

What Saith the Scripture?

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# YOUNG PEOPLE'S ILLUSTRATED BIBLE HISTORY

BEING A SIMPLE AND ATTRACTIVE ACCOUNT OF THE GREAT EVENTS MENTIONED IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS. COMPRISING ALSO THE LIVES OF THE PATRIARCHS, OF CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES, AND OF THE REMARKABLE WOMEN AND CHILDREN MENTIONED IN THE SACRED VOLUME.

EACH SECTION CLOSING WITH APPROPRIATE MORAL REFLECTIONS.

ALSO AN APPENDIX, CONTAINING INSTRUCTIVE TABLES AND OTHER VALUABLE MATTER.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION  
BY THE AMERICAN EDITOR,  
REV. ALVAN BOND, D.D.,  
[1793-1882]

(Note from WStS: There is no name given as to the identity of the author.  
Rev. Bond is the only name associated with any of the writings in this book.)

ILLUSTRATED WITH NUMEROUS ELEGANT ENGRAVINGS BY THE MOST EMINENT ARTISTS;  
ACCOMPANIED WITH FOUR ACCURATE MAPS OF THE COUNTRIES OF THE BIBLE.

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## INTRODUCTION

THE Scripture lessons contained in this volume were originally published for the use and instruction of young people. That they might be adapted to the capacity and comprehension of those whose opportunities for acquiring a competent education were, by unavoidable circumstances, limited, a studied simplicity of style was adopted. This feature, however, which so uniformly characterizes the composition of these lessons will, it is believed, impart to them an interest and a charm, that will not only make them clear and attractive to young readers, but commend the book to the favor of Bible readers of mature years and liberal culture.

As an INTRODUCTION to the following collection of Scriptural Lessons, it is proposed to offer some REASONS, showing the superior claims of the Bible to the earnest attention, study, and belief of all classes, whether learned or unlearned, young or old; inasmuch as all are equally concerned in the momentous truths and teachings it reveals. The community is inundated with reading matter, journals, magazines, romances, histories, philosophies, &c., and the tendency is to neglect the Holy Word of God, as though its mission were ended, and the mighty themes, of which it treats, were obsolete. Whatever is done, therefore, to render Bible reading more attractive, and to revive an interest in the sublime truths of Divine Revelation, will be regarded with favor by all who believe in these truths, the knowledge of which surpasses in real importance all other kinds of knowledge.

The BIBLE embraces a collection of books, written, as is claimed, by holy men, who were inspired of God. It includes both the Old and the New Testaments. The contents of this sacred Book come under a two-fold division, viz.: Doctrinal and Historical. The work before us is confined, principally to the latter division.

While the doctrinal portions of the Bible have received earnest thought and searching investigation on the part of theologians and scholars, the historical parts have been passed over with less attention than may be claimed for them on the ground of their important relation to the Church of God, to say nothing of their instructive and practical value. There is the same evidence that the Bible histories were selected and arranged under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as there is that the doctrinal and

prophetic writings were so given.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God."

From the testimony of Josephus, it appears that the public records of the Jews were kept by the priests and other persons who were appointed as depositaries of the same, and that the sacred writers occasionally refer to them, as containing testimony to the facts in their narratives, and a more minute detail of particulars, which they omit as unnecessary to their purpose. For example, see reference to "The Book of Jasher," Josh. x. 13; 2 Sam. i. 18, and to "The Book of the Wars of the Lord," Numb. xxi. 14.

"The object of the historical books was to communicate instruction to the chosen people, and to mankind in general; and to illustrate the nature of God's providence in small as well as in great occurrences, in particular instances as well as in general appointments; they therefore often descend from the great outline of national concerns to the minute detail of private life. The relations, however, of individual events, that are occasionally interspersed, are highly interesting, and admirably develop the designs of the Almighty, and the character of those times to which they are respectively assigned. Those seeming digressions likewise, in which the sacred writers have recorded such remarkable events as related to particular personages, or such occurrences in foreign countries as tended to affect the interests of the Hebrew nation, are not only valuable for the religious spirit which they breathe, but are to be admired as strictly consistent with the sacred plan." (See Introduction to Starkhouse's History, &c., Glasgow Ed., 1842.)

Among the various reasons, showing the claims of the Sacred Scriptures to our earnest attention and belief, the first place must be assigned to the EVIDENCES of their Divine authority. It is not proposed to go into an elaborate argument for their Divine authority, but simply to notice some obvious facts, on which the evidence of the inspiration and authority of the revealed Scriptures rest.

One fact, worthy of notice, is the wonderful preservation of the Sacred Writings amidst the changes and revolutions of ages. Portions of them were composed more than three thousand years ago. No other historical writings, known to us, are so old by a thousand years. The books of the Old Testament were in the exclusive possession of the Jews, so long as their independent nationality continued. But as the art of printing was unknown, comparatively few copies were in existence at any one time, and these were mostly deposited in the tabernacle, temple, or synagogue. The later wars and domestic revolutions, suffered by the Jewish nation, involved to a great extent the destruction of their homes, their cities, their sanctuaries, and hundreds of thousands of lives; but their Holy Books were preserved amidst the common ruin. When Antiochus Epiphanes captured Jerusalem, he attempted to destroy every copy and fragment of the Jewish Scriptures. A few copies, however, escaped the ravages of the "Desolater," and were carried away by the captive Jews. During their long captivity in a heathen land, their forms of worship were interrupted and their national institutions destroyed; but the Providence of God watched over the Holy Scriptures and preserved them unharmed.

Another fact, bearing on the evidence that these Sacred Writings are of superhuman origin, is their being preserved unaltered. Other writings have been mutilated and changed from their original form. Not so the Bible. The Jews cherished such profound reverence for their Sacred Books, that the utmost

care and pains were taken by copyists to avoid the slightest mistake or alteration in the copies they made. The omission or addition of a single letter, if discovered, would vitiate the manuscript, and cause it to be condemned. Some three hundred years before Christ the Old Testament was, by order of Ptolemy Philadelphus, an Egyptian king, translated from the Hebrew into Greek, on which work seventy scholars were employed. This ancient version, quoted often by the apostles, on being compared with the original, and also with our version as now received, is found to agree with the same in all important particulars. There have been collected from many quarters several hundred manuscripts, some of them written as early as the fourth century, one of the oldest being very recently discovered in the convent of Mount Sinai, all which, on being critically examined and compared, are found to agree with each other in all essential points, as it respects history and doctrine. Thus may the care of a protecting Providence be clearly recognized in the circumstances which have prevented all such changes in the text of the Scriptures, as would obscure, or render doubtful the original reading. While contemporary works, embodying the productions of human wisdom and learning, have long since been irrecoverably lost, or so changed as to make them worthless, the Bible has been wonderfully preserved from loss, mutilation, or alteration, through thousands of years down to the present time. As another has said,

Cities fall, kingdoms come to nothing, empires fade away as the smoke. But that the Bible no tyrant should have been able to consume, no tradition to choke, no heretic maliciously to corrupt; that it should unto this day, amid the wreck of all that is human, without the alteration of one sentence, so as to change the doctrine taught therein; surely here is a "very singular Providence, claiming our attention in a most remarkable manner." How true, that "the Word of the Lord endureth forever."

The evidence for the Divine authority of the Holy Scriptures is confirmed by the fact of the harmony of their teachings and statements. It is known that they were written by many men, who lived in different provinces, and in different ages. These men belonged to different classes, and possessed different degrees of culture. Among them were kings, prophets, legislators, priests, shepherds, publicans, fishermen, &c. That men who lived in lands so remote from each other, and in times between which centuries rolled, and under many forms of government, with various degrees of mental culture, should so harmonize with each other in their teachings and oracles, shows most conclusively, that they must have been guided by the unerring inspiration of the Holy Spirit. On no other ground can the fact be explained, that so many fallible men under such circumstances should have avoided all disagreements, and preserved such unity in their voluminous writings.

Another consideration bearing on this point is the peculiar nature of the subjects on which they wrote. These subjects related to the existence, character, and government of God; the creation of the world, the origin, nature, duty, fall, and destiny of man; the two dispensations of religion, the Mosaic and the Christian,-- subjects unlike any recognized in human history or philosophy; and yet the sacred writers, living under different dispensations and civilizations, have evinced a unity of spirit and purpose,-- a harmony in their teachings and revelations,-- forming a system of heavenly truth which challenges the homage and faith of mankind. Such a fact as this can be satisfactorily explained on no other principle than the presence and agency of a supernatural inspiration. Greek and Roman philosophers in times of classic civilization and art abounded in contradictions, inconsistencies, and absurdities, in treating subjects of morality and religion. "The world by wisdom knew not God." On the other hand, the sacred writers, both in the Old and New Testaments, have shown that they were moved and guided by



one Spirit, and in the consistency and drift of their teachings have commended themselves to the confidence and admiration of the wise and good of all ages.

The Divine origin of the Scriptures becomes evident from the characteristics which distinguish them from all human writings. One of these characteristics is uncompromising truthfulness. The candid reader of the Bible cannot but be impressed with the conviction, that the sacred historians aimed to give a true and impartial record of the events and transactions which occurred in their times and in their nation. In no instance did they betray such partiality for their own people, as to prevent their telling the whole truth respecting their conduct. The corruptions and the evils of the times were exposed with a fidelity to history as candid and truthful as it was bold and faithful. The lives and conduct of patriarchs, priests, rulers, and other classes of people, were exhibited in the light of truth and fact, however humiliating to national pride and reputation. Their own personal faults were mentioned without attempts at concealment or palliation. The sins and errors of Abraham, of Jacob, of Moses, of David, of Solomon, of Peter, are faithfully narrated. In view of facts, which so distinguish the sacred writers from all other historians, we must infer that they wrote under the influence of a very different inspiration from that which has inspired the muse of profane history.

The spirit of love pervades the sacred writings as a prominent element. The sacred writers ever showed themselves to be unselfish, unambitious men, whose aim was to do good to others. In pursuance of this generous purpose they made great sacrifices, they endured persecutions, trials, privations, and labors; and in some instances they showed a heroic devotion to the good of their fellow-men that was ready to die for them. Moses, for example, exiled himself from the privileges, pleasures and honors of the court of Egypt, for the sake of espousing the cause of an oppressed people. For them he labored and prayed, and by his intensely earnest intercessions he was instrumental in averting from them the menacing judgments of an offended God. He was willing to be blotted out of the book of God, if this were necessary to the Salvation of the people whose cause he had espoused. We find in Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel, men of the same stamp, men in whose bosoms love for their people glowed with undying ardor. The same was true of the apostles. Paul was so intensely desirous of the salvation of his brethren after the flesh, that he would consent to be accursed from Christ, if this might be the means of saving them from their impending doom. With the like spirit the apostle John says, "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." In these examples do we not perceive the working of a more than earthly love? Such love pervades the Bible, and shows that the men, in whose lives and actions such a spirit runs, were influenced by unearthly aims, divine impulses.

The God of the Bible, unlike the deities revealed by man's wisdom, is represented as being LOVE itself. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God so loved the world. It was a love different from, and superior to, that general benevolence witnessed in the gifts of Providence. It was a sacrificing love, influenced by which he gave his Son to labor, and to suffer, and die for guilty man. This sublime idea could never have possessed the mind, save as it was revealed by a Divine inspiration. And in the life of the only-begotten Son we have a wonderful manifestation of love, love unparalleled in nature and degree. Impelled by it he endured the cross. While we were sinners Christ died for us. The revelation of such love must be traced to a higher source than the wisdom of this world. It carries with it the evidence of a Divine original. Such love as is revealed in the lives and teachings of the holy men of

the Bible,-- such love as that predicated of God, and witnessed in the life of Jesus, forming as it does a pervading element of the Sacred Scriptures, proves these Scriptures to be Divine in their origin.

Another characteristic of Bible instruction is holiness. This element, as a distinguishing feature, pervades the laws, precepts, exhortations, psalms, doctrines, and prophecies of the Bible. And when God is introduced as the object of love and worship, he is invested with an atmosphere of holiness. "Worship at his holy hill; for the Lord our God is holy." The things prohibited, and the duties required, show that the pages of the Sacred Word are luminous with the pure light of holiness. It is this peculiarity that makes the Bible an object of aversion with wicked men. They bate the light of sacred truth, and will not come to it, because it exposes their deeds of evil. This feature imparts to it a majesty and force which distinguish it from all other books, and strengthen the argument for its Divine inspiration.

A fact peculiar to the Scriptures is the supreme regard they express for the honor and glory of God. They breathe a spirit of reverential piety that exalts Jehovah, as the object of supreme love, loyalty, and praise. The men of God, such men as Moses, David, Isaiah, Daniel, Paul, John, and Peter, disclaim all credit for their works of faith and labors of love, ascribing all to God. Their devout acknowledgment is,-- "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory." Very different is the spirit that pervades the views of men in general. They praise themselves for what they think is praiseworthy. And they glorify their fellow-men for such deeds of heroism, for such achievements and enterprises, as tend to inspire popular admiration. Historians, poets, eulogists, limit their utterances to human instrumentalities and agencies, when speaking of the signal deeds of illustrious men. God and Providence are ignored. How very different the spirit that pervades the Sacred Writings. In them, whatever is great, and laudable, and noble, is ascribed to God. Jesus prayed,-- "Father, glorify thy name." The same spirit is exhibited in the teachings of the sacred writers, a fact which shows that they spake and wrote as moved by the Holy Ghost.

The characteristics thus enumerated, as distinguishing the writings of the Bible, show most conclusively that it is the WORD OF GOD. Take the one sublime statement with which the teachings of the Bible are introduced,-- "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Here is recognized the unity of the Godhead, and this theology is with marvelous consistency carried along through all the writings of the Old Testament. Living, as the sacred writers did, amidst the surroundings of polytheism, they strenuously and persistently maintained the great cardinal truth, that the Lord Jehovah, the Creator of the world, was one God. How can such a fact be accounted for except on the ground that these holy men, patriarchs, prophets, and psalmists, were guided in their sublime utterances from age to age by a supernatural influence, which led them into the truth.

Let us pass on to another source of evidence for the Divine authority of the Bible, viz.: the prophetic writings. No one will claim that mere human foresight can look down the ages, and tell of events of which there is no visible sign. But there are found scattered through the Scriptures from Moses to Malachi, predictions of signal events a long time before their fulfilment. New and increasing evidences of the truthfulness of these eminent prophecies are furnished by modern researches among the ruins of buried cities, whose destruction was foretold long before it took place.

The splendid capital of the Assyrian Empire, Nineveh, must have seemed as though it might resist

every hostile assault, and flourish for ages, at the time as Nahum and Zephaniah predicted its destruction, the one 645, and the other 630 years B. C. These predictions specified details, circumstances, and agencies, in connection with which its overthrow would be effected. Improbable as these predictions must have appeared when uttered, they received literal fulfilment about 606 years B. C. The city was then laid waste, its noble monuments overthrown, and its inhabitants dispersed and carried into captivity. The ruins, which have been discovered by modern explorations, and which attest the magnificence of this ancient city, furnish historic illustration and confirmation of the ancient prophecies, and prove that they must have been revealed to the men by whom they were uttered. A heathen historian, who must have been ignorant of the Hebrew Scriptures, has given a narrative of the destruction of this great city, comprising all that was foretold.

Babylon was once the glory of kingdoms,-- the proud metropolis of the world; it was so when its doom was announced by Isaiah and Jeremiah. In the predictions uttered, the nations are specified by whom the city would be besieged and conquered, and the name of the conqueror was given, a hundred years before he was born, and the circumstances are noted that would accompany its overthrow. Improbable as the prophetic utterances seemed at first, as the course of time swept on, the things spoken by the prophets came to pass. Subsequent history has confirmed their truthfulness, and the ruins of this mighty kingdom, as brought to light by modern antiquarians, add unanswerable testimony to the evidence, that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

The doom of Tyre, the extermination of the Edomites, the desolation of Egypt, and especially the singular fortunes of the Hebrew nation,-- as foretold by different prophets, attest the divinity of the prophetic writings, and strengthen the general argument for the supernatural origin of the entire Bible. The facts contained in the history of the Jews, as developed through a long course of ages, show in a most conclusive manner, that the spirit of prophecy pervades, and gives authority to the sacred writings. The growth of this people from a very humble origin, their peculiar nationality, their deliverance from Egyptian oppression, their possession of the land of Canaan, their institutions, their civil wars, their captivity, their restoration, their subjugation to Roman dominion, and their final destruction as a nation, and more than all, their continued existence as an isolated race, show with singular particularity the truthfulness of the many predictions uttered by Moses and other prophets respecting them, making their historic record of unparalleled vicissitudes a standing monument, like a lone pillar in the desert, attesting the Divine authority of the Bible.

The prophecies cited in the foregoing remarks, form only a small part of what are contained in the Scriptures. As a whole, they constituted an anticipative history of the world, so far as such history stood related to the church. They have been in a continued course of fulfilment during successive generations to the present time. Whence, we may inquire, this accurate foresight of future events? Not from the foreseeing wisdom of men, for they know not what shall be on the morrow. We infer, therefore, that it could only have been possessed as a special gift from the omniscient God. Hence the Bible, which contains a record of these prophetic visions, must be a Divine book, the Word of God.

The argument for this conclusion is fortified by the moral influence of the Scriptures. From the past, as well as the present history of the world, the fact cannot be questioned, that Bible knowledge has exerted a marked influence for good on the governments, laws, civilizations, institutions, and social condition of states and communities, and on the character of individuals.

History shows, that where there has been no Divine revelation, and consequently no clear knowledge of the only true God, governments have been established and laws enacted with a view, not to the good of subjects, but to the enthronement in seats of power of selfish, ambitious, unscrupulous rulers. The reign of oppression has been absolute and grinding wherever the Bible has been unknown. The old civilizations of the world, such as existed in Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, though under them arts and architecture flourished, and classic literature attained a high degree of refinement, yet, so far as the masses of the people were concerned, ignorance, superstition, corruption, oppression, and misery, characterized the state of society. The iron heel of despotic rule everywhere crushed out the life of struggling manhood. Men, stripped of their rights, were treated as of small account, except as instruments to be used to subserve the purposes and pleasures of a few irresponsible and remorseless potentates.

In the absence of the elevating influences of the Word of God, the general course and drift of the people is in the direction of a debasing idolatry. There the social condition is marked by vices, corruptions, and cruelties of the grossest forms. No civilization that has lacked the moulding influence of Divine revelation, has ever possessed power to reform the habits of idolatry, to enlighten the ignorant masses, or to elevate a people to the sphere of knowledge and virtue. "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

An entirely different phase of society is assumed where government, law, institutions, and religion, are brought into contact with the formative,-- the regenerating influences of the Holy Scriptures. Nowhere else, however sunny the skies, or luxuriant the earth, or healthful the clime, does the moral landscape refresh the sight with growths of living virtue, and scenes of attractive beauty. Nowhere else does government recognize the inalienable rights of the people, or protect them. Nowhere else is the light of popular education diffused. Nowhere else are there found the noble institutions of philanthropy and benevolence. Nowhere else is the fundamental relation of marriage rightly understood and sacredly guarded. Nowhere else do temples and altars rise for the worship of the true and living God. Such results never flow from the sources of this world's boasted wisdom.

The late Dr. Wayland, as the result of wide observation and profound reflection, has expressed his views as follows: "That the truths of the Bible have the power of awakening an intense moral feeling in man under every variety of character, learned or ignorant, civilized or savage; that they make bad men good, and send a pulse of healthful feeling throughout all the domestic, civil, and social relations - that they teach men to love right, to hate wrong, and to seek each other's welfare as the children of one common Parent; that they control the baleful passions of the human heart, and thus make men proficient in the science of self-government; and finally, that they teach him to aspire after a conformity to a Being of infinite holiness, and fill him with hopes infinitely more purifying, more exalted, more suited to his nature, than any other which this world has ever known, are facts as incontrovertible as the laws of philosophy or demonstrations in mathematics." No such moral forces ever proceeded from the teachings of man's wisdom. The lessons of heathen sages never wrought any thorough or permanent reform in the lives of individuals, or in the state of society. What human talent, culture, learning, and philosophy, have failed to accomplish, has been successfully achieved by the Word of God. In facts like these, facts patent to all candid observers, we find proof that the Bible is from heaven.

The like conviction will flash upon the mind from a careful study of the adaptation of Scriptural instruction to the capacities, necessities, and conscious cravings of men of all races. God possessed a perfect knowledge of the wants of our fallen race when he revealed to them his Word. Hence we find the truths and teachings of the Bible, whether doctrinal, historical, prophetic, devotional, or moral, peculiarly adapted to the wants of men in making them wiser and better for this life, and fitting them for the higher life of the world to come. This Holy Book is equally adapted to meet the wants of mankind in whatever times, countries, or conditions they have existed. Such adaptedness is beautifully illustrated and signally manifested, when its hallowed lessons come to the soul in the trying emergencies of life, and especially in that eventful, solemn crisis, when man finds himself trembling on the margin of that unknown futurity, concerning which the oracle of uninspired reason reveals no gleam of light, offers no relief, no peace. Then its precious worth is realized. "If there is one great thing in this world," as another has said, "it is the BIBLE OF GOD-- great in origin, great in thought, great in promise, great in beauty, great in its results! It hangs as by a golden cord from the throne of the Highest, and all heaven's light, life, love, and sweetness, come down into it for us. It hangs there like a celestial harp; the daughters of sorrow tune it, and awake a strain of consolation. The hand of joy strikes it, and feels a divine note of gladness. The sinner comes to it, and it discourses to him of repentance and salvation. The saint bends an ear to it, and it talks to him of an Intercessor and an immortal kingdom. The dying man lays his trembling hand on it, and there steals thence into his soul the promise,-- 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned.' 'Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' 'The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.' Where is promise, where is philosophy, where is song, like this?"

The foregoing pages contain a condensed argument for the Divine authority of the Sacred Scriptures. A more elaborate and scientific statement of this argument would not comport with the design of this introductory article. Enough has been said, however, to show their superiority over any other books ever written. Such superiority becomes evident from the nature and importance of the KNOWLEDGE of which the Bible is the only authentic source.

The history contained in this Sacred Book, is more valuable than that found in any uninspired writings. It is not claimed that Bible history is a substitute for the general history of the world. It is more specially a history of the kingdom of God on earth. Other peoples and nations are referred to only, as they were in some way connected with that kingdom. And yet it is true, that the book of Genesis is the ground of all the authentic history in existence from the epoch of creation to the death of Joseph, a period of about 2369 years. The Pentateuch as a history covers a period of about 2553 years, down to the death of Moses. No other record furnishes any reliable account of the creation of the world, the creation of man, the apostacy, the state of the human race before the deluge, 1656 years, the origin of nations in the 10th chapter of Genesis, the lives and fortunes of the early patriarchs, the sojourn of the Hebrews in Egypt, their exodus, the giving of the law, and the conquest of Canaan. There are twelve other books principally historical, which record events as connected with the Church of God to the time of the return of the Jews from the captivity. It is not supposed that the Bible chronicles contain a record of all the important events that transpired during these ages, but only such a selection as the Holy Spirit should suggest to the sacred historians. In this selection from existing documents, as well as what was revealed directly, special reference was had to what might be

important for the use of the church in all subsequent ages.

There are other departments of knowledge which show the great superiority of Bible truth as a source of instruction. On those great and profoundly interesting subjects,-- the existence and character of God, the origin, character, duties, and destinies of man, the future state, the plan of salvation through a Redeemer,-- on these and many other subjects connected with them, there is no source of reliable knowledge outside of the Bible. Without the light and truth which come to us from this Holy Book,-- without its histories, its teachings, its precepts, its prophecies, its psalms, its gospels and epistles-- how dark and gloomy were the condition of man from the cradle to the grave. Without God in the world, as revealed in the Bible, he would have no hope, no faith, no source of peace. The earth might revolve, as now, and seasons come and go with their stores and sources of temporal good, with alternating phases of sternness and beauty. The mountains also might tower upward in rugged grandeur, the rivers flow onward between smiling banks, the seas roar and lift up their waves in stormy sublimity, but what would man care for these exhibitions of wisdom, power, and loveliness, deaf as he would be to their utterances, while ignorant of what the Holy Word reveals? What motive were there to worship at the altar of "the unknown God," or seek information about the unknown future by consulting the dumb oracle of uninspired reason? Why should not man, thus groping in the region and shadow of death, limit his aims and labors to what shall minister merely to present gratification, accepting as his creed the frigid philosophy of the atheistic stoic,-- "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we shall die."

As darkness brooded over the chaotic abyss at one stage of the creative process, till, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," commanding the light to shine, kindling life and beauty, so the world of intelligent man were but a moral chaos, enveloped in thick darkness, unless the Spirit's presence should cause light to shine through the revelations of the Bible. The darkness would prevail till God said, "Let there be light."

Pluck the sun from the heavens, and what would be the effect? The stars might remain, but how poor a substitute would they be for the lost sun! Under their cold, twinkling radiance, what could live and flourish? The world might stand as now, but clad in perpetual darkness, save as relieved by star-light, deprived of the heat of the orb of day, how soon would its fields of verdure, and forms of beauty, and growths of fruit and vegetation fade, and wither, and freeze, and perish! A result analogous to this would follow, were the Bible, the sun in the moral heavens, with all the light of which it has been, and is still the fountain, destroyed. Who can conceive the desolation that would follow? The dial of human progress would, like that of Ahaz, reverse its shadow, and the world would soon be thrown back into the rayless gloom of heathenism, barbarism, and universal corruption. The ruins of those beautiful creations, to which the Bible more than any other agency has contributed, might remain, but the glory of the moral world with its growing civilizations, its humane achievements, its noble institutions of learning and religion, would soon disappear forever.

The authority of the Bible, as an inspired book, which differs from all other books, finds support in the great and leading purpose which it reveals, viz.: THE REDEMPTION OF MAN. It was no part in the design of God to make his word of truth a manual of science, or the source of such knowledge as can be acquired by observation and study. A higher end was embraced in his plan, the establishment of a kingdom in the world-- the subjects of which should be redeemed from the ruins of the fall, and

be "purified unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The materials incorporated into this great spiritual organization, were not to be selected from any one people, or from any one age. All kindreds and peoples, and all times, were included in the comprehensive plan of Divine wisdom and benevolence revealed in the Bible.

The progressive development of God's redeeming plan on to its consummation furnishes a sublime historic exhibition of the wisdom and power which underlie it. In this respect it differs radically from all the plans of human improvement and elevation ever devised by reformers, philosophers, or statesmen. It rises majestically, a tower of hope for a world lying in wickedness.

The Old Testament, by its altars, types, personages, histories, prophecies, and peculiar institutions, pointed to the one great crowning event, which, "in the fullness of time," was realized in the mission of the incarnate Son of God, as the Saviour of men. It is this momentous truth that lends to the Old Testament such significance, value, and glory. It was all along the ages a forth shadowing of his coming, who was to be a Mediator between God and alienated man.

As the great Teacher, the atoning Mediator, the regal Head over all things to the Church, Jesus Christ is the Divine, the Central Object of Bible revelations, in which truth and prophecy meet, and find a marvelous fulfilment. From him they derive light and power, and by him they are clothed with authority that claims the reverence and faith of all men. The Bible is, emphatically, "the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation." It gives light where all human teachings leave the inquiring mind in darkness; it inspires peace of conscience and relief of soul, where all other teachings only perplex and confuse; it is a well-spring of refreshing hope and comfort, where all mere human writings prove dry and barren. A pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night, it shows the way to heaven.

The teachings of the Bible are not only so profound as to command the attention of the mightiest intellect, and awaken earnest inquiry in men of the highest culture, but they are so plain and simple as to be adapted to the humblest capacity. The least and the lowest of the human family may find in the Bible what is suited to their understanding. Matchless wisdom and pure simplicity, so wonderfully united in its teachings, show that it is a book for all mankind, for the humblest peasant and the profoundest student. "This supreme and mighty Book," says another,-- "the Book of mankind finds no domain inaccessible to it, and no fragment of the human race for which it has not a vitalizing power."

In these respects how greatly does the Bible differ from all mere human compositions, whether philosophies, sciences, theologies, histories, or codes of law. These are constructed with reference to the concerns of the present life, revolutions, reforms, political changes, and social improvements. They have their day of popularity and influence, and then are consigned to dumb forgetfulness, never more to be revived. Such is the common fate of the productions of the human intellect. Very few of them outlive the generation when they had their birth. However brilliant or popular for a time, they pass away as a dream, while the Bible lives on unchanged and imperishable, more and more read, believed in, and loved. What better witness do we need that it is Divine?

The Bible is sufficient to instruct and comfort men of the loftiest intellect and highest culture, and is no less adapted to the younger classes of society. It has taught the little ones of the Christian

household more about God, and heaven, the origin, the duty, and the destiny of man, than the wisest sages ever knew. Jewish parents were required to store the minds and memories of their children with Scripture truths. Jesus in his childhood had become so well acquainted with the Scriptures, that he could converse about them with the Doctors in the temple.

In an age like the present, when error and delusion, in fascinating forms, imperil the principles and morals of the young, the greatest safeguard for their protection is a knowledge of God's Holy Word. Its sacred histories are replete with attractive and startling lessons of truth and warning easily understood; and as a preparation for a knowledge of preceptive and doctrinal theology, they hold an important place. The simplicity and clearness of these lessons, recommend them especially as aids to that religious culture, to which the young mind and heart should be subjected. To answer this important purpose the work, here introduced, was originally prepared, and seems admirably fitted. The estimate in which it is held in the country where it was first published, appears from the fact, that successive editions have been demanded.

As an introductory article, it has been thought, that its value would be enhanced by exhibiting in a simple manner some of the more obvious and conclusive evidences, which may be adduced in vindication of the claims of the Bible to the faith, the study, and the reverence, not only of those who move in the higher sphere of life, but of those also who dwell on lower ground-- the masses, many of whom are but children in religious knowledge. To instruct, interest, and benefit this numerous class of readers, as children and youth, this work, it is believed, possesses a special adaptedness.

With these convictions, this humble service is commended to the blessing of Him, whose Holy Word not only giveth light, but maketh wise unto salvation.

NORWICH, CONN.

ALVAN BOND.

## THE OLD TESTAMENT

(WStS Note: [THE NEW TESTAMENT](#) has been started. Installments of the two testaments will be added alternately.)

### 1. THE CREATION.

MANY years ago, there was no earth, nor plants, nor animals, nor sun, nor moon, nor people. All was darkness; but God was. God is eternal; He had no beginning. He will have no end.

God spoke, and created all things by his wonderful power. The first day, He created light:



the second day, the blue sky; the third day, the seas and dry land, and trees; the fourth day, the sun, and moon, and stars; the fifth day, the birds and fishes; the sixth day, beasts, and insects, and creeping things, and man. Then all was finished, and "God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good." "The seventh day God ended His work which He had made." God rested on that day, and therefore He commands us to rest on the Sabbath day. He says, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

"The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." God gave to the animals beautiful and useful bodies; but to man He gave more: He gave him a soul also, which could never die. God gave wonderful instinct to the animals; but He gave reason to man, power to know and to love, and to worship God. The man's name was Adam. God created him holy and happy. "And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man." The garden was full of beautiful trees and flowers; the little birds sang sweetly, and the animals all played together upon the green grass; they did not fight, nor hurt one another; all was love and happiness, because there was no sin. It was warm and pleasant, there was no cold wind, no snow, no winter.

"The, Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it." But God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." When Adam was asleep, God took a rib out of his side, and made it a woman, and brought her to Adam, and she was his wife. Her name was Eve. She had a soul and reason like Adam, and was holy and happy as he was. God said to them, "Of every tree in the garden ye may eat; but of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which is in the midst of the garden, ye shall not eat, lest ye die." Adam and Eve loved one another, and they loved God. They walked in the beautiful garden, and sang praise to God, without pain, or sorrow, or fear; and they loved to hear God speak to them, and to learn the wonderful things He taught them.

## 2. THE BEGINNING OF SIN.

THERE was a wicked angel of old, named Satan. Once he had been a bright and happy angel in heaven; but he was disobedient and God drove him out of heaven, and many other wicked angels with him. Sin cannot be in heaven; all must be holy there. "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down into hell." 2 Pet. ii. 4.

Satan hated Adam and Eve, because they were holy and happy, and he was wicked and miserable; and he went into the garden, and appeared like a serpent, and spoke to Eve, and tempted her to eat the fruit which God had forbidden. But Eve said, "God commanded us, saying, Ye shall not eat of it, lest ye die." Then Satan told a lie, for "he is a liar, and the father of it," John viii. 44, and said, "You shall not surely die." And Eve was tempted to

believe Satan, and she took the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and ate, and gave to Adam, and he ate. God saw all this, and He was very angry. Adam and Eve were sinners now, their holiness and happiness were gone, and God would punish them for their sin. "They heard the voice of the Lord God, walking in the garden in the cool of the day; and Adam and his wife hid themselves." Why did they fear? Because they knew they had sinned; they knew that God was angry with them: they were not glad now to hear His voice; they could not now sing His praises, and talk happily to Him. But Adam and Eve could not hide themselves from God, for He can see everywhere. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." Prov. xv. 3.

God called Adam, and said to him, "Hast thou eaten of the fruit of which I commanded thee not to eat?" and Adam did not humbly confess his sin, but answered, "The woman gave it to me, and I ate." Then God said to Eve, "What is this that thou hast done and she answered, "The serpent tempted me, and I ate." Then God told Adam and Eve that they had sinned, and therefore they must die. Thorns and thistles would now grow in the beautiful world; they must labor, and suffer pain and sorrow all the days they lived, and then "die, and return to the dust." Their bodies must die; but where must their souls go? They could not die, because they were immortal: and they could not go to heaven, because they were sinful. Heaven is holy; "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth." Must the souls of Adam and Eve, and all their children, be lost? No- God did not wish his sinful creatures to perish. He said, "Deliver their souls from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom." Job xxxiii. 24.

God said, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. What did this mean? Satan was the serpent; Jesus Christ was the Seed of the woman. In due time, Jesus would come into the world, and subdue Satan, and deliver all who should believe, from Satan's power, from sin and death. If we, like Adam and Eve, have faith in Jesus, we shall be saved as they were, and made eternally happy when we die.

### 3. CAIN AND ABEL.

BUT though God forgave Adam and Eve, He would not let them remain in the garden. An angel came with a flaming sword to drive them away. They were sinners, and therefore they must not stay there. Now, they felt pain and sorrow.

Cain, the eldest son of Adam and Eve, was very wicked; but his brother Abel loved and prayed to God, and believed in Jesus. Abel was a shepherd: and, at God's command, he took a lamb, and killed it, and offered it up in sacrifice. Abel sacrificed the lamb in faith, and in obedience: Cain offered a sacrifice too, but not the right sort of sacrifice, and not in the right way. He brought the fruits of the earth, and gave them to God. But he did not confess his sins, nor ask for forgiveness; so God accepted Abel, and his sacrifice; but Cain,

and his sacrifice, He did not accept.

But when Cain knew God was angry, he did not ask God to forgive him, and change his heart; he was sullen and jealous, because God accepted his brother, and did not accept him. God said to Cain, "Why art thou angry? If thou doest well, shalt thou not also be accepted?" for God was willing to forgive Cain. But Cain would not attend to what God said; Satan was in his heart, tempting him to be angry and passionate, and Cain did not "resist the devil."

One day, Cain and Abel were together in the field. They were alone; Adam and Eve were not there; and Cain struck Abel, and killed him. Abel's body fell dead upon the ground, but his soul did not die; Cain could not hurt that: it went to heaven, to be there in happiness for ever. God saw Cain kill his brother, and asked, "Where is Abel?" and wicked Cain committed another sin, and told a lie, and said, "I know not." But God had seen Abel die, and He punished Cain, and drove him away, far from his father, and mother, and brothers, and sisters; and he was a wanderer in the earth.

Adam and Eve were very sorry for their dear son. When they looked on his dead body, they must have thought of their own sin, and of the punishment of sin: and how glad they must have been to remember God's promise, that Jesus should come and die to save sinners. They lived to be hundreds of years old, and then they died. Their bodies were buried in the tomb; but we may hope that their souls went to heaven.

#### 4. THE DELUGE.

MANY people were in the world, and most of them were very wicked; but a holy man was among them, named Enoch. The Bible says, "Enoch walked with God." What does this mean? It means that Enoch's sins were pardoned, and that he was at peace with God, and that he loved and served Him. God blessed Enoch, and was pleased to take him to heaven without dying. "He was not, for God took him."

"God saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth." And He said, He would destroy the wicked people, and send a flood of water to wash them all away. But there was then another holy man, named Noah, and God promised to save him. God commanded Noah to make a great ark of wood. Noah did as God told him, and when the ark was finished, he went in, - with his wife, and his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and the wives of his sons, and many beasts and birds, and creeping things; and "the Lord shut him in." The wicked people would not go into the ark, nor believe Noah when he told them that the water was soon coming to drown them all. God waited in mercy many years; for He did not wish them to perish. But they would not repent, nor believe, nor turn to God; and, at last, He sent rain from heaven, and water out of the sea, and washed away the wicked

people. "The rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights," and every thing in the earth died. Was Noah safe? Yes: the ark floated upon the waters; it did not sink, because God kept it up. God will keep safely all who, like Noah, love and serve Him. He can keep them in every place. When they are asleep in the dark night, God sees them; when they walk about, He is with them; when they are in storms upon the great sea, He can keep them. He sends His holy angels to take care of them; His eye is always upon them. Those are happy people who have God near, to love and keep them wherever they are. And the ark may remind us of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we are in Him, by faith, then we shall be safe for ever from God's anger, as Noah was safe in the ark from the waters of the flood.

When the rain was over, the ark rested upon a mountain, called Ararat, and Noah looked out. All the ground was covered with water. There were no trees, nor flowers; they were withered and dead. There were no people, nor beasts, nor birds; the water had drowned them all. Then Noah opened a window in the ark, and sent out a raven. The raven flew about, and did not return to Noah. Then Noah sent out a dove. But the dove was not, like the raven; it would not feed upon the dead bodies, and there was no resting-place for it; so it flew back again, and Noah put out his hand and pulled it into the ark.

Seven days after, Noah sent out the dove again; and in the evening it returned, and brought in its beak an olive leaf. Noah was very glad to see this leaf; because he knew by it that now the trees were beginning, to bud and grow, and that soon all would be dry and pleasant again. So Noah thanked God, and waited patiently for seven more days; and then he sent out the dove again. All was dry now. The trees and flowers grew, and the still shone brightly and pleasantly. The dove did not return any more to the ark. God gave it instinct to build its nest among the trees, and to find food for itself without Noah to take care of it.

Noah took the covering off the ark, and looked, and he saw that all was dry. Then God told him to come out, with his family, and all the living things that were with him. They were glad to see the dry ground again, and the sun, and trees, and flowers, so beautiful and fresh. They were all well; for God had kept them safely in the ark from the wind and the waters. Then Noah and his family thanked God, and built an altar, and offered joyful sacrifices in faith, and prayed, and praised the Lord.

And God set a beautiful rainbow in the sky, and he told Noah, that when it should rain again upon the earth, and the clouds should be black and heavy, then the rainbow should be seen in the cloud, that people might know that God would not again drown the world. The sun shining upon the little drops of water in the rain-cloud, makes the bow, and its beautiful colors; God sends the rain, and the cloud, and the sunshine to make the bow, that we may remember his promise to Noah, never to drown the world again. But God sends rain from heaven, to make the grass and corn grow; to water the ground, and make the trees and flowers bud and blossom. God is very good and kind. "He maketh grass to grow upon the mountains; He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry." Ps. cxlvii. 8, 9.

When Noah and his family came out of the ark, they went into different places, and built cities and houses; and they had many children and the earth was soon full of people again. These people all spoke the same language. Many of them were very wicked. They sought to make themselves great, not to please God; and, in their pride, they said, "Let us build us a city, and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad." But God was angry with them, because they were proud, and forgot Him. And He confounded their speech, and made them speak different languages; so that they could not understand one another, nor finish the city and tower. The place was named Babel, or confusion, and the wicked people were scattered abroad upon the face of the earth. See how God hates and punishes pride!

## 5. ABRAM.

THERE was a man named Abram who lived in Mesopotamia. The people there were idolators, but Abram worshipped God. God told Abram to go away from his home, into the land of Canaan; and He promised to bless him, if he did so. Abram obeyed directly; he took his wife, and his nephew Lot, and all he possessed, and went to Canaan. This showed his faith and obedience; and God did as He promised, and brought Abram safely to Sichem, and then said to him, "Unto thy seed will I give this land." Abram then had no children; but still he believed God, and "built an altar to the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord." Abram was very rich: he had silver, and gold, and asses, and camels, and servants. His nephew Lot was rich too, and there was not room in the land for the possessions of both Lot and Abram; and their servants were unkind, and quarreled with one another. Abram did not like to see this, for he wished all to be love and peace. So he asked Lot to separate from him, and to go to the place he liked best. Then Lot looked towards Jordan; it was a beautiful place, like a sweet garden, and full of water. So Lot chose to go to Sodom; because it was very pleasant, and there would be much food there for him, and for his cattle. Lot was very selfish; for he did not try to please Abram, he only tried to please himself. Let us always try to remember, that the Bible tells us to love others as as ourselves.

Abram and Lot parted, and Lot went to live in Sodom. But Lot was not happy there. The people were very wicked, and he was vexed, because they would not love and worship God, as He wished to do. And now Lot was punished for his sin in going among wicked people, and choosing a home in a place where God was not obeyed. We should try to be with those who love the Lord, and who will help us to do right. Riches and possessions can not make us happy; the love of God alone can give us peace and comfort. And therefore Abram was happier than Lot was, in the rich city of Sodom. And God blessed Abram, and said to him again, "All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy children." Then Abram went to Hebron, and dwelt there, and built an altar to the Lord.

## 6. MELCHIZEDEK.

SOON after Lot went to live in Sodom, a great king named Chedorlaomer, and other kings with him, came, and fought against the city and the people of Sodom. Chedorlaomer conquered the king of Sodom, and took away all the riches of the city, and made many of the people prisoners, and Lot was made prisoner among them. See how vain and foolish it is to love and trust in riches and worldly things! Lot went to Sodom, hoping to enjoy all his great possessions: now, he had lost everything, and was made prisoner himself.

When Abram heard what had happened to Lot, he armed himself, and his servants, and pursued the army of Chedorlaomer, and smote them, and brought all the people and goods that Chedorlaomer had taken, and delivered Lot; and Lot returned in safety to Sodom. The king of Sodom offered to give great riches to Abram; but Abram would not take any reward; for he wished only to show kindness to others, not to enrich himself. Let us try to imitate Abram, and to be kind and generous as he was. The Bible says, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Phil. ii. 4.

When Abram returned, the king of Salem, who was named Melchizedek, came out to meet him, and gave bread and wine to him and his servants, to refresh them. Melchizedek was a priest as well as a king, and he blessed Abram, and said, "Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy bands." Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth part of all the riches that had been taken, to show how much he honored and respected him.

We read no more of the history of Melchizedek; but the Bible teaches us, that he is to remind us of another and greater king and priest -- of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Melchizedek was a type, a likeness, of Jesus. Jesus is a king; He reigns in the hearts of his people now; He will reign over all the world hereafter. And he is a priest too; He has offered up the sacrifice of himself, to take away our sins, and He ever lives in heaven, to make intercession for us there.

## 7. ABRAM'S VISION.

AND now the Lord spoke to Abram again in a vision, to comfort and encourage him. God promised to do great and wonderful things for him at some future time, but not yet; for He was pleased first to try Abram's faith and patience.

One night, God brought him out, into the fields, and told him to look upwards. The stars

were shining; brightly in the sky, and God told Abram to try to count them; but, there were more, many more, than Abram could number. Then God, said, "So shall thy seed be." Abram had yet no children, but he believed God still. He felt sure, that the Lord could and would do as He promised. This is an example of faith for us. God speaks to us in the Bible, and all he says we are to believe. And those who truly believe, will be blessed with faithful Abram.

God promised Abram that he should inherit the land of Canaan; and He told him what would happen to his children, when he himself was dead. God commanded Abram to take several animals, and to divide them in pieces, and offer them in sacrifice, and when the birds came to devour the dead bodies of these animals, Abram drove them away. That same night, God spoke to Abram again, and told him, that his children should go into a strange land, and be afflicted there; but that after 400 years, they should come out of that land, with great riches, and possess all the country of Canaan. And when it was dark, Abram saw, in vision, a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp, which passed between the pieces of the sacrifice, which Abram had offered at God's command.

What was the meaning of this? Perhaps the vision was meant to teach Abram, what should happen to his children, in that strange land to which they were going. The smoking furnace might teach him that they would be afflicted; and the bright lamp might teach him that they would be comforted. God often afflicts his people, but He always comforts them too; and so, as we shall soon see, He afflicted and comforted Abram's children, the people of Israel in the land of Egypt.

## 8. HAGAR.

SARAI, the wife of Abram, had a maid named Hagar, who was also Abram's wife. Hagar behaved disrespectfully to her mistress, and this made Sarai angry, and she treated Hagar very harshly, and was so unkind to her, that Hagar ran away from her mistress, and fled into the wilderness. It was wrong of Hagar to be disrespectful to her mistress; and it was wrong of Sarai to be unkind to her servant; and Abram himself was wrong in allowing these things to happen in his family.

But what became of Hagar? The angel of the Lord found her in the wilderness, by a well of water, and said to her, "Hagar, whence camest thou?" And Hagar answered, "I flee from my mistress Sarai." Then the angel told Hagar to return to her mistress, and to submit to her. This was Hagar's duty, and she could not be blessed nor happy while she forgot this duty and gave way to her own pride and self-will. But the angel comforted Hagar, though he reproved her, and told her that she would have a son, who would be the father of a great nation. That son was to be named Ishmael, which means, "God shall hear," because God had heard the affliction of Hagar, and had mercy on her. And the Angel said, that Ishmael

should be a wild man, and that his hand would be against every man and every man's hand against him: Ishmael was born not long after, and from him descended the nation of the Arabians, who have always been a wild people, as the angel foretold.

So Hagar was comforted; and she did as she was commanded, and returned to Sarai. But first, she gave a name to the angel who had appeared to her. She called him, "Thou God seest me." He saw Hagar in her affliction, and He can still see us in all our sorrows, and bless and comfort us, as He did her, if we pray to Him, and trust in Him.

## 9. THE COVENANT.

AFTER this, the Lord appeared to Abram, and again promised to bless and multiply him, and give him the land of Canaan, for a possession. And God changed his name, and called him Abraham, which means the father of a multitude, because many people should descend from him. And Sarai's name also was changed to Sarah, which means a princess. Then the Lord appointed a sign in Abraham's family, to mark them as a distinct people; this sign was the circumcision of every son who, should be born in the family of Abraham.

Were the children of Ishmael to possess the land of Canaan? No; Ishmael was not the promised seed who should inherit Canaan; but God told Abraham, that Sarah should have a son who should be called Isaac, and that He would make with him, and with his children, an everlasting covenant? What is a covenant? An agreement and promise between two parties. The promise which God made to Noah, never to drown the world again, was a covenant; and the sign of it was the rainbow. And now, the promise God made to Abraham, to bless his seed, and to give them the land of Canaan, was a covenant; and the sign of it was circumcision. And God had made another covenant with Adam in the garden of Eden, when He promised that Jesus Christ should come into the world, and die to save sinners. This was the greatest covenant of all. And we know that every one of God's covenants is true, because [they are] made by Him who cannot lie, and who will never deceive His people.

## 10. THE ANGELS VISIT.

ONE day, Abraham was sitting at his tent door, and he looked up, and saw three men standing by him. Then he rose up directly, and bowed respectfully to them, and asked, "Let now water be fetched and wash your feet, and rest under the tree, and I will bring you food." So the men sat down, and Abraham ran into the tent, to his wife Sarah, and told her to make cakes very quickly; then he ran to the field, and took a calf, and killed it, and dressed it; and he brought the calf, and the cakes, and butter, and milk, and gave them to



the men under the tree; and they did eat, and Abraham stood and waited upon them. He was right to be kind and respectful: Peter says, "Use hospitality one to another." I Peter iv. 9. And Paul says, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers." Hebrews xii. 2.

When the men had finished eating, they asked, "Where is Sarah?" And Abraham said, "She is in the tent." Then the Lord told Abraham, He would soon give to him and Sarah a son; for God had not forgotten his promise made to Abraham so many years before. Sarah heard the Lord speak, but she did not believe what He said, and she laughed and thought it could not be true. Then the Lord said, "Why did Sarah laugh? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Sarah shall have a son." Sarah was afraid, and denied, and said, "I laughed not;" but He said, "Nay, but thou didst laugh." So the men went away, and Abraham went with them towards Sodom. And then the Lord told Abraham, that He was angry with those two wicked cities, Sodom and Gomorrah, and was come now to destroy them.

Abraham thought of his nephew Lot, who was still in Sodom, and he felt afraid, and very sorry for him. So he asked the Lord to spare the city if fifty righteous people were there; and the Lord said He would. But soon, Abraham thought, that Sodom was so very wicked, that perhaps there were not fifty there who loved God; and he prayed the Lord again, five times, if there were forty-five, or forty, or thirty, or twenty, or only ten righteous people in Sodom, to save the city. And the Lord said, "If I find in Sodom ten righteous, I will not destroy it." Then the Lord went away, and Abraham returned unto his place.

It was right and kind of Abraham to pray for Lot. We should all remember our friends in prayer, and ask God to take care of them. And when they are unhappy, or in danger, we should particularly pray God to comfort them, and to keep them from evil. "Pray one for another. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James v. 16.

## 11. SODOM DESTROYED.

IT was evening when the two angels came to Sodom. Did they find there ten righteous people? No; there were not ten righteous in Sodom; and therefore it could not be saved. But the Lord remembered Abraham's prayer: and He remembered righteous Lot, who loved God all alone in the wicked city, and sent the angels to save him.

Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom; and when he saw the angels, he rose and bowed respectfully, and brought them to his house, and gave them food. Then they said, "Whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring out; for we will destroy this place." So Lot went out, and spoke to his sons-in-law, and said, "Get you out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city." But they would not believe what he said. And when the morning was come, the angels hastened Lot, and said, "Arise, take thy wife and thy two daughters which are here;" and while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the

hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful unto him, and they brought him forth. Then they said, "Escape for thy life to the mountain; stay not; look not behind thee." But Lot said, "I can not escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me. There is a little city near to flee unto, let me escape thither." And God mercifully allowed Lot to go to that little city. It was called Zoar.

So Lot, and his wife, and his two daughters, escaped from Sodom; and then "the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven." All the cities were destroyed; all the people died. Lot was saved, with his two daughters but "his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt."

In the morning, Abraham rose very early, and went to look toward Sodom. No beautiful city was there now; it was all black with smoke; the houses destroyed; the people killed. But God had remembered Abraham's prayer for Lot, and kept him safely. But Lot had no house to live in; no riches, no possessions: he lived in a cave, with his two daughters, and was thankful to be even there.

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