

GOD'S GREAT PLAN HIDDEN IN ABRAHAM AND FAMILY.

The Mystery, Covered So Long, Is Now Made Plain.

Isaac, the Second Son of the Patriarch, Pictured the Heavenly Seed. Ishmael, the First Son, the Earthly Seed.



PASTOR RUSSELL

address from these words of Scripture:

"And Isaac brought Rebecca into his mother Sarah's tent, and she became his wife and he loved her."—Genesis xxiv. 67.

When we sometimes speak of Abraham, Isaac and others as types we should not be understood to mean that they were merely types—that the Bible stories respecting them are fictions. A person or thing is a type when, in addition to the actual experiences, the Scriptures indicate that it prefigures and illustrates on a small scale some person or things yet future. As, for instance, Adam in certain respects, as the head of the race, was a type of Messiah, the Second Adam.

The first Adam was the head of our race, but failed to give the eternal life desired. In God's providence Messiah is to be the Second Adam, in the sense that he will regenerate, as his children, all the posterity of the First Adam. Messiah is thus declared in prophecy to be the Everlasting Father of mankind—the Father or Life-giver, better than Adam, and who will give to our race everlasting life, instead of a heritage of weakness, imperfection and death.

Similarly, Moses not only was a real character, the leader of the nation of Israel, but, additionally, he was a type of a greater Mediator—Messiah. As Moses mediated the Law Covenant for Israel, so Messiah, the Prophet like unto Moses, or antitype of him (Acts iii. 23), is to be the Mediator of Israel's New Covenant, under which the Abrahamic blessings will reach them and through them reach all the families of the earth (Jer. xxxi. 31).

Similarly, Aaron was a type of the higher priesthood and its better sacrifice connected with the New Covenant. The Levites, additional to their own experiences, served, in God's providence, as types of the higher institutions by which the New Covenant will be inaugurated shortly.

On this occasion we ask your attention to Abraham, known in the Scriptures as the friend of God, as the father of the faithful, and to his son Isaac, the Son of Promise, born out of the natural order, miraculously, when his mother was old; also to Isaac's wife, Rebecca, selected by Abraham to be the companion and joint-heir with his son Isaac in his inheritance. These personages lived their lives wholly unconscious of the fact that God was using them and overruling their affairs so as to make of them prophetic pictures of his own great Plan of the Ages. These type-pictures are always to be read in full harmony with the inspired writings of the Bible and never to be understood in contradiction of the same.

Abraham a Type of God.

Not everything that Abraham did, however, is to be esteemed typical. In a general way this grand man of the past looms up before our minds as a monument of faith and integrity and justice. The blessings promised to go through him to his Seed, which would constitute him the father of many nations, made of him, as St. Paul points out, a type of the Almighty, from whom flows every good and every perfect gift—from whom proceeds the blessing which ultimately is to flow through Messiah, his Son, and through Israel, his people, unto all the families of the earth.

All Christians, presumably, are aware of St. Paul's interpretation of Abraham and his family as types. As Abraham typified God, so his wife typified the Covenant through which the vitality of the promise ultimately develops the Seed of Promise—Isaac in a type, and Messiah in the antitype. St. Paul also explains that Sarah's servant, Hagar, at Sarah's wish, became for a time her representative with Abraham and brought forth Ishmael. Hagar, St. Paul explains, typified the Law Covenant, vitalized by the gracious arrangements of the same God and Father. And Hagar's son, Ishmael, Abraham's first-born, typified the Jewish nation, the first development under the Covenant.

As Abraham loved Isaac and desired blessing upon him, so God loved Isaac and desired a blessing upon Israel, the Son of Promise, the offspring of the Law Covenant. Isaac, as Ishmael, the offspring of the Law Covenant, was declared not to be the primary heir of the Abrahamic promise, but a secondary one, so the children of Israel, the offspring of the Law Covenant, were not intended to be the Spiritual Messiah through whom the promise declared that the blessing should first proceed.

In the type, we see that Sarah, Abraham's wife, who represented the original Abrahamic Covenant, brought forth

a son of her own, Isaac, long years after the bondmaid, her substitute, had brought forth Ishmael. When Isaac was born, Sarah repudiated Ishmael and no longer acknowledged him as her son, but, instead, claimed everything for Isaac. The antitype of this is that from the time that God began the development of the Spiritual Israel and set forth the "Covenant of sacrifice," through which this Spiritual Israel would be developed—from that time it began to be clearly manifest that the chief portion of the promise of God to bless the world was not to be fulfilled through the Ishmael Seed, natural Israel, but through the Isaac Seed—Spiritual Israel.

The Well-Spring of Hope For the Jew.

From the first there was manifested a competition for the Abrahamic blessing. And as Ishmael mocked at the infant Isaac, so the Jew, in his considerable development and strength, mocked at the Antitype Isaac—Jesus and his comparatively ignorant and unlearned followers—and persecuted them. In order to continue the type, that Abraham might typify God, he was commanded to send forth Hagar and her son into the wilderness. That sending forth typified the Divine disfavor which came upon the Jews eighteen centuries ago and which has made them outcasts from God's favor, as Hagar and Ishmael were cut off from Abraham's presence and family and care. The bread and water which Hagar took with her, by which she and Ishmael were nourished in the wilderness for a time, pictures and types the promises of God through the Law and the prophets which still belong to the Jew and upon which, for eighteen centuries, he has been nourished, and without which the hope of the nation would have perished.

Now we come to the dire moment pictured in Genesis xxi. 15-19. The water provided by Abraham had been consumed. No more was to be had. Ishmael was dying. Hagar, his mother, separated herself from him. At the opportune moment the angel of the Lord appeared to her and pointed her to a spring of water, where she refreshed herself and Ishmael with new life.

The antitype of this is now to be seen before us. The Jewish people, separated more and more from the Law and the Prophets, are becoming weak and faint as respects hope. They are about to die! But no, the Lord graciously points out a well-spring of the water of life at this critical moment. As Ishmael was rescued from death by this water, so the nation of Israel, whom he typified, is now about to find in the providence of God that their portion of the Abrahamic Covenant is the earthly one, not the heavenly one, not the spiritual. They are about to be refreshed and to enter upon a new career. That career, however, will not mark them as Ishmaelites, nor will their New Covenant relationship be symbolized by Hagar, the Old Law Covenant. Thenceforth they are represented under a new type.

Isaac Was Heir of All.

If, at first, our Jewish friends might be inclined to feel disappointed that they were represented in Ishmael, and not in Isaac, by the Hagar Covenant, the Covenant of bondage to the Law, instead of being formed free from the Law, there is a consolation. Their consolation is that Isaac typified the Messiah and that Israel is pictured as the nation on whose behalf Messiah will mediate the New Law Covenant. The Messiah must be spiritual, in order to be able to confer the great blessings indicated in the Covenant made with Abraham. The nation of Israel never expected to be spiritual and had no such promise in the Bible. To the Jews will come exactly what they have always been expecting—greatness as an earthly people, honor as the elect nation through whom the New Covenant blessings will be opened up to all the world of mankind—the Gentiles.

As already pointed out, Isaac, the son of Abraham, typified the Messiah of glory, the Son of God and heir of all the promises—the one through whom alone eternal life may be obtained and restitution to that perfection which will enable Israel and the world to keep the Divine Law perfectly and merit the gift of God, eternal life, according to their New Law Covenant—and through its great Mediator—Messiah.

Eileazar Type of the Holy Spirit.

In due time, Abraham sent his trusted servant Eileazar (typical of the Holy Spirit) to select a Bride for his son Isaac. Eileazar might not go anywhere. He was directed to go only to those of Abraham's family, thus implying that none would be called to be the Bride of Messiah except such as were already in relationship to God through faith, obedience and justification. When the servant had found Rebecca he put upon her certain jewels, explained to her and her relatives the nature of his mission, and asked her if she were willing to come and be Isaac's Bride. He said, My master, Abraham, is very rich and all that he hath he hath given unto Isaac.

Thus the great riches of God are again illustrated in Abraham and the fact that Messiah is his Son and the heir of all the promises of God, the One through whom Israel and all mankind shall be blessed. Rebecca promptly responded and thus betrothed herself to the unseen Bridegroom and hastened with the servant to Isaac. As her kinsfolk bade her goodby they wished her a blessing in these words, "Be thou the mother of thousands of millions" (Genesis xxiv. 60).

We read that "Rebecca arose and her damsels (maids, servants) and they rode upon the camels and followed the man Eileazar."

Here we find, in harmony with other Scriptures, a picture of this Gospel Age, and its work of bringing to Messiah a special Bride class of saintly

ones. First amongst these saints were some of the Jewish nation, according to the Divine Rule; as the Scriptures set forth—"to the Jew first." This Bride class has been selected from every nation, people, kindred and tongue, yet in all will be but a little flock—"Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom"—the spiritual, unseen Kingdom of Messiah—joint-heirship with him in his throne—not the earthly Kingdom which has been promised definitely to Israel.

The Bride Class and the Great Company.

Other Scriptures have shown us that there are two classes amongst these saints. A few, peculiarly devoted, will constitute the Bride class. And a larger number, not so courageous of the Truth and righteousness, will constitute her companions, her servants, as Rebecca travelled accompanied by her servants. These two classes are particularly specified in the Scriptures (45th Psalm), where we read of the Messiah-Bride and Queen. In her resurrection glory she is pictured as the Queen robed in gold of Ophir with fine needlework—the glory representing the divine nature which will be granted her and the fine needlework representing her glorious righteousness, embellished with the fruits of the holy Spirit. The Psalmist tells how she shall be brought into the presence of the great King Jehovah and then adds that the virgins, or companions, that follow her shall also be brought into the presence of the King, showing that there will always be a difference of rank on the spiritual plane. These two classes are again pictured in the Law as Priests and Levites, the Bride class being represented by the Priests, owing to their willing sacrifices of the earthly portion in favor of the heavenly.

We are not to identify the Bride class with the nominal Christian Churches of today any more than we would identify the Apostles with the Jewish Church of their day. The Apostles were a select few, and similarly all the members of the Church throughout the Age have been a select few out of a nominal many. "The Lord knoweth them that are his." The true Church has been selected, not only from all of the twelve tribes of Israel, but from every other nation, people and tongue, even so many as the Lord our God has called.

Rebecca's leaving her father's house typified the personal consecration of each one who, led of the Spirit, accepts the Divine invitation to joint-heirship with Christ. The first jewelry given to Rebecca, when first she beaded the invitation and invited the servant to her home, represents the earliest blessing received by believers. The jewelry she received after she had decided to go to Isaac and become his wife represents the blessings of the Holy Spirit which come upon the fully consecrated, those who determine to walk in the footsteps of Jesus in the narrow way into the Kingdom, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Arrived at the end of her journey, she found herself in the presence of Isaac, and immediately alighted from her camel and covered herself with a veil. Thus, pictorially, is represented the fact that the Church, when having experienced the change of the First Resurrection and in the presence of the heavenly Bridegroom, will no longer need the guidance of the holy Spirit, through the Scriptures. This part of the picture, of course, is yet future. The Scriptures, however, indicate, and outward conditions corroborate the fact, that the time of this glorious change is nigh at hand.

To Be the Mother of Thousands of Millions.

Isaac immediately received Rebecca and took her into his mother's tent. Sarah had died and Rebecca became her successor. Thus is beautifully pictured the fact that when the Bride of Messiah shall be complete on the plane of glory, the Sarah Covenant will be at an end and her place, as a channel of blessing, will be taken by the glorified Church. Then will be fulfilled the prophetic blessing of her relatives, "Be thou the mother of thousands of millions." Those thousands of millions represent the world of mankind, which will be regenerated, or granted new life by the great Messiah during the thousand years of his reign as the Mediator of the New Covenant.

Messiah will be the regenerator and his Bride will be the nourisher, instructor, helper of all mankind under the New Covenant, because it will be this antitype Isaac and his Bride that will mediate for Israel, and through Israel for the world, the New Covenant of Restitution blessings (Acts iii. 19-21). "In thee and in thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed," applies primarily, as St. Paul shows, to Messiah and his Church in glory—the sacrifices being past, the spiritual nature being attained as a reward for the sacrifices (Galatians iii. 16, 29).

Whoever will first receive Messiah and come into harmony with the righteous laws of his Invisible Kingdom will be the first to be blessed. There will be no partiality in this matter, for God is no respecter of persons. However, because of their past experiences and earthly hopes and trust in the Law and the Prophets, the Jews will be the first amongst the nations to accept the new order of things and ally themselves with it; therefore, to them will the blessings go first and through them, as instruments of the Kingdom, the blessings will extend to all.

While thanking God for the glorious prospects of that glorious time which is nighing, let us, dear friends, seek to make our calling and election sure to membership in the Body of the Bride of Christ.



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