

ISAAC, THE PEACEABLE

– GEN. 26:12-25. – SEPT. 1. –

Golden Text: – "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." – Matt. 5:9.

ISAAC signifies "laughter." Abraham laughed with pleasure when informed that he would have a son that would be born in his old age. (Gen. 17:17.) Sarah laughed with incredulity when she was informed on the subject. (Gen. 18:12.) And again she laughed in joy and appreciation at the time of Isaac's birth: hence he was named Laughter, or Joyous. His life, as recorded in the Scriptures, was rather an uneventful one. As might have been expected from the fact of the age of his parents, he appears to have been rather a quiet, thoughtful, non-resistant child and man, with less of the fire and aggressive energy than displayed by some others. Our lesson covers a considerable period of his life, and the chief points of character which it brings to our attention are, first, his meek, patient, peaceable disposition; and, second, his abiding faith in God and in the promises made to Abraham, his father.

As Abraham, in the time of drouth, went southward into Egypt, so Isaac similarly went southward, but stopped in the land Gerar, the king over which was Abimelech. The Lord's blessing was so manifestly with Isaac that Abimelech and the people of that land urged him to move elsewhere, as his prosperity, they imagined, was somewhat at their expense. It is not amiss that we here note the fact that the Lord's blessing upon Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their descendants – Israel according to the flesh – was manifested in temporal prosperity; whereas divine favors to spiritual Israel of this Gospel age are manifested in spiritual prosperity. And since the two prosperities, under present conditions, can rarely exist side by side in the same individual's

experience, it follows that those who are in line with the spiritual promises of the present time are generally, in temporal matters, "the poor of this world, rich in faith, heirs of the Kingdom." "Not many wise, not many great, not many learned, according to the course of this world, hath God chosen." – Jas. 2:5; 1 Cor. 1:26,27.

It is not a little remarkable that, even in their cast-off condition, the natural seed of Abraham (to whom still belong certain as yet unfulfilled promises of God, which will surely be fulfilled as soon as the spiritual Israel has been selected), are nevertheless so kept and guided by divine providence that in all parts of the world they are comparatively successful in the commercial and literary competition of the world; so that, as Abimelech said to Isaac, "Go from us, for thou art more mighty than we," the various nations of earth feel toward and act toward Isaac's posterity – the Jew is continually asked to move on, because, even though alienated for the time being from the chief blessing of the Abrahamic promise, the Lord's hand is with him, and he prospers in his undertakings.

The experiences of fleshly Israel in having no continuing city or country, but being pushed hither and thither throughout the earth for now several centuries, should have produced in at least some of that nation a spirit of humility and of patient waiting for the Lord, and his fulfilment of his gracious promises to them. And we are glad to hope that such will be found thus exercised and ready for the Kingdom at its inception; and yet amongst the Jews, as a people, we notice comparatively little faith and comparatively little meekness – especially amongst their wealthy ones. Evidently, the majority are not Israelites indeed, and will not be prepared for more than the average blessings upon the world at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom. Nevertheless, we may hope that a goodly remnant of that people are in the condition of heart in which they will be ready to welcome Messiah's Kingdom, when the eyes of their understanding shall

open, and to join with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the holy prophets of their brethren, who will then be princes in all the earth (Psa. 45:16), in constituting a nucleus of a holy nation, gathered about the earthly phase of the Kingdom, – through which shall proceed to Israel and to all the nations the heavenly laws and blessings dispensed by God through spiritual Israel, then glorified with Christ at its head.

The peaceable disposition of Isaac is exhibited in this lesson by the fact that although he recognized himself to be the divinely appointed heir of that land, who should ultimately inherit it; and although, with his large retinue of servants, King Abimelech himself [R2860 : page 263] had recognized his superior power; nevertheless, rather than have strife and contention, Isaac moved his encampment a considerable distance away from the place of strife, abandoning some of his rights for the sake of peace. And it was after he had thus relinquished his rights, trusting to God to give him the land in his own *due time* and manner, that the Lord appeared to him (in what manner is not explained), and reiterated to him the substance of the covenant already made with his father Abraham, saying: "I am the God of Abraham, thy father [I still recognize him; he is not extinct; he still has a place in my gracious arrangements and purposes, although he sleeps with his fathers; I am abundantly able, in due time, to resurrect him, and to fulfil to him and to his faithful posterity all my gracious promises]: fear not, for I am with thee [I recognize thee as associated in these promises and an heir with him – I approve also the element of faith in thy character, and thy submission to my times and seasons and arrangements – I appreciate the fact that thou dost not strive to attain the things I have promised, until the time that I am pleased to give them to thee], and I will bless thee and thy seed, for my servant Abraham's sake [– in harmony with the one covenant made with Abraham: you will understand that I am not making a new covenant with you, but merely confirming the original one]."

Many of the spiritual children of Abraham need to learn the lesson of patience – patient waiting on the Lord for the fulfilment of his gracious promises. With quite a good many there is a disposition to hasten matters, to force things; and even questionable methods are sometimes adopted and commended, with the thought that the aggressive ones are more acceptable servants to the Lord than others; but instead of such aggressiveness, as the carrying of the gospel into China or Africa or India with the sword, [R2861 : page 263] being the evidence of a zeal which God approves, it should rather be considered an evidence of lack of faith in God, without which it is impossible to please him. A proper faith in God will lead to a careful study of his Word, of the promises; and a careful study of the promises would show that the present is not the time for conquering the world, but the time for calling out, proving and testing, the elect Church, which in due time, as the seed of Abraham, shall be fully empowered and fully commissioned to be both kings and priests, and to conquer the world in righteousness. A proper condition of faith in God must lead his faithful ones to wait patiently for him; praying the meanwhile, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth;" and to expect that when the due time shall come Emmanuel will take the control of the world's affairs, and cause its subjugation and blessing to proceed rapidly and effectively. Now, it is our duty to avoid striving with the world; rather to give place – to permit our rights to be infringed, to wait on the Lord, and to expect that he will provide for us the things and the experiences most helpful to our development as new creatures, and thus to make us fit, "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

Two other circumstances in Isaac's life seem to illustrate his attitude of faith, obedience and patient submission, even more than this lesson. One of these we have already referred to, – his submission as a young man, in health and vigor, to be bound by his father as a sacrifice upon the altar. In this complete

submission to Abraham, his father, Isaac well typified his antitype, Christ Jesus, and his submission to the heavenly Father, Abraham's antitype, even unto death, even the death of the cross.

The other was the matter of his marriage. Isaac manifested a wonderful degree of patience and trust in the divine providence which he seems to have realized was guiding in all the affairs of his father Abraham, and in his affairs as his son and heir under the promises. He was a full-grown man of forty years when his father Abraham, apparently without consulting him in the matter, sent the servant to select for him a wife, who, when she came, he accepted with full loyalty of heart, as being the Lord's choice for him. We are not setting this forth as an example in all respects for the fathers and sons of our day. On the contrary, we believe that some of these matters in ancient times were arranged with a view to the typical lessons embodied in the various circumstances and affairs of life. Isaac, as the type of Christ, was fully submissive to the will of his father, as a type of Jesus' submission to the divine will respecting the selection for him of the Gospel Church, to be his Bride and joint-heir in the great promises respecting the world and its blessing. Our Lord Jesus is fully in harmony with the Father's will respecting whom, how many, and of what character, shall be the joint-heirs of his Kingdom. The force and beauty of the picture is seen when we recognize the servant Eliezer as representing the divine message, the Spirit of the Word of truth, sent forth of God, to gather during this Gospel age a people, a little flock, who shall constitute the Bride, the Lamb's wife, and thus be members of the body of the antitypical Isaac. – Acts 15:14; 2 Cor. 11:2.

The characteristics of God's dear Son must be found in all those who will be eventually accepted as his Bride and joint-heir. This will include the great faith in the Father which the Lord Jesus exercised, and which was typified in Isaac's full trust and submission. So, then, it is for us who are seeking to make our

calling and our election sure to this gracious part in the divine plan, to be peaceable, peace-loving, gentle, willing rather to retire and be non-resistant, where no principles are at stake, where no command of the Lord is to the contrary. We can well afford to sacrifice earthly interests, since the promises to which we are heirs belong to the future, and are so exceedingly abundant, more than we could ask or think, that their attainment will far more than compensate for any incidental losses or deprivations as respects the present time.

The Apostle says, "We, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise" (Gal. 4:28) – Christ, our Head, and we, his members, are the antitype of him who was called "Laughter," or "Joyous." And do we not have more joy than others, even in this present time? True, we have a full share in the trials and difficulties and sorrows and disappointments that cause the whole creation to groan and travail in pain together: yet we have what they do not have – "the **[R2861 : page 264]** peace of God which passeth all understanding, ruling in our hearts" and enabling us to be "joyful in tribulation also," knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and all the various fruits of the spirit which, when perfected in us, shall bring us to the complete joy and rejoicing of the heavenly Kingdom. And if this name, Joyous, applies to us in such degree in the present time, what shall we say of the glorious future, when joined to our Master in the glories of his Kingdom we shall cause the knowledge and blessing of the Lord to fill the whole earth, and bring laughter and joy to a world of mankind, now weak and groaning under the administration of sin and death? "Praise God from whom all blessings flow!"
