reason for the substitution of Leah for Rachel, he was later told: “It is not so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn” (Gen. 29:26). The issue of the elder and younger reminded Jacob of his own deceitfulness and sin against Esau.

The description of Leah is interesting and puzzling. “Now Laban had two daughters. The name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful in form and appearance” (Gen. 29:16-17). The meaning of *tender-eyed*, or, *weak-eyed* has been lost. This description stands in contrast with the description of Rachel, possibly suggesting a meaning that might be rendered in English: “not much to look at,” as opposed to being “a real looker.” But there is no certainty to this conclusion. It could also be that Leah's eyes were her one significant feature of beauty, while Rachel had many beautiful features.

It is interesting that the Scriptures give us an example, Hagar, of being *weak-eyed*. In Genesis 21 Hagar and Ishmael were sent away at Sarah's insistence, so that Ishmael could not inherit the family wealth and blessings with Isaac. Out in the wilderness and out of water, Hagar despaired of life and left Ishmael under the shade of a bush so she would not have to watch him perish. God *opened* (AV), or *focused* (CV) her eyes so that she could see a well of living water, which became their salvation. Hagar stands in contrast with Sarah as mother of those under the bondage

of Law, as opposed to the mother of those under Grace (Gal. 4:21-31). Some among the church fathers have viewed Jacob's situation with the two wives as representing Christ coming for a Jewish bride, but ending up with a gentile bride instead, or Leah representing Israel under the law, and Rachel the church.ⁱ At Christ's coming, this prophecy of Isaiah was repeated a number of times:

“You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them” (Mt. 13:14-15).

While this prophecy includes hearing and the attitude of the heart, sight is a large part of it. In John 9 the Lord Jesus healed the man born blind and then described the condition of the Pharisees as blindness. We do not wish to overwork these thoughts, but the *bride at the well* scenes are pictures of the chosen and their reception of Christ. And Jacob's reception of Leah as wife was definitely a disappointment.

Another passage of interest is Romans 9-11, where Paul treats the subject of the casting off of Israel, nationally. In His explanations he mentions both the Sarah-Hagar relationship and the Jacob-Esau relationship (9:8-13). Would we be out of line to think that the Leah-Rachel relationship was an extension of the same principle? To be sure we don't become unbalanced in these thoughts, we will note that the Authorized Version's use of the word *blindness* in Romans 11:25 is not accurate: “blindness in part is happened to Israel (AV).” Newer translations are commonly saying that *hardening* in part, or, *callousness* in part has happened to Israel.

Chapter 9: Jacob and the Exodus

Israel came into bondage and servitude in Egypt and needed a deliverer. The Christian finds their condition in this world to be a similar situation. The biblical description of Jacob returning to Canaan clearly stands in parallel with these. “As soon as Rachel had borne Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, ‘Send me away, that I may go to my own home and country. Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, that I may go, for you know the service that I have given you’ (Gen. 30:25, 26). By this time Jacob's family had grown quite large—11 boys and 1 girl—only Benjamin had not yet been born. In correspondence with this, the Israelites multiplied significantly during their sojourn in Egypt. “But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them” (Ex. 1:7). “Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, “Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.”’” (Ex. 5:1). Pharaoh would not let them go but offered compromises instead: only the men could go, or only the people and not the livestock. But none of his compromises were acceptable to God. Similarly, Jacob delineated wives and children, making it clear that all were to go with him in his exodus.

Pharaoh responded to God's command by making the work imposed on the Israelites more rigorous. Jacob's work had also changed and became more difficult: “So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah into the field where his flock was and said to them, ‘I see that your father does not regard me with favour as he did before. But

the God of my father has been with me. You know that I have served your father with all my strength, yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times. But God did not permit him to harm me. If he said, “The spotted shall be your wages”, then all the flock bore spotted; and if he said, “The striped shall be your wages”, then all the flock bore striped. Thus God has taken away the livestock of your father and given them to me’...Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, “Is there any portion or inheritance left to us in our father’s house? Are we not regarded by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and he has indeed devoured our money. All the wealth that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and to our children. Now then, whatever God has said to you, do” (Gen. 31:4-9, 14-16).

These words tell of the discontentment and mistreatment felt by Jacob and his family. The Israelites in Egypt also cried out to God for deliverance (Ex. 3:7-10; etc.). Jacob left Laban enriched with large flocks and herds, in addition to the growth of his family. Israel also spoiled Egypt of many riches as God gave them favor in the sight of the Egyptians, and they asked for things before leaving (Ex. 11:2-3; 12:35-36).

Both Jacob’s family leaving Laban, and the Israelites leaving Egypt were headed to the land of Canaan (Gen. 31:18). Jacob and the nation of Israel both crossed bodies of water at the start of their exoduses (Gen. 31:21; Ex. 14). Jacob was pursued by Laban, and Moses and the Israelites were pursued by Pharaoh and his army (Gen.31:22-23; Ex. 14:5-9). Both Laban and Pharaoh caught up to the ones they were pursuing. God intervened to save Jacob and his family by warning Laban in a dream not to even speak of doing anything harmful to him. God intervened to save Israel by dividing the sea and drowning Pharaoh in it.

The plagues that Moses performed upon Egypt showed the LORD’s power to be far superior to that of any of the gods of the Egyptians (Ex.12:12). The plagues and the exodus were a humiliation of the Egyptian gods. Similarly, Rachel stole the household idols of Laban. He required them at Jacob’s hand when he caught up to him. Jacob had no knowledge that the idols had been stolen, and even offered Laban the life of the person found guilty of the crime. During Laban’s search for his idols, Rachel begged her father’s lenience for not moving for him, explaining that “the way of women is upon me” (31:35). Actually, she was sitting upon his images. This may be seen as a humiliation of Laban’s gods. By the time Laban had finished his search, Jacob was incensed with anger and gave vent to his feelings.

Jacob and Laban contracted a covenant, making a mound of stones which became a boundary between them. Neither could pass this boundary for the purpose of evil, and Jacob could do no evil to Laban’s daughters. By destroying the Egyptian army in the Red Sea, God created a situation in which Egypt could no longer pursue Israel to do them any harm.

We have seen numerous parallels between Jacob’s exodus from Laban and Israel’s exodus from Egypt. There may be more than have been noted here. Our purpose in pointing them out is to build a foundation for further application of this study. We have said that Jacob represented the Spirit of Christ laboring in the world through those of faith, whether they are of the Jewish nation or the Church. If this is true, then we should be able to discern from the Scriptures how there will be, for these groups, exoduses yet to come.

The Exodus of the Church, the Body of Christ

One of the passages of Scripture that describes the exodus of the Church is 1 Thessalonians 4:13 and following. Notice these correspondences between the Church's exit from this world and Israel's exodus from Egypt. The Israelites who left Egypt were partakers of the Passover. The members of Christ's body are those who have partaken of Christ, the true Passover. Israel was locked in slavery—Pharaoh would not let them go. Believers who have died are locked in the grave, and like the living believers, they are held to this world by gravity. But when Christ returns for us, not even gravity will hold us back. Moses told Pharaoh that they had to take at least a three day journey into the wilderness. The third day is the day of resurrection—the means by which sleeping believers will be prepared to leave this world.

The Israelites' Passover was a meal of expectation. The blood was on the doorpost; their staff was in their hand; they had their sandals on; they were ready to leave at Moses' command. Believers have an expectation in Christ, for Whom they are waiting. At midnight when the death of the firstborn occurred in Egypt, there was a cry that went up in Egypt such as had never been heard before. At the commencement of the Church's exodus, the Lord will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God. "Thus says the LORD: 'About midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt'" (Ex. 11:4). Here the Scriptures are designating the LORD Himself being present. "...the Lord Himself will descend from heaven..." (1 Thess. 4:16). God led them out of Egypt (Ex. 13:18, 21). God, through Jesus, will lead forth the believing who have died as well as believers who are living (1 Thess. 4:14-15).

"And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people" (Ex. 13:21-22). Similarly: "...and so we will always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17). More comparisons could be drawn, but this should be enough to show that the catching away of the saints follows the same motif as the exodus of Israel from Egypt, and the same as Jacob's exodus from Haran.

Israel's Next Exodus

In Romans 11 Paul tells that a partial hardening had come upon Israel until the complement of gentile believers should be brought into faith. And then what happens? "And in this way all Israel shall be saved, as it is written, 'The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob'" (Rom. 11:26). Isaiah prophesied: "Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you. I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth" (Isa. 43:5-6). Some people will say that this Isaianic prophecy referred to the return of captives after the destruction of Jerusalem, hundreds of years before Christ. We would not disagree that its first application lies there, but we do expect it to be fulfilled again in a much greater way. Ezekiel's prophecy of the pouring out of the Spirit is yet awaiting a fulfillment. There will be a large scale return, after the pattern of the New Testament Pentecost, and a great salvation for Israel. These things are waiting for the complementary measure of Gentiles to be brought into the body of Christ.

Creation's Exodus

In Romans 8:18-25 Paul speaks of the deliverance of creation from the slavery of corruption. There are not as many parallels in this short passage, but we can see that Paul casts this great deliverance in terms that reminisce of the exodus. He speaks of the sufferings and travail that the creation is enduring. These sufferings are described as slavery. Even creation has a premonition of an expectation of deliverance from this slavery, similar to the expectations God has given His chosen ones through His word and promises. Israel was created and born as a nation in the exodus. Believers will be recreated and reborn as sons of God with the deliverance of their bodies. Creation is waiting for these sons of God to be unveiled, so that the re-creation of all things can commence. The mention of the sons here takes us back to that Spirit of Christ, operating prophetically in Jacob in the past, and operating in the glorified in the future.

Chapter 10: Joseph, the Deliverer Drawn from the Well

We have been viewing expanded scenes that show us more details of Christ meeting his bride with the meaning symbolized by the well. Now we will consider a couple of scenes with Joseph that represent Christ in this capacity. However, their emphasis is mostly on His death, because that is how the figure of a well or pit is used with Joseph. The Hebrew word for well is *beer* (*b-a-r*), and the Hebrew word for pit is *bohr* (*b-o-r*). The similarity in Hebrew letters is readily apparent, and in the Authorized Version both words are sometimes rendered *well*, and both are sometimes rendered *pit*. *Dungeon* is also a frequent rendering (especially of *b-o-r*) when the context speaks of imprisonment. Cistern is also a variant with some translations. We wish to make the reader aware of the similarity and closeness in meaning of the two words, since we are considering the two together in this figurative usage.

The following verses give examples of casting into a pit as a figure of death. “For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near unto Sheol. I am counted among those who go down to the *pit*; I am a man who has no strength, like one set loose among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, like those whom you remember no more; for they are cut off from your hand. You have put me in the depths of the *pit*, in the regions dark and deep” (Ps. 88:3-6 emphasis mine). “As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I set your prisoners free from the waterless *pit*” (Zech. 9:11 emphasis mine; see also Ps. 28:1; 30:3; 143:7).

Joseph, like the other men we have seen come to wells, was on a journey. He was sent by his father Jacob to check on the welfare of his brothers (as David was also sent). In this case his brothers stand in the place of the bride, even though they try to kill him. Joseph was envied by his jealous brothers, as Christ was envied by the jealous Jews (Gen. 37:11; Mt. 27:17, 18). Joseph went to Shechem where his brothers had been sent to graze the sheep. But his brothers were not there. Finally Joseph met someone who had talked to his brothers and learned that they had moved on to Dothan. Like Joseph, Christ was sent from the Father to check on His brethren. Also like Joseph, He did not find them where they were supposed to be. The reason for the ministry of John the Baptist was to bring the Jews back to the place of fellowship with God—the place they should have been.

When Joseph's brothers saw him coming, they began conspiring to kill him. Joseph had been a tattletale before (Gen. 37:2), and they expected nothing different

from him now. Dothan was on the route of caravan trade and travel, and it is likely to have provided more diverse offerings of entertainment for the shepherds. It is not unlikely that they had more to hide from Jacob than just a change in location for pasturing the flock.

The Jews of Jesus' day also conspired to kill Him. Caiaphas even prophesied, unwittingly, the necessity of Christ's death for the people (Jn. 11:47-51; Mt. 26:3-4). The gospel writers record several parables by Jesus regarding His death at the hand of conspirators (Mt. 21:33-40; etc.). Joseph's brothers stripped him of the beautiful robe his father had given him before casting him into a pit (Gen. 37:23-24). Christ was stripped of His clothing before His crucifixion (Jn. 19:23-24).

"And they took him, and cast him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it" (Gen. 37:24). The absence of water may just add to the idea of lifeless desolation. Jeremiah was also put in a well or cistern with no water (Jer.38:6), and a similar idea comes from Zechariah 9:11 quoted above. A well of water is a source of life, and a dry well is nothing but death. A similar idea is given at Rephidim, where God said, "Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb" (Ex. 17:6). The word *Horeb* means *dry*, or, *desolate*, if not used as a proper noun. The Israelites had no hope of receiving water from the dry, desolate rock in front of them, and the Jews had no hope of life from Christ, hanging on the cross in front of them. The grave offers no hope of life—it is a dry pit.

By showing these parallels between Joseph and Christ, we show that Joseph being cast into the pit represents Christ's crucifixion. There is even a double emphasis because Joseph was also cast into the *dungeon* (which is the same word as *pit*). Christ was crucified between two robbers. One of the robbers repented of his deeds and was promised that he would be with Christ in paradise. Joseph's experience in prison was similar. Two prisoners there had dreams which Joseph interpreted for them. One was reinstated in service to Pharaoh, and the other was executed. The correspondence to the robbers crucified with Christ is obvious.

Still, there is more to it than this. Joseph was taken up from the pits, both that in the fields of Dothan and the dungeon of the Egyptian prison, and from there he went on to rule the Egyptian empire, second only to Pharaoh. After drawing him out of the dungeon, Pharaoh gave him a gentile wife. There was a bride at Joseph's well. Similarly, Christ was raised from death to sit on the Father's throne of heaven. After God raised Christ from the dead, He presents Him with a multinational complement which is still being formed.

It was the one who was drawn up out of the pit that saved Egypt and the countries round about by preparing for the famine. In this he eventually saved even his own family and the brothers who intended to kill him. Christ is the Savior of the world—a truth that will be verified in its own periods of time (1 Tim. 2:3-6). He will even bring salvation to His own nation that killed Him. In all this we can see Christ drawn from the well—the pit of death—bringing the life and blessings of the Spirit of God to mankind.

Chapter 11: Moses, the Bridegroom of Blood

Isaac and Jacob lived in a time of promise before the law was codified at Sinai. This affects the way they have been presented to us in the previous chapters. Moses will be viewed as the giver of the law, and this fact will alter the picture in his presentation as a groom. Christ came under the law, and so His first coming will have much in common with the presentation of Moses. In Isaac's and Jacob's scenarios

Christ is represented according to the present era in which Israel and the law are set aside.

With Isaac and Jacob, a single woman was present at the well. With Moses the seven daughters of the priest were there. True, only one became his wife, but the use of multiple maidens is similar to the situation we will see with Saul, the first king. In a sense, the kings were married to the nation, and the spiritual anointing was on them as leaders. This is different from viewing individual believers as members of the bride and the anointing being in them. Moses' situation was similar to the kings, because the priests stood in a position between God and the Israelite bride, and the anointing was on them. The fact that Reuel was a priest complements Moses' role as lawgiver.

“When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian. And he sat down by a well.

“Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came and drew water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. The shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and saved them, and watered their flock. When they came home to their father Reuel, he said, ‘How is it that you have come home so soon today?’ They said, ‘An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds and even drew water for us and watered the flock.’ He said to his daughters, ‘Then where is he? Why have you left [*forsaken*] the man? Call him that he may eat bread.’ And Moses was content to dwell with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah. She gave birth to a son, and he called his name Gershom, for he said, ‘I have been a sojourner [*stranger*] in a foreign land.’” (Ex. 2:15-22).

In the stories of Rebekah and Rachel the purpose given for the traveling of the man was to find a bride (Gen. 24:3-4; 27:46-28:2). While we see that same outcome in the episode with Moses, it was not the purpose of his journey. Here in Exodus there are multiple reasons for the scene at the well. First, Moses is seen as a law breaker—he was fleeing the penalty for murder. This complements his typical role as a representative of his nation, Israel.

Second, the well scene shares a common purpose with the larger context of the chapter. Chapter 2 of Exodus bears the purpose of identifying Moses as one who is qualified to be the deliverer of Israel from Egyptian oppression. This is accomplished in three scenes. First, Moses, an infant son endangered by the Pharaoh's command, is hidden at home and later placed in a small ark at the river's edge. By faith and divine Providence Moses is delivered from the water and Pharaoh's edict, and is reared in his own Hebrew home at the expense of the royal Egyptian household. In the second scene Moses struck and killed an Egyptian taskmaster for beating a Hebrew. The third scene is that of the well, and we should notice the use of the words *saved* (v. 17) and *delivered* (v. 19). In all three of these events Moses is identified as a candidate suitable to be Israel's deliverer.

Even the name, *Moses, one taken out of the water*, was of prophetic significance. He saved the daughters of Reuel at the well of water, changed the water of Egypt to blood, brought Israel through the sea of water, and saved them repeatedly by supplying water in the wilderness. He even ended his life short of entering the Promised Land because of striking the rock a second time in supplying Israel with water. Many of the most significant events of Moses' life were linked to water.

Moses' scene at the well is colored by two other scenes in Genesis, besides those of Rebekah and Rachel. The first is Genesis 15 where Abraham offered a covenantal sacrifice to the LORD. In a trance, Abraham had a vision of a smoking

furnace and a burning lamp passing between the rows of the sacrificial portions. God told Abraham that three things would happen to his seed: (1) they would be *sojourners*, or, *strangers* (*g-r* in Hebrew), in a land that was not theirs; (2) they would *serve* those people; and, (3) they would be *afflicted* by them (Gen. 15:13, 17). In the first two chapters of Exodus the Hebrew people *serve* the Egyptians and are *afflicted* by them. Two of the three things God prophesied to Abraham are mentioned as coming to pass. But it is not until the birth of *Gershom*, and Moses' statement about *sojourning* (*g-r*) in a foreign land—statements given as part of the scene at the well—that God moves to bring deliverance to Israel. As soon as we have this statement of the third key word from God's utterance to Abraham, there is mention of the remembrance of the covenant and of God hearing the cries of the Hebrews. Then Moses met the LORD at the burning bush and was sent to deliver Israel. Moses' own experience became a representation of Israel's experience. The context points out this idea by identifying the third feature with Moses personally.

The second scene that sheds light on Moses' experience at the well is that of Sarah's slave Hagar. The *gr* of the name Hagar puts the idea of *stranger* or *sojourner* before us again. Hagar was an Egyptian (Gen. 16:3), and the daughters of Reuel recognized Moses as Egyptian (Ex. 2:19)—probably from his speech or clothing. In Genesis 16 Sarah, desperate to bear a child, gave her handmaid Hagar to Abraham. She thought to build herself up as a mother by having a child through a surrogate mother. But when Hagar became pregnant, she thought herself elevated above Sarah. Sarah would not tolerate that attitude for even a moment. A serious lack of peace raged in Abraham's household. Sarah humbled Hagar, and Hagar ran away.

Hagar "fled from her [Sarah's] face" (Gen. 16:6 AV). Moses "fled from the face of Pharaoh" (Ex. 2:15 AV). Hagar stopped at a well in the wilderness (Gen. 16:7, 14). Moses stopped at a well in Midian (Ex. 2:15). There Hagar spoke to an angel of the LORD (Gen. 16:7-11). Following the scene at the well, Moses spoke to an angel of the LORD at the burning bush in the wilderness (Ex. 3:1-ff.). The angel of the LORD told Hagar to return to Sarah (Gen. 16:9). The angel of the LORD told Moses to return to Pharaoh (Ex. 3:10). Hagar did not immediately respond to the angel's instructions. The angel spoke to her three times, each time telling her more about the greatness her son would achieve, before Hagar responded (Gen. 16:9-12). In parallel with this, Moses repeatedly made excuses why he could not return and do what he was instructed to do (Ex. 3:11-4:17). Hagar was told that the LORD had heard of her humiliation (Gen. 16:11). Moses was told that the LORD had seen the humiliation of His people in Egypt, and He had heard their crying and knew their pain (Ex. 3:7). Hagar returned to Sarah, and Moses returned to Pharaoh. Hagar named the well where she spoke with the angel, "Well of the Living One Who sees me" (Gen. 16:13-14 CV). Moses met the LORD as the One with an unusual name: "Thus shall you say to the sons of Israel, I-Shall-Come-to-Be, has sent me to you" (Ex. 3:14 CV). Hagar and Moses are posed in the narratives as representatives of each other and as parallel representatives of Israel. This parallelism casts Moses in the scene as an Egyptian slave, even though he had been free in his adoption by Pharaoh's daughter.

In writing to the Galatians, Paul spoke of Sarah as representing the covenant of promise, and Hagar as representing the covenant of law (Gal. 4:21-31). Surely Paul was aware of these parallels in the books of Moses, and knew that Moses' experiences as Israel's lawgiver made him a figure who could not lead Israel to life and joy. Paul wrote to the Galatians that if a law had been given that was able to give us life, then righteousness would have come to us through the law (Gal. 3:21). But law can only condemn. It cannot give life. Life comes through the faith of Jesus Christ, and His

sacrifice for our sakes. And so there is no joyful running from the well, as with Rebekah and Rachel, to bring glad tidings of a visitor who is a savior and deliverer. Neither are there any descriptions of beauty or bridal suitability for the daughters of Reuel. Instead, the lawgiver is forsaken at the well, until the father's sense of decorum orders the return to bring this deliverer to their home and offer the obligatory meal of gratitude.

In Exodus 2:20 Reuel asked his daughters why they had *forsaken* the man, when they left Moses at the well. This scene is typically prophetic of Israel's relationship to God. *Forsaken* is a very suggestive word—a word used many times to describe Israel's unfaithfulness to God. They forsook the covenant, the commandments, the law—they forsook the living God for those who are not gods. Jeremiah's summation is apt: “Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD, for my people have committed two evils: **they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water**” (Jer. 2:10-13).

There was a conflict to be resolved at the wells. Abraham's servant prayed, and waited to see how his prayer would be answered. Jacob rolled the great stone from the well to water Laban's flock for Rachel. The context is suggestive that this feat was usually accomplished by several people together, not just one person alone. Moses, in similar fashion to striking the Egyptian, was quick to deal out lawful justice to the bullying shepherds who would steal the water drawn by Reuel's daughters. In all these scenes the livestock were watered. This tending to the needs of the flock is the demonstration of the qualities of leadership and service needed for guiding God's flock.

One more scene, and its comparative scenes, still requires our attention for an introduction to Moses. It is this scene which names him the bridegroom of blood. It takes place when Moses is returning to Egypt with his family.

“At a lodging place on the way the LORD met him and sought to put him to death. Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it and said, ‘Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!’ So he let him alone. It was then that she said, ‘A bridegroom of blood’, because of the circumcision” (Ex. 4:24-26).

This passage is difficult, and has been given many explanations. In the verses just prior to these God instructed Moses to tell Pharaoh that Israel was God's firstborn son, and that if Pharaoh did not release His son, then He would kill Pharaoh's son. Gershom was Moses' firstborn son, and this is one of the connecting links for the recording of the incident at this point.

When Israel was wandering in the wilderness, they did not practice circumcision, evidently as a concession to the difficulties of journeying on the way. But upon entering the land of promise, they stopped to re-institute the practice (Jos. 5:2-5). The passage in Joshua has two words in common with the passage in Exodus: *way* and *flint*. (Flint [chert in some translations] is a stone that was used for making knives. Even after the use of metal blades became common for many things, the use of traditional stone knives remained for many religious practices.) This corresponding use of words shows a correlation between these passages. Before Israel could begin conquering the land, they had to conform to covenant requirements.

Because of the obvious emotion of Zipporah, it seems likely that she may have refused to allow Gershom's circumcision at the normal age of 8 days. At any rate, Moses had been journeying, on the way—like Israel, but stopped now in a lodging. Now was a good time to circumcise Gershom so that he would be in conformity with the covenant, which called for the death of all those who did not comply (Gen. 17:14). Moses was under threat of death because he was responsible for the circumcision of the child. God wanted to impress the seriousness of this mission on Moses, so Moses was smitten with a deathly sickness until the blood of Gershom's circumcision was applied to him. The stress of this whole scenario provoked Zipporah's response, "you are a bridegroom of blood to me." Similar to this, Christ's death on the cross is referred to as a circumcision (Col. 2:11). It is the application of His blood—His circumcision—on our behalf which delivers us from death.

Moses was preparing to go to Egypt, as he was bidden—he was just getting started. Why should God suddenly threaten him with death? First, remember that Moses had been repeatedly objecting to God's mission (Ex. 3:11-4:14). "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh? The sons of Israel will question me: What is the name of the God Who sent you to us? They will not believe me! They will say, the LORD never appeared to you! And I'm not a good speaker! Please send someone else!" (paraphrase) We are told "the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses" (Ex. 4:14).

A similar situation occurred with Balaam (Num. 22-24). God's anger grew hot because Balaam was going to see Balak, and God had even told him to go (Num. 22:20-22)! And yet God sent a messenger of death to block Balaam's way, so that Balaam would grasp the severity of the situation (Num. 22:32-33). And this was done just as Balaam was beginning his journey, before he even had a chance to make any error.

Even the covenant and apostasy at Mt. Sinai follow the pattern of these warnings. Moses was up on the mountain receiving the stone tablets. Israel, at the foot of the mountain, made the golden calf and began worshipping it. We're told that the anger of both God and Moses burned hot (Ex. 32:9-10, 19, 22). The fledgling nation of Israel was just entering into covenant relationship to God. They were on the threshold of their journey to the land of promise. They were only beginning. Yet Moses sent armed Levites through the camp who killed about 3,000 men. In a sense this was a circumcising of the nation, like Zipporah circumcising Gershom. Those who filled the role of the lusting of the flesh were cut off. Paul tells us that God did not delight in the majority of them, and their example was meant to teach us not to lust after evil things—to teach us to cut off the flesh (1 Cor. 10:1-13).

Moses was going to Egypt to liberate Israel. Balaam was going to Balak to bless Israel. The nation of Israel was going to possess the land in blessing. All were doing what God instructed, but God threatened all three with death at the commencement of their journey. God even suggested wiping out the entire nation of Israel at Sinai and building a new nation from Moses (Ex. 32:9-10)! Why did these things happen? We are told that God's anger grew hot with all three, and there was good reason for God to be angry: Moses was breaking the Abrahamic covenant; Israel was worshipping God falsely with an idol, and Balaam wanted Balak's hire and would teach him to corrupt the Israelites so that God would punish them (Rev. 2:14). In these events we find God giving warnings: a warning to Israel's leaders through Moses' example, a warning to Israel by the events at Sinai, and a warning to the nations through Balaam's example. How blessed we are to be related to the Bridegroom in grace rather than law! And how different the Pentecost after resurrection was from the Pentecost after the Egyptian Passover—3,000 being saved, instead of 3,000 being killed!

Chapter 12: Water in the Wilderness

During the period of Moses' leadership of Israel, the theater sets for *the bride at the well* are revamped and cast at on site locations between Egypt and Canaan. These new scenes fit a different set of circumstances and provide teaching for new situations. Instead of viewing the relationship of Moses and Zipporah, there will be a shift to Israel as the bride and God as the groom, yet Moses will be retained in a mediatory role. Under Moses' leadership the scenes partake more of the nature of life under law, though grace is still the overriding principle. Also, the watering of livestock is upgraded to the watering of thirsty people, though livestock are still included. Of greatest importance is the progress in integrating Christ or God the Father as a character in the scene.

The Rock at Rephidim (Exodus 17:1-7)

The children of Israel moved and encamped at Rephidim according to the bidding of the LORD—they followed the column of cloud. But there was no water source there. As their thirst became more acute, the people complained and contended with Moses, to the extent that Moses feared stoning (v. 4). God did not enter the squabble between Moses and the people, but, as a Father Who sees and knows the needs of His children, He gave His instructions to Moses for the filling of those needs.

“And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.’ And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarrelling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the LORD by saying, ‘Is the LORD among us or not?’” (Ex. 17:5-7)

Moses was probably surrounded in the center of the camp—not in an ideal location for an inundation of water. God instructed him to follow Him, bringing some of the elders as representative witnesses, and the rod of God used in the implementation of the plagues in Egypt. Being at the foot of Mt. Horeb, there was probably a dry wadi that led to a rock face or an incline of the mountainside. If not, the coming inundation would create one. Moses and the elders of Israel followed the column of cloud which led them to the mountain and took a position on the rock there. God said, “Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb.” The elders actually beheld the cloud, the form taken by the Image of the LORD, as it took position on the rock. There was little more that could have been done to identify God's Image with the rock.

Moses came as close as physically possible to striking the Image of God with the rod. This idea should come home to our hearts. And this thought should be coupled with the thought of verse 7 above. The people were questioning whether or not Yahweh was among them. This is very much the same as the questioning of the Jews in Jesus day about the origin of Christ. Was that Man among them really God's representative.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers...all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ” (1 Cor. 10:1-4). Christ suffered the stroke of God’s judgment for our sakes. “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed...Come everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price” (Isa. 53:4-5; 55:1).

The word *followed* in 1 Corinthians 10 may cause confusion. Christ, the Rock, *following* is in the sense Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 15:46, “...it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual.” After the natural rock gave natural water, then came Christ the spiritual Rock, of which the natural was a type. Christ gives the water that satisfies the spiritual thirst. Some also have the opinion that Paul took the word *Rock* from many uses where Yahweh is spoken of as one’s Rock in time of trouble. That is also a possibility. Still, if that were the case, the Rock that *led* them might be more appropriate. The important issue is that Yahweh was identified with the Rock.

Moses struck the rock with the rod and the water flowed, filling the wadi that ran through the camp, supplying the Israelites and their livestock with water. The nation of Israel is the bride; God is the Groom, and they meet at the well, the smitten Rock. God is the Groom and also the water source through the Person of His Son.

Notice the order of the following events. In chapter 16 of Exodus, just prior to this passage, is the account of Israel receiving manna from heaven. First, Christ must be made flesh—the bread of life must descend from heaven. Then, He must suffer the judgment of God upon the cross—the striking of the rock. Then, following that judgment comes the water—the gift of the Spirit of God to live within the believer. “Jesus stood up and cried out, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, “Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.”’ Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (Jn. 7:37-39).

Immediately following the provision of water to Israel, she faced a battle with Amalek. No doubt this battle was for possession of the water. The nation of Amalek descended from Esau and represents the flesh. Peter said that fleshly lusts *wage war* against the soul (1 Pet. 2:11). Paul said, “...the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do” (Gal. 5:17).

Moses was stationed on the hill overlooking the battle. As long as he held up his hands, Israel prevailed. When he became weary and lowered his hands, Amalek prevailed. Finally, they placed a rock under Moses for him to sit on, and Aaron held up one of his arms and Hur held up the other. Then, with constancy in his upheld hands, Joshua led the forces of Israel to victory. Our success against the flesh relies on constant prayer. We need to be constantly *propped* up in prayer. What has this to do with the bride at the well? The name of this place was Rephidim. Rephidim means *prop*, or, *support*. Prayer is involved in the bride’s dining on Manna and drinking from the Rock, as well as defeating the flesh. It is in the place where we are propped up in prayer that we drink most deeply of the water of life.

We would like to connect this scene of the water from the rock at Rephidim with a postscript about Zipporah. In the next chapter—Exodus 18—Reuel, Moses' father-in-law, brought Zipporah and her two sons to be reunited with Moses. The experience of near death for Moses and the flaming anger of Zipporah must have caused Moses to send her back to stay with her father. The details in chapter 18 about this event are most interesting for several reasons. Two of those will be mentioned here: (1) this event is set in the text out of historical sequence; (2) other than the genealogies in Chronicles, this is the only mention we have of Moses' second son, Eliezer.

There is a great difference in the names of Moses' sons. The first, Gershom, bears the meaning of *sojourner*, or, *stranger*, and was so named for Moses' situation. The second, Eliezer, means *God of help*, and was so named for Moses' experience of escaping the wrath of Pharaoh. The two names also show the progress of the nation of Israel, as they followed God's leading. They were sojourners in Egypt, and then the God of their fathers helped them, freeing them from slavery and leading them out. So the sons' names are related to Israel's history, as well as Moses' personal experience.

If this passage—Exodus 18—is compared with the parallel passage in Numbers, it can be seen that the event in Exodus is not given in chronological order. Why? We have seen that both Moses and Hagar have been cast in roles representing the nation of Israel. It appears that Zipporah takes on that role also. Let's recall the chronology given above. In Exodus 16 is recorded the initiation of sending the manna—representing the incarnation of Christ. In chapter 17 Israel received water by means of Moses striking the rock with the rod of God—representing the crucifixion of Christ. The water gushing forth from the rock represents the gift of the Holy Spirit, which followed the cross. That event was followed in the latter part of chapter 17 by the battle with Amalek—flesh versus Spirit. Then comes the return of Zipporah. Remember that she left because she was offended at the circumcision of Gershom. That circumcision represents the cross—the stumbling-block of offense to the Jews—which prevented so many of them from believing in Christ. But, with the name of *Eliezer—God is my help*—Zipporah returns. In this chronology the return of Zipporah represents the return of Israel to God, after the complement of the Gentiles has been brought in. This would give reason for the events being recorded in the order they appear.

Chapter 13: The Water and Bride at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 32:1-29; Deuteronomy 9:7-21)

When considering Moses and Zipporah, we mentioned the episode at Mt. Sinai with the golden calf. But we did not go on to show that there was a most unusual portrait there of the bride at the well. It is better that we did not, because the Groom, as in the last scene, will be the LORD rather than Moses. Moses was up on the mountain, receiving the stone tablets and instruction from the LORD. Israel, down below, impatiently thought Moses must be dead or gone. Aaron was no match of will against the crowd. What Aaron intended to be a modified worship of God quickly degenerated into pagan rituals. God sent Moses down the mountain to take control of the people.

“And as soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses' anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. He took the calf that they had made and burned it with fire

and ground it to powder and scattered it on the water and made the people of Israel drink it” (Ex. 32:19-20).

In Numbers 5 a ceremony is described in which a husband—overcome with jealousy and suspicious of his wife’s fidelity—could resolve his jealousy and suspicions. The couple in question would bring a meal offering to the priest. The priest would mix dust from the tabernacle floor in a vessel with holy water. An oath was pronounced before God; the offering was given, and the bitter water was drunk by the woman. If the woman was innocent, the bitter water would have no effect on her. If she was guilty, her belly would swell, her uterus would die, and she would become a curse among her people.

Here is the picture: Israel meets God at Mt. Sinai to enter into a covenant of marriage with Him. Israel is the bride. They meet by water—a brook that is flowing down from the mountain (Deut. 9:21). Israel is unfaithful. Moses, by smashing the stone tablets of the covenant, makes the Husband’s declaration that His wife has been unfaithful—they broke the law and covenant. Moses burned and pulverized the golden calf with which the people had committed spiritual adultery. Then, functioning as priest, Moses gave Israel the bitter water from the brook, where he had spread the ashes and dust. All the elements of the scene are present, but they are cast in the setting of the violation of the law.

We should not leave this scene, without casting it in another and fairly similar set of circumstances. Moses, up on Mt Sinai, receiving the law, represents Christ in heaven. Coming down from the mountain, Moses represents Christ, coming to establish a new covenant with Israel. But, when Christ came, Israel rejected Him and the covenant He brought. Like Moses breaking the tablets of stone, the covenant Christ would have confirmed with the nation of Israel was broken off. Israel was out of covenant relationship with God, much as Israel was cut off from covenant relationship when they crucified Christ. Moses went back up the mountain and Christ went back up to heaven. Moses came down from the mountain to reestablish the covenant with Israel, and this time his face glowed. Christ will return from heaven, not in humility but in glory, and will establish a new covenant with Israel.

Speak to the Rock (Numbers 20:1-13)

The first verse of this passage is not actually part of the scenario showing the bride at the water source, but it is closely related. In verse 1 we are told of the death of Miriam, sister to Aaron and Moses. By the time we reach verse 13 and the scene has been shown, the impending deaths of Moses and Aaron will have been foretold. So we have here a changing of the guard. New leaders will take the places of the old. There will be a reference to the generation that has nearly died off as they near the 40 year mark of wandering. The smiting of the rock in Exodus 17 was during the outset of those years. Now we have a similar event, setting those years of wandering, as it were, between two bookends. God’s provision was there at the start and the end and throughout.

Again, the congregation was without water. Again, the congregation complained to Moses. This time they mourned the fact that they had not already died along the way in the wilderness with their friends and relatives that had fallen. They complained that the land they were in was not a place of figs and grapevines and

pomegranates. Ironically, these are the fruits the spies had brought back from Canaan (Num. 13:23) when the nation refused to go up to possess the land. There is no recorded response of Moses and Aaron to the assembly, but we're told they went to the tent of appointment to bring this issue to the Lord.

“Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the entrance of the tent of meeting and fell on their faces. And the glory of the LORD appeared to them, and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water. So you shall bring water out of the rock for them and give drink to the congregation and their cattle.’ And Moses took the staff from before the LORD, as he commanded him” (Num. 20:6-9).

Like the Exodus 17 scene, the water would issue from stone. But nearly every other detail is different. In Exodus it was a *rock*, but here it is a *crag*, a rock of great size and height. In Exodus 17 Moses was told to take the rod with which he had smitten the waters of Egypt, turning them to blood. Here he was to take the rod that was laid up before the Lord, which was Aaron's rod that budded. “Put back the staff of Aaron before the testimony, to be kept as a sign for the rebels, that you may make an end of their grumblings against me, lest they die” (Num. 17:10). Notice that the purpose stated here for the rod that budded was a purpose of grace—so that the rebellious ones might not die. In Exodus it was the elders who witnessed the striking of the rock at a distance from the congregation, but here it is done in the sight of all—in the sight of a new generation that will enter the land. In Exodus the rock was to be smitten, but here the *crag* was to be spoken to.

We have seen that the rock represented Christ, and in Exodus it was Christ as enduring the judgment of God for sins upon the cross. Here Christ has changed from a Rock to a Crag, or Mountain. Daniel retold and interpreted the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, and in that dream a stone became a mountain that filled the earth, representing the kingdom of God under Christ. So we can expect here that we have a typical representation of the kingdom at a stage of further development. The rod of Aaron speaks of the resurrection life of Christ and the authority associated with that life. The fact that Moses was only to speak to the Crag shows Christ as possessing and exercising power and authority. The speaking was to be done in the sight of the congregation, showing the access of all to Him. In Exodus we were only told that Moses cried out to God and God answered him. But here we are told that Moses and Aaron prostrated at the tent of appointment and the glory of God appeared to them. This seems to represent that the intermediary roles of prophet and priest are coming to their end. Such will be the case at Christ's return, because the outpouring of the Spirit removes the need for intermediaries between God and His people.

Moses and Aaron are not said to have entered into dispute with the people, but they took the matter directly to the Lord. That part of their response was good. Yet Moses and Aaron had somehow come to the end of their self-control. They had come to the end of their grasp on what it means to be a minister of God. They addressed the assembly as rebels, and asked them if *they* should give them water from the *crag*. Then Moses disobeyed the LORD's instruction. Instead of speaking to the great rock he struck it twice with the rod.

Here is the picture. Christ is the ascended Source of God's Spirit—He is the Groom. Moses and Aaron are the servants who were to draw the water for the bride, the congregation, Christ's flock. The servants fail to draw the water as it should be

drawn, but the Groom gives an abundant supply to each and every member of the bride, in spite of the failure of those who were to serve. In Cana, the servants who drew the water knew so much more than the master of ceremonies. It is a wonder of God's grace that the bride at the well will always find her Groom, whether there is a qualified servant there to draw the water for her or not. The Groom will never let the bride leave thirsty. Our faith in God passes through the lone channel of Christ. It is not dependent upon the qualification of human ministers, even though they may be the means God uses to convey the message and blessings.

The writer of Hebrews wrote to Jews who stood on the brink of leaving faith in Christ and returning to Judaism. We would like to recall two expressions he used to describe their dilemma. They were like the Jews of generations before who did not have the faith to enter into God's Sabbath, but died in the wilderness wanderings. And, it was as if they would have to crucify the Son of God to themselves again, holding Him up for disgrace (Heb. 6:6). They were striking the Rock twice! And if they did that, like Moses and Aaron, they would not enter.

Moses and Aaron represented the law and a priesthood of flesh, and so their disobedience and death before reaching the land of promise shows the inability of the covenant of law to enter the kingdom. He Who is the Stone that becomes the Mountain is He Who will pour out the Spirit of grace and supplications in Jerusalem. Then they will look upon Him Whom they have pierced, and they will mourn over Him like the mourning for the loss of a firstborn. Then a fountain shall be opened for the repentant nation (Zech. 12:10-13:1).

Chapter 14: The Bride's Request (Joshua 15:15-19; Judges 1:11-15; 3:8-11)

The passages before us occur during Israel's invasion of the Promised Land. Israel did not completely drive out the inhabitants of the land as God had commanded. Judges chapter 2 begins with an angel of the LORD coming and reprimanding Israel. He said that God promised to keep His covenant, but they had to abstain from making covenants with the people of the land, and they must break down the altars of the native people they conquered. Israel made few covenants with the people of the land, but what they did was just as bad, if not worse. By intermarrying with the Canaanites, they were effectively contracting *unspoken covenants* of tolerance and cooperation.

The book of Judges begins with a marriage and springs of water, and that scene becomes a standard for the history recorded in the book. Caleb was still a prominent leader, but was aging. In the battle to secure the city of Debir he promised to give his daughter, Achsah, as wife, to the commander who took the city. Othniel, a relative of Caleb, captured the city and married his daughter.

Achsah asked Othniel to request of her father a field to add to their possession of land. Apparently Othniel declined or delayed to do so. Achsah made the journey to see her father, going a distance sufficient to require riding a donkey. On arriving she descended from her mount to speak to her father. The text is suggestive that her dismount may have included bowing down to him. This is similar to Rebekah descending from the camel and covering herself before speaking to Isaac. They did not look down upon the man, but approached with humility. Caleb asked why she had come, and his daughter told him she wanted to ask for a blessing, or gift. She explained that the land allotted to her and Othniel was *south-land*, or, *arid land*. She requested, "give me also springs of water." So Caleb gave her the desire of her heart,

“the upper springs and the lower springs” (Jdg. 1:15). This was much more a request of common sense and good planning, than one of greed, or self-seeking.

So we have a bride with some assertiveness and good sense, a groom with bravery and leadership, and upper and lower springs. But that is not the end of the story. Sometime later Israel was subjected to a foreign power for 8 years. God brought this about because of Israel’s unfaithfulness. After Israel returned to God, seeking for deliverance, He raised up a judge to lead them. That judge was Othniel. The name, Othniel, means *lion of God*. The name or description of the oppressor was Cushan-rishathaim, which means *the doubly wicked Ethiopian*. He was from Mesopotamia, or, *the exalted land of two rivers*. Doubles are rampant here. The Spirit of Yahweh came upon Othniel with a double blessing. Othniel was blessed with the military leadership to take Israel into victorious battle, and he received the wisdom to judge Israel. Israel found rest for 40 years under his judgeship. How fitting it is that the father would give both upper springs and lower springs to one who later faced someone known as *double wickedness*. The gift of the springs, as a spiritual blessing, suggests some of the words of Christ: “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him” (Lk. 11:13).

The application to Christ, of a name like, *Lion of God*, is transparent. And the spiritual blessings represented by the springs need no comment. In the case of Isaac, Rebekah was marrying one who possessed all, and that fittingly represents Christ. But it is just as fitting for today’s believer to request of the heavenly Father the spiritual blessings that will enable us to be more fruitful in His service. We are one with Christ, what is His is ours, and all is committed to Him. He is the Firstborn. The firstborn sons of old received a double portion, to enable them to care for the family in the father’s stead. How fitting to God’s grace today that not the firstborn son, but a daughter, requests and receives a double portion of spiritual blessings.

We wish to step back now and take a second look at this story, because it occupies the place of a high water mark in a saga destined for drought. Indeed, in the light of what was to follow, Achsah’s request appears inspired and prophetic. By today’s standards, Caleb’s gift of his daughter as a wife and prize for military victory seems primitive at best. But recall the time and circumstances. Israel’s conquering of the land was a divine mandate. It incorporated a long-due judgment upon the land of Canaan for the wickedness of its people (Gen. 15:16), and it was the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham and his descendants. Also, no single soldier was going to conquer the city. Achsah was being offered to those who were leaders of considerably large forces. The offer applied to men of stature and reputation who were on the cutting edge of their nation’s long-desired destiny.

It is even possible that Caleb was aware of romantic interest between Achsah and Othniel, but we do not wish to suggest more about the situation than the Scriptures reveal. Othniel was motivated to win the victory, whatever his reasons. And, however good or bad this scenario is, the book of Judges uses it as a benchmark. Achsah represents Israel coming into the Promised Land as the bride of the Lion of God. This Lion is judging the wicked nations and dispossessing them. She is indeed the prize of a mighty warrior. She represents Israel, the prize of Yahweh, Who is a Man of war, Who dashes the enemy into pieces (Ex. 15:4-6). Yahweh did win Israel as His bride—a prize bought at the price of victories over Egypt, Ethiopia, Seba and other peoples (Isa. 43:3,ff.).

But look at Israel's condition half way through the book of Judges. We could only wish that Jephthah had promised his daughter as wife and prize to the one who conquered Ammon. Instead he vowed to make whatever first came out of the door of his house, upon a victorious return, a burnt sacrifice to God (Jdg. 11:29-35)! We are not told the final fate of Jephthah's daughter. But we do know that human sacrifice was forbidden, and that Jephthah should have been stoned had he done such (Lev. 18:21; 20:1-5). Furthermore, the law provided standards according to age, gender and time span for the purchase price of people when vows could not be fulfilled (Lev. 27:1-8). Even though she may have been redeemed, Jephthah's daughter still would have had to remain a celibate for the rest of her life. That would have been her *living death*. On the other hand, Israel had grown so corrupt that human sacrifice was certainly possible, though this writer is not convinced it happened.

If this is the condition of Israel halfway through the book of Judges, how does the book end? Even though the record of Achsah is meagerly brief, there are correlations in the text that identify her with the concubine of chapter 19. Both women leave their spouse after marital consummation and return to their father. Both women ride a donkey, though the concubine was dead at the time of her ride. And with both there is a reference to their heart.ⁱⁱ Achsah received the desire of her heart, and the Levite wished to speak to his concubine's heart and bring it back to him. Achsah represented Israel at the beginning of Judges, and the concubine represents Israel at the end of Judges.

Achsah shows Israel as the bride of the victorious Lion of God, coming into possession of the land, and receiving the spiritual blessings of the upper and lower springs. But by the end of the book, Israel is only a concubine. She is out of covenant relationship to God. She forsakes Him to prostitute herself to others (19:2). She returns to her father's house—the condition before God's calling. The Levite comes as a reconciling husband to speak to her heart and bring her heart back to God. The delayed and prolonged leaving of the father's house by the Levite shows Israel's great difficulty in leaving the influence of false gods for faithfulness to the true God.

When they finally get away from her father's house, the Levite refused to spend the night in a Jebusite city (19:10-12), determined only to stay among the children of Israel. That would seem safer. They stopped to lodge in Gibeah, a Benjamite town, but no one offered them shelter. They planned to spend the night in the city square, but an old man, returning late from the field, urged them to stay under his roof and within the protection of his walls. The old man originated from the same area as the Levite. The Levite told him that he had food for his donkeys as well as bread and wine (like Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18) for himself and those with him, and that he was on his way to the house of the LORD.

Throughout the story the Levite's actions seem questionable at best, and his actions at Gibeah were inexcusable, so we might wonder that such details as *the house of the LORD*, and *bread and wine*, symbols of the cross and the tabernacle service, should be included. The man is never named except for the designation of Levite. His role in the episode is that of the Levites in Israel. They were scattered throughout the land in designated cities, and their function was to perform spiritual service among the people. *Levite, house of the LORD, bread and wine*—these are all symbols of God's provision, presence, and care for Israel—realities that should have prevented Israel from becoming a concubine. But the Levites, though designated for this spiritual role, were little more faithful than the rest of the tribes.

That night men of the city—Benjamites—surrounded the house demanding that the Levite be given to them for sexual abuse. This shows Israel lusting to abuse all

that was dedicated to God. In self-preservation, and perhaps a warped sense of values, the concubine was cast to the hoodlums. She was stripped, gang-raped, and victimized with untold abuse throughout the night, which resulted in her death. The next day the Levite put the concubine's body on one of his donkeys, took it home, and cut it into pieces. These pieces he sent out to the various tribes of Israel. This mutilated body represents the condition of Israel. They were not one nation. Instead of being at war with God's enemies, they were also warring among themselves. How distant this portrait is from the likeness of Achsah, a few chapters earlier!

To finish the contrast to Achsah, we must look at the other closing events of the book. The significant result of the mutilation of the concubine jumps off the page when the author describes the outrage of the children of Israel: "...and the congregation assembled *as one man* to the LORD at Mizpah" (Jdg. 20:1, 8, 11). Repeated three times for emphasis, the nation that had been divided like the concubine's body was now united! Oh that it were united for good and not for evil! What began as vengeance to rectify a hideous crime, quickly escalated into civil war. Israel as a whole had gathered against Benjamin. Benjamin refused to give up the perpetrators of the crime against the concubine, so they gathered all their forces to repel Israel. They fought two costly and bloody battles in which Benjamin had the upper hand. In the third battle Israel routed them, slaughtering and pursuing them to a mountain fortress, where they held out for four months. During those four months Israel sacked and burned the Benjamite cities, killing man, woman and child. The tribe of Benjamin was nearly annihilated.

Finally Israel realized they were committing genocide against Benjamin, and they relented—but it was too late. All that remained of Benjamin were the soldiers in the mountain fortress. To complicate things, the men of Israel had sworn two oaths at the beginning of the conflict: (1) They would also wage war against any tribe or clan of their nation that did not send troops to support the battle with Benjamin; (2) No one would give any of their daughters or granddaughters/descendants to marry Benjamites. The problem they struggled with now was how to reestablish Benjamin as a tribe. And, how could they do it without breaking the oaths with which they had bound themselves?

Here is their solution. (1) They proclaimed peace with the remaining Benjamites. (2) They discovered that Jabesh-gilead had not sent any support for their genocide war. So, they sent an army to slaughter Jabesh-gilead—killing everyone—man, woman and child, except for virgins, who were saved as brides for the Benjamites. (3) When step 2 of the solution didn't yield enough brides for Benjamin, they devised an agreement whereby the men of Benjamin could kidnap young, unmarried women at an annual feast, without fear of retribution. What a pitiful solution!

God had originally commanded the Israelites to totally wipe out the nations they were dispossessing. Obviously they failed to do this. God had commanded the Israelites not to intermarry with the people of Canaan, but they did and were soon drawn away after the Canaanite gods. But, when the 11 tribes fought against a tribe of their own people, they nearly accomplished what God commanded against the Canaanites. The men of Israel would not break the oath they had sworn for war, but they had all broken their oath of faithfulness to their covenant with God.

Judges began with Achsah being given as a bride to the man who conquered a Canaanite city. The book ends with the slaughter of the people of Jabesh-gilead, by their own people, to provide wives for soldiers who fought their own nation rather than giving up men who had raped and murdered a woman. And finally, the nation

agreed to condone the kidnapping of women, making kidnapping and rape acceptable terms for gaining a wife. How desperately far they wandered from God's instruction!

Chapter 15: Harod: The Well of Fear and Trembling (Judges 6-7)

The story of Gideon is not as closely related to the ideas of marriage as some of the previous scenes have been. In spite of this we can still follow the line of thought: God's people are His bride; blessings come to them from His Spirit being with them or in them. The early scenes with Gideon emphasize the fear in which God's people were living, and their lack of trust in Him. We meet Gideon threshing his wheat in a wine trough from fear the Midianites would find and take it (Jdg. 6:11). When he followed the LORD's instruction to destroy the altar of Baal, he did so at night from fear of his family and townspeople. Even after getting thousands of troops as reinforcements, he tested God with the fleece, fearing that God would not really be with him.

When the Israelite forces assembled at the well of Harod, God instructed to dismiss all who feared or trembled at the thought of battle. Two thirds of the force returned to their homes. Probably this is where the spring of Harod received its name which means *fearful*, or *trembling*. Just prior to the battle God told Gideon to allay his fears by sneaking down close to the enemy camp and listening to the talk of the Midianites. Gideon did so, and heard the interpretation of a dream which gave him confidence. We have amply shown that fear is a major theme in Gideon's episode.

Even though Gideon was fearful, he was enabled to deliver Israel against overwhelming odds. The reason for this is found in the first statement of the angel of the LORD: "The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor" (6:12). Gideon had not shown himself to be mighty in anything—especially valor. But God speaks, as He did in creation and with Abraham, "and calls into existence the things that do not exist" (Rom. 4:17). After telling Gideon that He was with him, God said, "Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you" (6:14)? Gideon continued to object, but, "the LORD said to him...I will be with you" (6:16). The presence of God's Spirit with us is sufficient, regardless of our fear.

Contending With Baal

Gideon was nicknamed Jerubbaal (6:32), which means, "he will contend with Baal." Under the dark cover of night, Gideon destroyed his father's altar to Baal and the Asherah; he rebuilt the altar of the LORD, and he made a sacrifice to the LORD. In the morning, upon discovering what was done and who did it, the townspeople were calling for Gideon to be executed. Gideon's father intervened saying that if Baal really were a god he should contend for himself. From this came Gideon's nickname, Jerubbaal.

In the subtle art of biblical literature, the Scriptures draw many lines of comparison between Gideon's actions in Ophrah and Elijah's actions on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18). Elijah was very bold and even sarcastic in his contention with Baal and Baal's prophets. We tend to think of Elijah as one who would flatten his nose against the nose of death, and staring straight ahead—eye to eye—tell death to get out of the way. But Elijah was subject to the same emotions that Gideon was, and that we are (James 5:17). And at this particular time in Elijah's life he showed the fear and trembling of Gideon.

In both events with Gideon and Elijah, Baal and Asherah are mentioned. Baal was the primary opponent in both cases. In both accounts bulls were offered in sacrifice. In both, altars were an important feature of the account—both men built altars to the LORD. The same Hebrew word for *demolish* is used in both accounts. Gideon *demolished* the altar of Baal; Elijah rebuilt the altar of the LORD which had been *demolished*. Gideon feared the townspeople and the Midianite oppressors. Elijah feared the threats of Jezebel. Gideon feared for having seen an angel of the LORD, and Obadiah feared for seeing God’s messenger, Elijah. Gideon had too many people and had to reduce his forces. Elijah was one man against 450 prophets of Baal, and 400 prophets of the idols.

The description of Gideon’s process in reducing his manpower employs words used in Elijah’s episode on Carmel. The majority of those tested by drinking from Harod, the spring of fear and trembling, *bowed down on their knees to drink* (Jdg. 7 :5, 6). The same words, *bow*, and, *knees* are used in 1Kings 19:18: “Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the *knees* that have not *bowed* to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.” Even more unusual than this correlation is that of lapping like dogs. The Hebrew word for *lap* (*l-q-q*) is only used 7 times in the Bible. Four of those occurrences are in the episode with Gideon (Jdg. 7:5, 5, 6, 7) where the people drank water by lapping like dogs. The remaining three occurrences are all in the episode with Elijah, Ahab and Jezebel. One time it is said that the dogs licked or lapped the blood of Naboth, whom Jezebel had killed. The other two occurrences are references to the dogs lapping the blood of Ahab (1 Ki. 21:19, 19; 22:38).

Here is the picture at the spring of Harod. God’s people may be there with fear and trembling, but by drinking in the water of the Spirit, they can have the strength to contend victoriously. Paul said, “...we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us” (2 Cor. 4:7). God required Gideon to decrease the number of soldiers, because if victory was given to such a large group they would think they had won the battle themselves. The 300 went out in faith, though they were overwhelmingly outnumbered. They had a voice, a horn, a jar of clay and a torch. The torch represented the Spirit within. The jars were broken to represent human weakness. The voices shouted, the horns were blown, and God gave the victory. Fear was overcome, and the power was clearly of God.

Chapter 16: Samson, The Bridegroom (Judges 14 & 15; John 19:28)

Samson’s role and purpose in the Bible is often misunderstood. His affairs with undesirable women have led many to conclude he is nothing more than a good example of a bad example. To a degree this is true. Part of the difficulty in understanding Samson stems from the fact that he represents more than one character. In his strength he represents what Israel should have been—a conqueror of the Canaanite nations. In his lust and weakness for women he represents what Israel was—a compromising transient, swayed by foreign religions. If we consider these roles together we can see that God used him as a display to Israel of the difference between what they were and what they could have been. Seen in this double role we can also see ourselves in him—the devoted and victorious believer we would be, and the person we are who so frequently falls short.

This much of the picture seems clear, but we also find him in the list of faithful ones (Heb. 11:32), and he also represents Christ as the bridegroom. The name Samson

means *sun*. The song of Deborah, in recounting an Israelite victory closes with these words: “So may all your enemies perish, O LORD! But your friends be like the sun as he rises in his might” (Jdg. 5:31).

Psalm 19 draws a relationship between the sun and the bridegroom, describing the sun as a strong man: “The heavens declare the glory of God...In them he has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy. Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat” (Ps. 19:1, 4-6).

Heat, fire, and sunlight are important elements of the story of Samson. The angel that brought news of his birth ascended in the flame of the sacrificial fire, like the life of an ascent offering going up to God. Samson’s riddle was solved at sundown (14:18), and his anger burned hot (14:19). The men of Gaza planned to kill him at sun up, but he stole their city gates at midnight. Samson put torches between the tales of foxes and burned the Philistine harvest. In retaliation the Philistines burned Samson’s fiancée and her family. When the men of Judah bound Samson and handed him over to the Philistines, his ropes crumbled like flax that had been burned. Delilah bound him with seven new bowstrings, but he snapped them like flaxen threads that had been singed in fire. Heat, fire and sunlight are all significant features in this story of a bridegroom who is a strong man named *Sun*. And being named *Sun*, Samson represents a *heavenly* bridegroom.

Weddings are a time of rejoicing and fellowship. But when we look at Samson’s experience we see none of that. The record of Samson’s life shows him betrayed repeatedly: betrayed by his espoused bride, betrayed by his best man—who took his bride, betrayed by the men of Judah who handed him over to the Philistine army, and betrayed by Delilah. Samson was also a man of unrequited love, and appears to have led a solitary existence. In these things we see a glimpse of the Lord, Jesus Christ. He came as His nation’s Bridegroom, but they crucified Him.

The Spirit of God moved Samson to desire a Philistine bride. Through the ensuing events Samson would weaken the Philistine’s power and domination over Israel. His parents objected to the foreign bride, wondering how their son could be a deliverer if he compromised himself with the enemy, but they gave in to Samson’s insistence.

On a journey to Timnah to see his chosen, a lion roared as it sprang out to attack Samson. “The lion has roared; who will not fear?” (Amos 3:8). The lion was sheltered from sight in the vineyards of the city. This ambush by the lion presages the later ambushes laid for Samson by the Philistines. Endued with supernatural strength, Samson tore the lion to pieces, as easily as one would prepare a young goat for sacrifice or cooking, but he did so without a knife or any weapon.

The place of this event is important. It was in a vineyard. Samson was a nazirite, and was forbidden to eat or drink grapes in any form. For him the vineyard was a place of temptation, and also the place of victory. Peter said, “Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). The Lord Jesus met and defeated this lion during His temptation in the wilderness.

Later Samson stopped by to look at the sun-dried carcass of the lion and noticed that a swarm of bees had taken up residence there and had made honey. He took some of the honey and gave some to his parents also, but he did not tell them where it was from. The writer of Judges made an interesting use of synonyms in this account. The word for *swarm* was not the usual word like that found numerous times in the record of the plagues on Egypt. Instead he used the same word that is generally translated *congregation* and is used to describe the children of Israel in the

assemblage in the wilderness. Here is a message for Samson and Israel: *kill the Philistine lion if you want to live in peace in the land of milk and honey!*

The same message can be applied to us today. “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery” (Heb. 2:14-15). Through the death of Christ comes the sweet fellowship in grace that was otherwise impossible.

One of the ways the Scriptures give emphasis to a thought is by repetition. There are many different types of repetition used in the Bible. In the four chapters of Judges that relate the story of Samson the number 3 is repeated in a number of ways. Samson’s story is built around his affairs with 3 women. There were 30 Philistine men in the bridal party, and 30 others were slain to provide 30 changes of clothing. 300 foxes were caught and used to burn the Philistine harvest. 3,000 men of Judah bound Samson to hand him over to the Philistines, and there were about 3,000 Philistines on the roof, or upper balcony, of the building Samson collapsed. Also in these four chapters are a number of words and phrases repeated 3 times. *Honey* is one of those words with a triple repetition. Throughout the Bible the number 3 is often associated with the kingdom of God in its progressive revelation.

Samson and his parents prepared the customary feast for the wedding. Thirty companions were taken from among the Philistines to make up the bridal party. Normally these were relatives and friends of the bride and groom, but in this case no close acquaintances of Samson are mentioned. This group of men were the *sons of the bride chamber* that Jesus mentioned in Mathew 9:15.

The disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus and asked why His disciples did not regularly fast like they and the Pharisees did. Perhaps there was even an unasked question insinuated here: “Why do you not fast?” The Lord answered with a question and a statement. “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?” The obvious answer to the question is, “No.” But notice that the Lord used a synonym for fasting which strikes a far more ominous note. He changed fasting to mourning, foretelling of His coming death. Then he followed with the statement that the Bridegroom would be separated from his bridal party, and then His disciples would fast. The situations were different but similar for Samson and Christ. The joy that should have attended their days quickly vanished and turned to sorrow.

There is another word used 3 times in the Samson episode which supplies a subtle hint to the heart of the problem. It is the plural *sons*. In Judges 13:1 the *sons* of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, so the LORD gave them a 40 year captivity to the Philistines. The second and third uses of *sons* occur when Samson’s betrothed speaks of the bridal party as the *sons* of her people. (See the CV, the ESV is not consistent in translating *sons*.) The subtle suggestion carried by this repetition is that there is no difference between the Israelites and the Philistines. Both groups are designated as *sons*. This thought is corroborated by the record that 3,000 men of Judah bound and delivered Samson to the Philistines (15:11), and about 3,000 Philistines were on the upper floor of the temple of Dagon which Samson collapsed (16:27). These are not coincidences, but subtle hints.

Samson propounded this riddle to the members of the bride chamber: “Out of the eater came something to eat. Out of the strong came something sweet” (14:14).

Riddles were a common form of entertainment in social gatherings like weddings, but Samson attached an expensive consequence to his riddle. If the 30 men solved the riddle during the seven day festival leading up to the marriage, Samson was to provide each of them with a change of clothing. If they failed to solve it in the allotted time, each was to give Samson a change of clothing. Clothing then was costly, all fabric being woven by hand. When it became clear to the bridal party that they could not solve the riddle, they were angry and threatened the bride and her family with death, should she fail to get the solution for them.

The word for *putting forth*, or, *propounding* a riddle is used three times in the story. This is a figurative use of the word. Literally the word, *chud*, means *to tie*, as in tying a knot. By giving the riddle Samson tied a knot for his wedding guests, and by solving it they would be untying the knot. This is an interesting figure because the story of Samson has him tied with ropes and bowstrings several times. There is even a similarity when his hair was woven with the fabric in the loom and fastened to the wall with a peg. The *peg* or *pin* served the same purpose as a knot. Within the context of the whole book the word for *peg* occurs again when Jael drove the peg through Sisera's temple. These recurring words and ideas would spark interest in those who listened when the Scriptures were read.

Since the riddle had to do with death and resurrection, this idea of binding and tying knots also carries implications about Christ, the true Bridegroom. He was bound and handed over to the Romans. His body was wrapped in cloth and His tomb was sealed. Still these knots did not hold him. At the tomb of Lazarus the Lord said, "Unbind him, and let him go" (Jn. 11:44). When Peter and John looked at the wrappings of Christ in the tomb, they were all neat and orderly.

Like Samson, the Lord Jesus tied knots with words that His people could not untie. For instance, "...Jesus asked them a question, saying, 'What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?' They said to him, 'The son of David.' He said to them, 'How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet"? If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?' And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions" (Matt. 22:41-46).

Another word used 3 times is *chlyphe*, meaning *changes* or *alteration* of garments. In Genesis 45:22 Joseph gave changes of garments to his brothers when he told them who he was. Since Christ is the Bridegroom of Israel, and since the kingdom of heaven is likened to a wedding feast, this giving of garments represents the blessing of entering the kingdom. We gather this from Jesus' parable in Matthew 22:1-14. There we read of a king preparing a wedding feast for his son, but the invited guests declined to attend. The king was angry and retaliated. Then he told his servants to fill the feast with any and all people they could find. At the ensuing banquet there was one guest without a wedding garment. When the king asked about his garment, he was speechless. That guest was thrown out of the banquet—barred from entering the kingdom.

It seems likely that these words of Zephaniah may have been in the Lord's mind when He spoke this parable. "Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is near; the LORD has prepared a sacrifice and consecrated his guests. And on the day of the LORD's sacrifice—'I will punish the officials and the king's sons and all who array themselves in foreign attire'" (Zeph. 1:7, 8).

At Samson's wedding the bridal party all lacked the obligatory garments. In Christ's day the situation was much the same. The Jews would not conform to the

requirements of the kingdom. And, as the day of the LORD will show God's wrath and anger, Samson's anger burned hot because trust with his secret was violated (14:18, 19).

We have seen that Samson's slaying of the lion represents Christ defeating Satan in temptation and through His death on the cross. It is His resurrection that is symbolized by the sweet honey and the *congregation* fellowshiping in the benefits of His work. It was the denial of Christ's resurrection by the Jews—the denial of the lion's carcass and honey—that locked them out of the wedding banquet of the kingdom. They had no garments to give, only threats and deception. Samson slaughtered 30 Philistines in Ashkelon and took their garments to pay the debt of his riddle.

But that is not the end of the story of the strong man bridegroom named Sun. More events are recorded to give a fuller representation of the true Bridegroom's work. After providing the garments to the bridal party, Samson left Timnah and returned home in a fit of anger. Evidently his marriage was never consummated. After a while, when his anger had cooled down, Samson returned to Timnah to visit his wife. Upon arriving he found that she had been given to one of the bridal party—one we might call the *best man*—as wife. The father offered her younger sister in her place, saying that she was more attractive than the older sister. The Israelite people would notice a hint at Jacob's situation here, but Samson's anger flared again and this time his target of revenge was the whole Philistine populace.

Samson caught 300 foxes, and tied them tail to tail with a torch tied to the tails. He released these fire spreaders in various places destroying the Philistine harvest. The words *tail* and *torch* are each used 3 times. The Philistines retaliated by burning the bride's family. Samson retaliated for this in a battle where he slew many of the Philistines. Then Samson went to a solitary place to live, probably in an effort to protect family and friends from injury by association with him.

During this time the Philistines regrouped and changed their strategy in dealing with Samson. The Philistines set themselves in battle array against Judah in an area that became known as Lehi. Judah was already subservient to them, and when they asked the Philistine's intentions, they were told to bring them Samson bound, or suffer the consequence.

To prevent a great slaughter of his people, Samson agreed to let the Jews bind him and hand him over to the Philistines. When Samson was given to the Philistines, they shouted in triumph, like the lion roaring in the vineyard. Then the Spirit of God came upon him, and the ropes that bound him became as burned flax and crumbled away. His bonds "melted off his hands."

"And he found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, and put out his hand and took it, and with it he struck 1,000 men" (Jdg. 15:15). I would like you to consider the unlikely nature of this line of Scripture if it were anything but divine. In human writings the author would tend to emphasize and get caught up in the excitement of the imminent battle. We might expect to hear that Samson grabbed or snatched a weapon from one of the Philistines, or even that he grabbed or snatched a bone or club and began swinging the weapon. But we do not expect to hear that he *found* a jawbone of a donkey, and even less do we expect to be told that it was a *fresh* jawbone—one from a newly deceased donkey. These are important details in the Scripture, and they help us to see a deeper meaning.

The word *found*, or, *to find*, is used 3 times in the Samson narrative. The first 2 times it is used in the thought of the sons of the bride chamber *finding out* Samson's

riddle. The third use is here, when he *found* the fresh jawbone. So the use of the word *found* creates a link between Samson's riddle and the jawbone. We have seen that the riddle about the lion and honey had to do with death and resurrection. Now we are also being shown a relationship between the death of the donkey and the death of the Philistines. And Samson, who held the bone of the newly deceased donkey, nearly died as well. We also wish to bring to the reader's mind the words of Paul about Christ becoming flesh, "...and being *found* in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:8).

Again, the words of Hebrews 2:14 come to mind as we think of the idea that the donkey's death and the death of the Philistines were connected. "...that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil." But the passage in Hebrews, like the Philippian passage, goes on to connect this thought with the incarnation. We are specifically told that Samson stretched forth his hand and took hold of the jawbone. If we continue reading at Hebrews 2:14, in verse 16 we find that, speaking of Christ, "For assuredly it is not taking hold of messengers [angels], but it is taking hold of the seed of Abraham." (CV) Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom, in becoming flesh was taking hold of our humanity—something that was stubborn and unclean and unsuitable for sacrifice—that in His death for humanity he could wrest the power of death from Satan, and deliver us.

Like Christ, Samson had a way with words, and a short summary verse of his words is recorded. It receives widely varied interpretations, but we favor one that follows the Greek version of the O. T. "Then Samson said: With the jawbone of the donkey to rub out, I rubbed them out. With the jawbone of the donkey I smote a thousand men" (Jdg. 15:16 CV). There are several Hebrew words built on the 3 consonant stem *ch-m-r*. The sound and meanings of the words change when different vowels are inserted. The word for donkey is very similar, being *ch-m-o-r*. So the first line of Samson's ditty had the unusual phonetic quality of three words with the *ch-m-r* sounds.

One of the words from this stem means to smear, and another means to heap up. The original Hebrew text did not have the vowels, so it is a matter of judgment which word was intended. While keeping the same Hebrew text, we can change from the idea of *heaps of dead enemies* (AV, ESV and others), to enemies being *smear*ed or *wiped out*. This brings us to a parallel thought of victory relating to Christ and the cross. Paul used the same word for *smear* found in the Samson story when he said, "...dealing graciously with all our offenses, **erasing** the handwriting of the decrees against us, which was hostile to us, and has taken it away out of the midst, nailing it to the cross, stripping off sovereignties and authorities, with boldness He makes a show of them, triumphing over them in it" (Col. 2:14, 15). In early times erasure was done by rubbing or smearing away the ink, sometimes by using an oil or some lubricant. The Philistines ruled over the Israelites, but Samson was erasing their authority and rule. Christ's work on the cross erases the angelic authority over humanity by fulfilling the law which they had given and by raising mankind up to the position of being God's image.

"As soon as he had finished speaking, he threw away the jawbone out of his hand. And that place was called Ramath-lehi" (Jdg. 15:17). If Samson finding and taking up the jawbone represented Christ taking up human flesh, then casting away the jawbone would represent the death of Christ. Christ's death on the cross followed immediately after His last words. Similarly Samson's casting away of the jawbone is

related to his finishing speaking. The place where this great battle took place was called Ramath-lehi. Ramath means an *up-lifting* or *height*—a *hill*, and Lehi means *jaw*, or *jawbone*. So the place was the up-lifting of the jawbone. With the jawbone representing Christ in the flesh, the place would have been Golgotha, where Christ was lifted up. Jesus said, “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” (Jn. 12:32).

“And he was very thirsty; and he called upon the LORD and said, ‘You have granted this great salvation by the hand of your servant, and shall I now die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?’ And God split open the hollow place that is at Lehi and water came out from it. And when he drank, his spirit returned, and he revived. Therefore the name of it was called En-hakkore, it is at Lehi to this day” (Jdg. 15:18, 19).

Several things are suggested here. Christ on the cross cried out “I thirst” (Jn. 19:28). After Samson drank from the spring God caused to break open from the hill, “his spirit returned.” This phrase is suggestive of resurrection. The name of the spring was “the spring of him who cried, or called.” The spring of life—the gift of God’s Spirit—was given after Christ battled victoriously and thirsted for our sakes. Truly in the life of Samson we have a picture of the heavenly Bridegroom coming and providing the water of life for our sakes.

Chapter 17: The Relentless Perseverance of Divine Grace

Before leaving the book of Judges it will be well to briefly consider its ending, as it prepares the way for a fresh alteration in the scenes at the well. As a young person reading the Bible for the first time, I was appalled by the ending of the book of Judges. I thought the events recorded there were too sinful and horrid to be included in God’s word. Much later I came to notice what I once thought was *insignificant trivia*—the names of places where these events transpired. Amid all the repulsive and gruesome details of depravity I began to detect the unfolding blossom of grace.

The Levite was from the hill country of Ephraim (Jdg. 19:1). He seems to have been a harbinger of the corruption and curse that would come on the house of Eli, the priest. But, as we open the pages of 1 Samuel, we find that Elkanah and Hannah, the parents of Samuel, were also from the hill country of Ephraim (1:1). Samuel would surpass the family of Eli in leadership and service to the nation.

The Levite’s concubine was from Bethlehem in Judah (Jdg. 19:2), and it was to her father’s house there that she had returned before the incident of her abuse and death. As the pages of 1 Samuel turn, we find the family of Jesse living in Bethlehem (16:1). Samuel went to Bethlehem to anoint Jesse’s son David as king of Israel. Unlike the concubine with a straying heart, David was a man after God’s own heart.

Gibeah was the city where the Levite stopped to spend the night, and it was men of Gibeah who raped and brutalized the Levite’s concubine (Jdg. 20:15). Gibeah, along with the other cities of Benjamin would soon be burned. Shortly thereafter it would be rebuilt by some of the surviving members of the Benjamite force and their wives, who were either purchased by the massacre of Jabesh-gilead or kidnapped. Gibeah was also to become the home of Kish, the father of Saul, who was the first king of Israel. Kish is referred to as a master of valor, meaning he possessed military training and prowess. It is not clear how many generations passed between the massacre of Benjamin in Judges 20 and the anointing of Saul to be king, so we don’t know if it was Saul’s grandfather or great grandfather who was among those soldiers besieged in the mountain fortress. Abner, Saul’s chief military commander, was a

cousin or uncle of Saul. Evidently Saul's family excelled in military ability and leadership and were not far removed from the remnant of their tribe that barely escaped extinction.

Jabesh-gilead was a city that had not sent any troops to the war with Benjamin. In retaliation it was destroyed and the young virgins saved as brides for the remnant of Benjamin. In 1 Samuel 11 we find the city repopulated, and under threat from the Ammonites. The newly anointed king, Saul, in hot anger against the threat, cut a team of oxen in pieces and sent them throughout the country in a manner similar to the Levite sending out the dismembered corpse of his concubine. The oxen parts were attended by the message that, if any did not rally in support, their oxen would receive a similar fate. Israel turned out in full force, as one man, and soundly defeated the Ammonites.

The events and character sketches associated with these locations in the closing pages of Judges are all wonderfully reversed in the opening pages of 1 Samuel. God did not forsake His people, but He judged them for the wrong and continued working with them. There was always the hope of a godly leader rising—a hope that was ultimately fulfilled in Christ. The closing chapters of Judges echo a statement that there was no king in Israel in those days, and each man did what was right in his own eyes (Jdg. 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). And even though the appointment of a king was not God's ideal for Israel at that time (1 Sam. 8:7), He still worked with them through that process also.

Chapter 18: Saul: A New Groom at the Well (1 Samuel 9-11)

Saul is introduced with a brief genealogy. The first thing we are told about him is he was sent by his father to find lost donkeys. This picture of searching for straying stubbornness is an apt description of Israel at the end of the book of Judges. The repeated line that every man did what was right in his own eyes was about to be remedied with the selection of a king. This search for donkeys was Saul's journey, on which he meets his bride at the well. Some alterations are made to the scene, however, since the marriage is that of a king to his nation, rather than a man to his wife.

There are some similarities between a coronation and a wedding, as can be seen from this quotation: "Go out, O daughters of Zion, and look upon King Solomon, with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, on the day of the gladness of his heart" (Song 3:11). Weddings and coronations were both very public affairs in which the populace attended and participated. Some eastern countries still crown the groom in nuptial ceremonies, and some crown both bride and groom. Both ceremonies are characterized by feasting and the giving of gifts (1 Sam. 10:27).

After three days of searching and failing to find the donkeys, Saul determined to return home. However, the lad who accompanied him knew that the prophet Samuel was in the city close by, and he convinced Saul to inquire of him. "As they went up the hill to the city, they met young women coming out to draw water and said to them, 'Is the seer here?'" (1 Sam. 9:11). This verse calls to mind the meetings with Rebekah, Rachel and Zipporah at a well. But, instead of meeting a bride and being escorted to her home, they met a group and were directed to Samuel, who was waiting for them. We are not told of any water being drawn from the well, but there

definitely was a meal. Saul was invited to a feast, where he was the guest of honor. He was seated at the head of the table in Samuel's place, and received the priest's portion of the sacrifice. There were about 30 men who were guests at the meal (1 Sam. 9:22), reminding us of Samson's bridal party (Jdg. 14). They would have been elders and leaders of the community.

The next day before returning home, Saul was secretly anointed as king by Samuel. The anointing replaces, at least in part, the purpose of the well in the previous scenes. We have seen that the water from the well was a symbol of the Holy Spirit of God, coming to the believer with life and truth. Now the oil becomes the symbol of the Spirit and His gifts of enablement for leadership. "Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head and kissed him and said, 'Has not the LORD anointed you to be prince over his people Israel? And you shall reign over the people of the LORD and you will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies'" (1 Sam. 10:1).

Samuel told Saul that he would receive three signs that would verify to him the anointing he received. He would meet two men who would tell him that the donkeys were found. He would meet three men going up to sacrifice at Bethel, and they would give him part of their offering. Again he would be receiving part of the priest's portion. Finally, he would meet a group of the prophets prophesying in ecstasy, and when he did, he would prophesy with them. By this participation in the office of prophet, he was receiving a sign of the presence of God's Spirit. Furthermore, when he left Samuel, God transformed his heart into a different one (1 Sam. 10:9). In all these things we see Saul being introduced into the offices and functions that Samuel had been filling. His position as king would be enhanced by intimacy with these offices.

Since Saul was the first king, there was no established precedent for entering that office. Most of the judges entered the capacity of judgeship by being God's chess piece in delivering the people through a military victory. Deborah may have been a notable exception to that rule. But the judgeship of Israel's leaders was rarely passed to descendants in the same family. In many ways Samuel was preparing his replacement. It was very much like an adoption ceremony, in which the son takes over the business and authority of the father. But the book of 1 Samuel repeatedly shows the failure of sons in office. Eli's sons were so corrupt that the entire house of Eli was to be judged. Under their inadequate care and guidance, the ark of God was captured. Samuel's sons corrupted themselves and took bribes. David's sons would be even worse.

There was still a public ceremony to be conducted. Samuel convened the twelve tribes and publicly, by lot, made the descending selections from tribes to families to individuals. The casting of the lot took selection out of man's control and was used to find the mind of God in the matter (Prov. 16:33). It also satisfied the public that the decision was divine. The decision was met with considerable approval, but there were also those who disapproved. In the scenes at the well, one of the common points was finding a bride of the right family. In the selection of the king, the determination of the lot fulfills that same purpose.

Still missing from our list of well-scene elements was some deed to prove Saul's suitability for the task. With Abraham's servant at the well this was proven by God's answer to his prayer, Rebekah's watering of the camels, and her membership in the right family. Jacob proved his suitability by removing the stone from the mouth of the well and watering the flock. Moses proved himself by driving away the lazy shepherds who tried to steal the water drawn by Reuel's daughters. Saul's opportunity did not

occur immediately at the selection and instruction ceremony, but came shortly thereafter when Jabesh-gilead came under siege by the Ammonites.

Saul cut a team of oxen in pieces and sent the pieces throughout the country, reminding everyone of the dismembered concubine and the civil war that followed. The pieces of oxen were accompanied by the message that any who failed to turn out would have the same done to their oxen. The turnout was strong. The same terminology used in the book of Judges was repeated, “Then the dread of the LORD fell upon the people, and they came out *as one man*” (1 Sam. 11:7 emphasis mine). Saul showed good military strategy, dividing his forces into three groups, and giving the enemy false information so they would be taken by surprise. God gave Israel an overwhelming victory, and Samuel called for the people to come to Gilgal and renew the kingship. This they did with sacrifices, offerings and great joy.

The well-scenes included a meal shared with rejoicing. The renewal at Gilgal helps fill this element. The sacrifices provided a meal for those present, as well as communion with God. The victory over the Ammonites was a cause of joy to the tribes of Gad and Reuben, who were already under Ammonite domination—as well as for those of Jabesh-gilead and the nation at large. The victory also represents the revelation from God given at the well scenes. The victory was a gift from Yahweh and verified His guidance in the selection of Saul.

While many of the elements have changed from the former scenes at the well, we can still discern a similar pattern. And in these events we see Saul wed to the nation of Israel as their king. As an interesting footnote, the name of the king of the Ammonites was Nahash. Nahash means *serpent*. When Adam was given authority in the garden he was tested by the Serpent, as Christ was by Satan. Also, Adonijah, who plotted to make himself king before Solomon could succeed David, gathered supporters and made sacrifices and feasting at the stone of Zohelath, which also means *serpent*. This also calls to mind the book of Revelation and the opposition of the Serpent described there.

Chapter 19: David: The King after God’s Own Heart (1 Samuel 15-2 Samuel 6)

Similar to the coronation of Saul, the scenes in which David is wed to Israel as their king are spread out through the Scriptures and cover a considerable period of time. There are several reasons for this, not least of which is the fact that David’s anointings represent different aspects of the reign of Christ and different phases of the kingdom of God. David was anointed three times, and each anointing increased the sphere of his rule. Some of the characteristics of the scene at the well accompany each anointing and some occur at other scenes along the way. David’s first anointing took place during Saul’s reign, and had to be done in secret.

At Sinai Israel grew impatient for Moses to return from the mountain and sinned by worshipping in a way that violated God’s instruction. Similarly, Saul grew impatient for Samuel’s arrival when he had been instructed to wait. He intruded into the priestly office, doing what he should not. So God told Samuel that He had rejected Saul from reigning continually and from being the head of a dynasty. After the battle with Amalek, Samuel and Saul had such a serious falling out, that Samuel did not go to see him for the rest of his life—a considerable number of years.

God sent Samuel to anoint one of the sons of Jesse in Bethlehem as the next king. Samuel hesitated to anoint David, telling God that he feared Saul would kill him if he did so. God instructed Samuel to take a heifer with him and say that he had

come to make a sacrifice. It was public knowledge that Saul had fallen from favor, and the people feared him and what he might do if a new king was anointed. When Samuel came to Bethlehem, the elders were made aware of his coming and met him trembling, asking if he had come in peace. Obviously this was a situation where a public anointing could have led to a blood bath at Bethlehem if Saul learned of it. How similar this is to Herod killing the infants of Bethlehem in an effort to destroy Christ!

Samuel assured the elders that it was a time to rejoice, and he hallowed Jesse and his sons, inviting them to the sacrifice. When Samuel saw Jesse's first son, Eliab, he thought that surely he was the one to be anointed. But God told him no, and told him that He was looking at the heart rather than the outward appearance. All Jesse's sons who were present passed before him, and Samuel asked if there were any more. Only David, the youngest, was absent, tending the flock. Samuel instructed to send for him, saying they wouldn't gather round to eat till he arrived. David was summoned, and God approved him. "Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward...Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him" (1 Sam. 16:13-14). The Scriptures make a sharp distinction here: the Spirit left Saul, and the Spirit prospered on David. Even though the administration did not change immediately, God began working through David in a way the populace could perceive.

There is a parallel to this in today's world. Christ has ascended to the throne of God. All authority and power are His. But the time has not yet come that He should exercise all that authority. He is Head over all to the church (Eph. 1:22), but the world does not yet see nor recognize Him as Head. That will come, in time.

When Samuel came to anoint David, David was where he was supposed to be—caring for the sheep. This contrasts with Saul's position when Samuel prepared to anoint him. Saul was wandering, looking for lost donkeys that he never did find. This reflects his political career. He had some victories, but he never possessed the office with unquestioned permanence.

The next significant event, following David's anointing, was his victory over Goliath. That was David's *proof of suitability* as leader of the nation. Great detail is given about Goliath's size, armor, and of his defiance of Israel (1 Sam. 17:1-11). For 40 days the Philistines and Israelites were standing in array against each other, and Goliath was coming out twice a day and taunting the Israelites. In the morning and evening Goliath would march out and call for a champion to fight with him, saying the battle of champions would determine which country served the other. Saul and the Israelites were paralyzed with fear.

David was sent by Jesse to bring supplies to his three older brothers who were in Saul's army. This was David's journey to the well—he was on a mission for the welfare of his brothers. When he arrived the Israelites were marching out in full force to fight the Philistines, but Goliath appeared again with his taunt, and the Israelite troops fled back in fear. David left the supplies in the proper hands and ran among the troops to see his brothers. He was baffled that no one would fight the giant. He asked what would be done for the one who would defeat this foe. The hand of the king's daughter, and freedom for his family in Israel (evidently freedom from taxation or military service) would be the hero's prize.

In the confusion of Israel's retreat, David's brothers spotted him, and were angry to see him there. They were probably jealous of him because of his anointing

and felt they looked cowardly in retreat. Like the brothers of Joseph they spoke degradingly to him. But David's concern was for the honor of the God of Israel.

Soon he was brought to Saul who did not recognize him, despite David's previous musical service to him. David volunteered to take the giant's challenge. Israel had a champion. They had a champion who stood head and shoulders above all other Israelites—Saul. But Saul was indispensable, or perhaps just too scared. For David the whole issue was the honor of God. If no one else would take the initiative, he was ready to do whatever was necessary. He was confident that God would not be mocked by the Philistine giant or the Philistine army. Saul knew God could work such miracles, but his previous failures made him doubt that God was willing to work a miracle through him.

After trying and turning down the offer to use Saul's armor, David chose 5 smooth stones from the wadi for his sling and went out to meet the giant. Goliath voiced his offense at being offered such an unworthy opponent, cursed David by his gods, and told David he would feed his body to the birds. "Then David said to the Philistine, 'You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand'" (1 Sam. 17:45-47).

David ran toward the Philistine, loading his sling and slinging the stone as he went. It sunk into the forehead of Goliath, and the giant fell dead on his face before the glory of God. David took Goliath's sword and beheaded him with it. At the death of their champion, the Philistines fled with no thought of honoring Goliath's offer. The Israelites pursued the Philistines to the gates of their cities, killing many on the way. Then they returned and plundered the abandoned camp, gaining much needed weapons. Saul's military leader, Abner, brought David to Saul for official introductions. From this time forward David became a leader in Saul's army. Immediately David became popular—so popular that Saul would try to kill him out of jealousy. David did not receive Merab, Saul's daughter as wife, though she had been promised. Later Saul promised to give her to David if he proved the killing of 100 Philistines by the evidence of their foreskins. David supplied 200, but still did not receive Merab as wife. Later Saul gave David his daughter Michal for a wife. In all these delays before giving David a wife, Saul was trying to use the circumstances to bring about David's death.

David's victory over Goliath was typical of Christ's victory of resurrection. The battle shows the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15) being crushed by the seed of the woman when Goliath was beheaded. Since Goliath was beheaded with his own sword, the victory reflects Christ, through death, destroying the Adversary, who held the power of death (Heb. 2:14). The great victory over spiritual powers is clearly typified, but David is withheld from receiving a wife or becoming king so that he might represent Christ in His rejection.

At Samson's wedding feast there were 30 men as bridal party guests (Jdg. 14). At Saul's sacrificial meal, before being anointed, there were about 30 men as guests (1 Sam. 9:22). David also had his 30. They were even designated *the 30*, but they were his *mighty men*. There may have been exactly 30 at the beginning, or it may have

been a round number, but by later years a few more were added in (2 Sam. 23:8-39; 1 Chron. 11:10-47). These men were his captains, and they had been distinguished by deeds of unusual bravery and valor. Usually these deeds were victorious battles against staggering odds, but they also included such feats as going down into a cistern on a snowy day and killing a lion that was trapped there.

There is one feat recorded of 3 of these mighty men that truly displays the comradery, love, and respect that David shared with his men. It happened at a time when David was a fugitive from Saul in the hill country of Judah. The Philistines controlled the area of Bethlehem and had a garrison of troops stationed there. In the privation of their circumstances David voiced his desire to drink from the water of the well at the gate of Bethlehem. As a youth he had quenched his thirst there many times. Three of his men fought their way into the Philistine camp, drew water from that well, and brought it back to him. David was overcome with emotion at this deed of love and bravery. "He poured it out to the LORD and said, 'Far be it from me, O LORD, that I should do this. Shall I drink the blood of the men who went at the risk of their lives?'" (2 Sam. 23:16, 17). The highest thing David could do with the water he did. He made it a sacrificial gift to his God. This says so much about how God views our service (cf. 2 Tim. 4:7; Phil. 2:17).

After the death of Saul, David inquired of God about moving into the cities and moved into the area of Hebron. The elders of Judah met with him there and anointed him king over Judah. This was followed by seven and a half years of struggles within the house of Saul to maintain rule over the rest of Israel. Finally all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and anointed him king over all of Israel there. They said, "Behold, we are your bone and flesh. In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led out and brought in Israel. And the LORD said to you, 'You shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel'" (2 Sam. 5:1-2). It is interesting that here we have the same term of identity that Laban used of Jacob: *my bone and my flesh*. And we noticed how Christ used that expression to describe Himself in His resurrected body. David's later anointings represent the future receptions of Christ as King.

After his third anointing, and during the final era of his reign, David made the changes which would bring Israel's worship of God to its zenith. That would be realized in Solomon's reign with the new temple. David organized courses of Levites for service and singing and brought great expansion to Israel's worship. This was very much like a great outpouring of God's Spirit, because it changed how the nation viewed their relationship and responsibility to God. David primarily represents Christ in His first coming, when He was rejected, so a really clear picture of the well is not given. But the changes he initiated and brought to Israel's worship shows the great spiritual effects that the wells symbolize. Though Christ was rejected, He fulfilled the law and His rejection brought the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem. Christ changed Israel dramatically.

Chapter 20: Solomon Becomes King (1 Kings 1; 1 Chronicles 23:1; 28, 29)

When the restraints of age were limiting David's activity and awareness of the political scene, his oldest living son, Adonijah, attempted to usurp the throne. Thanks to Nathan and Bathsheba, Solomon was speedily anointed and succeeded to the throne (1 Ki. 1; 1 Chr. 23:1). Following the impromptu affair, there was a second and more

formal ceremony (1 Chr. 28, 29) in which David addressed both the country at large and Solomon, as the new king. The chief topic of David's address was the building of the temple, about which more will be said later. So Solomon's coronation, though affected somewhat by Adonijah, was the first coronation of normal succession to the throne in time of peace.

Under orders from king David, Solomon rode David's mule, the royal mount. This simple detail made a statement that Solomon would be the next king. He left the palace precincts accompanied by the escort of the royal guard, headed by Benaiah. This royal guard ("the Cherethite and the Pelethite," 1 Ki. 1:38, 44) is described in terms literally meaning *executioners* and *runners*. The functions of executing criminals and carrying the king's orders were the primary duties of their employment. Zadok the priest was accompanied by the prophet Nathan for the anointing ceremony, in which they used the holy oil that was kept in the tabernacle David had set up for the ark of the covenant. Public announcements were made, or official assembly horns sounded. The royal entourage made its way to the spring Gihon to conduct the anointing and official announcement. This grand procession attracted a large following along the way. Gihon was a public place, unconfined by the narrow walls of a building, which made a suitable setting for the ceremony. Gihon was a significant source of water in Jerusalem and was associated with Israel's capture and possession of the capital city. This location provided for the *meeting* of Solomon with his bridal nation at the well.

After the anointing, the trumpet was sounded, which cued the assembly to shout, "Long live King Solomon!" (1 Ki. 1:39). Then, with musical accompaniment and loud rejoicing, the regal procession wended its way back to the palace. There Solomon was seated on the royal throne. The aristocracy paid homage, and King David himself worshipped God in gratitude for living to see his son ascend the throne.

In 1 Chronicles 28 and 29 comments about the coronation of Solomon are interspersed in David's charge to the nation, its leaders, and to Solomon about the construction of the temple. David had spent years accumulating riches and materials for the construction of the temple. He had received from God the pattern to be followed (1 Chr. 28:19), and he gave a great gift from his own personal wealth as well. He encouraged generous giving to the work from all those of substance, and the gifts were many. There was great rejoicing in anticipation of the worship of God ascending to new heights. Thousands of sacrifices were made, and the whole congregation was fed and rejoiced in the new king and the nation's plans. Solomon was again anointed for office, and Zadok was officially anointed as chief priest.

In the book of Genesis Abraham met with Melchizedek, king of Salem. The book of Hebrews tells us that he represented Christ. Melchizedek is a compound: *melech*, meaning *king*; and *zedek*, meaning *righteousness*. Salem is also the word *shalom* meaning *peace*. And thus we are told that Christ is King of righteousness and King of peace. In the second anointing of Solomon, Melchizedek is before us again. Solomon's name is another spelling of *shalom*, and he was anointed king—giving us *king of peace*. In the same ceremony Zadok, whose name is the same as *zedek* in Melchizedek, was anointed. So both elements are included, though by means of two persons. The ceremony in 1 Chronicles 28 and 29 represents Christ coming into His exercise of full authority and power as King of righteousness and peace. This represents the final expansion of Christ's authority in the kingdom.

The spring or well of Gihon also bears a typical significance here. The name Gihon means *gushing*, or, *great breaking forth*, because at different times the underground supply of water gushed and swelled up. Paul wrote to the Romans:

“...much more have the grace of God and the free gift by grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many...where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (5:15, 20). The idea behind the words *free gift* is that of *a gift that gushes in abundance*. This thought is fully borne out by the context. Gihon makes a fitting place for the anointing of one who represents the true Melchizedek. Paul’s thoughts are well in line with the Melchizedek idea: “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). Christ was raised because of our justifying—our being declared *righteous*, and in Him we have *peace* with God. Both elements of righteousness and peace are found in Him.

Fully integrated into this representation of Christ as Melchizedek, is the glorious purpose of building the temple. When Moses gave his farewell instructions in Deuteronomy, he gave the reason for the harshness of their campaign against the Canaanites: “You shall tear down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and burn their Asherim with fire. You shall chop down the carved images of their gods and destroy their name out of that place. You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way. But you shall seek the place that the LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation there. There you shall go, and there you shall bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution that you present...” (Deut. 12:3-6; cf. 12:11, 21; 14:23-24; 16:2, 6, 11) The purpose was to eliminate and forget the existence of every foreign and false god, so that there would be a place where the name of Yahweh was supreme and solitary. Through all the years of wilderness wandering, God was waiting for the place for His name to be won and established. Through all the generations from Joshua through the book of Judges, God was waiting for the place for His name alone to be established. Through all the years and generations of fighting with the Canaanites and the Philistines, God was waiting for the place for His name to be established.

When we turn the page into the New Testament we see that even the temple built by Solomon was only a type of the real and greater temple: a recreated humanity in which God dwells. And throughout our lives, as we struggle with the flesh and bow down to greed and desires, God is waiting for the ground of our heart to be captured and established as the place for His name. This, again, is the bride at the well of God’s grace—the story of God’s love for mankind—the story of the Spirit of God quenching the thirst of sinners—the story of God making humanity one, holy, righteous, and His image. The joy at Solomon’s coronation, when David gave freely and the Israelites gave freely to build the place among them where the name of God would dwell, is but a faint whisper of the clarion song of joy we will hear and sing when God becomes all in us, and the name of every vain desire is blotted out.

Chapter 21: The Coronation of Christ (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John)

The gospel accounts tell the story of the coming Groom to meet the bride at the well. As the scenes changed along the way in the Old Testament, so also they take another step up in development when we meet Christ in the New Testament. The journey of Christ to the well lasted more than thirty years. It began with His conception in the womb of Mary; it continued through the experiences of His youth; it came to a climax at His anointing under the ministry of John, the Baptist.

Christ was not anointed with the holy oil that was poured on the priests, kings and prophets of old. He was anointed with the Spirit of God when it descended on Him at His baptism by John. This anointing was much more than that of the kings.

Remember that the Spirit came upon Saul at his anointing, but because of his repeated sins and shortcomings, the Spirit later left him. This reminds us of the words in Genesis 6:3 that the Spirit of God would not always abide or strive in human flesh. But in John's account, the testimony of the Baptist was that he had gazed upon the Spirit, descending as a dove from heaven, and that it *remained* on Christ. (The idea of remaining or abiding or continuing is a key thought in John's writings.) Like the dove remaining on the earth after Noah's flood, the Spirit found in the Son of Mankind One on Whom it could remain always. That is great news for all mankind.

This baptism-anointing embellishes the scenes of anointing a person for office, by enlarging the scene to include ideas of creation. The baptism shows a symbolic death and resurrection and presents a scene much like what we find in Genesis. If we were to combine the arts of interpretation and translation, we could render Genesis 1:2, "And the earth lacked form and was vacant of life, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the Breath of God breathed on the face of the waters." This rendition likens the first chapter of Genesis to the second chapter where the LORD God took the formless dust of the ground, formed a man, breathed into his face the breath of life, making him a living soul (Gen. 2:7). So we can see that the anointing of Christ at His baptism is not only the anointing of Him for his royal and intermediary offices, but it also identifies Him as the beginning of the new creation (Rev. 3:14). And the remaining of the Spirit of God upon a Man is a signal that humanity will yet again be the image of God. Christ was that Image in the Old Testament, and He showed that He could still be that Image in human flesh. And thus Pentecost also becomes an earnest/promise of man being made into God's image.

In Mark's account, after the baptism and anointing by the Spirit, the Spirit *immediately drove* Him into the wilderness for 40 days for testing by Satan. This was a proving of suitability of the Groom, but it was not His final test. This temptation was the test which Adam and Eve failed in the garden, but it was indeed only the test of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If we see the cross as the tree of life, we might think of its' restoration to humanity as a test also—a test which Christ performed wonderfully—a test which Adam and Eve were disqualified from ever attempting.

The miracles of Christ's ministry were a testimony to His nation, and were themselves also proof of His suitability as the Groom. They are also the powers of the age to come—powers that will be imparted to His body and bride. The miracles do not stand on the same plane with His temptation by Satan, His crushing in the olive press, or His death on the Cross. These proofs are the acid test that He is able and capable. The miracles are powers that will be shared with the body and bride when they take their place as His complement.

When David slew the giant, Goliath, it was a time when he was unrecognized as the king of Israel, even though Samuel had anointed him king. In fact, from that day forward, he became the *fugitive* king of Israel. There was no sword in David's hand, so he beheaded Goliath (Gen. 3:15) with his own sword. The writer of Hebrews said of Jesus, "...that through death he might destroy the one that has the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14). In other words, death was Satan's sword. He was a murderer from the beginning (Jn. 8:44), killing Adam and Eve in the garden. Christ defeated Satan through death—with Satan's own weapon, just as David did to Goliath. And, as David, Christ is a fugitive King in His first anointing. Christ is not recognized and revered as the King He is, except to those who go out to the cave of Adullam to meet Him there (1 Sam. 22:1,2).

The resurrection of Christ, after proving Himself obedient, designates Him as Son of God with power (Rom. 1:4). He was then exalted to the right hand of God—He took the place of King. And on Pentecost He poured out the water on His thirsty flock and bride by drawing from the well of God’s love and grace; from that gushing well He poured out the Spirit of God upon them. This produced the joy that sends beautiful feet, even to the mountains, carrying a message of glorious and inspiring news.

The bulk of the revelation of Christ, the Groom, presents Him in the character of His first anointing. Like David, there are three events that might be referred to as three anointings or comings for Christ. These are three divisions in His ministry which correspond to the three phases of the kingdom. The next two phases will occur during the ages of the ages. The second anointing/coming of Christ will be one of national, and global recognition. He will be seen coming in power and great glory. There will be no question, as with his first coming, concerning His origin. It will be seen by many that He comes directly from heaven.

David’s third anointing extended his rule to all of Israel, and Christ’s third anointing/coming sees His realm of rule extend beyond the inhabited earth to all humanity (as well as celestial beings). It will commence with the great white throne judgment, when all the dead are raised to life. That will dramatically increase the number of beings under His rule. Seated on His Father’s throne, He will judge them all for the deeds of their lives with the wisdom that Solomon foreshadowed.

The period of Christ’s first anointing bears a surprising recognition of His Kingship. Matthew both opens and closes his account with people who were not Jews identifying Jesus as the King of the Jews. The magi came asking, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?” (Matt. 2:2) Near the end of Matthew’s account, Pilate, the Roman governor, had a sign posted over Him at His crucifixion which read: “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews” (Matt. 27:37). The identification of Jesus as king of the Jews by the Gentiles is part of the rebuke that put Jews and Gentiles alike on the level ground of faith.

Chapter 22: There Is a River

Why was the bride met at a well? The well, as a supply of water, provides the scene with a critical element of the primal scene from which this scenario has descended. The primal scene is the garden of Eden, where the first bride, Eve, met Adam. As the Scriptures teach, that meeting symbolized the union of Christ with His redeemed people. The water source in Eden was a river which divided into four rivers. The abundant supply of water in the garden makes it an extravagant symbol of life to arid regions. Life in abundance is one of the key ideas.

There are four significant features of that scene we would like to emphasize: (1) the elevated location, (2) the river, (3) the garden, and, (4) the presence of God. These are the basic elements that made the garden of man’s nativity the paradise it was. God’s presence there was shown by His visits, His guardians—the cherubim, and by the tree of life. These vital elements are presented again and again through the Scriptures with unique and unexpected variation.

The reason we have the scenes depicted as the well, instead of a river, is because sin has taken us away from the river and the garden it watered. A well or spring is a substitute for the river that does two things: (1) by providing the same element—water—it can symbolize the same thing the river symbolized: the Spirit of God; (2) by offering a more limited supply than the river, it shows that we are in a condition where we can only enjoy an earnest of what the river represented. A well

must be searched for and found, and it may be missed. But a large river can be stumbled upon without searching. We would like to give brief sketches of some river scenes, dividing them by their dominant features.

The River of Eden (Genesis 2)

There is a beautiful old hymn, by an unknown author, the lyrics of which set the mood for our meditations in this section. Its title line comes from Psalm 46:4. A portion of the lyrics is given here:

There is a river that flows from God above;
There is a fountain that's filled with His great love;
Come to this water, there is a vast supply;
There is a river that never shall run dry.

There is a river that flows from deep within;
There is a fountain that frees the soul from sin;
Come to this water, there is a vast supply;
There is a river that never shall run dry.

The river of Eden is phenomenal in its description, requiring more words and detail than the creation of the first man. Not only is the description longer and more detailed than we might expect, but it is surprisingly unusual too. Rivers, as we know them today, begin as drainage of an area, and grow with tributaries as they descend in altitude. Gravity is the force which creates them. But the river of Eden was already flowing at a considerable elevation. This is the only way we can explain its continued flowing into other areas. And it was so large that it became the headspring of four rivers. Where do we have an example of a river dividing into more rivers, rather than tributaries joining to form a larger river? The phenomenon would require a very large source, such as a huge spring or glacier at a considerable elevation. The river is a varied and tangible model of the Spirit of God. It represents an inexhaustible supply. Instead of being dependent on the downward pull of gravity, this river of the Spirit of God is constantly springing up. It flows and operates with nature, but is not dependent upon nature. God is the incredible, inexhaustible source of life. Wherever He goes, life springs up. His touch can turn the desert into a garden, the sinner into a saint.

There is no mention of the bride, Eve, drinking of the water of Eden's river. This is not without purpose. In the scene we are shown of Eden humanity is losing life. To speak of Adam and Eve drinking from the water would contradict the theme of the Genesis account. In contrast with Eden, Psalm 1 shows us the river in a similar figure, but in a scene where its blessings are received. The righteous man who meditates on God's word is like a tree planted by streams of water. The tree flourishes and bears fruit. The man likened to the flourishing tree is contrasted with wicked men who perish. The emphasis is all on the spiritual benefits that come to the life devoted to God, showing the symbolism of the river to represent God's Spirit imparted through His word.

Chapter 23: The Rivers of Moses

In Genesis 2 Eden was situated on the mountain of God. What a studied contrast we find at Sinai, which is also called Horeb! Eden was well watered everywhere with an abundance of trees. Horeb means *dry*, or, *desolate*, and the meaning of Sinai is uncertain—some think it means *bush*. The trees in the garden of Eden were heavy with fruit, but the bush at Sinai burned with fire. In Eden our parents were given a choice, but Moses was given a commandment to remove his shoes. We think of Eden as sunny and bright, but, when Israel entered covenant with God, Sinai was covered in thick clouds with fire. It looked more like a volcano than a highland park where life could exist. It was smoking and burning and quaking with the presence of God. Eden was a garden to be lived in, but no one was even to touch the lower extremities of Sinai under penalty of death (Ex. 19:12). (This reminds us of Eve’s exaggeration of God’s command: “...neither shall you touch it, lest you die” [Gen. 3:3].) Eden had the large and wondrous river, but Sinai only had a brook tumbling down the mountainside. Into this brook Moses cast the ashes and powder of the golden calf, to change the water from a blessing to a curse for the unfaithful bride (Deut. 9:21). At Horeb’s river the curse of the law stands in contrast to the grace and glory of creation, and the restored river of life in Revelation.

At Rephidim (Ex. 17) the contrast was similar. Instead of a garden they were in a wilderness. The river was not one flowing from a distant source, but water that came forth from the dry rock, when it was struck with the rod of God. Stone is an unyielding substance, like the grave, never giving up what it holds within. But the judgment of God is powerful to unlock prisoners and secrets.

Years later, at Kadesh, the scene was very similar. There a river flowed from the rock to water and refresh the people for the conquest of the land. But it was flowing primarily for a new generation, because the old generation was passing away under a curse. So, even on the border of the Promised Land, the gloomy cloud of death was overshadowing.

The Nile

These rivers of Moses are meager in comparison with Eden, but there is another river that should also be considered with Moses—the Nile. The Nile stands in strong contrast with the rivers of God (Ps. 36:8; 46:4; 65:9; 105:41) as an emblem for the world’s way of life. The river of Eden branched out and went out into the world, but the Nile demands conformity to itself, calling the world to come to it and its irrigable banks and bottom lands. To move away from the Nile was to move away from its sustenance of life. Pharaoh commanded that the promised seed be cast into the river (Ex. 1:22) to feed the monsters lying in its waters. But God can save even from there. God’s judgment fell on the river (Exodus 7) as it will fall on this world and its systems. The plagues against Egypt were leveled against the gods of Egypt, many of which were associated with the Nile. The turning of the river to blood showed that the world’s ways are the ways leading to death, and that God will so judge this world. During the plague of blood, the Egyptians were forced to dig to find drinking water (7:24), much as we saw the patriarchs digging wells. These wells are the means God has ordained until His river flows wide again.

There is a theme tied to the Nile that we should explore briefly. It is bound up with the name *Rahab*. Rahab is a name associated with the ocean as a formidable and violent force (Ps. 89:9, 10), with monsters of the aquatic deep (Isa. 51:9, 10), and

with Egypt and Pharaoh as a dominating empire (Ps. 87:4; Isa. 30:7). In turn, these are all associated with Satanic powers opposed to God's will, and they all evince the characteristics of pride and strength. When not translated as a name, *rahab* is rendered by such words as *pride*, *audacity*, and *strength*.

“Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, that pierced the dragon? Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over?” (Isa. 51:9, 10)

“Can you draw out Leviathan with a fish-hook...or pierce his jaw with a hook...His breath kindles coals, and a flame comes forth from his mouth...His heart is hard as a stone, hard as the lower millstone. When he raises himself up the mighty are afraid...Though the sword reaches him, it does not avail, nor the spear, the dart, or the javelin. He counts iron as straw, and bronze as rotten wood. The arrow cannot make him flee; for him sling stones are turned to stubble...He makes the deep boil like a pot; he makes the sea like a pot of ointment. Behind him he leaves a shining wake; one would think the deep to be white-haired. On earth there is not his like, a creature without fear. He sees everything that is high; he is king over all the sons of pride” (Job 41:1, 2, 21, 24-28, 31-34).

“Behold, I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lies in the midst of his streams, that says, ‘My Nile is my own; I made it for myself.’ I will put hooks in your jaws, and make the fish of your streams stick to your scales; and I will draw you up out of the midst of your streams, with all the fish of your streams that stick to your scales. And I will cast you out into the wilderness, you and all the fish of your streams; you shall fall on the open field, and not be brought together or gathered. To the beasts of the earth and to the birds of the heavens I give you as food” (Eze. 29:3-5).

These verses show the same symbolism applied to different historical situations. And they show the symbol of the river of the water of life transformed from its glorious beginning as a provider and sustainer of life to the cursed home of a cruel and heartless monster. The chosen seed stand in danger of being swallowed up if the Strong Arm of Yahweh does not deliver them. Until the river of life flows again, there are only wells and lavers that must be sought out.

The Tabernacle and Its Water

In a sense, the tabernacle was a traveling garden of Eden. The presence of God was there in the shining cloud of the Shekinah Glory over the mercy seat. And His presence was visible to all in the pillar of cloud and fire. The cherubic guardians of His presence in Eden were embroidered on the curtains, as well as being in tangible form on the mercy seat. Elevation may not have been perceivable in the tabernacle as it travelled, but it might be seen in the pillar that led them, shading them by day and lighting their way by night (Ps. 121:5-6). The pillar ascended to great heights over the tent of meeting when the people were camped. There were representations of the garden in a number of ways. The golden lampstand was a compound symbol of the almond and olive trees by its use of oil to give light and the shapes of almonds and blossoms formed into its branches (Ex. 25:31, 34). It stood as a reminder of the tree of life. The wooden walls and the use of wood in some of the furnishings also suggest the thought of trees. Even the priest had a semblance of being a walking tree of life.

The lower hem of the priest's robe was decorated with pomegranates of blue, purple and scarlet, interspersed with golden bells (Ex. 28:31-35; 39:24-26).

And there was a representation of the river also—in the laver. The laver held a large supply of water that was used by the priests for washing themselves, washing portions of the sacrifices, and in cooking (Ex. 30:17-21; Lev. 1:9, 13; 8:31; 16:4, 24). It is specifically stated that the priests washed their hands and feet, thus cleansing their actions and their walk before the Lord. Consider how similar this is to the thought of Psalm 1, where the righteous man, meditating on the word of God, was like a tree planted by the waters. It is even more like Paul's comments in Ephesians 5: "...Christ loved the church, and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (5: 25-27).

The water of the laver was like the water in the wells. It had a limited location and must be sought out. That was the nature of man's situation under the law. He must diligently seek out God and be concerned with cleansing himself before God. God was not then flowing forth to meet man in his diverse, cosmic domains. God was hidden behind dark, thick curtains and stringent ritual and ceremony.

Chapter 24: The Temple and Its Water

The temple, the design of which God gave to David, and the commission of building which He gave to Solomon, seems at first to be an elaborate and stationary tabernacle. But there were significant differences. These changes were more than accommodations to suit a nation that had become established and powerful. These changes also represent the conditions of kingdom rule in the future. Through Christ's work on the cross and His ascension to the throne of heaven, the earnest of the Holy Spirit is given to believers. Pentecost was the type of a future and more glorious outpouring of the Spirit of God that will accompany the establishment of the next phase of the kingdom. The design of the temple was modified from the tabernacle design to foreshadow these glorious changes.

First let's consider the temple as a replacement for the Garden of Eden. The temple was great in elevation, being situated on Mt. Zion. The presence of God dwelt in the temple, and the cherubic guardians of His holiness were there in the form of wooden carvings overlaid with gold, and as carvings on the doors. Phenomenal quantities of gold, silver and bronze were used in the building. A pair of huge bronze pillars stood at the front of the temple, and their tops were decorated with 400 bronze pomegranates. These made a symbolic representation much like the tree of life.

The same ark which had graced the tabernacle was brought to the holy of holies in the temple. A new altar of incense was made of gold, and a new golden table was provided for the showbread. The most surprising changes were made with the golden lampstand and the laver. Remember that these furnishings speak of the work of the Spirit of God. The oil burned in the lampstands speaks of enlightenment by the Spirit. The laver was there for cleansing "by the washing of water with the word" (Eph. 5:26). In Solomon's temple, there were 10 lampstands, 10 large lavers, and one additional and huge laver, called a sea. The capacity of the sea was 50 times that of one of the ten large lavers. This multiplication of lampstands and lavers foreshadows the future multiplication of the ministry of the Spirit of God. The base of the sea was cast in the form of 12 oxen supporting the enormous bowl, 3 facing each

of the four directions. This represents the ministry of the Spirit going out to the whole world. The four groups of oxen represent also the four rivers into which Eden's river parted. The increase in the water supply foreshadows the progress in God's plan of redemption, and a reaching toward the ideal that had been represented by the river of Eden. Here is a significant step away from the well toward the river.

Ezekiel's Temple and River

In Ezekiel 40-46 is recorded the prophet's vision of a new temple. The description is bafflingly different from that of Solomon's temple. There is no mention of gold or silver, and a great deal is said about living quarters for the priests. The furnishings of Ezekiel's temple are also much different in description. There is mention of several tables of stone, which were to be used in the preparation of sacrifices. The altar of sacrifice is mentioned, but the other furnishings of the tabernacle and temple are taken for granted, if indeed they were even seen by Ezekiel. The inner walls were decorated with alternating palm trees and cherubim. *Palm is tamar*, meaning *upright*, or, *erect*. The palm makes a living, visual picture of *uprightness*, or, *righteousness*. The cherubim showed the faces of men and lions. The temple in Ezekiel's vision stands in stark contrast with the tabernacle and temple of Solomon.

Probably the most unusual thing about Ezekiel's temple is the river that issues from under the threshold or sill of the building (chapter 47). This river brings before us the work of God's Spirit. Wherever it flows it imparts life, and the trees of life line its banks, reminding us of Eden and the garden-city at the close of Revelation. We would like to point out one particular point in common between the temple of Solomon and that of Ezekiel. The location of the sea (the huge laver) in Solomon's temple is in the same area as the springing source of the river in Ezekiel's temple. "And he set the sea at the southeast corner of the house" (1 Ki. 7:39). "...and behold, water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar" (Eze. 47:1). It appears that the sea—an oversized laver—of Solomon's temple represents the same things that are represented by the river in Ezekiel's vision. And the fact that the sea was a laver shows the intended relationship between all the lavers and the original river of Eden. The river in Ezekiel's vision flows past the altar, reminding us that the sacrifice of Christ provides for the gift of the Spirit. Ezekiel makes the transition for us from laver to river.

Those who are familiar with the Bible are likely to have made a connection between Ezekiel's river and the river of life at the end of the book of Revelation. We will reach that after viewing more of the O. T. sketches. But before leaving Ezekiel's vision, we wish to point out that the water *flowing out from the temple* speaks of the true worship-relationship to God as being a river of life. In Revelation the *river issues from the throne* of God and the Lamb (Rev. 22:1), showing the rule on the new earth to be a source of life. That rule will be the completion of the subjection of all to Christ. We will also see a close relation between Ezekiel's river and Zechariah's.

Chapter 25: David's River
(Psalm 23)

Yahweh is my Shepherd; nothing shall I lack.
 In verdant oases, He is making me recline;
 Beside restful waters, He is conducting me.
 My soul he is restoring;
 He is guiding me in the routes of righteousness, on account of His Name.
 Even though I should walk in the ravine of blackest shadow, I shall not fear evil,
 For You are with me; Your club and Your staff, they are comforting me.
 You are arranging a table before me in front of my foes;
 You have sleeked my head with oil; my cup is satiated.
 Yea, goodness and benignity, they shall pursue me all the days of my life,
 And I will dwell in the house of Yahweh for the length of my days. (CV)

We give the Concordant Version here with the hope that words less familiar will cause us to see the thoughts in a fresh light. David paints an Edenic picture here in what is often called the Shepherd's Psalm. There is a definite progression in the scene as it passes from the pastoral setting to the table and finally to the house of Yahweh. Psalm 65 has many similarities and flows in reverse order, passing from Yahweh's house to the pastures and watered hillsides.

The 23rd Psalm begins by conducting our journeys: to verdant oases, beside restful waters, in the routes of righteousness, and finally, walking the ravine of blackest shadow—the valley of the shadow of death. These are not geographical journeys through space. Rather they are our journeys through experience and time. They are journeys that we experience as we go through trials and come out of the trial to a place of rest, refreshment, and contemplation of what we have done and seen. They are journeys where we learn the practice of righteous living and of enduring faith. The destination of the oases and restful waters remind us of the meeting of Christ at the well.

We should remember that Moses' journeys, one of which brought him to his bride at the well, also included the valley of the shadow of death. Moses' first effort to deliver an Israelite from Egyptian oppression resulted in the death of the Egyptian, and also in Moses' rejection by the Jews. He then left—his first journey. Later Moses returned with the rod of God and miraculous powers. In delivering the Israelites he led them through the Red Sea with a wall of water on the right and a wall of water on the left—he led them through a valley of death. It proved to be the valley of death for Pharaoh.

If we look at the journeys of Moses to deliver Israel, he traveled from the Mountain of God to Egypt, and then brought the Israelites back to Mt. Sinai to make a covenant with God. This is very like Christ's second coming. He will come from heaven with great powers, deliver His people, and then take them back with Him. In a very real sense He will, like Moses, be retracing His steps. The path through the Red Sea was the path to meeting God on the mountain. Our Guide knows the way, because He has come from His home of glory to our transient abode in humility, and returned home in victory. He is fully qualified to be our Shepherd, and He is especially qualified because our journey leads through the valley of death.

The journeys of the 23rd Psalm continue, leading us to a table. The table is in front of the enemies because the table represents the kingdom and its blessings. In the next age of the kingdom we will be blessed with the age-abiding life of

immortality, while the world continues in its mortal condition. That life is well described as being seated at a bountiful table, with a full cup and with a body clean and anointed. The journeys continue, and lead to the house of Yahweh—not as a place to occasionally visit and worship, but as a place to live and stay. This description hints at the real and ultimate climax: not just living in God’s house, but being God’s house. This Psalm highlights the journeys of the Groom—journeys into which the Bride enters and shares.

Chapter 26: Isaiah’s and Micah’s Mountain River
(Isaiah 2:1-5; Micah 4:1-5)

“It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many people shall come, and say: ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.’ For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD” (Isa. 2:2-5).

There is considerable emphasis given to the idea of *height* as the prophets speak of the mountain of the LORD. Clearly the actual elevation above sea level is not the point of the emphasis. Rather, the expressions about height and exaltation have to do with authority, power, and glory. Nothing is higher in the sense of being greater or more glorious.

Rivers flow. But the river in Eden did not flow. It *went out*, or, *went forth* (*y-tz-a*) from the garden. This is a case where the Scripture’s use of synonyms is very instructive. In the passages of Isaiah and Micah that we have noted, the law and the word of the LORD *went forth* (*y-tz-a*) out of Zion—just like the river out of Eden. This going forth was tremendous. God’s word does not flow like a river with the restrictions of gravity and quantity. It went to all the nations, and it imparted peace and prosperity and worship wherever it went.

People go forth. They go from place to place. People do not *flow*. But in these passages in Isaiah and Micah the people flow or, rather, the peoples *rivered* to Zion. The verb form of the noun, *river* (*n-h-r*), the same word used to designate the river in Eden, is the word used to describe the movement of the nations to Jerusalem. The root idea of this word is *sparkle*, coming from the appearance of flowing water in the sunlight. Figuratively it means *to be cheerful*, adding a harmonious note to the beautiful scene described by the prophets.

Here is a magical river. It flows in two directions at once. Flowing out from God’s capital city are truth and righteous judgment. At the same time, flowing into the city are the worship, thanksgiving, and praise of the people.

From the distance is seen the glittering sparkle of the water in the sunlight. Closer in is heard the babbling sound of the tumbling brook. In still closer the ear distinguishes the individual words of the people of whom the stream is made. They are saying, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD...that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths (v. 3).”

“There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved” (Ps. 46:4, 5). Psalm 46 blesses with the same feelings of security and peace that are fostered by Isaiah’s and Micah’s words. We would simply notice again the common features with Eden: the elevation of Zion, the river, and the presence of God. The fourth feature is missing—the garden. But the garden is replaced with the city. As the passages progress, it will be seen that the garden develops into a city because of the increased population since Adam and Eve. Yet the city never loses its paradisiacal or gardenlike qualities. What will issue from Zion is not just law, but it is also described as the word of the LORD. It is what the righteous man of Psalm 1 meditated on, and it is what Paul said cleansed the saints: “the washing of water with the word.”

In Eden, the life-giving river divided into four *heads*, or, *beginnings*. The same water from the same source issued through all four channels, though each river flowed in its own direction along its own course. Isaiah has spoken of this out-flowing from Jerusalem as the word of the LORD. In the New Testament we see something similar. It begins with four heads—the four accounts of Christ, the Word, coming in flesh. Each account is unique, yet each comes from the same Source and speaks of Him who gives the water of life.

Chapter 27: Zechariah’s River

In looking at these scenes of wells, lavers and rivers, we have probably given excessive attention to the brides that were pictured there. We would like now to focus more attention on the traveling Man, the Groom, Who comes to meet the bride. We have seen Him represented by shepherd, prophet, deliverer, contender with false gods, strong man, military leader, king, and favored son. Now we are about to behold Him as the Glorious One Who comes to shake this world and all its kingdoms so they may be replaced by a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

First He is the Glorious One, having “a glory as of an only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn. 1:14 CV). When Ezekiel beheld the glory of God leaving the temple, the glory went east from the temple over the mountain on the east side of the city, the Mount of Olives (Eze. 11:23). When Christ departed from His disciples, He left them from the Mount of Olives (Lk. 24:51 & Mk.11:1). When Ezekiel beheld the glory return, it came in from the east, over the Mount of Olives, to the eastern gate of the temple (Eze. 43:1-4). When Christ returns in glory to Israel, He will return in the same manner in which He left (Acts 1:11), “On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives, that lies before Jerusalem on the east” (Zech. 14:4). “For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts.” (Hag. 2:6-7 cf. Heb. 12:26-28). These verses show Christ’s leaving and returning placed in parallel with the leaving and returning of the glory of God to the temple.

The return of Christ in glory is related to a quaking. Matthew has taken care to place this thought before us, though many English translations mask it from the reader’s view. In English we have a number of words derived from the Greek word *seismos*. A *seism* is an earthquake. *Seismic* activity is earth tremors. *Seismographs* measure the shocks from earthquakes. Matthew uses the noun, *seismos*, and the verb, *seioo*. A great *seismos* occurred in the sea when Jesus and the disciples were in a boat (Mt. 8:24). Christ calmed the sea and wind with His word. When Christ entered the

city of Jerusalem, riding on the donkey: “the entire city is *aquake*, saying, ‘Who is this?’ Yet the throngs said, ‘This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee’” (Mt. 21:10-11 CV). At the time of Christ’s death, there was an earthquake (Mt. 27:51-54). At the time of the resurrection, there was an earthquake (Mt. 28:2).

The life, death, and resurrection of Christ have shaken this world in many ways. The city that was *aquake* at His coming fell to destruction at the hands of the Romans because they rejected Him. The universal condemnation of humanity under Adam’s sin was broken at the cross and resurrection. The universal binding of humanity under the power of death was fractured with the raising of Christ to immortality. Matthew relates these important events in Christ’s life with earthquakes or seismic terminology to point us toward the greatest earthquake of all, and toward the more glorious coming of Christ. His return will shake this world’s kingdoms as never before.

When the seventh angel with a bowl of the fury of God poured it out, an earthquake occurred, larger than any since man has been on earth. The cities of the nations fell; the islands fled; the mountains were not found; and Babylon the great fell (Rev. 16:18-20). This earthquake will set in motion the events leading up to the marriage supper of the Lamb. This catastrophically phenomenal event is the coming of the Man on a journey to meet the bride at the well. But the well is no longer suitable or sufficient. When His feet touch the Mount of Olives, the earthquake will split the mountain apart from east to west. One half of the mountain will move to the north and the other half to the south, creating a valley through which members of His bride may escape. Like the walls of water when the Red Sea divided, the sides of the split mountain will create a path for the Lord’s people (Zech. 14:4-5). The Lord’s people leave the apostate city in the same direction that the LORD’s glory left the temple.

The earthquake triggered by His coming will transform the area of the Jordan rift valley. This is a major fault line in the earth’s crust. The geological changes will include the opening of a fountain in Jerusalem that will be the source of two rivers. One river will flow to the Mediterranean, and the other will flow down to the Dead Sea. These pure waters will be a source of life and refreshment wherever they flow, just as described by Ezekiel (47:1-12). These rivers run their course in the land of Palestine. The land of promise will lead the world in renewal. Then that land and its people will reach out to the rest of the world, and the rivers will then be figured by the scenes of Isaiah and Micah, flowing out and drawing in from the whole world.

These rivers will be real, just as the trees of Eden were real, even though they were also symbolic. The simple eating of the fruit of one of those trees brought death and all its incumbent plagues upon humanity. Every day we experience that reality. But these rivers represent something far greater than the fish and trees with fruit that Ezekiel saw along the banks. Here the glorious Groom waters the flock—He gives the drink of life to His bride, and the bride in turn ministers to the world. These rivers show us the pouring out of the Spirit upon humanity, and the ministry of that life reaching out to the world. “...and a fountain shall come forth from the house of the LORD and water the Valley of Shittim” (Joel 3:18). “Thus says the LORD who made you, who formed you from the womb and will help you: Fear not, O Jacob my servant, Jeshurun whom I have chosen. For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They shall spring up among the grass like willows by flowing streams” (Isa. 44:2-4).

Chapter 28: The River in Revelation

“And the angel said to me, ‘Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb’” (Rev. 19:9). At the fall of Babylon the great, and amidst divine judgments upon the earth, we have this declaration concerning the happiness of those invited to the wedding dinner of the Lamb. What is the wedding dinner of the Lamb? It is several things. To begin, it is the time when the saved are joined with the Lord in His service, and there is no longer a separation between Him and them. It may be referred to as the coming of the Messiah, or the coming of Christ for the church, or the beginning of the kingdom on earth.

Many prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures speak of the coming of the Messiah and His deliverance of His people. “On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine well refined. And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. It will be said on that day, ‘Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation’” (Isa. 25:6-9). “I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 8:11). At the last supper Jesus said: “I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Mt. 26:29).

There is no lack of passages which speak of a meal shared by Christ and the saints. And yet we do not wish for thoughts of this wedding supper to be fixated on food. The meal Christ shared with the disciples was far more than food and drink at a common table. It was the making of a covenant with them; it was the binding of a relationship—a relationship symbolized by marriage. In Matthew 22: 1-14 Jesus told a parable, saying: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son” (Mt. 22:2). It is the kingdom itself that is like a wedding feast that has been prepared. Jesus also said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Mt. 5:6). And Paul said, “the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17). All those in Christ who are burdened by the injustices and immorality that permeate our culture will find that the righteousness and peace of the kingdom will provide a satisfaction beyond anything we can currently realize. This righteous reign will constitute a true feast of fine things.

The impending age (Eph. 2:7; Heb. 2:5), which contains the 1,000 years of Revelation 20, will be the beginning of these festivities. But these joys will not reach their height until the following age, the age of the ages—the age when the new heaven and earth come. The great white throne judgment occurs at the juncture of these two future ages. The New Jerusalem will descend out of heaven from God to the new earth, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

The age of the new heaven and earth commences the new creation. The old creation began in the garden scene with the man and the woman. The new creation begins with the city/garden scene and the second Man, the Lord out of heaven, and His complement. The old creation began with ten statements in the form: “And God said...” The new creation commences with a ten-fold decree from the great white throne. We know the great white throne is the source, because the definite article refers back to the last throne mentioned—the great white throne. Here is the decree:

“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
 ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.
 He will dwell with them,
 and they will be his people,
 and God himself will be with them as their God.
 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes,
 and death shall be no more,
 neither shall there be mourning
 nor crying
 nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.’
 ‘Behold, I am making all things new.’
 ...said...he who was seated on the throne” (Rev. 21:3-5 last two lines out of textual
 order for outline symmetry).

This chiasm is perfectly balanced. Statements 1 and 10 begin with “Behold,” and call attention to the divine actions being implemented. Statements 2 through 5 are all positive statements about the presence of God with humanity. Statements 6 through 9 are all negative statements that the conditions of evil in the first creation will no longer continue. And the whole of the ten statement declaration is enclosed by statements telling that this decree comes from the throne. The fact that this decree is issued from the great white throne should cause us to examine carefully our views of what transpires there.

Immediately after the statement that all is being made new, there is a transition from the time of the vision to the time in which John was living. This transition is signaled by an address to John: “Also he said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.’ And he said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for the murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death’” (Rev. 21:5-8).

Believers and bride members will not be thirsting at the time of the vision. Then they will be satisfied. They thirst in the days leading up to the times of the vision. By the same token, they should be conquering or overcoming prior to the times of the vision. At the time of the vision, conquering will be replaced with reigning. It follows too that the detestable and murderers, etc. will be committing those acts in times prior to, but not after, the great white throne judgment. Realizing this, we can notice a fine distinction regarding the bride and the well and the river. In the vision of the new earth, like in the old creation, there is a river issuing from the garden/city. But, prior to the new earth, those who are thirsting drink from the *spring* of the water of life. In John’s day and ours, it is still a well or spring, a limited supply—an earnest—that the believer partakes of when they meet the Man at the well. On the new earth, the water of life will be a great river (Rev. 22:1).

The bride, the wife of the Lamb, is the city, the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:9-10). The bride and wife of the Lamb is the people. The throne of God and the Lamb is in the city, and the throne is in the people. The river flows out from the throne in the city, and so the river flows out of the people. Jesus said, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his

heart will flow rivers of living water.’ Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (Jn. 7:37-39). Water issuing from the throne speaks of life coming through rule. Life will flow through the ministerial reigning of the bride. Ezekiel’s river flowed from the temple, showing that the recognition and worship of the One true God will characterize the millennial eon.

In the first creation, humanity’s commission included **servicing** and **guarding** the garden, and what it represented (Gen. 2:15). The AV uses the word *dress* (or *till*) and *keep*, but the words used in this verse are just the normal words for *serve* and *guard*. Man cannot plant trees of knowledge or trees of life, but he can serve and guard what God has planted. It is interesting to notice that these two words, when used in the same context, nearly always refer to service to God, and guarding the holy things of God. The Levites and priests were to serve and guard the tabernacle and its ceremonies (Num. 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-7; Deut. 13:4; Mal. 3:14); Solomon’s coronation instructions from David included these words (1 Chron. 28:8-9). (The word for *guard* is frequently translated *keep*, or, *observe*.) Paul too spoke much of serving and guarding, especially to Timothy. But when we come to the bride and her future, we see *servicing* and *reigning* (Rev. 22:3-5). After Satan and his kingdom have been conquered, *guarding* can give place to *reigning*.

In the first creation, Adam named his wife Eve, which means the *mother of living*. This was a response of faith by Adam to God’s revelation that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15). Apart from God’s prophetic promise, there is no sense in the order of events that transpired there. It was only after the woman sinned, died, was judged, and clothed by sacrifice, that she was named *mother of living*. Why did she have to die, before she could become the mother of living? It was only after these events that she fulfilled this prophecy in type by bearing children. Christ’s complement, His bride, will fulfill the role of giving life through reigning with Him, but only after knowing sin, death, after passing through judgment, and after being clothed with glory at His coming. This is how the bride at the well comes to serve and reign. This is the reason for the order of events as recorded in Genesis.

So the river was in the mount of God in Eden. Then it was lost, and water had to be found at springs or dug from wells. But as God’s redemptive plan comes to its climax, the river will be restored. Mankind will again be blessed to drink of the sweet, life-giving waters.

“The Spirit *and the Bride* say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price” (Rev. 22:17). The bride’s ministry begins now, in John’s day and our day, and it will reach its zenith in the presence of the Lord. It may only be a spring or well now, but a glorious day is coming when the river will flow deep and wide. Like the river of Eden and like the river of Ezekiel’s vision, the flow increases as it goes.

Chapter 29: The Return of the Four Rivers of Eden

In the garden of Eden, humanity enjoyed fellowship with God. We see that God’s work through Christ restores and excels that fellowship which was broken and lost. We have seen many examples of the work of Christ in sending the Spirit of God to humanity, pictured through a supply of water. The river of Eden, which divided into four rivers, comes to us again in the four accounts of the incarnation, crucifixion

and resurrection of Christ. These are descriptions of channels through which the Spirit of God comes to us. In that sense, they are streams of living water.

“A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and the onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates” (Gen. 2:10-14).

The Pishon: John’s Account

The first river is Pishon. This name means *to disperse or, great diffusion, or multiplication*. The river encircled the land where there was gold—very fine gold—and also bdellium and onyx. Bdellium was a resin, very much like myrrh. We do not know if bdellium here refers to that resin, or perhaps to precious stones that were colored like the resin. The Concordant Version has *pearl* instead of bdellium. The onyx stone reminds us of the shoulder pieces of the priest’s ephod that were engraved with the names of the sons of Israel.

We believe this river to represent John’s account of the gospel for several reasons. The first is in the meaning of the name: *dispersion or diffusion or multiplication*. The Greek word *apostello* means *to send forth*, especially in the sense of an agent for the sender. This word is used between 20 and 30 times in each of the four accounts. But in Matthew and Mark it only refers to Christ being sent forth once or twice. In Luke it refers to Christ 4 times. But in John it refers to the commissioning or sending of Christ by the Father 17 times. Here is the final use: “Jesus, then, said to them again, ‘Peace to you! According as the Father has commissioned Me, I also am sending you!’” (Jn. 20:21 CV). The One Who was sent forth sends forth others, causing the spreading, the multiplication, the diffusing of the good news. “And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’ (v. 22). The image here changes from water to breath, but the symbols both represent the Spirit. John also repeatedly speaks of Christ as light. Light shines in the darkness with an immediate and explosive diffusion that dispels darkness.

Next we want to consider the precious things encircled by this river. What do the gold, bdellium and onyx represent? John’s account is much different from Matthew, Mark and Luke. The first three read very much like historical records. But John’s account is more fully based on reasons and purposes and conflicts. Some commentators have called it *the spiritual gospel*. It has been said that it has the smallest vocabulary but the most profound depth. Instead of miracles and healings, John speaks of signs. He emphasizes the great struggle of the Jews in failing to accept the true origin of Christ. Christ tells the Jews that they are not Abraham’s children because they fail to do the works of Abraham. They are not children of God because they do the works of their father, the devil. The blind come to see, but those who see are really the blind ones. He talks about *seeing* the Father (1:18; 5:37; 6:46; 14:9; 15:24), and does so in ways that contradict each other, if we understand them superficially. He speaks of sleeping and dying, of waking and being resurrected. His life was light. And He sent the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of reality. There is no gold nor bdellium nor onyx as precious as truth and life and peace. More than the other accounts, John speaks of the resurrection life of the coming age, of a calling to life in

the kingdom of God. This is not simply eternal or endless life, but it is the glorified life of the coming kingdom ages. And in a greater way than the priest with onyx on his shoulders, He pronounces His benediction of peace on those who believe in Him. Three times in the 20th chapter He blesses them with His peace (vv. 20, 21, 26).

The Gihon: Luke's Account

The second river is Gihon. It encircled the land of Cush, which means *dark*. There is a similarity in meaning between *Gihon* and Pishon. Gihon was also the name of a notable spring in Jerusalem. At times the water of this spring would gush forth. This characteristic of breaking forth, or issuing gave it the name Gihon. Pishon is similar, so to distinguish between the two, we will focus on the idea of breaking forth or breaking out as we consider Luke's account.

This thought correlates well with much in the book of Luke. Luke begins with "the whole multitude of people...praying **outside** at the hour of incense" (Lk. 1:10). The book closes with quite a change from the idea of reverent, prayerful earnestness. "And they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually **in the temple** blessing God" (Lk. 24:52-53). There was a breaking out from earnest, prayerful desire—colored with the thought of Elizabeth's barrenness—to the fulfillment of joy in the resurrection of Christ—birth from the dead womb of the grave.

The opening chapters have considerable breaking forth. Mary burst into inspired praise when she met with Elizabeth. Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit, and his tongue was loosed to prophesy when John was born. A multitude of the heavenly host burst into praise when they announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds. Simeon burst into thanksgiving in the temple when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus there to present him for circumcision.

The Baptist's announcement of repentance in view of the coming kingdom called for a breaking forth from the accepted forms of drawing near to God. He was calling the nation to come out into the wilderness away from their comfort zones to a place more like that where Israel's original covenant was made. Luke alone opens Jesus' ministry in Nazareth with a message that broke open the synagogue and sent Jesus forth to teach outside of His hometown. He went to Capernaum where they were astonished that His word had such power. Demons were cast out and the sick were healed, and Jesus moved on to other cities. He called some disciples who were fishermen, by telling them to cast their nets again, after failing all the previous night to catch anything. They had a catch that was literally breaking out of their nets. Jesus shocked the people by telling the paralyzed man that his sins were forgiven—this was an *outside the box* concept. Then He asked if it was easier to say that, or to tell the man to get up and walk. Then He did that too.

It seemed He broke with common sense—He called a tax collector to be one of His disciples! Then He even attended a feast at the tax collector's house! Christ was starting a new counter-culture that would break with all the traditional mores. Christ illustrated this principle with the parables of patching an old garment with new material and putting new wine into old wineskins. These illustrations said that Judaism could not contain the message of the kingdom He was bringing. He foretold His rejection with the additional comment peculiar to Luke: "And no one after drinking old wine desires new, for he says, 'The old is good'" (Lk. 5:39).

Luke presents a condensed version of the sermon on the mount as a counter-culture for breaking out of the status quo and entering the kingdom: turn the other

cheek, go the second mile, bless your persecutors, love your enemies. Jesus found faith like none in Israel when a centurion bid Him not to come under his unworthy roof, but just say the word. Jesus shattered traditions in the face of a Pharisee, forgiving the sinful woman who washed His feet with her tears and hair. He commanded the storm to be still. He gave His disciples power to cast out demons. He called those who served God His brothers and sisters and mother. Take the lowest seat at the feast, not the highest! Prepare a feast for the poor and beggars who cannot repay you! He even welcomes tax collectors and sinners and eats with them! Everywhere we look, the Lord was breaking out and encircling the land of Cush, the land of those whose face had been in darkness.

The Hiddekel: Mark's Account

The third river is Hiddekel. This is documented to be the Tigris. The name means *swift*, or *rapid*. There is a definite correspondence between the book of Mark and the ideas associated with the Hiddekel. The ideas of rapid and swift can be seen with only a superficial reading. The word *eutheOs*, meaning *immediately*, *straightway*, or *at once* occurs about 40 times in this shortest of the accounts, and about 15 times in Matthew, 8 in Luke and 4 in John. In addition to this the very sentence structure is different. It is structured with a lot of short, abrupt, terse statements. N. T. Wright's translation, *The Kingdom New Testament* seems to have caught the crisp style of Mark quite well. The brief statements and the emphasis on things happening quickly causes the current of the narrative to flow rapidly.

There is a lot of action, and not so much contemplation. The words *oun* (therefore, then) and *tote* (then) which tend to link ideas into longer thoughts and thought processes have considerably less use in Mark. *Oun*, a particle of sequence or consequence, is found 55 times in Matthew, 45 in Luke, 200 in John, but only 11 times in Mark. *Tote*, and adverb of time, is found 90 times in Matthew, 14 in Luke, 10 times in John and only 6 in Mark.

The action of the Spirit of God initiates the ideas of rapidity and abruptness. The first occurrence of the thought is related to Christ's baptism. "And when he came up out of the water, *immediately* (*eutheOs*) he saw the heavens opening and the Spirit descending on him like a dove" (Mk. 1:10). This is quickly followed by more action: "The Spirit *immediately* (*euthus*) drove him out into the wilderness" (Mk. 1:12).

The Euphrates: Matthew's Account

The fourth river is Euphrates. Euphrates means *fruitfulness*. Matthew shows a great correspondence with the Euphrates. *Fruitfulness* comes out in Matthew's account in quite a variety of ways. The Gospel opens with a lineage of Christ, showing Him to be the fruit of the promise to Abraham and of the covenant with David. Throughout the book we hear the continual sounding of the chorus, *that the Scriptures might be fulfilled*. What we have in Christ is the fruit of the Old Testament, and the fruit of prophecy. Matthew's account leads the others in this feature. After Matthew passes the genealogy and narratives on the birth, the Baptist's ministry opens by calling for the fruits of repentance.

The word fruit occurs 19 times in Matthew, 5 times in Mark, 12 times in Luke, and 10 times in John. Yet the diverse applications of the idea of fruit are even more abundant. The examples of trees bearing good and evil fruit are repeated through the narrative. If the sermon on the mount is read with this thought in mind, this theme

can be seen to pervade its length. Those of the beatitudes will reap a blessed fruit. Saltiness is the fruit of salt. Illumination is the fruit of a light not hidden. Even the law bears its fruit, no dotting of an *i* or crossing of a *t* will lack the fruit of its fulfillment. The Pharisees and hypocrites are already enjoying the fruit of their outward show. It is a message of conduct. Conduct is the fruit of belief. The parable of the sower shows the fruits of hearing. Parables like that of the talents show us the fruits of stewardship. Christ repeatedly scolds the scant of faith, speaking to them of the fruits of faith—*if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed...* And he warned the Jews that the kingdom would be taken away from them and given to a nation bringing forth the proper fruits. He gave the parable of the vineyard to illustrate that idea. There the stewards failed to give up its fruit.

Conclusion on the Four Rivers

The argument may be raised, “But all of the gospel accounts can be shown to have the characteristics that have been attributed to each one here!” We wholeheartedly agree. And it should be that way. All four of the rivers in Genesis originated from the same river. All four were flows of water. All four could be used to irrigate and raise crops. All four could provide water for people and livestock. All four could float a boat. Yet each river had its own characteristics which distinguished it from the others. All the gospel accounts have the same message about the same Christ. Each must make a complete picture. Yet each one emphasizes different things, and each one appeals more dearly to a particular audience. Each has its own unique way of showing Christ as the Provider of the water of life and the Sender of the Holy Spirit. We’ve shown the rivers to be in reverse order from their presentation in Genesis. Perhaps that is because the work of Christ reclaims them.

Chapter 30: The Fragrances of the Garden

When we speak of the fragrances of a garden, we are not leaving behind the idea of the river or spring. Water is closely related to the fragrances. By the evaporation of the flower’s perfume, the fragrance is borne on the wings of the breeze. When there is less water available for the plants, not only are the plants smaller, but the fragrance is weaker. So the fragrances tell us again of the water. This is true with frankincense as well. Frankincense is made from the sap of a tree native only to southern Arabia. The bark of the tree is peeled back to allow the resinous sap to exude. The globules or lumps that are formed are called *tears*.ⁱⁱⁱ

The fragrances of the flora and spices are not mentioned with Eden at the beginning or with the New Jerusalem at the end, but they are present all along and they come into play. God required special recipes of spices to be used in the making of incense for the tabernacle and temple worship and for preparing the holy anointing oil. These spices were constantly in use in the tabernacle and temple which represented the garden. Frankincense was burned with the meal offerings and was offered in behalf of the showbread. Frankincense was used only with sweet savor offerings—not with sin or jealousy offerings. The Scriptures compare incense to the prayers of the saints (Ps. 141:2; Rev. 8:3, 4), and Israel was continually employed with ceremonies which bore aloft a fragrance of Christ to God. With that imagery before us, how great was the fire and how dense the cloud of incense when Christ prayed in the garden of Gethsemane! When He laid His will aside before the Father in an agony of bloody sweat, oh the fragrance that was borne aloft to the Father!

There was an episode in the life of Jacob in which the fragrance about him brought untold blessing. His brother Esau was called Edom from selling his birthright for a bowl of food. Edom is spelled with the same letters as Adam, who also sold his birthright for food. When Jacob disguised himself as Esau, he wore Esau's garments, which bore the scent of the open field. "Then his father Isaac said to him, 'Come near and kiss me, my son.' So he came near and kissed him. And Isaac smelled the smell of his garments and blessed him and said, 'See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed'" (Gen. 27:26-27).

God the Father smelled the sweet savor and aroma of Christ in all the offerings that represented the sacrifice of Golgotha. He smelled the scent of man upon Christ during that time also, and accepted Him as the sacrifice for humanity, even though He was not the firstborn of humanity. Christ bore the scent of the firstborn, Adam, and was accepted as the new Head of humanity. We are accepted in Christ, the Firstborn of creation. It is His scent upon us, as we are clothed in His righteousness, that pleases the Father.

Myrrh was included in the holy, anointing oil recipe. Esther, in preparation for presentation to the king, received treatments of myrrh oil for six months. Christ's life began and ended with the fragrance of these spices. They were gifts at His birth (Mt. 2:11), myrrh was mixed with the wine given to Christ at His crucifixion (Mk. 15:23), and similar gifts were used for His burial (Jn. 19:39, 40). And Christ's whole life was an offering to the Father that was a well-pleasing, sweet fragrance to Him (Isa. 53:11; Mt. 3:17; Rom. 12:1, 2).

We see little in the Song of Solomon that correlates with the episodes of meeting the bride at the well. The Song is part of the wisdom literature, and it speaks of romantic love much in the way the Proverbs speak of common sense and wisdom in the varied situations of life in the flesh. But, as it speaks of love, it frequently mentions the fragrances of spices, aromatic woods and blossoms carried on the breezes that pass through the gardens. These fragrant garden breezes can represent the unspoken communication of love between a man and woman, similar to the way the wafting fragrances of spices represent the satisfaction to God that comes from humble obedience and submission to His will. Like the aroma of a sacrifice ascending through the air toward heaven, our service is pleasing to the Father.

Still, there is an element in the Song of Songs that might be related to our thoughts on the joy that comes with Christ's resurrection. Two separate episodes, or poems, in Canticles relate a nocturnal longing and searching for the loved one. Our own life experiences teach us how elusive and fleeting sleep can be, when we lie down to take our rest, if our mind and heart are fixed on one who is dear to us. This is especially true if the loved one is suffering any ill.

Let's place ourselves in the sandals of Mary Magdalene, the night Jesus was crucified (Mt. 27:55, 56). Christ had cast seven demons out of her (Lk. 8:2). We can only try to imagine how her life had changed. For her, Christ surely represented everything that was good and pure and right. Watching Him die, she must have wished that she could die in His stead, and that He could live to help others—but that was impossible. She followed with others and saw the garden and tomb where his body was laid. Joseph secured the body and tomb. Nicodemus secured a large quantity of myrrh and aloes. The body was wrapped with these spices. Darkness was coming on and the Sabbath beginning, so the women planned to return later and finish the entombment with more ointments and spices.

Contact with a dead body made one ceremonially unclean. This probably affected the development of methods used by the Jews in burial preparations.

Egyptian mummification involved the removal of internal organs and as much as 70 days of treating the body with preservatives. The Jewish methods employed here were far less invasive. Joseph and Nicodemus would have been ceremonially unclean for the festival. Being figures of public stature, this surely brought some restrictions upon their activities. But they would not be stayed from service to the One they had come to love and respect as their Lord.

It is hard to imagine that any of Jesus' followers would have been able to escape the agony of the day's events, even momentarily, in the respite of sleep. Even after the Sabbath's delay, Mary was at the tomb well before morning light. We find her there on the resurrection morning, wandering in the darkness, searching for *the One her soul loves* (Song 3:1-3). But the tomb was empty! Where had they taken her Lord? The grief of Jesus' death was assaulting her with fresh vengeance. She stood, weeping, in the garden. Through the blur of tears and weeping, someone—it must have been the gardener—asked her why she wept. She implored him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away" (Jn. 20:15). And then the Gardener, who is also the good Shepherd, called her by name, and she recognized His voice. We can imagine that His body still carried the fragrance of the myrrh and aloes provided by Nicodemus. Perhaps Mary had only thought it was the fragrance of the garden.

Who is this Who says, "O Death, I will be *your* plagues! O Grave, I will be *your* destruction!" (Hos. 13:14 NKJV). It is our King! "My heart overflows with a pleasing theme; I address my verses to the king; my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe. You are the most handsome of the sons of men; grace is poured upon your lips; therefore God has blessed you for ever. Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one, in your splendour and majesty! In your majesty ride out victoriously for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness...your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia...Hear, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear: forget your people and your father's house, and the king will desire your beauty. Since he is your Lord, bow to him" (Ps. 45:1-4, 8, 10-11).

Chapter 31: Images of the Bride

We have noticed that John's account of Christ carries a strong emphasis on the theme of Christ as the Bridegroom. John provides five images of the bride. We are omitting Nicodemus as a representative of the bride nation, though we cast him in that role previously. Here we will only consider female figures as the bride. The first of these is the Samaritan woman considered previously.

The Woman Taken in Adultery

The second is the woman caught in the act of adultery. Some believe this passage (John 8:1-11) was a late addition to the text. We will not discuss that issue, but will show that the theme of this passage is in tune with the theme of the context where it occurs.

The Samaritan woman was met at a well in Samaria, and Christ spoke with her about true worship and the contemporary conflict of thought on temples: Mt Zion versus Mt. Gerizim. In John 8 the scene is the temple area of Jerusalem. In the context leading up to this scene Christ had spoken in the temple of Himself as the source of water, the source of the Holy Spirit, much as He had spoken to the Samaritan woman (Jn. 7:37-39). Those statements set the stage for an image of the

bride to be introduced. She must be one who had characteristics that would enable her to represent the temple crowd with whom Jesus was confronted.

The primary theme of the scene with the woman caught in adultery is judgment. The law of Moses condemned her. Would Christ condemn her? Would her accusers condemn her after being reminded of their own sin? Since the woman represents those who brought her to Christ, we might even ask the question, can they perceive themselves and their nation as the bride of this Messiah?

Verses 12-59 begin with Christ's statement, "I am the Light of the world" (v. 12). Light is what makes things manifest, enabling judgment to be made (Eph. 5:13). Following we find the Jews condemning Christ in contradiction to the true witness of Christ Himself and of the Father to Him. The Jews, like the woman taken in adultery, were the servants of sin. If they would believe and receive Christ as their Messiah, He could free them from sin (34-36). They could only judge the actions of the flesh (v. 15), not of the heart. And their only claim to being God's people was through their fleshly descent from Abraham. Christ showed them that in their hearts they were descendants of Satan (v. 44). The chapter concludes with the Jews picking up stones to stone Christ, just as they suggested stoning the woman (vv. 5 & 59).

The Second Time

Another theme common to John is presented in this scenario. That is the coming down of Christ into the world. In this passage this theme is presented in two ways. First it comes to us in the *stooping* (*kupto*) and *unstooping*, or, *up-stooping* (*anakupto*) of Christ, when He stooped to write on the ground. Second, the stooping is associated with the giving of the law, specifically the ten commandments, by its mention of Christ's finger. The insinuation is that what He wrote on the ground reminded the accusers of their own sinfulness.

The ten commandments were *written with the finger of God* (Ex. 31:18). It was when God came down on Mt Sinai to make a covenant with Israel that He wrote with His finger on the tablets of stone. Then, after Moses broke the tablets, showing that Israel broke the covenant by their sin, a second set of tablets was made which were also the writing of God. With the second set of tablets Moses came down from the mountain with glory on his face. Christ will come a second time in glory and set up a covenant with Israel and believers. The second stooping and writing by Christ on the ground represents this. Stephen's sermon emphasized the second coming of Christ when he said that Joseph was made known to his brothers the second time (Acts 7:13). Then he related in great detail how Moses was rejected the first time but received the second time (7:35, 36). After Christ's second stooping, the guilty came into the condition of being uncondemned, as Israel will after His second coming.

The fact that Christ did not condemn the woman is in keeping with His coming as the Bridegroom. "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (Jn. 3:17). His final word to the woman, "...*sin no more*" (Jn. 8:11), reminds us of Jeremiah's prophecy. Jeremiah had said that the LORD was Israel's husband (31:32), but they had broken His covenant with them. But He would make a new covenant with them and write His law in their hearts and would forgive their iniquity and remember their *sin no more* (v. 34).

Mary and Martha

These two women provide a different picture of the bride: that of faith in Christ. There is no mention of them in the book of John before chapter 11 and the account of Lazarus' death and resurrection. The scene centers around the tomb of Lazarus. That tomb replaces the well, because life would issue from it.

The Lord's meeting with Martha is filled with precisely the things that should characterize Israel's reception of the Bridegroom. She believed in the resurrection (11:24), and she believed that Jesus was the Christ—the Messiah—the Son of God, Who was to come into the world. Her confession lacks nothing and is on a par with Peter's.

Mary was more overcome with emotion and evoked the Lord's emotions as well. We do not have a confession like Martha's from her, but we have no doubt that it would have been the same.

Like the well where Jacob met Rachel, and like the tomb where Christ was laid, the tomb of Lazarus was covered with a stone. Christ commanded its removal. Martha protested because of the odor from a body dead for four days. The Lord questioned Martha, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" (11:40). Then He prayed. Then He commanded Lazarus to come forth. And the tomb, the barren womb of death, gave birth.

Shortly after this a supper was prepared, and Lazarus sat at the table with the Lord. Martha was serving—with joy, we can be sure. Mary took a pound of spikenard and anointed Him with it. It was a very costly gift. Matthew and Mark tell us that she anointed His head. John tells us she anointed His feet. Evidently she did both, but each account supplies the details most suitable for their theme. Washing of feet was a courtesy performed for guests who had travelled a considerable distance. Mary anointed and cleansed the feet of the Man Who journeyed from heaven to provide us with the water of life. The words of John suggest a verse from the Song of Solomon: "While the king was on his couch, my [spike]nard gave forth its fragrance" (Song 1:12). This reference suggests the love of the bride for the Bridegroom.

Little wonder that Mary and Martha are paired together. They display the perfect combination of devotion and service that should characterize the bride of Christ. Mary shows that wonderful self-abandonment of love. Martha shows the vigilance of loving service, and both demonstrate a foundation of faith.

Mary Magdalene

The last of the five bride images is Mary Magdalene. Christ had cast seven demons out of her (Lk. 8:12). This calls to mind the parable Christ spoke to His generation of Jews (Matt. 12:43-45). He came, casting out the demon in Israel, but they were not filled with the Spirit, and so the demon returned with seven others more wicked than the first. So Israel's state after rejecting Christ was worse than before. Mary symbolizes that state so that she can represent a future generation of Jews who will receive their Lord with great joy.

We find Mary in the garden and in the Lord's presence. She was mourning, as one would mourn for their only son (Zech. 12:10-14), and then the opened tomb poured out upon her the Spirit of grace and supplications. And she looked upon Him Whom they had pierced (Zech. 12:10), and she saw her Master and Teacher—her Bridegroom.

John's Images of the Bride in Revelation

When we think of images of the bride, the climactic entrance of the new Jerusalem at the close of Revelation comes to mind. But what John presents in Revelation about the bride is a careful contrast that is developed throughout the book. The contrast is between an outward worldly image and an oppressed spiritual image.

In the letters to the seven churches we see a mixture of good and evil. Even the name of Jezebel arises in them. As the book progresses we see repeated mention and emphasis on the idea of martyrdom. And we come to see the bride, the new Jerusalem, as especially made up of those who are martyrs. The following table shows a comparison of a false and outward bride as opposed to the spiritual, persecuted bride.

Jerusalem	Babel
Melchizedek: king of righteousness, king of Salem (Gen. 14:18-20)	Nimrod: king of confusion and the beginning of his kingdom was Babel and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar (Gen. 10:8-10) [Revolver, rebel]
Melchizedek brings forth bread and wine	Nimrod—He starts to become a master in the earth
He is a priest for the El Supreme	Becomes a master hunter before Yahweh Elohim
He blesses Abram, "Blest is Abram by the El Supreme, Owner of the heavens and the earth. And blest is the El Supreme, Who awards your foes into your hands."	Therefore it is being said, "As Nimrod, the master hunter before Yahweh."

The bride's relationship to God contrasted with the prostitute's relationship to the beast

New Jerusalem	Babylon the Great
And one of the seven messengers who have the seven bowls brimming with the last seven calamities came, and he speaks with me saying, "Hither! I shall be showing you the bride the wife of the Lambkin" (Rev. 21:9)	And one from among the seven messengers who have the seven bowls came, and he speaks with me saying, "Hither! I shall be showing you the sentence of the great prostitute who is sitting on many waters,"
The holy city, new Jerusalem, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband (21:2)	With whom the kings of the earth commit prostitution, and those dwelling on the earth are made drunk with the wine of her prostitution
And he carries me away, in spirit, on a mountain huge and high	And he carries me away, in spirit, into a wilderness
And a great sign was seen in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon underneath her feet, and on her head a wreath of twelve stars. And shows me the holy city, Jerusalem, as it is descending out of	And seen was another sign in heaven, and lo! a great fiery-red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and on its heads seven diadems. And I perceived a woman sitting on a scarlet wild beast, replete with names of blasphemy, and having 7 heads and 10

heaven from God, having the glory from God	horns.
Her luminosity is like a stone most precious, as a crystalline jasper gem	And the woman was clothed with purple and scarlet, and gilded gold and precious stones and pearls

Quotations in the tables above are from the Concordant Version for consistency.

Chapter 32: The Journeys of the Man

Through most of this study our focus has been to sketch the outline of the bride at the water in the varying scenes. All through we have noticed, or at least hinted at, the Man Who journeys to meet the bride there and supply the water for her. It is an amazing thing just to consider the journeys of our Lord. In the Old Testament He was the Image of God, walking in the garden of Eden; descending to Sodom to rescue Lot and judge the wickedness; as Fire in the bush, sending a deliverer in answer to the captives' cries; as a Pillar of Cloud and Fire, leading through the wilderness; as Captain of the host of the LORD, conquering the land of promise; as the Angel Whose name was wonderful and ascended to God in the flame of the sacrificial fire; as High Priest in the tabernacle and temple, washing the inner parts of the sacrifices, cleansing them and making them acceptable to God; leaving the glory of existence in the form of God to willingly be humbled to the fashion of man; descending like Joseph into a pit, yet His was the pit of hades from which none had ever returned; raised to walk the paths of life that lead out of the deep; ascending from the lowest parts of the earth to grace the throne of God in heaven and rule there; returning in power and great glory as King of all to receive the complement God is building for Him; reigning until His headship is complete and God is All in all. The journeys He has made! The things He has done! The things He has seen! The things He will yet accomplish! What a wonder that we may be joined with Him and share His allotment!

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ⁱ Another similar interpretation is that Leah represented Israel under the law, the handmaids of Leah and Rachel represented the church, and Rachel represents a future, repentant Israel. Charles Feinberg notes that in Ezekiel's vision of the temple the tribes who descended from Leah and Rachel are positioned closer to the temple area of the land than the tribes who descended from Bilhah and Zilpah. Charles L. Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel, The Glory of the Lord*, p. 276, Moody Press, Chicago, 1978.

ⁱⁱ In most translations the reference to Achsah's heart is lost, due to a variation in textual readings, but it is preserved by the LXX. Caleb gave her the (her) heart's desire. In the Hebrew a pun is made. Heart is *l-b*, and this ends the line in which Caleb's name, *c-l-b* occurs. Since the feminine ending to *lb* was omitted to make the pun, the text was suspected of corruption. The writer's art and intention were misunderstood. This note and the three comparisons of Achsah to the concubine are made by: Tammi J. Schneider, *Judges*, Berit Olam series, Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 1985.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, p. 1360, Moody Press, Chicago, 1975.