

## ISAAC'S PEACEFUL CAREER

– GENESIS 26:12-25. – *MARCH 10*. –

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

ISAAC, the child of promise, in whom centered for the time the riches of God's gracious provision for the world of mankind, was not remarkable, either as a boy or a man. His experiences were rather commonplace as a rule. But is it not so with the majority of the Lord's people? Not many great, not many wise, not many learned, not many noble, not many rich, hath God chosen, but chiefly the poor of this world, rich in faith, heirs of the Kingdom. (1 Cor. 1:26-29; Jas. 2:5.) If all the characters of the Scriptures were notable, the majority of us would feel ourselves so commonplace as to excite our fears that the Lord would have no place for us amongst his elect. We are glad that in divine providence some have prominence, greatness, almost thrust upon them by the necessity or interests of the Lord's plan. We are glad also for those less prominent, in whose hearts the Lord works equally a work of grace, purification, strength of character, to make them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. A lesson in this connection is that strong characters may be developed and high ideals attained in the heart and in deed amongst the lowly and obscure. The majority of the Lord's elect are of this kind – "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." – Matt. 11:26.

The name Isaac signifies laughter, yet it would appear to be a misfit so far as the boy and the man were concerned. Retiring, peace-loving, meditative, quiet, he had not the rollicking disposition that might be represented by the name. A probable suggestion is that the laughter connected with his name was the remembrance of the experience of his parents in that

matter. (1) We read, for instance, in Genesis 17:17 that Abraham laughed at the idea of a son being born to those so old. (2) In Gen. 18:12 we read that Sarah laughed at the idea of her having a son in old age. (3) In Gen. 21:6 we read that Sarah laughed with joy at the birth of her son. Another thought is that as Isaac was a type of Christ (Gal. 4:28), and the joy typified by his name was a prophecy of the blessing that is yet to come through the glorified Christ to all nations, in harmony with the prediction of the angels – "good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people." (Luke 2:10.) But as Isaac was not peculiarly mirthful or joyous, neither was Jesus, his great antitype, nor yet the Church, the body of Christ. Nevertheless there are joys of the Lord which the world cannot appreciate – the experience of all of those who have the divine peace and blessing.

## **ISAAC'S YOUTH AND MARRIAGE**

Of a very different character indeed was Isaac's elder half-brother, Ishmael – domineering, tyrannical. Not amenable to restraints and reproofs, he made life miserable for Isaac until Abraham, in harmony with the Lord's direction, treated him as an incorrigible, and refused to him and his mother the privileges of the home. (Gen. 21:12.) We are informed that Hagar also had a sneering spirit. (Gen. 16:4.) Separation was not only wise but necessary to the type, as St. Paul shows. Ishmael was 13 years old, or 18 if, as some think, this occurred in Isaac's fifth year. We are to remember the Apostle's explanation of this incident, that it was typical: that Hagar and her son Ishmael represented the Law Covenant and the Jews, while Sarah and her son represented the original Abrahamic Covenant and the Church of this Gospel age. The persecution of the Isaac class at the first advent was very manifest, and as a result the Ishmael class, the Jews, have been cast off from divine favor and have had a **[R3953 : page 72]** time of trouble ever since. It is with pleasure that we see in the type, as well as in the direct statement of the Apostle, that the

time will come when God's favor shall return to them and they shall return to the Lord, and he shall abundantly have mercy upon them, and we rejoice that this time is now near at hand, even at the door.

When Isaac was forty years of age, according to the custom of the time Abraham selected a wife for him – not that this was an invariable custom of the time, either, for we find that Isaac's two sons, Jacob and Esau, selected their own wives; but as Isaac was intended to be the type of Christ, so the bride of Isaac was intended to be the type of the Church. Hence the selection of the typical bride must be after the manner of the selection of the antitypical Bride. Thus as Abraham sent his servant to select the bride for **[R3953 : page 73]** Isaac, so the Scriptures inform us the heavenly Father sends the holy Spirit to make selection of those who may constitute the Bride of Christ, for, as Jesus declared, "No man can come unto me except the Father which sent me draw him." The story of the selection is a beautiful one, and fits well to the calling of the Church, thus: –

The divine guidance was sought and had in the matter of the selection, and this guidance was along practical lines – the approved maiden showed herself hospitable and kindly disposed in that she proffered the drawing of water for the camels which Abraham's servant had brought. It demonstrated her physical strength as well as her quality of heart. So those who are drawn of the Father to the Son must have certain elements of character to begin with, however these may be afterwards shaped and polished. The kindly, the generous, seem always to have the divine approval; hence we all should be on the alert to cultivate these qualities in our hearts and lives, and as parents and preceptors of the rising generation we should endeavor to cultivate this same quality in those under our care, having in mind the fact that such will be the more likely and the more ready to receive divine blessings of various kinds.

## **REBECCA'S FAITH AND ITS REWARD**

As soon as Abraham's servant recognized the character of Rebecca he perceived that she would make a suitable wife for his master's son – that the Lord had guided him to her. He at once rewarded her kindness with an earring and bracelets and went with her to her home, where the matter was related to the family, and where Rebecca, with the consent of her parents, accepted the marriage proposal. Thereupon the servant brought forth more jewels and presented them to her, and they came on the journey and met Isaac at the well Lahairoi.

As the limitation for Isaac's bride was that she must belong to the family of Abraham, so the limitation of those called to be members of the Bride of Christ is: **(1)** That they shall not be sinners, not of the world, but of the "household of faith." Sinners are called to repentance, but not called to be the Bride of Christ – only believers are honored by this call. **(2)** Only those who have something of generosity and amiability in their characters are approached. **(3)** The self-sacrifices of these bring blessings in advance from the Lord, typified by the earring and bracelets of Rebecca; for no one can receive the truth and render service thereto without experiencing a blessing from the Lord. **(4)** After this came the information respecting the riches of God's grace and the invitation to become members of the Bride, the Lamb's Wife. The acceptance of the proposition could not be possible if it were with hesitancy; it must be prompt and hearty, and then the servant, the holy Spirit, opens up further treasures and presents them to the betrothed, and the journey begins. **(5)** That journey not only represents the individual experiences of our lives as we travel on under the guidance of the holy Spirit, looking forward to the time when we shall meet the Bridegroom, but it represents also the experiences of the Church as a whole for the past eighteen centuries, approaching to and hoping for the meeting of the Bridegroom and the marriage feast, the joys and

blessings that are to follow when we shall be forever with our Lord, the heavenly Bridegroom. (6) As Isaac went out and met the bridal party on the way, at the well, so Christ meets his Church at the end of the journey. (7) The account tells us that when Rebecca recognized Isaac she put on a veil and alighted from the camel. Applying this to the antitype we see that at the end of our journey the Church shall pass beyond the veil and alight from the accessories of the present journey, and be thenceforth under the direct guidance and blessing and in the presence of the heavenly Bridegroom. What joys, what blessings, what glories are implied in this! As Isaac had but one wife, so Christ has but the one Bride, and the present period is for the testing of those who will be acceptable for that position. Respecting the type, Rebecca, Doctor Abbott writes that "Rebecca's noblest monument is found in the fact that in the prayer-book of the Church of England in the marriage service is the statement, 'that as Isaac and Rebecca lived faithfully together, so these persons may truly perform and keep the vow and covenant between them.'"

### **ISAAC PROSPEROUS BUT PEACEABLE**

The record shows that Isaac inherited the great wealth of his father Abraham, flocks, herds, gold, silver, servants, etc. And that he increased this considerably is shown in our lesson – "The man waxed great and grew more and more until he became very great: for he had possessions of flocks and of herds and a great household: and the Philistines envied him." At the time of this lesson a drouth had prevailed in the more southern part, and Isaac had moved his establishment to the vicinity of Gerar north to the Mediterranean coast, because of the better pasturage and water. The Philistines had recognized God's favor with Abraham in his great growth, and now they saw the same in respect to Isaac. Not wishing to encourage this growingly influential family they had stopped the wells that the herdsmen of the north should not come

their way; but Isaac's herdsmen, not taking the hint, had dug the wells afresh, and this led the king or chief of the Philistines to come out plainly and request Isaac and his retainers to move to other parts, saying, "Go from us; for thou art mightier than we." They knew not when the strife between the herdsmen might mean a civil war, and in the interests of peace they urged Isaac not to remain too close a neighbor.

We see a similar spirit manifested in various parts of the world today toward the posterity of Isaac – Russians, for instance, use these very words to the Jews, "Go from us, for you are mightier than we." The Lord's blessing has been with the seed of Abraham in a very remarkable manner, notwithstanding their chastenings during this Gospel age. No wonder, then, that other men feel somewhat envious of them and desire not to sit under their shadow. If the Russians merely asked the Jews to remove it would not be so bad, so unjust, provided, of course, that they would purchase from them their property at a reasonable value. But, coming far short of the spirit of the Philistines, they are ready to kill, to rob, to destroy the Jews.

In compliance with the request, Isaac did change the seat of his encampment a distance down the valley, but again trouble broke out. The Philistines were still jealous and claimed the water wells found by Isaac's herdsmen. But **[R3953 : page 74]** the man of peace would not permit of strife and moved his home again. Still angry feeling continued, and again he moved still farther away, and rejoiced that although the country was poorer, less advantageous every way, nevertheless he had peace for himself and his possessions.

### **"BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS"**

There is a lesson for the Lord's people here, a lesson of peace: Blessed are those who are peaceable and who are peacemakers – blessed of God. They may not always prosper as

well in outward and temporal matters, but they surely will be prosperous in their hearts, in their heart experiences, in their relationship to the Lord; they surely will make the better progress in the fruits and graces of the Spirit, and be the better fitted and prepared for the glorious opportunities soon to come, when, as the antitypical Isaac, associated as members of the Prince of Peace, they shall engage in the work of uplifting and refreshing and blessing all mankind. True, there are times when "backbone" is necessary, when principle is involved, and when retreat would be absolutely wrong; but these cases are rare. Undoubtedly we can often yield, and, as Isaac did, in so doing may find a provision of the Lord for our prosperity. Had the requirement of Abimelech been that Isaac should renounce the worship of the true God we can readily see that the principle involved would have hindered Isaac from yielding; and so with us, we are to note carefully and stand by everything involving principle.

Had Isaac and his servants been less numerous than the Philistines there would have been less merit in his conduct. We are to remember that, according to the words of the Philistines themselves, Isaac's clan was greater than that of the Philistines. For the greater to be submissive, yielding, peace-loving, is peculiarly commendable. Too frequently it is the case that might makes right, and the stronger one declares to the weaker, "Go yourself," with the result of clashing, bitterness, resistance, etc. Let us as the followers **[R3954 : page 74]** of the Lord in such matters take the course of Isaac, and, as the Apostle exhorts, "So far as lieth in you live peaceably with all men"; do not stand upon your rights – be willing to sacrifice for the interests of others, or at least to preserve peace between yourselves and others.

### **"THE LORD HATH MADE ROOM FOR US"**

The Scriptures exhort, "In all thy ways acknowledge him." This is a matter which we feel is too frequently neglected in our

day, even amongst the Lord's consecrated people. But Isaac did not forget the source of his blessing – the naming of the well indicates this, "Now the Lord hath made room for us and we shall be fruitful in the land." Our blessings increase in value and in efficacy and in the joys they bring to us in proportion as we recognize that they come from above. Let us then more and more – in all the little affairs of life as well as in the great – look to the Lord for his blessing and guidance, and give him thanks and acknowledgment as we perceive his hand in our affairs. So doing we learn to trust him more, and to have blessing ourselves as well as become blessings to others.

It was at this time that the Lord appeared to Isaac in a vision, or through an angel perhaps, and assured him that the promise made to his father Abraham under divine blessing was sure to him, and he built an altar unto the Lord, rendering worship. Possibly Isaac was fearful that the course he was pursuing, the course of peace, was an unwise one, and that the Philistines thereby would be encouraged to more and more take advantage of him. Many in his place would have thought, However much we are disposed for peace we must give these Philistines a lesson, and let them know there is a limit to our gentleness – a point beyond which if they go they will find a stern resistance and serious injury. Such would have been worldly wisdom and quite probably such thoughts did come to Isaac. It was at this time, then, that the Lord manifested himself especially to him and gave him especial assurances of his protecting care, and that all the good promises made to Abraham respecting that land and his own posterity would be absolutely fulfilled.

### **ABIMELECH SEEKS A TREATY**

To Isaac's surprise Abimelech, the king of the Philistines, with Phichol, the chief captain of his army, visited him at his new home. "Isaac said unto them, Wherefore art thou come unto



me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you?" "And they said, We saw plainly that the Lord was with thee, and we said, Let there now be an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee; that thou wilt do us no harm, even as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace: thou art now the blessed of the Lord."

What an illustration Isaac here had of God's overruling providence! By his course of peace he had not only gained the respect and friendship of those who were envious of him, but additionally he had honored his God and incidentally honored himself in that these men recognized the fact that the favor of God was with him. And is not this the case with the Lord's people who seek to follow the counsel of his Word? Is it not better that we should suffer some disadvantages at times and keep the peace and accept the Lord's Spirit, thus holding up a light before the world, than that we should give way to wrangling and quarreling and give evidences of a carnal spirit and of doubt of God's power to protect us? Surely we may learn a lesson in this, and appreciate more and more the Master's words, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

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