

# NOTES ON THE BOOK OF GENESIS

by

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE connection of this chapter with the two which precede it is worthy of notice. In Chapter 22, the son is offered up; in Chapter 23, Sarah is laid aside; and in Chapter 24, the servant is sent forth to procure a bride for him who had been, as it were, received from the dead in a figure.

This connection, in a very striking manner, coincides with the order of events connected with the calling out of the Church. Whether this coincidence is to be regarded as of divine origin will, it may be, raise a question in the minds of some; but it must at least be regarded as not a little remarkable.

When we turn to the New Testament, the grand events which meet our view are, first, the rejection and death of Christ; secondly, the setting aside of Israel after the flesh; and, lastly, the calling out of the Church to occupy the high position of the bride of the Lamb.

Now all this exactly corresponds with the contents of this and the two preceding chapters. The death of Christ needed to be an accomplished fact ere the Church, properly so called, could be called out.

“**The middle wall of partition**” needed to be broken down, ere the “**one new man**” could be developed.

It is well to understand this in order that we may know the place which the Church occupies in the ways of God. So long as the Jewish economy subsisted there was the most strict separation maintained between Jew and Gentile, and hence the idea of both being united in one new man was far removed from the mind of a Jew. He was led to view himself in a position of entire superiority to that of a Gentile, and to view the latter as utterly unclean, to whom it was unlawful to come in. (Acts 10:28).

If Israel had walked with God according to the truth of the relationship into which he had graciously brought them, they would have continued in their peculiar place of separation and superiority; but this they did not do; and, therefore, when they had filled up the measure of their iniquity, by crucifying the Lord of life and glory, and rejecting the testimony of the Holy Ghost, we find Paul is raised up to be the minister of a new thing, which was held back in the counsels of God, while the testimony to Israel was going on.

**“For this cause I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery . . . which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets (i. e., New-Testament prophets) by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel”** (Ephesians 3:1-6). This is conclusive.

The mystery of the Church, composed of Jew and Gentiles, baptized by one Spirit into one body, united to the glorious Head in the heavens, had never been revealed until Paul’s day. Of this mystery the apostle goes on to say, **“I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God, given unto me, by the effectual working of his power”** (Ver. 7).

The apostles and prophets of the New Testament formed, as it were, the first layer of this glorious building. (See Ephesians 2:20). This being so, it follows as a consequence that the building could not have been begun before.

If the building had been going on from the days of Abel downwards, the apostle would then have said, “the foundation of the Old-Testament saints.” But he has not said so, and therefore we conclude that, whatever be the position assigned to the Old-Testament saints, they cannot possibly belong to a body which had no existence, save in the purpose of God, until the death and resurrection of Christ, and the consequent descent of the Holy Ghost. Saved they were, blessed be God: saved by the Blood of Christ, and destined to enjoy heavenly glory with the Church; but they could not have formed a part of that which did not exist for hundreds of years after their time.

It were easy to enter upon a more elaborate demonstration of this most important truth, were this the place for so doing; but I shall now go on with our chapter, having merely touched upon a question of commanding interest, because of its being suggested by the position of the 24th of Genesis.

There may be a question in some minds as to whether we are to view this deeply-interesting portion of Scripture as a type of the calling out of the Church by the Holy Ghost. For myself, I feel happier in merely handling it as an illustration of that glorious work.

We cannot suppose that the Spirit of God would occupy an unusually long chapter with the mere detail of a family compact, were that compact not typical or illustrative of some great truth.

**“Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning.”** This is emphatic.

What, therefore, are we to learn from the chapter before us?

*I believe it furnishes us with a beautiful illustration or foreshadowing of the great mystery of the Church.*

It is important to see that, while there is no direct revelation of this mystery in the Old Testament, there are, nevertheless, scenes and circumstances which, in a very remarkable manner, shadow it forth; as, for example, the chapter before us.

As has been remarked, the son being, in a figure, offered up, and received again from the dead; the original parent stem, as it were, being laid aside, the messenger is sent forth by the father to procure a bride for the son.

Now, in order to the clear and full understanding of the contents of the entire chapter, we may consider the following points, viz., 1, the oath; 2, the testimony 3, the result.

It is beautiful to observe that the call and exaltation of Rebekah were founded upon the oath between Abraham and his servant. She knew nothing of this, though she was, in the purpose of God, so entirely the subject of it all. So it is exactly with the Church of God as a whole and each constituent part.

**“In thy book were all my members written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there were none of them.”** (Psalm 139:16). **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love”** (Ephesians 1:3, 4). **“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. That he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified”** (Romans 8:29, 30).

These Scriptures are all in beautiful harmony with the point immediately before us. The call, the justification, and the glory of the Church, are all founded on the eternal purpose of God, - His Word and oath, ratified by the death, resurrection, and exaltation of the Son. Far back, beyond the bounds of time, in the deep recesses of God’s eternal mind, lay this wondrous purpose respecting the Church, which cannot, by any means, be separated from the divine thought respecting the glory of the Son. The oath between Abraham and the servant had for its object the provision of a partner for the son.

It was the father’s desire with respect to the son that all led to Rebekah’s after-dignity. It is happy to see this. Happy to see how the Church’s security and blessing stand inseparably connected with Christ and his glory. **“For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man”** (I Corinthians 11:8, 9).

So it is in the beautiful parable of the marriage-supper; **“the kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king which made a marriage for his son.”** (Matthew 22:2).

THE SON is the grand object of all the thoughts and counsels of God: and if any are brought into blessing, or glory, or dignity, it can only be in connection with him.

All title to these things, and even to life itself, was forfeited by sin; but Christ met all the penalty due to sin; He made Himself responsible for everything on behalf of His body the Church; He was nailed to the Cross as her representative; He bore her sins in his own body on the tree, and went down into the grave under the full weight of them. Hence, nothing can be more complete than the Church's deliverance from all that was against her. She is quickened out of the grave of Christ, where all her trespasses were laid.

The life which she has is a life taken up at the other side of death, after every possible demand had been met. Hence, this life is connected with, and founded upon, divine righteousness, inasmuch as Christ's title to life is founded upon His having entirely exhausted the power of death; and He is the Church's life.

Thus the Church enjoys divine life; she stands in divine righteousness; and the hope that animates her is the hope of righteousness. (See, amongst many other Scriptures, John 3:16, 36; 5:39, 40; 6:27, 40, 47, 68; 11:25; 17:2; Romans 5:21; 6:23; I Timothy 1:16; I John 2:25; 5:20; Jude 21; Ephesians 2:1-6, 11, 15; Colossians 1:12-22; 2:10-15; Romans 1:17; 3:21-26; 4:5, 23-25; II Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 5:5).

These Scriptures most fully establish the three points, viz., the life, the righteousness, and the hope of the Church, all of which flow from her being one with Him who was raised from the dead.

Now, nothing can be so calculated to assure the heart as the conviction that the Church's existence is essential to the glory of Christ.

**“The woman is the glory of the man”** (I Corinthians 11:7).

And again, the Church is called “**the fulness of him that filleth all in all**” (Ephesians 1:23).

This last is a remarkable expression.

The word translated “**fulness**” means *the complement, that which, being added to something else, makes up a whole*. Thus it is that Christ the Head, and the church the body, make up the “**one new man**” (Ephesians 2:15).

Looking at the matter in this point of view, it is no marvel that the Church should have been the object of God's eternal counsels. When we view her as the body, the bride, the companion, the counterpart, of his only-begotten Son, we feel that there was, through grace, wondrous reason for her being so thought of before the foundation of the world.

Rebekah was necessary to Isaac, and therefore she was the subject of secret counsel while yet in profound ignorance about her high destiny. All Abraham's thought was about Isaac.

**“I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell.”**

Here we see that the all-important point was, “**a wife unto my son.**” “**It is not good that the man should be alone.**”

This opens up a very deep and blessed view of the Church. In the counsels of God she is necessary to Christ; and in the accomplished work of Christ, divine provision has been made for her being called into existence.

While occupied with such a character of truth as this, it is no longer a question as to whether God can save poor sinners; he actually wants to “**make a marriage for his Son,**” and the Church is the destined bride,- she is the object of the Father’s purpose, the object of the Son’s love, and of the testimony of the Holy Ghost. She is to be the sharer of all the Son’s dignity and glory, as she is the share of all that love of which He has been the everlasting object.

Hear his own words:

“**And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me**” (John 17:22, 23).

This settles the whole question.

The words just quoted give us the thoughts of Christ’s heart in reference to the Church.

She is to be as He is, and not only so, but she is so even now, as John tells us, “**Herein is love perfected with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is so are we in this world.**” (I John 4:17).

This gives full confidence to the soul. “**We are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life**” (I John 5:20).

There is here no ground for uncertainty.

Everything is secured for the bride in the bridegroom. All that belonged to Isaac became Rebekah’s because Isaac was hers; and so all that belongs to Christ is made available to the Church. “**All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s**” (I Corinthians 3:21-23). Christ is “**head over all things to the Church**” (Ephesians 1:22).

It will be his joy throughout eternity to exhibit the Church in all the glory and beauty with which he has endowed her, for her glory and beauty will be but the reflection of his. Angels and principalities shall behold in the Church the marvellous display of the wisdom, power, and grace of God in Christ.

*But we shall now look at the second point for consideration, viz., the testimony.*

Abraham's servant carried with him a very distinct testimony. "**And he said, I am Abraham's servant. And the Lord hath blessed my master greatly, and he is become great; and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and men servants, and maid servants, and camels, and asses. And Sarah, my master's wife, bare a son to my master when she was old; and unto him hath be given all that he hath**" (Ver. 34-36).

He reveals the father and the son. Such was his testimony. He speaks of the vast resources of the Father, and of the son's being endowed with all these in virtue of His being "**the only-begotten,**" and the object of the Father's love. With this testimony he seeks to obtain a bride for the son.

All this, I need hardly remark, is strikingly illustrative of the testimony with which the Holy Ghost was sent from Heaven upon the day of Pentecost. "**When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.**" (John 15:26). Again, "**Howbeit when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine and show it unto you.**" "**All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine and shall show it unto you**" (John 16:13-15).

The coincidence of these words with the testimony of Abraham's servant is instructive and interesting.

It was by telling of Isaac that he sought to attract the heart of Rebekah; and it is, as we know, by telling of Jesus, that the Holy Ghost seeks to draw poor sinners away from a world of sin and folly into the blessed and holy unity of the body of Christ.

**"He shall take of mine and show it unto you."**

The Spirit of God will never lead any one to look at himself or his work; but only and always at Christ.

Hence, the more really spiritual any one is, the more entirely will he be occupied with Christ.

Some there are who regard it as a great mark of spirituality to be ever looking in at their own hearts, and dwelling upon what they find there, even though that be the work of the Spirit.

This is a great mistake.

So far from its being a proof of spirituality, it is a proof of the very reverse, for it is expressly declared of the Holy Ghost that "**he shall not speak of himself;**" but that, on the contrary, "**he shall take of mine and show it unto you.**"

Therefore, whenever one is looking inward, and building on the evidences of the Spirit's work there, he may be assured he is not led by the Spirit of God in so doing.

It is by holding up Christ that the Spirit draws souls to God.

This is very important.

The knowledge of Christ is life eternal; and it is the Father's revelation of Christ by the Holy Ghost that constitutes the basis of the Church. When Peter confessed Christ to be the Son of the living God, Christ's answer was, "**Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jonah; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it**" (Matthew 16:17, 18).

What rock? Peter? God forbid "**This rock**" simply means the Father's revelation of Christ as the Son of the living God, which is the only means by which any one is introduced into the assembly of Christ.

Now this opens to us very much the true character of the Gospel.

It is pre-eminently and emphatically a revelation,- a revelation not merely of a doctrine, but of a Person,- the Person of the Son.

This revelation being received by faith, draws the heart to Christ, and becomes the spring of life and power, - the ground of membership, - the power of fellowship. "**When it pleased God . . . to reveal his Son in me, &c.**"

Here we have the true principle of "**the rock**," viz., God revealing his Son.

It is thus the superstructure is reared up; and on this solid foundation it reposes, according to God's eternal purpose.

It is therefore peculiarly instructive to find in this 24th of Genesis such a marked and beautiful illustration of the mission and special testimony of the Holy Ghost. Abraham's servant, in seeking to procure a bride for Isaac, sets forth all the dignity and wealth with which he had been endowed by the Father; the love of which he was the object; and, in short, all that was calculated to affect the heart and draw it off from present things.

He showed Rebekah an object in the distance, and set before her the blessedness and reality of being made one with that beloved and highly-favored object.

All that belonged to Isaac would belong to Rebekah too, when she became part of him. Such was his testimony.

Such also is the testimony of the Holy Ghost.

He speaks of Christ,

- The glory of Christ,
- The beauty of Christ,
- The fulness of Christ,
- The grace of Christ,
- “**the unsearchable riches of Christ,**”
- The dignity of his Person and the perfectness of his work.

Moreover, He sets forth the amazing blessedness of being one with such a Christ, “**members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.**”

Such is the Spirit’s testimony always; and herein we have an excellent touchstone by which to try all sorts of teaching and preaching.

The most Spiritual teaching will ever be characterized by a full and constant presentation of Christ. He will ever form the burden of such teaching. The Spirit cannot dwell on aught but Jesus. Of him he delights to speak. He delights in setting forth His attractions and excellencies. Hence, when a man is ministering by the power of the Spirit of God, there will always be more of Christ than anything else in his ministry. There will be little room in such ministry for human logic and reasoning. Such things may do very well where a man desires to set forth himself; but the Spirit’s sole object, be it well remembered by all who minister, will ever be to set forth Christ.

Let us now look, in the last place, at the result of all this.

Truth, and the practical application of truth, are two very different things.

It is one thing to speak of the peculiar glories of the Church, and quite another thing to be practically influenced by those glories.

In Rebekah’s case, the effect was most marked and decisive.

The testimony of Abraham’s servant sank down into her ears, and into her heart, and entirely detached her heart’s affections from the scene of things around her. She was ready to leave all and follow after, in order that she might apprehend that for which she had been apprehended. It was morally impossible that she could believe herself to be the subject of such high destinies, and yet continue amid the circumstances of nature.

If the report concerning the future were true, attachment to the present was the worst of folly. If the hope of being Isaac’s bride, joint-heir with him of all his dignity and glory,- if this were a reality, then, to continue to tend Laban’s sheep would be practically to despise all that God had in grace set before her. But, no: the prospect was far too bright to be thus lightly given up.

True, she had not yet seen Isaac, nor yet the inheritance; but she had believed the report, the testimony of him, and had received, as it were, the earnest of it, and these were enough for her heart; and, hence she unhesitatingly arises and expresses her readiness to depart in the memorable words, “**I will go.**”

She was fully prepared to enter upon an unknown path in companionship with one who had told her of an object far away, and of a glory connected with him, to which she was about to be raised.

**“I will go,”** said she, and *“forgetting the things which were behind, and reaching forth toward the things which were before, she pressed toward the mark for the prize of her high calling.”*

Most touching and beautiful illustration this of the Church, under the conduct of the Holy Ghost, going onward to meet her heavenly Bridegroom. This is what the Church should be; but, alas! there is sad failure here.

There is little of that holy alacrity in laying aside every weight and every entanglement, in the power of communion with the Holy Guide and Companion of our way, whose office and delight it is to take of the things of Jesus, and show them unto us; just as Abraham’s servant took of the things of Isaac, and showed them to Rebekah; and no doubt, too, he found his joy in pouring fresh testimonies concerning the son into her ear, as they moved onward toward the consummation of all her joy and glory.

Thus it is, at least with our heavenly guide and companion.

He delights to tell of Jesus, **“He shall take of mine and show it unto you;”** and again, **“he shall show you things to come.”**

Now, this is what we really want,- this ministry of the Spirit of God, unfolding Christ to our souls, producing earnest longing to see Him as He is, and be made like him forever. Naught but this will ever detach our hearts from earth and nature.

What, save the hope of being associated with Isaac, would ever have led Rebekah to say, **“I will go,”** when her **“brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at least ten.”**

And so with us: nothing but the hope of seeing Jesus as He is, and being like Him, will ever enable or lead us to purify ourselves, even as He is pure.

~ end of chapter 24 ~

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