

ABRAHAM WAS VERY RICH

– FEBRUARY 23. – GENESIS 13:1-18. –

"The blessing of Jehovah, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow therewith." – Proverbs 10:22. – R.V.

THE BIBLE declares that there are not many rich, not many wise, not many learned, who enjoy God's special favor, but chiefly the poor of this world, who are rich in faith. But whoever concludes from this that God is prejudiced against the rich, or that all the rich are iniquitous and have gained their wealth through fraud, errs grievously. What it does teach is that God is no respecter of persons. Whether one be rich or poor, learned or ignorant, God's estimation of him is from the standpoint of the heart. There are both good and bad rich men, just as there are both good and bad poor men.

Abraham, though the youngest son of the family, at the death of his father Terah doubtless inherited all that remained of his possessions, including the share of Sarah, his wife, who was his half-sister. The chronology of the narrative agrees with this; but some have erred in the study of it. Abraham is mentioned first amongst his brethren because of his greater prominence, and not because he was the elder.

Added to Abraham's rich inheritance was the blessing of the Lord upon him. After he had accepted the Divine call and left his homeland to become a wandering shepherd and herdsman in Canaan, his flocks and herds increased greatly. He was, under God's blessing, very rich. Others also of God's servants in the past were greatly blessed with riches – for instance, Job. We are not, however, to apply our Golden Text in this way at the present time. The blessing of the Lord very rarely makes wealthy His saintly people during this Gospel Age. Jesus and the Apostles and the specially

saintly all down through the Age and today are poor in this world's goods.

It may be asked, Why this change in God's dealings? The reply of the Scriptures is, that in the past, up to the time of Christ, God's blessings were to men as *men*; but since the time of Christ, God's saints are "New Creatures in Christ." The terms of discipleship are that they exchange all earthly favors, riches and blessings, and sacrifice their claims to these in order that they may become heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, their Lord, to the Heavenly inheritance – and share in the Messianic Kingdom and its glory, honor and immortality.

God dealt with Abraham as a *friend* and gave him *earthly* blessings and promised him *earthly* blessing in the future life. Jesus and His followers God accepts not as friends, but as *sons*. His promises to these are not earthly, but *Heavenly, spiritual* privileges and hopes in the present life, and spiritual glory and immortality – far above angels – in the life to come. God's favor to this House of Sons, of whom Jesus is the Head (Hebrews 3:6), is manifested often in the trials, difficulties, chastisements and earthly losses and afflictions which they experience, all of which are designed to work out for them "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The beauty and harmony of the Bible can be understood only **[R5170 : page 30]** by those who thus "rightly divide the Word of Truth" and differentiate between the blessings and promises to the Ancient Worthies as distinct from those which appertain to the followers of Jesus.

ABRAHAM'S FRIENDS NOT JOINT-HEIRS

Lot was a man of nearly Abraham's age, his nephew, the son of his brother Haran. They were friends and companions. God did not call Lot, nor any other of Abraham's relatives, but merely himself, to be the recipient of the promises – the channel through whom they would be fulfilled. This did not hinder Lot from being with his uncle,

but indeed permitted him to share the blessings of Divine Providence, which guided Abraham's affairs. God's Covenant and promises were not made with Lot, but with Abraham only. Similarly the spiritual children of Abraham alone are the heirs of the Abrahamic promise, and not their friends or relatives, although the latter may share a reflex blessing of spiritual influence through association with them.

These spiritual children of Abraham, Christ and His consecrated followers, are particularly specified as the heirs of the Abrahamic promise by St. Paul. (Galatians 3:29.) "They all have a faith similar to that of Abraham, and a spirit of obedience similar to his. Jesus is their Head, Captain and Leader, as well as their Redeemer, and they become His disciples by a covenant of sacrifice similar to His own. His promise to them is, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My Throne" – the Kingdom which is to fulfil all the gracious promises which God made to Abraham – to Jews and Gentiles.

RICHES OFTEN BRING TROUBLES

God's blessing upon Abraham, shared by Lot, led on to more or less of ambition and strife, not between the two men themselves, but between their servants. Abraham loved peace, and perceived that it would be wise that the two families should part company. Lot assented. Abraham gave him his choice as to the section of country; and Lot chose the most fertile – the plain of Sodom, in the Valley of Jordan, and the Plain of Sodom, afterward devastated as a judgment from the Lord, is now the Valley of the Dead Sea.

Lot made his home in Sodom while his herds and flocks were pastured in the fertile regions surrounding. Doubtless Lot's wife had to do with the choice. She loved a beautiful home. To her the surroundings of Sodom were very attractive. The family lived there three years, although the riches of the country had a debasing effect upon the people. Lot's righteous soul was vexed, more than

offsetting the charm of the country which his wife so loved. Looking back with longing heart at the time of its destruction, she was overtaken in the catastrophe which her husband and daughters escaped. **[R5171 : page 30]**

Abraham, on the contrary, fixed his heart and hopes upon the gracious promises of God, which appertained less to the present and more to the future life. Sarah, his wife, was a real helpmate, who shared her husband's hopes and desired to co-labor with him faithfully for their accomplishment. In these two families, both well-intentioned, we see illustrated the difference between seeking chiefly the Divine approval and seeking chiefly earthly welfare and ease.

Many Christian people today make similar mistakes to that which Lot made. They allow conflicting earthly interests to separate them from the blessings of God's greater favor. They thus involve themselves and their families in the snare of the wicked, while at heart preferring righteousness.

The Master's advice should be remembered, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness." Do that which is in harmony with that aspiration and leave to God the oversight and care of earthly interests, that He may give you the lessons and experiences most helpful for you. Those who follow His advice find peace and joy which the world can neither give nor take away – "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding."

GOD'S BLESSING MAKES RICH

Whoever has the Lord's blessing is rich indeed, regardless of the amount of this world's goods which he possesses. Of what value is all the wealth of a Croesus if it bring not peace, joy and happiness? Wherever we go we find all – rich and poor – seeking pleasure, seeking the springs of joy; but how few of these seekers ever find it! Alas! it seems impossible for the world to understand the great fact

that the blessing of the Lord constitutes the true fund of riches and pleasures forevermore – more than the life that now is, and the coming one!

Those whom the Lord makes rich with His promises and His favor, His guidance and His blessing, have the joy which others are vainly seeking. These true riches during this Gospel Age are obtainable by all who have the "hearing ear," and who learn of God's favor in Christ. In Christ are hidden all the treasures of Divine Wisdom, Love and Power.

The only ones who obtain a share of these blessings at the present time are such as become followers of Jesus through faith and consecration of their lives to His service. Nevertheless, in Him are also restitution blessings for the world of mankind, which will be dispensed during the thousand years of His reign, which will begin at His Second Coming. St. Peter tells us of this, and points us to the fact that it has been "foretold by all the Holy Prophets since the world began." – Acts 3:19-21.

God's Covenant with Abraham is several times repeated in slightly different form. One of these presentations is a part of today's study; but as this will be the topic of our study next week, we will here merely allude to it and ask the reader to note that it was not a Heavenly promise, but an earthly one – "all the *land* which thou seest"; and that it was to an earthly people – "I will make thy seed as the dust of the *earth*." These are wholly different promises from those which appertain to the Spiritual Seed of Abraham, as our lesson of next week will show.

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