



A History of Worship

Part One

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(This study, started online in 2010, is an expansion of the worship section in our book, "[A History of Man's Quest for Immortality](#)," Fifth Estate Publishing, 2007)

God's Invitation to Worship

Don't you love it when someone invites you to a special event? Doesn't it make you feel good to know other people think enough of you to want you to be with them? Well, that's what God does every day – He invites people to be “with” Him and **worship** Him. This special invitation began thousands of years ago – in an ancient land called Eden (delight).

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” Genesis 2:7-9

God created Adam, the first man, and placed him in a garden that was located eastward in Eden. It was an amazing invitation filled with great joy and opportunity. God created Adam to be the head of the human race and to care for and guard the great garden God had given him. God allowed Adam to eat the vegetables and herbs of the ground and fruit of the trees – except for one tree – the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God also created a wife for Adam and brought her to him. God told them to love each other, have children, fill the earth, subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth (Genesis 1:28).

The invitation God made to Adam and Eve and to all their offspring was a personal relationship with the Creator God – a relationship of love and worship. It was **pure worship** – the created worshipping the Creator. God asked them to do just one thing for Him – **obey Him**. “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’” (Genesis 2:16-17)

Imagine that someone invited you to the most amazing island in the world and told you to eat all the delicious food they had made just for you, stay in luxurious rooms they built just for you, swim in the amazing pool they made for you, and play all the fun games they had designed for you on the island. Then they said, ‘by the way, don’t eat the fruit from this one tree in the middle of the island. That’s not for you. If you do eat fruit from that tree, you’ll have to leave the island.’ Do you think it would be wrong to do the one thing they told you not to do? It’s their island – their house – their food – their pool – their games – their trees. Don’t they have a right to have house rules and expect their guests to abide by them? Of course they have that right. You have that same right in your house.

So, what about God’s rights in the Garden of Eden? God created Adam and Eve and invited them to enjoy a perfect world that met all their needs and held such promise for all generations of humans to come and asked them to do just one thing for Him. How did Adam treat this great invitation from God? How did he express his love for God? How did he worship God? Poorly. Here’s what happened.

“Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’ And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’ Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.” Genesis 3:1-7

Adam did the one thing God told Him not to do and brought upon himself and the entire human race a great disaster. How did it start? With **impure worship**. That is Satan’s form of worship. It’s the kind of worship he introduced to the angels in Heaven. Satan wanted to be like God – worshiped and adored. God removed Satan from his high position as worship leader in Heaven and created hell for Satan and the angels who followed him in his betrayal of God. Satan entered the body of a beautiful snake and tempted Eve with the idea of being “like God.” That desire for impure self-worship ruined Satan and the human race as well.

What did God do? He introduced His plan to save Adam and Eve and everyone who would receive His generous invitation of Love and Grace through Jesus His Son. “And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.” (Genesis 3:15) God introduced human beings to **offering worship** (Genesis 3:21) – where people brought offerings of obedience and sacrifice to the Lord God. God then expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden so they would not eat from the Tree of Life and live forever in their fallen state (Genesis 3:22-24). God kicked them out so He could save them.

Life became very hard on the east side of the Garden. Adam worked the land and Eve raised their children – and they were slowly dying. They had lost their immortality. The incorruption that was part of their original nature was corrupted by sin. Adam and Eve experienced cell-death every day of their lives. They slowly became older and lost their strength. They had to deal with pain, injury and disease. They knew good and evil and were experiencing the ravages of sin in their hearts, minds and flesh. But they still had a relationship with God. He didn’t give up on them and they didn’t give up on Him. Adam and Eve loved God and worshiped Him in a new way that was based on making sacrificial offerings to Him – all pointing to the day when the Son of God would be their Sacrifice (Genesis 3:15).

God told Adam he would die if he ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil – and Adam soon found out how terrible death could be.

“And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. So the LORD said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.’”

Genesis 4:3-7

Cain’s type of worship is one of the worst kinds – **mixed worship** – where there is an outer appearance of worshiping God, but inside the person is really worshiping themselves (**self worship**). They have an outward form of godliness, but deny the true power of God. People who saw Cain bring his offering to God probably thought Cain was doing a godly thing – worshiping the One True God. But God sees the heart – He knows what we’re thinking, feeling and wanting. God did not “respect” (Hebrew *sa ‘ah*– turn the eyes toward or away from an object, depending on usage) Cain’s offering. God saw it, but looked away from it. He did not express favor toward Cain’s offering the way He had expressed favor toward Abel’s offering. We are reminded in 1 John 3:12 that Cain’s works were evil, while Abel’s were righteous.

God gave Cain the opportunity to turn from mixed worship to the true heart of offering worship and promised Cain that He would accept (Hebrew *s'et* – honor) him. God also warned Cain that sin was crouching at the door of his emotions and will, ready to take control of Cain. He told Cain that he had to rule (Hebrew *masal* – rule, govern, have dominion, gain control) over sin and control his nature. So, how did Cain respond to this wise and loving counsel from God?

“Now Cain said to his brother Abel, ‘Let’s go out to the field.’ And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.” Genesis 4:8

The sin nature not only led to death – it also led to murder. What a terrible thing to happen to Adam and Eve and their family. Cain’s sin of stealing the worship that belonged to God and killing his brother out of intense jealousy led to the destruction of the moral fabric of the first family. Everyone in Adam’s family learned the tremendous power of sin to steal, kill and destroy – which is Satan’s way of stealing the worship that rightfully belongs to God (John 10:10). God created people to worship and glorify Him and have a personal relationship with Him. Sin stole that from every person who has ever been born and will be born – but more importantly sin stole that from God.

Cain’s sin split the human race into two primary spiritual camps – those who followed the Lord and those who didn’t. Let’s look at each line and see the heart of their worship.

“Then the LORD said to Cain, ‘Where is Abel your brother?’ He said, ‘I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?’ And He said, ‘What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground. So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth.’ And Cain said to the LORD, ‘My punishment is greater than I can bear! Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me.’ And the LORD said to him, ‘Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.’ And the LORD set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him. Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden. And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. And he built a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son—Enoch. To Enoch was born Irad; and Irad begot Mehujael, and Mehujael begot Methushael, and Methushael begot Lamech. Then Lamech took for himself two wives: the name of one was Adah, and the name of the second was Zillah. And Adah bore Jabal. He was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. His brother’s name was Jubal. He was the father of all those who play the harp and flute. And as for Zillah, she also bore Tubal-Cain, an instructor of every craftsman in bronze and iron. And the sister of Tubal-Cain was Naamah. Then Lamech said to his wives: ‘Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; Wives of Lamech, listen to my speech! For I have killed a man for wounding

me, Even a young man for hurting me. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold.” Genesis 4:9-24

God didn't say that Cain would be hidden from His Face, but that's how Cain saw it. He moved even farther east from Eden to distance himself from his father and mother. Cain fathered a son and the line of Cain began. We see no hint of any connection to God – no worship, no offering, no prayer. The Bible doesn't tell us how long Cain lived, but his contemporaries lived an average of 900 years and personally knew several generations from their line. That means Cain would have had lots of time to share his side of the story of how God had treated him. Cain built a city and called it after his son Enoch. Cain was a proud and ungodly man. He had rebelled against God before and would continue to rebel against Him. That was Cain's ultimate legacy to his family – pride and rebellion. God had promised to protect Cain, but Cain trusted in his own strength and built a fortified city for protection. Lamech was born in the fifth generation from Cain and was also filled with a proud, rebellious and ungodly spirit. He took for himself two wives in further rebellion to God's creative purpose. Lamech bragged about killing a man and said he would be avenged seventy-seven fold – a demonstration of continued rebellion against God Who had said He would avenge Cain sevenfold if anyone killed him. Lamech's sons developed skills that would lay the foundation for worldly arts and business that would have nothing to do with the will or purpose of God. The line of Cain was **too proud to worship** God.

What would happen to God's promise of a Seed Who would destroy the seed of Satan? Cain was the firstborn, but was far from the will and blessings of God. The line of Cain was arrogant, proud and rebellious – an example of the power of sinful flesh. Could the Seed come from Cain? It could not because sinful flesh with its proud and rebellious spirit has no place for God and is therefore no match for Satan. Even though Adam and Eve were devastated at the death of Abel and the loss of their relationship with firstborn Cain, they still believed in God's promise of the Seed. Eve became pregnant again and gave birth to a son. She named him Seth (placed, appointed) because God had appointed another Seed for her instead of Abel "whom Cain killed." Eve spoke prophetically and looked to the future when God would provide the Seed Who would destroy Satan's hold on humanity.

So, what of the line of Seth? What kind of people were they in comparison to the line of Cain? Adam and Eve raised Seth to believe in God and worship Him. It was quickly evident that the Seed could come from the line of Seth. "And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then men began to call on the name of the LORD." What a powerful statement about the way Seth's line would live – "then men began to call on the name of the LORD." The name Enosh means "mankind in its frailty and weakness." Seth had learned well from his father and mother that the human race was mortal and weak and in need of God's great help. Seth learned that God wanted people to worship Him with a humble attitude. It was in that humility that men began to "call on the name of the LORD." The word "call" is the Hebrew word *qara* and means a calling or crying out for something. The word was used in the Old Testament for a

solemn calling of the name of God – invoking of His Name, proclaiming His Name. The name Seth and his family called upon was the LORD (Hebrew – *YHWH*). It demonstrated their dependence on God because of their weakness. The beginning of the line of Seth realized their frailty and weakness in a world filled with sin and approached God with **humble worship**.

The children who came from Adam and Eve lived for many centuries, but they eventually died – just as God had said. The cells of their body finally stopped living and death overtook them. Adam died at the age of 930. Seth died at the age of 912. Enosh died at the age of 905. Cainan died at 910. Mahalel died at 895. Jared died at 962. Enoch was 365 years old when God took him. Hebrews 11:5 tells us that Enoch pleased God and the Lord took him away so that Enoch would not experience death. Methusaleh died when he was 969. Lamech, the father of Noah, died at the age of 777. When we look closely at the birth record of Seth's family in Genesis 5, we can determine that the number of years from God's creation of Adam to the birth of Noah was 1,056 years.

A lot of people were born during those years and few of them loved God and worshiped Him. In fact, by the time Noah was 500 years old, God determined to destroy the human race because of their great wickedness – “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” (Genesis 6:5-8) God told Noah to build a large, 3-story ark that would be big enough to carry him and his family, a great number of animals, birds and insects and enough food for all of them to stay alive during a catastrophic flood that God would send to destroy everyone not in the ark. God sent the flood when Noah was 600

years old – just five years after the death of his father Lamech at the age of 777.

The flood covered the earth and all flesh on the earth died – “So He destroyed all living things which were on the face of the ground: both man and cattle, creeping thing and bird of the air. They were destroyed from the earth. Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark remained alive. And the waters prevailed on the earth one hundred and fifty days.” (Genesis 7:23-24) God caused a wind to pass over the earth and the waters of the flood subsided. (Genesis 8:1) The flood began in the “six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month.” (Genesis 7:11) The ark rested on the mountains of Ararat “in the seventh month, the seventeenth day of the month.” (Genesis 8:4) The waters continued to decrease until the tenth month when “the tops of the mountains were seen.” (Genesis 8:5) The earth was finally dried in the second month, on the 27th day of the month, in the 601st year of Noah’s life. (Genesis 8:14) Noah and his family and all the animals had been in the ark for one year and ten days.

“Then God spoke to Noah, saying, ‘Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons’ wives with you. Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that is with you: birds and cattle and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, so that they may abound on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.’ So

Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him. Every animal, every creeping thing, every bird, and whatever

creeps on the earth, according to their families, went out of the ark. Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, 'I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.'" Genesis 8:15-21

God started new with Noah and his family. The first thing Noah did after getting everyone and everything off the ark was to build an altar to the Lord and offered burnt offerings to God. The Lord smelled the offering and it was a soothing aroma to Him. This was **renewed worship** and began a great time of restoration between God and the human race. The Lord blessed Noah and his sons and their wives and established new laws concerning what they could eat and what would happen to anyone who killed another person.

"Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man.' Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man." Genesis 9:5-6

Noah lived another 350 years after the flood, which means he lived long enough to see his family quickly fall away from worshiping God. God knew this was going to happen because He knew that "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." (Genesis 8:21) Even though God said He

would never again destroy life with water, He had already determined to greatly shorten the lifespan of human beings – from more than 900 years to just 120 years (Genesis 6:3). Noah lived to be 950 years old, but his three sons died at the age of about 600. Their children died before they reached their 500th birthday. Within just five generations from the end of the flood, people were living to be less than 300 years old.

It was during the third generation from the end of the flood that big trouble erupted in the human race. Noah had a great-grandson named Nimrod who was a proud and arrogant man. His name in the Hebrew language means “rebel.” Nimrod led the human race to travel from the east to a plain in the land of Shinar (part of ancient Mesopotamia including modern Iraq). It was there that God dealt powerfully with the rebellious spirit of mankind.

“Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. Then they said to one another, ‘Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly.’ They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. And they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.’ But the LORD came down

to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. And the LORD said, ‘Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let Us go down and

there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.' So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city."

Genesis 11:1-8

I wrote about this in more detail in *A History of Man's Quest for Immortality*" (Fifth Estate Publishing, 2007), but a primary point is that humanity's rebellion against God just made things much worse for people. The human race had been one race with one language and one physical appearance. They were also unified in purpose – the **worship of self**. They built a tower that inched its way toward the heavens. They wanted their name to be great rather than God's. They wanted to restore themselves rather than obey God and restore the earth. They wanted to control Heaven and their destiny. They were searching for the long lost Garden of Eden and their former immortality. They didn't want to scatter around the earth – they wanted to reach into heaven and live forever and ever!

God had the answer for their mortality problem, but it wasn't going to work their way. He put a stop to their evil plan by taking away their unity - their drive to work together to conquer their mortality. He confused everything that had made them one.

The sons and daughters of Noah scattered in every direction. Their language and physical appearance were different, but their hearts were still deceptively wicked. Nimrod, who had been the rebel leader, built an empire on the foundation of self. He was the strongest and most vicious of Noah's

descendants, so he was able to stay close to Babel and build his kingdom of self.

“And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah (that is the principal city).” Genesis 10:10-12

Based on the number of years of his contemporaries from the line of Shem, Nimrod lived to be more than 400 years old. That gave him plenty of time to build what became known as Mesopotamia – the Cradle of Civilization. Nimrod’s empire included some of the most powerful kingdoms of the world – including the Sumerians, Akkadians, Babylonians and Assyrians. It’s interesting to note that hundreds of years after Nimrod opposed God and attempted to build a kingdom that would rise to Heaven itself, the kingdoms of Babylon and Assyria opposed the Kingdom of God in Israel. Assyria defeated the Northern Kingdom of Israel and Babylon defeated the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Man’s opposition to God’s plan continued from the early days of man’s attempt to build a tower to Heaven to opposing the people of God in Israel. It was Nimrod’s kingdom, Babylon, that destroyed the Temple of Solomon.

Nimrod is mentioned often in ancient literature as a god-like being who was worshiped and held in high regard by pagans. It was the beginning of **idol worship**. This worship of man-made gods would go on to plague the world for thousands of years. It also became the plague of the people God chose

to restore true worship and carry forward the line that would one day bring forth the Seed that would destroy Satan and sin.

(You can read more about our ancient ancestors – including Noah and Nimrod – on pages 14 – 17, 474 – 483, 496 – 507, and 510 – 521)

The Problem

What happened to the **true worship** of God when the waters receded on the earth and Noah made the first **sacrificial offering** to God? Did Noah's sons and wives and their children and their children's children continue to follow God as Noah did? The families born after the Flood rebelled against God and tried to regain their position in the world through their own strength. They refused to worship God through offerings. They refused to obey God's plan for them to move across the earth, take possession of the land and be His people. Instead they all moved together toward the place where the Garden of Eden had last been seen before the Flood and built a tower toward Heaven so they could "make a name" for themselves. Their name was more important to them than God's Name – the **worship of self** continued. They did not want to be "scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth," so they conspired together under the leadership of Nimrod and other rebellious leaders (who were under the spiritual leadership of Satan) to run from God's Will for their lives to what they thought would be their salvation. Well, God would have none of that. He confused (Hebrew *balal* – mix up so as to confound through the mixture) their language so they could not understand each other's speech, and in doing so the people did just what God had planned for them to do.

“So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.” Genesis 11:8-9

God stopped the construction of the tower instantly. The people were thrown into a great panic by the confusion of language – apparently giving each family its own unique language (since the list of families in Genesis 10 & 11 is unbroken even after the confusion of language). If God also changed their genetic appearance at the same time, it was even more reason for families to scatter (Hebrew *pus* – disperse what was before united) over the face of the earth. They had a strong reason for getting as far away from each other as they could. Each family deeply feared the other families because of how God had changed them. I can imagine that panic fights may have broken out on and around the tower after God confused the languages. Family members would have found each other and run from the tower to find a safe place where they could regroup, try to make sense of what had changed and decide what they would do next. They could no longer count on support from the rest of the world’s population. Safety and support were up to the leaders of each family to provide.

You might think that this amazing demonstration of God’s Power would have humbled people and brought them to their knees to worship Him and ask for His forgiveness, but instead they all went their own way and did what was right in their own eyes rather than obey God. Nimrod and other

leaders of that time built fortified cities for protection and for **worship of self**. Within a short time the population of the world had developed a sophisticated system of **idol worship** based on gods of their own creation – often based on worshiping their own image rather than the True God who had created man in His Image. Families built their own system of gods and worshiped them in the form of idols – images of what they wanted their gods to look like. Pride in family, village, city, regional and national gods led to many of the wars recorded in early history. The Sumerians, led by Nimrod and his family, were the first people to write in their own language. Language became – like now – a factor of pride for people and they wanted to promote and protect it in a world filled with languages. Other families wrote in their language as well and the battle for historical supremacy was born.

So, back to our primary question – what happened to the true worship of God? Every family on earth was worshiping gods of their own making. This was no surprise to God. He knew what would happen even as He promised Noah that He would not destroy the earth by water again – “Then the LORD said in His heart, ‘I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.’” (Genesis 8:21) God knew the heart of man was evil from birth. That’s the sin nature we all know so well. Even faced with something as amazing as the Flood and the confusion of languages at Babel, the human race turned away from God to worship the work of their own hands.

The Promise

Even as there were ten generations from Adam to Noah, God would reveal His plan for worship and the promised Seed after ten generations from Noah. The total rebellion of the human race against God did not keep God from accomplishing His purpose.

“Now the LORD had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’” Genesis 12:1-3

God reached into the heart of Nimrod’s wicked rebellion against Him and chose a man to follow Him and carry the Seed forward. Abram lived in Ur of the Chaldees about 4,000 years ago – a large and powerful city-state. The primary pagan god of the people of Ur was Nanna, the Sumerian moon god. The Akkadians also worshiped the same moon god and called his name Sin. What did God ask Abram to do? Leave the wicked country of his birth, leave his father and go to a place God would show him. This new worship God was going to introduce to Abram would be established hundreds of miles west of Ur to a land known as Canaan. Canaan was not a land of people who worshiped the One True God of Heaven. The Canaanites worshiped many pagan gods that Abram and his family would have to deal with through the years – including Baal, Mot, Anat, Yam, Asherah, Dagon, Moloch, Chemosh, Tammuz, and Yarikh. Remember that

the whole world had gone after false gods. So, what was special about the land of Canaan? Why would God choose to send Abram there to re-establish true worship on earth?

Think for a moment about where Eden was located. God created Adam in Eden and placed him in a garden “eastward in Eden.” We know the approximate location of Eden because of the rivers Moses listed in Genesis 2. Scholars disagree on the exact location because of the modern understanding of the names of rivers and land masses, but we have a general idea.

“Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads. The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good. Bdellium and the onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one which goes around the whole land of Cush. The name of the third river is Hiddekel; it is the one which goes toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates.” Genesis 2:10-14

There are many theories about the original location of the Garden of Eden. Some think it was located in Iraq, others in Turkey. One thing we know for sure is that it was “eastward in Eden” (literally “the way of the east”). We know that God removed Adam and Eve from the Garden and placed them east of the Garden – “So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.” (Genesis 3:24) We also know that

Cain moved east when he left his family after murdering his brother – “Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden.” (Genesis 4:16) The Hebrew word for “Nod” means “wander.” It made sense for Cain to move his family eastward since to go westward would have meant heading toward the Garden of Eden and facing the powerful angels that would have killed anyone who attempted to gain entrance there. The Garden of Eden was a continual reminder of Adam’s sin, Cain’s rebellion and God’s righteousness. The sin nature of man would move the human race in the opposite direction of the location of God’s judgment and curse.

This continual movement to the east begs the question, “what was west of the Garden of Eden?” We know God created Adam in Eden and placed him in a garden “eastward in Eden.” We know that after He created Adam and Eve, He would walk with them in the Garden. Eden (delight) was where God lived on earth. We might think of it as the place of God’s earthly Throne. God is on His Throne wherever He lives and Eden was the place He created for Himself. He created the Garden for Adam, Eve and their children. What land do we know now that was west of the probable location of the Garden of Eden? Nimrod, the great-grandson of Noah – who knew the original location of the Garden -led the human race straight for the plains of Shinar and built a tower at what is now known as Babel (in western Iraq). Look west from Babel and what do you see? The Land of Canaan. That’s where God sent Abram to establish a land for the **people of promise**.

Think about the power of this statement – “Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you.” (Genesis 12:1) God was going to rescue (save) many members of the human race from the final destruction of our planet that is to come and He chose Abram to be the one who would become the father of those people. Where did God send Abram? I believe He sent him to the birthplace of Adam – to Eden. What was that area of the world known as during Abram’s time? Canaan!

“So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother’s son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan. Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land.” Genesis 12:4–6

The first mention of Canaan in the Bible is Genesis 9:18 – “Now the sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And Ham was the father of Canaan.” Canaan was a grandson of Noah. His father, Ham, had been on the ark with his mother during the Great Flood. He was born soon after Noah and his children left the Ark to live again on dry land. Ham sinned against his father Noah and Noah cursed the line of Canaan and said they would be servants of the line of Shem (Genesis 9:26). Abram was from the lineage of Shem. God sent Abram directly into the land that the children of Canaan had taken for themselves. Why?

Because the Canaanites were living on God's land and He was sending Abram to take it back for the people of God.

Having this background gives us a better understanding of the importance of the land of Israel. When God rescued (saved) the people of Israel from the land of Egypt, He gave them specific instructions about what to do when they entered the Land of Canaan. Here's what God told Moses to tell the children of Israel:

“Now the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you have crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, destroy all their engraved stones, destroy all their molded images, and demolish all their high places; you shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land and dwell in it, for I have given you the land to possess. And you shall divide the land by lot as an inheritance among your families; to the larger you shall give a larger inheritance, and to the smaller you shall give a smaller inheritance; there everyone's inheritance shall be whatever falls to him by lot. You shall inherit according to the tribes of your fathers. But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall be that those whom you let remain shall be irritants in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall harass you in the land where you dwell. Moreover it shall be that I will do to you as I thought to do to them.’” Numbers 33:50-56

God told Israel to drive all of the Canaanites out of the land, destroy all of the pagan idol worship, and possess (Hebrew *yaras* “take possession by driving out”) the land. God warned Israel that if they did not drive out the Canaanites from the land and destroy their idol worship, then the people they allowed to remain would be irritants in their eyes and thorns in their side and would harass them in the land. God went on to say that He would do to Israel what He was going to do to the Canaanites if they didn’t obey Him. As we know from the history of Israel, they did not drive out the Canaanites, they did not destroy the pagan worship, the Canaanites were irritants in their eyes and thorns in their sides, and God did to Israel what He would have done to the Canaanites.

These words that God spoke to Moses 3,500 years ago still ring in the ears of our planet. Have you ever wondered why the little country of Israel would be such a flashpoint of emotion in our world today? What’s the big deal about this one tiny country having a little bit of land. The land surface of the Earth is more than 57,000,000 square miles. The land surface of Israel is about 8,000 square miles – and more than half of that is desert (Negev – 4,633 square miles). That means that Israel, counting its desert, is only .0001% of the land mass of Earth. So, what’s all the fuss about? Why does anybody care about this tiny little country that’s mostly desert?

The answer came to the forefront of the news recently when one of the best-known American journalists of our time said what millions of people around the world believe about Israel. This journalist was asked to comment about Israel. Her response was – “Tell them to get the hell out of Palestine.” The person interviewing her on camera asked where the people

of Israel should go and she answered- “They go home.” When the interviewer asked her where Israel’s home was, the journalist answered, “Poland, Germany ... And America and everywhere else. Why push people out of there who have lived there for centuries? See?”

This journalist is of Lebanese descent and believes as many do that Israel stole land that belonged to the Palestinian people. What she and so many others don’t realize is that God gave that land to Israel four-thousand of years ago. It is because of the disobedience of Israel that non-Israelites are still in the land. God punished Israel harshly in 70 A.D. when He allowed Roman armies to destroy Jerusalem and the Temple Of God. It’s estimated that as many as a million Jews died during the Roman siege. Most of the Jews who survived were taken into Roman captivity and transported to other countries where their descendants remained until Hitler killed more than six million Jews during his campaign to annihilate the Hebrew race. That campaign drove tens of thousands of Jews from Europe back to Israel to join together for safety against those who might try again to exterminate them. About 40% of the world’s Jewish population now lives in Israel. The State of Israel was declared on May 14, 1948 – almost 1,900 years after Rome destroyed their country and drove them from their land. Jews returned at the end of World War II to again possess the land God had given them.

With that as our historical background, let’s return to Abram’s arrival in the Land of Canaan to see what we can learn about the importance of that land to God. The first time we see God speaking to Abram after he crossed into the Land of Canaan is in Genesis 12. The first named location was

Shechem, which was about 30 miles north of Jerusalem and nestled between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim. The first thing God said to Abram was, “To your descendants I will give this land.” Abram built an altar to the Lord at Shechem, then traveled south another 20 miles and pitched his tent with **Bethel** on the west and **Ai** on the east. Abram built another altar to the Lord there and called on God’s Name. Abram continued on his journey south and because of a famine in the land traveled all the way to Egypt to find food. Abram became wealthy during his time in Egypt and returned to the place between Bethel and Ai where he had established an altar and called again on the Name of the Lord.

It was at that place between Bethel and Ai that Abram’s nephew, Lot, left Abram and moved his family close to the wicked city of Sodom (Genesis 13). God spoke to Abram soon after Lot moved away. The Lord gave Abram more detail about the land He was going to give him and his descendants.

“And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: ‘Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you.’ Then Abram moved his tent, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built an altar there to the LORD.” Genesis 13:14-18

By walking great distances, Abram and his family began to get an idea of the magnitude of God's gift to them. Looking at all the dust beneath his feet gave Abram some idea about the great number of descendants he would have. What happens next has tremendous significance about why God chose to send Abram to take possession of the Land of Canaan. The kings of Shinar, Ellasar, Elam and Tidal "king of nations" made war with the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim and Bela (Zoar). This war was not Abram's battle, but it became personal to him when his nephew Lot was taken as part of the spoils of the war. Abram took 318 of his trained servants and chased the armies north as far as Dan and attacked them. Abram and his servants won the battle and took back Lot and all the goods the armies had stolen from Sodom. Abram and his servants, along with Lot, made their way south to go home. As they passed near the ancient city of Salem, someone came out to greet them.

"Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: 'Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand. And he gave him a tithe of all.'" Genesis 14:18-20

Who was Melchizedek? If God had called Abram to be the father of true worship, who is this priest of God Most High? The Old Testament doesn't give us much information about Melchizedek, but we do find a mention in one of the Messianic Psalms.

“The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’ The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies! Your people shall be volunteers In the day of Your power; In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, You have the dew of Your youth. The LORD has sworn And will not relent, ‘You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.’” Psalm 110:1-4

We have to look to the writings of the New Testament to get a better understanding about Melchizedek. The Book of Hebrews mentions the name of Melchizedek 9 times in chapters 5 – 7.

“So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.’ As He also says in another place: ‘You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek’; who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest ‘according to the order of Melchizedek,’ of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.” Hebrews 5:5-11

“This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” Hebrews 6:19-20

“For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated ‘king of righteousness,’ and then also king of Salem, meaning ‘king of peace,’ without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually. Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham; but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him. Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek,

and not be called according to the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. For He testifies: 'You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.' For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. And inasmuch as He was not made priest without an oath (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: 'The LORD has sworn And will not relent, 'You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek'), by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant. Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He

did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever.” Hebrews 7

Many people believe that Melchizedek was the Pre-Incarnate Son of God. That’s because Melchizedek was the King of Righteousness, King of Peace and High Priest of the Most High God. Who else but God’s Son could have met all those qualifications? And then there’s Abram giving a tithe of the spoils to Melchizedek. So, here’s the question – if Melchizedek was the Pre-Incarnate Son of God, why was God’s Son identified as the King of a real city in the Land of Canaan? What was He doing there and what was the significance of His appearing to Abram with bread and wine?

Ancient Salem has been identified as the location of **Jerusalem** that would centuries later become the capital city of Israel. Some archaeologists believe that artifacts found in the area prove the city of Salem was established between 3,000 and 2,600 B.C. The larger area was known as the Land of Canaan because the people who settled there were from the lineage of Canaan – son of Ham, son of Noah. The Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, Arvadites, Zemarites, and Hamathites came from the lineage of Canaan. The people who settled Salem were the Jebusites. Why would Melchizedek, King of Righteousness and Peace and High Priest of the Most High God, be the King of the Jebusites? The line of Canaan was cursed to be servants to the line of Shem, so why would God’s High Priest be involved as the leader of a Canaanite clan?

There are many views on this, but I don't believe Melchizedek was a king of the Canaanites. He is not mentioned again in the Bible as having another historical encounter with God's people. He appears once to Abram, then is gone. It may be that Melchizedek was King of Salem for just this encounter with Abram, or as I think is more likely, it may be that the name **King of Salem** (Hebrew *Melechitzedek* – righteousness is my king) was a title or designation of honor rather than a political position. We know from God's Word that Jesus Christ is a Priest forever "According to the order of Melchizedek." Melchizedek bringing bread and wine to Abram represented the salvation of God that would come more than 1,900 years later through the Sacrifice of Christ. What a beautiful picture of our Lord offering His Body and Blood to Abram – who was ancestor to all who would be saved through Christ's Death and Resurrection.

Jerusalem (Hebrew *Yerushaláyim* – abode or teaching of peace) plays a pivotal role in the Plan of God. The next time we see the name Jerusalem in the Bible after Melchizedek is centuries later in the Book of Joshua. Joshua, the great leader of Israel after the death of Moses, captured and killed Jerusalem's king, Adoni-Zedek (Joshua 10). The Tribe of Judah fought against the people of Jerusalem after the death of Joshua and burned the city (Judges 1). The Benjamites were supposed to drive the Jebusites from the land, but they didn't and the Jebusites remained in Jerusalem for many generations. Jerusalem is where David defeated the Jebusites and established the Kingdom of Israel. Jerusalem is where Solomon built the Temple of God. It's where Jesus died and rose again for the sins of the world. It's where Jesus will return in the future to establish His Throne in a new Temple and rule the world for a thousand years.

Why Jerusalem? Why Israel? The Land of Canaan was west of Babel and could have been the location of the original Eden. It may be that Jerusalem is on the site where God created Adam and Eve and had His earthly Throne. There is something special about God's Throne being permanently located in Jerusalem. Even after the united kingdom of Israel under David and Solomon divided, Jerusalem continued to be the capital city of Judah. Even after Judah was conquered and the people were taken into captivity, they returned to rebuild the City of Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple. Even after almost 1,900 years of being away from the land, dispersed around the world, Jews by the thousands and thousands returned to Jerusalem after World War II to rebuild the national identity of Israel with plans to build a third Temple. And what is the name of the great city of God that will come down from Heaven to the new Earth?

“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband ... ‘Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife.’ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God ... But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). And they

shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life." Revelation 21:1-2, 9-11, 22-27

And to think it all began with these simple words to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you."

(You can read more about our ancient ancestors – including Noah, Abraham and his sons – on pages 14 – 17, 474 – 483, 496 – 507, 510 – 521, and 532 – 586)

Our Proper Response

Worship is our **proper response** to the Eternal, Almighty, All Knowing, Everywhere Present God. The Lord of Hosts created the Universe and everything in it and is **deserving** of our **love** and **devotion**. That's how it started in the Garden of Eden, but it did not last long. Satan, the rebellious angel, moved in quickly behind God's creation of Adam and Eve and deceived Eve with a lie. Satan is the father of lies and continues to lie to the human race to this moment.

The lies of Satan have **never** been a match for God. The Lord chose from out of all the people of the world a man who would become the father of God's people. God called Abram to leave his country and travel hundreds of miles to a land He would show him. Abram obeyed the Lord and took his wife and nephew and traveled to Canaan. It was there that God taught Abram Who **He** was and how to **worship Him**. "After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.'" (Genesis 15:1) Abram first learned that God would **provide, protect and reward** him – all excellent reasons to worship God with thanksgiving. We can call it **thankful** or **grateful worship**.

Abram had much to learn about how God provides for those He calls. As is the nature of man, Abram doubted. He looked around at his physical circumstances and questioned God about how He could possibly do what He had promised. How could God make Abram the father of a great nation

seeing that Abram was an old man and didn't even have a child? The Lord brought Abram outside and directed his eyes toward the heavens – “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.’ And He said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’” (Genesis 15:5) God was the Creator of the heavens and had placed more stars in the sky than a person can count. He could certainly provide Abram with an heir from his own body.

How Abram responded is an important insight into worship – “And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.” This is **faith worship** – believing God even when we can't see how He will do what He says He will do. Faith is an absolute necessity in **true worship**. We cannot worship the Almighty God if we don't believe Him – “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” (Hebrews 11:6) Faith is how God works.

Worshiping and following God is not based on “see it – believe it.” Instead, it's “believe it – see it.” Faith comes first, then we see. It reminds me of the conversation Jesus had with Thomas.

“And Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’” John 20:28-29

God has special blessings for His children who believe **before they see**. That's the kind of faith Abram had. He believed God and left his country and family behind to go to live in a place he had never seen. God told Abram he would have descendants that would number as many as the stars in the sky. Abram didn't see it, but he believed it – and God accounted it to him for righteousness.

The next thing God did was make a covenant with Abram about the land he would inherit. The Lord also foretold the suffering of Abram's descendants and how God would provide, protect and reward them as well.

“Then He said to him, ‘I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it.’ And he said, ‘Lord GOD, how shall I know that I will inherit it?’ So He said to him, ‘Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.’ Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him. Then He said to Abram: ‘Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for

the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.’ And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: ‘To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates— the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.” Genesis 15:7-21

This was an amazing site to behold! God took the entire responsibility of the covenant agreement **upon Himself!** Covenants were made with two or more people involved in the agreement. In ancient times each party would make specific promises to the other party and expect certain types of benefits from the agreement. Covenants also carried penalties if the agreement was broken. Ancient covenants were “cut” (Hebrew *karath berith*), meaning that animals were sacrificed and cut in half to demonstrate the seriousness of the agreement. Blood had been spilled – a life had been taken for the covenant. It was a serious commitment that involved life and death. After the sacrifice and the cutting, the covenant parties would walk together between the cut pieces of sacrifice to demonstrate their commitment to keeping their agreement even to the point of death. So, did God walk with Abram between the cut pieces? No! God placed Abram in a deep sleep, then passed through the cut pieces alone, taking the full responsibility of the covenant upon Himself – including paying the price for any covenant failure on the part of Abram and his descendants. As we know, Abram’s descendants failed to possess the land as God commanded

and the price God paid was the death of His Son Jesus Christ. Jesus, God the Son, walked between the cut pieces of sacrifice while Abraham slept to demonstrate that He would take upon Himself the full responsibility of the covenant agreement with His people.

(Another amazing thing to note here is that God represented Himself through a “smoking oven” and “burning torch.” Where do we see this later in God’s relationship with Israel? When He led Israel out of Egypt with a **pillar of cloud** and **pillar of fire.**)

What was this covenant that God was willing to take upon Himself alone? **The Promised Land.** Abram asked God how he would know that he would inherit the land God had promised him. God’s answer was to tell Abram to bring the sacrificial animals to God to cut in two – “On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: ‘To your descendants I have given this land.’” God promised Abram land and He would deliver.

Was the “promised land” just land where Jews would live, raise children, work and die? No! The Promised Land was where God would **dwell** with His people. That has always been the plan of God, beginning with the Garden of Eden.

Abram had a lot to learn about God and how to follow Him. Abram believed God when He said he would have many descendants and shared that with his wife, Sarai. Sarai couldn’t see how any descendants would come through her body since she was old and had never been able to give Abram a child, so she recommended Abram have his child through another

woman. That was Abram's chance to demonstrate his absolute trust in what God told him, but instead he did as Sarai requested. Notice how Sarai blamed God for the situation.

“Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. So Sarai said to Abram, ‘See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her.’ And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai. Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived.” Genesis 16:1-4

Instead of trusting God to provide a child through Sarai's body, she and Abram used a surrogate of flesh, Hagar, to produce what they thought would be the promised child. How do you think that went? Did everyone become a big, happy family? No, it made matters worse. That's what happens when we don't take God at His Word – when we run ahead of God and try to produce His will through our fleshly ideas and ambitions.

“And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes. Then Sarai said to Abram, ‘My wrong be upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The LORD judge between you and me.’ Genesis 16:4-5

Hagar's reaction is not at all what Sarai had expected, but it was certainly human. Hagar had left her home in Egypt with Abram and Sarai to serve them. She would have heard conversations between Abram and Sarai about what God had promised them. Hagar knew what Abram and Sarai were doing when they asked her to have Abram's child. Something changed inside Hagar when she became pregnant with Abram's first child that caused her to despise Sarai. It might have been that Sarai would get all the attention and praise when Hagar had done all the work. It may have been that Hagar became proud of her position as the mother of Abram's first child and may have refused to obey Sarai and may have disrespected her. Whatever her reason, Hagar's reaction to Sarai began a feud that has not stopped to this day. Sarai mistreated Hagar and she (Hagar) ran from Sarai.

End of story, right? We all know that the child of promise was going to come from Sarai's body, so God didn't care about Hagar. Wrong. God did care about Hagar because the baby in her womb was from Abram. God cared so much that he sent the Angel of the Lord to Hagar to provide, protect and reward her and her unborn son – just as He had promised Abram.

“Now the Angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. And He said, ‘Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?’ She said, ‘I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.’ The Angel of the LORD said to her, ‘Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand.’ Then the Angel of the LORD

said to her, 'I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude.' And the Angel of the LORD said to her: Behold, you are with child, And you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, Because the LORD has heard your affliction. He shall be a wild man; His hand shall be against every man, And every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.' Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, 'Have I also here seen Him who sees me?' Therefore the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; observe, it is between Kadesh and Bered. So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram." Genesis 16:7-16

Several powerful things came from his situation. We see the Son of God personally involved with Hagar – "Then the Angel of the LORD said to her, 'I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude.'" This was not an angel speaking for God – this was God's Son speaking for Himself. We learn more about God and how He sees and knows everything (Hebrew *El Roi* – God Who sees). We learn how God keeps His Word even when we don't. We learn how getting ahead of God can cause bigger problems than having to wait on God. We see how one judgment in error can affect hundreds, thousands, even millions of people in future generations. We also learn an important lesson about the power of Law and Grace and which one is what God has for us today.

God made specific promises about what would become of Abram's descendants – those who came from his body. Ishmael came from Abram's body. God kept His promise to Abram and provided for his first descendant. The line of Ishmael became extremely large – too many to count – even as the Angel of the Lord had said. Ishmael had 12 sons who became leaders of many of the tribes of Arabia. Ishmael's sons and their sons and their sons and their sons were involved in many battles with other tribes, just as the Angel of the Lord had said. Those who trace their lineage back to Ishmael believe he is their connection to the promises of God to Abram. That has caused many problems – even to this day.

Muslims believe that Ishmael is one of the prophets of Islam, with roots that connect them directly to Abraham. They also believe that Ishmael was the son Abraham was ready to sacrifice to God, rather than Isaac. Muslims believe that Abraham and Ishmael rebuilt the foundations of Kaaba, which is the most sacred site in Islam (a large cube-shaped building) – located in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Muslim tradition holds that Adam, the first man, built Kaaba as the first building on earth dedicated to God and that Abraham and Ishmael rebuilt it on Adam's original foundation. Muslims face toward the Kaaba during their prayer times every day (no matter where they live in the world) and are supposed to visit the Kaaba at least once during their lives, if possible, and walk around the structure seven times in a counter-clockwise direction.

The Apostle Paul shared some fascinating insight into the spiritual nature of Hagar and Ishmael in his letter to the Galatians.

“Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar— for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children— but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written: ‘Rejoice, O barren, You who do not bear! Break forth and shout, You who are not in labor! For the desolate has many more children Than she who has a husband.’ Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? ‘Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.’ So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.”
Galatians 4:21-31

Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said that Hagar is the bondwoman and the conception and birth of Ishmael is symbolic of the flesh. God made two covenants – one to Abram and one to Hagar. The covenant God made with Abram is about spiritual freedom. The covenant

God made with Hagar is about spiritual bondage. Ishmael, son of the bondswoman, will not be heir with Isaac, son of the freewoman. “So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondswoman but of the free.”

God was about to take the next step in revealing Himself to Abram and Sarai. The Almighty God (Hebrew *El Shaddai*) appeared to Abraham 13 years later and revealed more about what He was going to do through Abraham and his descendants. He began by changing their Chaldean names to new names that would become Hebrew names.

“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, ‘I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.’ Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: ‘As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.’ And God said to Abraham: “As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me

and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.” Genesis 17:1-14

You can imagine that this is a lot for Abraham to take in at one time. God tells him that the land covenant will be an everlasting covenant. He reveals to Abraham the covenant sign of circumcision. If a male child in Israel is not circumcised, that person will be **cut off** from God’s people as a covenant breaker. Abraham’s still listening – no response yet – until what God says next.

“Then God said to Abraham, ‘As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her.’ Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, ‘Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?’ And Abraham said to God, ‘Oh, that

Ishmael might live before You!’ Then God said: ‘No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.’ Then He finished talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.” Genesis 17:15-22

Abraham had faith in God, but still had things to learn about the Power and Purpose of the Almighty. Abraham looked at his age and Sarah’s age and their physical condition and questioned what God had said concerning a child being born to them. Abraham actually laughed at what God said and prayed that his teenage son Ishmael might live before the Lord. Abraham went with what he could see with his eyes instead of what he should have seen with his heart and soul. God’s answer was quick and to the point –

“No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac.” (The name Isaac means “he will laugh.”)

God had introduced to Abraham the importance of **covenant worship** – worship and service to the Lord based on covenant agreements with God. The land covenant was all on God. He passed through the cut sacrifices alone. Keeping the provisions of the covenant were up to God’s faithfulness. The circumcision covenant was on the people of God. If they

were circumcised, they were part of the people of God through the covenant. If they were not circumcised, they were not part of the people of God – they were cut off as covenant breakers.

Abraham did just as God commanded and circumcised every male in his household. Abraham was also circumcised.

“So Abraham took Ishmael his son, all who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham’s house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very same day, as God had said to him. Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. That very same day Abraham was circumcised, and his son Ishmael; and all the men of his house, born in the house or bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.” Genesis 17: 23-27

The foundation had been laid for what would happen next. God chose who He would use for His Eternal Purpose and sent him to the land of promise, established a covenant for that land involving the cutting and halving of sacrificial animals, and another covenant for the cutting of the foreskin of every male. The Land Covenant is still in effect today and will always be in effect because God is solely responsible for that covenant – and He cannot fail. God has already returned His people to part of the ancient Land He gave them and will protect them there until Jesus Christ returns to rule and reign the world from the Promised Land. At that time, Jesus will expand

Israel to take all of the land God had promised Abraham thousands of years earlier. The Circumcision Covenant is no longer in effect. Israel rejected their Messiah and were cut off. God revealed the end of that requirement through the Apostle Paul as He turned His attention to Gentile nations.

So, if God rejected Israel and gave His salvation to Gentiles, doesn't that mean that Israel's rejection is final and complete? That's what many people believe and teach today and have taught for centuries. But it's not true. God's rejection of Israel is only temporary and partial. The Lord made that clear through Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles.

"I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, 'LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life'? But what does the divine response say to him? 'I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.' Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work. What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. Just as it is written: God has given them a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see And ears that they should not

hear, To this very day.' And David says: 'Let their table become a snare and a trap, A stumbling block and a recompense to them. Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, And bow down their back always.' I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them. For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, 'Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in. 'Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated

olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.' Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! 'For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor? Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?' For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen." Romans 11

Yes, to God be the glory!

(You can read more about Abraham's adventures with God on pages 532 – 562 of "A History of Man's Quest for Immortality.")

God Keeps His Promises

God loves promises! He loves to make them to people – and keep them. Abraham is an excellent example of how God makes and keeps promises to people. God promised Abraham land and He's keeping that promise to this day – no matter how hard the nations of the world try to remove Israel from their land. God promised Abraham that he would be the father of God's chosen people – and Christians and Jews are witnesses to God keeping that promise.

We pick up the History of Worship in Genesis 18. Abraham saw three men standing by him. He rose to greet them. One of the men standing before Abraham was the Lord. Abraham offered to bring them food and water and give them rest from their journey. The Lord asked Abraham about Sarah. Abraham told Him that Sarah was in the tent. Then, the Lord restated the promise He had made to Abraham about a son who would come from Abraham and Sarah – “I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son.” (Genesis 18:10) Sarah was listening from inside the tent and laughed when the Lord said that she would become pregnant and give birth to a son – “After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?” (Genesis 18:12) The Lord heard Sarah and asked a penetrating question that is at the heart of **faith worship** – “Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.” (Genesis 18:14)

Is anything too hard for the LORD? This is the question God asked Abraham and Sarah. It is not a human question that needs human consideration to find an appropriate answer. This is a rhetorical question from God. Is anything too hard for the Lord? Of course it isn't. God can do anything He wants. God said that Sarah would have a son – and she did!

The Lord promised Abraham - “At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.” Do you see how personal the Lord was in His promise to Abraham and Sarah? At the appointed time He would return to them, “according to the time of life,” and Sarah would conceive and give birth to the promised son. That's how involved God was in Abraham and Sarah's life and how involved He is in our lives as well.

“And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him—whom Sarah bore to him—Isaac. Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. And Sarah said, ‘God has made me laugh, and all who hear will laugh with me.’ She also said, ‘Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have borne him a son in his old age.’” Genesis 21:1-7

Abraham was 99-years-old when God gave him the Covenant of Circumcision (Genesis 17) and 100-years-old when Isaac was born. That's a year later – which means Abraham was circumcised in obedience to God's command prior to conceiving Isaac with Sarah. What happened in the year between circumcision and the birth of Isaac is also very interesting. In that period of one year, Abraham and the Lord had their discussion about finding righteous people in Sodom (Genesis 18:16-33); God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, but saved Lot and his daughters (Genesis 19:1-29); and Abraham and Sarah lied to Abimelech the king of Gerar, but God protected them (Genesis 20:1-18).

The day came and Sarah gave birth to Isaac, the son God had promised Abraham many years before. It was a happy time for the family that led up to a great feast on the day Isaac was weaned from being nursed by Sarah. But Sarah saw Abraham's son Ishmael scoffing and told Abraham to cast out the boy and his mother, Hagar. Abraham didn't like that because of his feelings toward Ishmael, but God supported Sarah's feelings and gave Abraham another insight to how important Isaac would be – “But God said to Abraham, ‘Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called.’” (Genesis 21:12) God also told Abraham that Ishmael would become the father of a nation of people because he was Abraham's son. However, Isaac was the son of God's Promise.

Abraham sent Hagar and Ishmael away from him and she and the boy wandered in the wilderness until she thought they would die. God opened Hagar's eyes to see a nearby well and she had water for herself and her son. God was with Ishmael and he grew up in the wilderness and became an archer. Hagar returned to Egypt, the land of her birth, and found a wife for Ishmael. Abraham made a covenant with Abimelech and lived in the land of the Philistines for many years (Genesis 21:22-34).

Abraham's journey of faith was not finished. God had much more to teach him about what it meant to be the father of the promised people of God. A major part of God's Promise was **redemption** and **salvation**. Abraham understood that God had given him Isaac to be his heir and part of the larger promise of a great nation that would belong to God. However, faith in God is often tested to see what kind of faith it is.

"Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then He said, 'Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.' So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said to his young men, 'Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.' So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on

Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, 'My father!' And he said, 'Here I am, my son.' Then he said, 'Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?' And Abraham said, 'My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.' So the two of them went together. Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son." Genesis 22:1-10

Do you see the confidence Abraham had in God's Promise? I don't think it was easy for Abraham to do what God told him to do, but he did it. And look at what Abraham told the young men who had gone with him and Isaac – "the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you." Abraham was not misleading his servants. He and Isaac were going to worship God and they both were going to come back. But didn't God tell Abraham to offer Isaac as a burnt offering? How could Abraham have seen that as worship? How could he have believed that Isaac would return with him after being offered as a burnt offering? Abraham had a faith that went beyond what he could see with his eyes and hear with his ears. He had walked with God long enough to know that God could do anything He wanted to do and would keep His Promise. Abraham believed that God could raise Isaac from the dead if necessary – "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called,' concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from

the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.” (Hebrews 11:17-18) God blessed Abraham’s faithfulness and saved Isaac by supplying another sacrifice, just as Abraham had said – “My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.”

God did just that – He provided another sacrifice and blessed Abraham for his faith. And in blessing Abraham, the Lord promised that in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed – “because you have obeyed My voice.”

“But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, ‘Abraham, Abraham!’ So he said, ‘Here I am.’ And He said, ‘Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.’ Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, ‘In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided.’ Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: ‘By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son— blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.’ So Abraham

returned to his young men, and they rose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.” Genesis 22:11-19

Do you see the process of **faith worship** in Abraham’s life? God told Abram what was going to happen when He first called him to go to a land He would show him – “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.” (Genesis 12:2) Abram heard God, obeyed God and took his **first step of faith**. Abram moved his wife, nephew, the people who were them and all their possessions to the land God showed him. When Abram arrived in the land of Canaan, God appeared to Abram again – “To your descendants I will give this land.’ And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.” Abram heard, believed, obeyed and took his **second step of faith** – he built an altar to the Lord and **worshipped** Him there. God tested Abraham’s faith and he took his **third step of faith** – he took his only son Isaac to offer him to God as a burnt offering in obedience to God’s command. As we’ve seen from our study so far, Abraham did not have all the answers to how God was going to do what He was going to do to bring about all the promises He had made to Abraham. Abraham **heard** God, **believed** God, **obeyed** God, and **worshipped** God. That’s what God wants from all His children – **faith, obedience and worship**.

We see that process repeated throughout the Bible – with all of God’s children of faith. We see it with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Deborah, Ruth, David, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Peter, Paul, and all those who **heard** God, **believed** God, **obeyed** God and **worshipped** God.

Before we move to the next chapter, let's be careful to see something prophetic in this story of Abraham's faith in God.

"Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

"Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, 'In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided.'"

God told Abraham to take his son Isaac to the "land of Moriah" and offer him as a burnt offering "on one of the mountains" He would show him. Anything significant about that?

Mount Moriah is where King David bought a threshing floor from a Jebusite to build an altar to God (2 Samuel 24) and where King Solomon built the Holy Temple -

"Now Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where *the Lord* had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite." 2 Chronicles 3:1

We know that Solomon's Temple was inside the city of Jerusalem. It's interesting to note that Jesus Christ was crucified near the Temple, but "outside the city gates to make the people holy through his own blood." (Hebrews 13:12) God said He would provide a sacrifice and He did - His One and Only Son.

(You can read more about Abraham's adventures with God on pages 532 – 562 in "A History of Man's Quest for Immortality.")

God's Desire

The desire of God's heart is to **give of Himself to others**. He created the Universe for us. He created the Earth for us. He created us. What God asks for from us in return is our **love, obedience and worship**.

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. ‘And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.’ Deuteronomy 6:4-6

“Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.” 1 Samuel 15:22

“(for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God).” Exodus 34:14

God wants our worship and He does not want His people worshipping anyone or anything else. His Name is Jealous (Hebrew *El Kanno*). Remember that the Bible is God's Revelation. He reveals Himself to the world – letting us know Who and What He is. Here are 100 of the names God used in His Word to **reveal Himself** to the human race. The names are Hebrew unless identified otherwise.

- 1 The most sacred, unutterable Name of God (He was, He is, He will be) – YHVH, Jahweh, Yah, Jehovah
- 2 YHVH the Holy God – Adonai ha'elohim hakkadosh
- 3 YHVH my Holy God – Adonai Elohai Kedoshi
- 4 YHVH my Rock and Redeemer – Adonai Tsur v'go'ali
- 5 The NAME – Hashem
- 6 GOD (Sacred Name) – Shem Hameforash
- 7 I AM THAT I AM – Ehyeh asher Ehyeh
- 8 The Excellent One – Hagaon
- 9 God is Sovereign (plural form) – El
- 10 God (singular form) – Eloah
- 11 God is Awesome – Elah (Aramaic)
- 12 God is Creator – Elohim, Hayotzer
- 13 The LORD our Maker – Adonai Osenu
- 14 The Living God – Elohim Chayim
- 15 God of the living – Elohim HaChayim
- 16 God the Father – Elohim HaAv
- 17 God our Father – Elohim Avinu
- 18 God in Heaven – Elohim Bashamayim
- 19 God of Heaven – Elah Shemaiya (Aramaic)
- 20 The God of truth – Elohim Emet
- 21 God is Most High – El Elyon
- 22 God of gods – Elohei Haelohim & Elah Elahin (Aramaic)
- 23 The Spirit of God – Ruach Elohim, Ruach El
- 24 The Spirit of the LORD – Ruach Adonai
- 25 The Spirit of the LORD God – Ruach Adonai Adonai

- 26 The Holy Spirit – Ruach Hakkodesh
- 27 God is Mighty – El Gibbor
- 28 God is One – El Echad
- 29 God is Great – El Haggadol
- 30 God is Holy – Hakkadosh
- 31 The Holy God – Ha-El Hakkadosh
- 32 The Holy One, blessed is He – Hakkadosh Barukh Hu
- 33 God is Everlasting – El Olam
- 34 The Eternal God – Elohei Kedem
- 35 Everlasting Father – Avi'ad
- 36 God is All Knowing – El De'ot
- 37 God is Awesome – El Hannora
- 38 God is Faithful – El Hanne'eman
- 39 God is Truth – El Emet
- 40 God is Gracious – El Channun
- 41 God is Merciful – El malei Rachamim
- 42 God is Righteous – El Tsaddik
- 43 God is All Sufficient – El Shaddai
- 44 God is Jealous – El Kanno
- 45 Just One – Yashar
- 46 The God of Justice – Elohei Mishpat
- 47 The God of All Glory – El Hakkavod
- 48 King of Glory – Melekh HaKvod
- 49 The God of heights – Elohei Marom
- 50 God of my strength – El Sali, Elohei Ma'uzzi
- 51 God of my salvation – El Yeshuati

- 52 God of our salvation – El Yeshuatenu
- 53 The God of my praise – Elohei Tehillati
- 54 The God Who is near – Elohei Mikkarov
- 55 The God Who is far – Elohei Merachok
- 56 The God Who sees me – El Roi
- 57 The God of my life – El Chaiyai
- 58 God of Compassion – El Rachum
- 59 God of my Kindness – Elohei Chasdi
- 60 The God of the Heavens – El Hashamayim
- 61 The God of rock – Elohei Tzur
- 62 The God of Israel – El Yisrael, Elah Yisrael (Aramaic)
- 63 King of Israel – Melekh Yisrael
- 64 Light of Israel – ‘Or Yisrael
- 65 The Holy One of Israel – K’dosh Yisrael, El k’dosh Yisrael
- 66 God of Jerusalem – Elah Yerushelem (Aramaic)
- 67 The God of forgiveness – Eloah Selichot
- 68 The LORD (Master, Owner) – Adonai
- 69 The LORD God – Adonai Adonai
- 70 The LORD your God – Adonai Eloheikhem
- 71 The LORD of Peace – Adonai Shalom
- 72 The LORD our Righteousness – Adonai Tzidkenu
- 73 The LORD my Rock and Redeemer – Adonai Tsur v’goali
- 74 The LORD my Miracle – Adonai Nissi
- 75 The LORD GOD of hosts – Adon Adonai Tseva’ot
- 76 The LORD God of Israel – Adonai Elohei Yisrael
- 77 The LORD your Sanctifier – Adonai Mekaddishkhem
- 78 The LORD my Shepherd – Adonai Ro’i

- 79 The LORD Who heals you – Adonai Roph'ekha
- 80 The God of hosts – Elohei Tseva'ot
- 81 LORD of lords – Adonei ha'adonim
- 82 The LORD of all the earth – Adon kol-ha'arets
- 83 Our God – Eloheynu
- 84 God with us – Immanuel
- 85 Deliverer – Moshia'
- 86 The Savior – Hamoshia'
- 87 Salvation – Yeshu'ah
- 88 God of Israel the Savior – Elohei Yisrael Moshia'
- 89 Mighty One of Jacob – Avir Ya'akov
- 90 The Giver of Salvation – Hannoten Teshuah
- 91 The Redeemer – Hagger'el
- 92 The Redeemer of Israel – Go'el Yisrael
- 93 Fortress (Shelter) – Machseh
- 94 Refuge (Dwelling Place) – Ma'on
- 95 Light of the Nations – 'Or Goyim
- 96 Wonderful Counselor – Peleh Yo'etz
- 97 Prince of Peace – Sar Shalom
- 98 Messiah – M'shicho, Shiloh
- 99 Messiah the Prince – Mashiach Nagid
- 100 Jesus the Messiah – Yeshua Hammashiach

The worship of Israel was based on God revealing Himself to His people. God revealed Himself first to **Abraham**, then to his son **Isaac** and to Isaac's son **Jacob**. One of God's Names is **The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob** (*Elohei Avraham elohei Yitschak elohei Ya'akov*). The names

God gave to His children also tell us more about the worship relationship they had with God. We've already seen that the name **Abraham** meant "father of many" and **Isaac** meant "laughter". Isaac and his wife Rebekah had twin sons who they named **Esau** and **Jacob**. Esau ("hairy") was the older son, Jacob ("heel catcher, supplanter") was the younger son. Esau **sold his birthright** to Jacob for food and Jacob tricked his father into giving him the **first-born blessing**. Jacob later wrestled with God and the Lord changed his name to **Israel**. The name Israel is a combination of the words *isra* (strive, power, rule) and *el* (God) and demonstrated God's intention to rule and bless the world through the lineage of Jacob.

Jacob was the father of 12 sons and one daughter.

- 1 Reuben
- 2 Simeon
- 3 Levi
- 4 Judah
- 5 Dan
- 6 Naphtali
- 7 Gad
- 8 Asher
- 9 Issachar
- 10 Zebulun
- 11 Dinah
- 12 Joseph
- 13 Benjamin

God chose **Jacob** (Israel) to be the one who would receive His special blessing and through whom He would eventually rule the world. **Jesus Christ**, the Savior of the world, would come through Jacob's lineage. That raises the question – what happened to the rest of Abraham's children and grandchildren? They all lived in proximity to Jacob and his sons and would interact with Israel for generations. You may recognize some of the names from your studies in the Old Testament. It's important in a study of worship to note which sons and tribes came directly from the line of Abraham and which came from the people who lived in Canaan before Abraham arrived. God promised certain blessings to the offspring of Abraham, even though He chose only one son to carry the Seed – from **Abraham to Isaac to Jacob to Judah**.

- 1 Abraham's sons:** Ishmael (by Hagar), Isaac (by Sarah), Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah (by Keturah)
- 2 Abraham's grandsons:** The 12 sons of Ishmael – Nebajoth, Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadar, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah (by mother from Egypt, name unknown) ... Isaac's 2 sons – Esau and Jacob (by Rebekah) ... Jokshan's 2 sons – Sheba and Dedan (mother unknown) ... Midian's 5 sons – Ephah, Ephraim, Hanoch, Abidah and Eldaah (mother unknown)
- 3 Abraham's great-grandsons:** Esau's (also known as Edom) sons – Eliphaz (by Adah daughter of Elon the Hittite), Reuel (by Basemath, daughter of Ishmael), Jeush, Jaalam and Korah (by Aholibamah the daughter of Anah) ... Jacob's 12 sons – Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Issachar and Zebulun (by Leah), Joseph and Benjamin (by Rachel), Dan and Naphtali (by Bilhah), Gad and Asher (by Zilpah)

... Dedan's 3 sons – Asshurim, Letushim and Leummim (mother unknown) ... Midian's 5 sons- Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abidah and Eldaah (mother unknown) ...

We could continue with this list for a long time because the Bible is quite specific about the lineage of Abraham – as it should be since God promised blessings to Abraham's children and children's children for generations.

Christians often ask why the Bible is filled with so many lists of names. One reason is how those names establish the lineage of God's Promises to His people. Whenever you see God become very detailed in revealing something, take note. The Bible is God's Holy Word and He didn't waste a word or a letter. The Bible is **God's Revelation of Himself** and He shows us those things that are important to Him. And if it's important to God, it's important to us. For the purpose of this study about the history of worship, we will focus on the line that carried the **Seed** that would be the **Salvation of God** to the world. The lineage of Israel would be the line of **worship** that God would receive from the human race, and none other.

The first chapter of the Book of Matthew, the most Hebrew of the Gospel accounts, contains a list of names proving that God kept His specific **Promise of the Seed** to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. It is an unbroken line from Abraham to Joseph, the husband of the Virgin Mary, the mother of God's Son.

“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David the king. David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah. Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot Asa. Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah. Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah. Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon, and Amon begot Josiah. Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon. And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor. Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud. Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob. And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations.” Matthew 1:1-17

We see the power of God’s Will concerning the **Seed Promise** played out in the life of **Joseph**, one of Jacob’s youngest sons. Joseph’s brothers were jealous of him because of how Jacob loved him. They conspired to kill

Joseph and tell their father that a wild animal had killed him. However, Reuben, the oldest of the brothers, suggested they throw Joseph in a pit. The brothers sold Joseph to a group of Ishmaelites (lineage of Ishmael, the brother of Isaac) and Midianites (lineage of Esau, the brother of Jacob) who sold Joseph into slavery in Egypt. God used the lineage of Ishmael and Esau – also from the lineage of Abraham – to bring about His Will in the life of Israel.

As we know from Genesis 39 – 48, Joseph went on to become second in command to Egypt's Pharaoh and provided for his father and brothers from the great famine that devastated Egypt and Canaan. The day came when God was ready to reunite Joseph with his father and brothers. The Lord used the widespread famine to do that.

“When Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, Jacob said to his sons, ‘Why do you look at one another?’ And he said, ‘Indeed I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down to that place and buy for us there, that we may live and not die.’ So Joseph’s ten brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt. But Jacob did not send Joseph’s brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said, ‘Lest some calamity befall him.’ And the sons of Israel went to buy grain among those who journeyed, for the famine was in the land of Canaan.” Genesis 42:1-5

Isn't that interesting! Jacob and his family were in trouble. They needed food. Jacob (Israel) was God's chosen one to carry the **Seed of Salvation** to the world. How would God provide and protect Israel? He sent Joseph ahead of his family to prepare the way. Egypt had grain because God gave

Joseph the interpretation of pharaoh's dream. Do you see the power of that? Everything looked so bad to Jacob for so many years. He thought Joseph had been killed by a wild beast. He had grieved and mourned for Joseph for years, not knowing that God was going to use a living Joseph to save his family from starvation. Wow! What a God we serve!

Joseph recognized his brothers when they came to him to buy grain, but they did not recognize him. Many years had passed and Joseph had become a strong man in Egypt. The brothers took the grain back to their father, Jacob, but the grain soon ran out. They had to make another trip to Egypt to buy more grain. It's interesting to see what Judah said to his father, since Judah now carried the Seed that would bring salvation to the world.

“Now the famine was severe in the land. And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the grain which they had brought from Egypt, that their father said to them, ‘Go back, buy us a little food.’ But Judah spoke to him, saying, ‘The man solemnly warned us, saying, ‘You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.’ If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food. But if you will not send him, we will not go down; for the man said to us, ‘You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.’” Genesis 43:1-5

Joseph's plan was to get his entire family to come to Egypt. He wanted to see his brother Benjamin (they had the same mother) and his father. That second reunion led to Joseph revealing himself to all his brothers. Joseph also revealed how God had worked out everything out for His Purpose.

“Then Joseph said to his brothers, ‘I am Joseph; does my father still live?’ But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed in his presence. And Joseph said to his brothers, ‘Please come near to me.’ So they came near. Then he said: ‘I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.’” Genesis 45:3-8

What wisdom that is for us! We may see disaster and defeat, but God sees a great victory in our lives as we obey His Will. Joseph’s brothers returned to the land of Canaan to tell Jacob that Joseph was still alive. The news revived Jacob’s spirit and he determined to go to Egypt to see Joseph before he (Jacob) died. As Jacob traveled to Egypt, he stopped to worship God. That’s when God revealed more of His plan to make Israel into a great nation.

“So Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, ‘Jacob, Jacob!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ So He said, ‘I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a

great nation there. I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes.’ Then Jacob arose from Beersheba; and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob, their little ones, and their wives, in the carts which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. So they took their livestock and their goods, which they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and went to Egypt, Jacob and all his descendants with him. His sons and his sons’ sons, his daughters and his sons’ daughters, and all his descendants he brought with him to Egypt.” Genesis 46:1-7

God’s prophecy to Jacob that He would make Israel into a great nation was quite interesting in light of the fact that the total number of people who went with Jacob to Egypt was just 70. That’s right! God started building the **Nation of Israel** with just 70 people. Generations later, Israel would become one of the mightiest nations on earth. Interestingly, Jacob sent Judah (who would carry the Promised Seed forward) to meet with Joseph about the family moving to Goshen. Joseph took care of all the details and continued to provide for his family’s needs until the end of his life.

Israel would grow into a great nation of people in Egypt, but their greatest days were yet to come when God would call them out of Egypt to return to the land He had given Abraham many years before. God would call them out **to be His people and worship and serve Him forever.**

(You can read more about Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and the children of Israel in Egypt on pages 270 – 282, and 562 – 586 of “A History of Man’s Question for Immortality”)

Israel's Worship

The world knows little about the worship of Israel between Joseph's death and Moses' birth. The Bible does not go into much detail about those centuries, but what we do know is that after the death of the generation that moved with Jacob to Egypt a new pharaoh came to power who did not know Joseph. The new pharaoh was concerned about how large and powerful the tribes of Israel had become, so he established a system of taskmasters over the Israelites to control them. The pharaoh used Israel to build supply cities for him, but the more the Egyptians afflicted the Hebrews the more they multiplied and grew. The pharaoh responded by making the lives of the Israelites harder and more bitter. The next step pharaoh took was to demand of the Hebrew midwives that they kill every Hebrew baby boy. But the midwives feared God more than pharaoh, so they saved the boy babies and told pharaoh lies about how the Hebrew women gave birth before the midwives could arrive to help them. God blessed the midwives for their bravery. Pharaoh commanded the Egyptian people to kill the Hebrew baby boys, but as we know from the story of Moses that didn't always happen.

“And a man of the house of Levi went and took as wife a daughter of Levi. So the woman conceived and bore a son. And when she saw that he was a beautiful child, she hid him three months. But when she could no longer hide him, she took an ark of bulrushes for him, daubed it with asphalt and pitch, put the child in it, and laid it in the reeds by the river's bank. And his sister stood afar off, to know what

would be done to him. Then the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river. And her maidens walked along the riverside; and when she saw the ark among the reeds, she sent her maid to get it. And when she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby wept. So she had compassion on him, and said, 'This is one of the Hebrews' children.' Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, 'Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?' And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Go.' So the maiden went and called the child's mother. Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages.' So the woman took the child and nursed him. And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. So she called his name Moses, saying, 'Because I drew him out of the water.'" Exodus 2:1-10

We learn from this story that the Hebrews continued to worship God in Egypt and knew something about their heritage. The Hebrew midwives feared God more than they feared pharaoh. That's saying a lot when you read about the power of the Egyptian pharaohs. They were like gods to the Egyptian people, but not so to the Hebrew people. The people of Israel would have known a great deal about the religious beliefs of the Egyptians because of their involvement in building the supply cities for pharaoh, but that knowledge didn't diminish their belief in the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

You can read more details about Moses' relationship with Israel and Egypt on pages 293 – 310 and 587 – 622 of "A History of Man's Quest for Immortality," but one of the most amazing insights I discovered while writing the book was why God revealed Himself to Pharaoh and the people of Egypt through 10 plagues. I had studied the Books of Genesis and Exodus for many years, but it was during an indepth study of the history of Egypt and its religious beliefs that I saw why God revealed His power to Pharaoh and the Egyptian people through plagues. It was a phenomenal demonstration of **Elohim's superiority** over every god of Egypt.

Moses had an intimate knowledge of Egyptian culture because he was raised by a daughter of Pharaoh. Moses lived among the royal elite until he was 40 years old and killed an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew man. Pharaoh learned about it and searched for Moses to kill him, but Moses fled to Midian for safety. Moses found refuge there with the Midianites. They were distant relatives of Moses from the lineage of Midian – one of Abraham's sons with his wife Keturah. Moses lived in Midian until he was 80 years old. That's when Elohim spoke to Moses from a burning bush. God had heard the "groanings" of the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt.

"So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them. Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a

flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed. Then Moses said, 'I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn.' So when the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then He said, 'Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.' Moreover He said, 'I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God. And the LORD said: 'I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.' But Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?' So He said, 'I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.' Then Moses said to God, "Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent

me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" (Exodus 2:24 – 3:13)

Moses knew “about” the God of Israel, but now He was meeting God for the first time. God left a deep impression on Moses – a “holy” impression.” Moses knew about the gods of Egypt in great detail from his own education and from observing how the people worshiped the gods through elaborate building projects, public displays of devotion and elaborate burials of royals. The God of Israel met Moses privately and intimately. The gods of Egypt did not speak. They were nothing more than stone and wooden images of men’s imagination. They could not speak or act on their own. They had no real power of their own – only that which the people gave them. So, when God revealed Himself to Moses the meeting was in an environment Moses knew well and could see that it was no trick of the magicians of the court of Pharaoh. The God of Israel was Real!

God made an unbreakable covenant with Abraham centuries before and promised that He was going to rescue His people from those who would enslave them – “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.” (Genesis 15:13-14) God chose Moses to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt and into the land He had promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Something important to remember when studying the history of Israel is that God's promise of Land and Seed had the highest purpose of worship. That's because it would connect God's people "personally" to God. God told Moses that at the beginning of their relationship – "When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain." The Hebrew word translated "serve" here is *abad*. It is translated as both "serve" and "worship" in different English translations. It is the idea of a person working as a servant. God called Israel out of Egypt to demonstrate their worship through works of service.

(This is similar to what God has called Christians to do – "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:8-10) Christians do not perform works of service in order to be saved since salvation is by grace through faith. I repeat - Christian salvation is NOT performance based! We cannot earn and do not deserve God's favor. However, Christians are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God prepared for us to do.)

God sent Moses first to the people of Israel to show that He was going to deliver them out of slavery in Egypt. Notice how the people responded to God – "So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped." (Exodus 4:31) **Worship** (Hebrew *hawah* – "pay adoration") is exactly what God intended to come from this

demonstration of His power to deliver the Israelites. Worship is always God's highest calling for His children.

Moses did as God said and told Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go into the wilderness so they could worship God. However, Pharaoh would not let them go and made life on the Israelites more and more difficult. It's interesting to note that in our study that Moses did not fully understand God's plan for delivering Israel out of Egyptian bondage. Moses could not comprehend why God was acting the way He was – "So Moses returned to the LORD and said, 'Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people? Why is it You have sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people; neither have You delivered Your people at all.'" (Exodus 5:22-23) What Moses and Israel did not know at that moment, but would soon learn, was that their education about what it meant to be the people of the Almighty God was just starting.

"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. For with a strong hand he will let them go, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.' And God spoke to Moses and said to him: 'I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name LORD I was not known to them. I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I am the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will

rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the LORD.” Exodus 6:1-8

God revealed something to Moses that He had not revealed to Abraham, Isaac or Jacob – “by My name LORD.” God told Moses that He had revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel) as “El Shaddai, God Almighty.” What God was doing for Moses and the people of Israel was securing His promise to them by His Most Holy Name **JEHOVAH** (LORD).

Look at how emphatically God pronounces the absoluteness of His promise – “And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the LORD.”

The people desperately wanted to be free from the cruel slavery of the Egyptians. They had called on El Shaddai to deliver them. Notice the lessons God intended to teach them about what **JEHOVAH** would do.

- 1 I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians
- 2 I will rescue you from their bondage
- 3 I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments
- 4 I will take you as My people, and I will be your God
- 5 I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

- 6 I will give it to you as a heritage
- 7 I am the LORD (JEHOVAH)

God knows how to teach lessons to His people. What He was going to do would become something they and all their descendants would remember forever. God was also going to teach Pharaoh and all of Egypt an important lesson – one they would learn, but not remember long. Even after suffering from 10 terrible plagues and finally letting Israel leave Egypt, Pharaoh still believed the gods of Egypt would prevail against JEHOVAH. He was wrong.

“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen.’ And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. So the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained. But the children of Israel had walked on dry land in the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. So the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Thus Israel saw the great work which the LORD had done in Egypt; so the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD and His servant Moses.” Exodus 14:26-31

Remember that land and Seed were always at the forefront of God's dealings with Israel because both connected to a "personal" relationship between God and people. God's desire has always been to be "with" His people, beginning in the Garden of Eden.

As Israel's time to leave Egypt approached, and just before God killed all the firstborn of Egypt, JEHOVAH revealed to Israel the redemptive nature of the Seed that would come from Judah. Notice how Israel responded to God's redemption through the blood of the passover lamb.

"Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, 'Pick out and take lambs for yourselves according to your families, and kill the Passover lamb. And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning. For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you. And you shall observe this thing as an ordinance for you and your sons forever. It will come to pass when you come to the land which the LORD will give you, just as He promised, that you shall keep this service. And it shall be, when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' that you shall say, 'It is the Passover sacrifice of the LORD, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households.' So the people bowed their heads and worshiped." Exodus 12:21-27

The people bowed their heads and **worshiped** (Hebrew *hawah* – “pay adoration”). That is always the response God wants from His people – worship. To this day Christians bow their heads and worship God as they remember His great salvation through Jesus Christ, **the Lamb of God**.

(You can read more about God’s redemption of Israel from Egypt on pages 587 – 595 of “A History of Man’s Quest for Immortality.”)

Songs of Praise

God saved Israel from slavery in Egypt. Moses led the people of God across the Red Sea on dry land and God brought the great waters crashing down on the heads of the Egyptian soldiers. Israel's freedom from their slave masters was complete and their new relationship with God was underway. Moses began by leading Israel in a song of praise to God. This is the first recorded worship song of Israel, so notice carefully the words God inspired Moses to sing. It has great importance in understanding how and why God wanted His people to worship Him. He wanted Israel to know that there was no other god like Him. God also gave Moses insight into Israel's future and what they would accomplish when He brought them into the land He had promised to Abraham many years before.

"I will sing to the LORD, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea! The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will exalt Him. The LORD is a man of war; The LORD is His name. Pharaoh's chariots and his army He has cast into the sea; His chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them; They sank to the bottom like a stone. 'Your right hand, O LORD, has become glorious in power; Your right hand, O LORD, has dashed the enemy in pieces. And in the greatness of Your excellence You have overthrown those who rose against You; You sent forth Your wrath; It consumed them like stubble. And with the blast of Your nostrils The waters were

gathered together; The floods stood upright like a heap; The depths congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; My desire shall be satisfied on them. I will draw my sword, My hand shall destroy them.' You blew with Your wind, The sea covered them; They sank like lead in the mighty waters. 'Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders? You stretched out Your right hand; The earth swallowed them. You in Your mercy have led forth The people whom You have redeemed; You have guided them in Your strength To Your holy habitation. 'The people will hear and be afraid; Sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom will be dismayed; The mighty men of Moab, Trembling will take hold of them; All the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away. Fear and dread will fall on them; By the greatness of Your arm They will be as still as a stone, Till Your people pass over, O LORD, Till the people pass over Whom You have purchased. You will bring them in and plant them In the mountain of Your inheritance, In the place, O LORD, which You have made For Your own dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established. 'The LORD shall reign forever and ever.' For the horses of Pharaoh went with his chariots and his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought back the waters of the sea upon them. But the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea." Exodus 15:1-19

God inspired Moses to use His Holiest Name in this first song of worship: *Yah* and *Yhwh* (LORD). God also inspired him to use *EI* and *Elohiym* (God). Notice also some key phrases which speak to God's special relationship to Israel:

- 1 my strength and song
- 2 my salvation
- 3 my God
- 4 My father's God
- 5 The LORD is a man of war
- 6 Your right hand, O LORD – glorious in power, dashed the enemy in pieces
- 7 greatness of Your excellence
- 8 glorious in holiness
- 9 Fearful in praises
- 10 doing wonders
- 11 You have redeemed
- 12 guided them in Your strength
- 13 the greatness of Your arm
- 14 Your people
- 15 the people Whom You have purchased
- 16 You will bring them in and plant them In the mountain of Your inheritance
- 17 For Your own dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord
- 18 The LORD shall reign forever and ever

This short song contains immeasurable evidence of God's deep Love and Devotion for the people of Israel. Though Israel treated God terribly for centuries, His Love for them has endured. How did Israel treat God terribly, you ask? Read the next 3 verses in Exodus –

“And they journeyed from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt. Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And the children of Israel said to them, ‘Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.’ Exodus 16:1-3

Do you see that? Israel had been free from their horrible slavery in Egypt for just six weeks and already they're complaining against God's plan for them. Isn't that just like human beings? We cry and cry to God – “Oh, Lord! Help us, Lord! Help us! Oh, Lord, just get me out of this mess and I'll obey you forever and ever” – and the first time things get a little rough we start complaining – “Oh, Lord! Why is this happening to me? Oh, I wish I could be back where I used to be when things were so much better.” Just like a human. We're either crying or complaining. What happened to the worship? to the praise? to the songs of joy? What happened in six weeks that would change the people of Israel from worshipers to complainers? They got hungry.

Think about that for a moment – the Israelites got a little hungry and they wished they were back in Egypt where they had pots of meat and ate bread to the full. I think they suffered from selective memory syndrome. The Egyptians had treated the Israelites terribly for years, but the only thing God’s people remembered was the little bit of food the Egyptians would allow them to eat. God demonstrated His amazing Power over the Egyptian gods and army, but all the Israelites could think about was their stomach and personal comfort. Just weeks earlier, they had all sung to the Lord about His strength and greatness and here they were with no faith in God’s ability to feed them. So, how did God respond to the growing unrest? “Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you.’” (Exodus 16:4) God fed the people of Israel bread (manna) from Heaven and it supplied their needs for 40 years until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.

That was probably the last time the people of Israel ever complained about anything – right? Wrong. Look at the next chapter in Exodus: “Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink. Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said, ‘Give us water, that we may drink.’” (Exodus 17:1-2) Instead of worshiping God and being thankful for what He had done for them, Israel started up their whining and complaining campaign – “And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, ‘Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst? (Exodus 17:3) The people were also saying some

pretty bad things about God, testing Him and His Word – “Is the LORD among us or not?” (Exodus 17:7) What did God do about it? “And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.’” (Exodus 17:5-6) Yes, God is extremely **Longsuffering**.

This story of Israel’s complaining and disobedience is repeated throughout the Bible, but God has always been true to His Covenant with Abraham. God promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob two things – land and the Seed. No matter what Israel did against God, the Lord was Faithful to His Covenant. No matter how bad, how ugly, how sinful, how awful things became between Israel and God – God was always Faithful.

And things did get ugly –

“Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, ‘Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ And Aaron said to them, ‘Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.’ So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said,

‘This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!’ So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, ‘Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD.’ Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” Exodus 32:1-6

Excuse me! Are these the same Israelites who God freed from bondage in Egypt? Are these the same people who walked across the Red Sea on dry land and witnessed God’s destruction of the Egyptian Army? Are these the people of Israel who ate bread from Heaven and drank water from a rock? Is this the same Israel that defeated the mighty army of Amalek? Are these the same people who saw the Glory of God resting on the top of Mount Sinai as a consuming fire? Are these the same Israelites who turned their back on the God they knew to worship a blind, deaf and dumb golden calf? Yes, I believe they are. How ugly is that? How absolutely pitiful. How human. God brought the people of Israel out of Egypt for the express purpose of protecting and providing for them while they served and worshiped Him – and what did they do? They served and worshiped an object of their own creation instead of the Creator. How sad.

Not unlike today – would you agree? God opened the door of salvation to every human being on the planet – Jews and Gentiles – through His Son Jesus Christ, and what do they do? They serve and worship objects of their own making. Study the history of man’s quest for immortality and that is what you will find – the human race serving and worshiping objects of their own creation.

It's easy to read about Israel and wonder how they could be so foolish – but can we not see our own foolishness? Who or what do we serve? And I am talking to Christians as well as non-Christians when I ask this question. Who or what do we serve? You don't think Christians can fall into the same spiritual trap as Israel? Look at what Jesus told some of the churches of the 1st Century.

“To the angel of the church of Ephesus write ... Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.” Revelation 2:1, 4-5

“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write ... But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.” Revelation 2:12, 14-16

“And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write ... Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual

immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.” Revelation 2:18, 20-23

“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, ‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: ‘I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.’” Revelation 3:1-3

“And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: ‘I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked— I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love,

I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.” Revelation 3:14-19

What does our Lord want from us? Obedience and worship. Let’s give God what He wants. He certainly deserves that – don’t you think?

Lessons of Worship

Israel's greatest lessons about worshipping their God were yet to come. They were just learning how important they were to God's Plan for the world.

“Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.”

Exodus19:3-6

If Israel obeys the Voice of God and keeps His Holy Covenant, they will be a “special treasure” to God above all people; for all the earth is His. They will be to God a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” Think about that for a moment. All the earth belongs to God and He promised it to Israel! That is truly amazing.

Moses and the people of Israel departed from Rephidim and came to the Wilderness of Sinai. They camped in the wilderness before the mountain. It's difficult for us to imagine what it must have been like for the Israelites to leave the only home they had ever known and take off for an unknown future in a distant and hostile land. For a moment, put yourself in

the place of an Israelite man or woman, boy or girl, camping in the wilderness waiting to hear from Moses what was going to happen next. Then you see Moses and he has a very serious look on his face. He looks right at you and says that he's going to sanctify you; then tells you to wash, clean your clothes and be ready for the "third day." **Third day?** What's that all about? Wait until you hear this! God is going to come down from Heaven to the top the mountain on the third day in the sight of all the people – including you! Here's how God told Moses it would happen.

"You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, 'Take heed to yourselves that you do not go up to the mountain or touch its base. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. Not a hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot with an arrow; whether man or beast, he shall not live.' When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain." Exodus 19:12-13

This is serious business – holy business! You could die if you don't pay attention and do exactly as Moses tells you.

The third day comes and it's time to see the Lord God of Israel – but there's still more to learn about what it means to **worship the Great God of Israel**.

"Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the

mountain. Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. Then the LORD came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. And the LORD said to Moses, 'Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to gaze at the LORD, and many of them perish. Also let the priests who come near the LORD consecrate themselves, lest the LORD break out against them.' But Moses said to the LORD, 'The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai; for You warned us, saying, 'Set bounds around the mountain and consecrate it.' Then the LORD said to him, 'Away! Get down and then come up, you and Aaron with you. But do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the LORD, lest He break out against them.' So Moses went down to the people and spoke to them." Exodus 19:16-25

Imagine the scene before you – thunder, lightning, a thick cloud on the mountain, the sound of a loud trumpet, Mount Sinai covered in smoke like that of a furnace because God descended upon it in fire, the whole mountain quaked greatly – the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder – Moses spoke and God answered him by Voice. Then, the LORD God came down upon Mount Sinai, and sat on the top of the great mountain. Would your heart beat faster? Would your breathing be more shallow and rapid? Would you become weak in your knees? Would you

tremble with fear? I would think we would all have that reaction to what Israel experienced on the third day.

This is the moment you've been waiting for – to see this **Almighty God** you worshiped in Egypt, along the Red Sea, in the wilderness, and now before the great mountain Sinai. What would He say to you? What does He want from you?

“And God spoke all these words, saying: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. Honor your father

and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's." Exodus 20:1-17

The people were frightened by what they saw and heard. They trembled and stood a distance from the mountain. "Then they said to Moses, 'You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.' And Moses said to the people, "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin.' So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was." (Exodus 20:18-21)

Interesting situation, wouldn't you say? Moses told the people of Israel not to fear, yet they should have fear. That's exactly the way our relationship should be to God in **worship and ministry**. God is our Heavenly Father, so we don't need to be "afraid" of Him. God is our Heavenly Father, so His fear should be before us so we don't sin against Him. Think about an earthly father for a moment. Children don't need to be afraid of him because he's their daddy. He loves them. However, children should fear their father's discipline and be careful to obey everything he tells them to do. Love and fear do go together in a parent-child relationship. It's interesting that while God told Israel to **love their neighbor as themselves** (Leviticus 19:18), He told Israel to **honor their father and mother**. The Hebrew word for

honor is *kabed* and carries the idea of a heavy duty placed on children to demonstrate great honor and fear for their parents, for they are worthy of it. The word **revere** in Leviticus 19:3 (“Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths: I am the LORD your God.”) is the Hebrew word *yare*, which means “to fear from an apprehension of danger and a sense of our own weakness, joined with trembling.” We are to honor and fear our parents; how much more should we honor and fear God in our service to Him and worship of Him. (It’s also interesting to note that God placed honoring father and mother alongside keeping His Sabbath.)

Children today have the wrong concept of their parents. They often see their mother and father as their “buddies,” their “pals,” someone who will buy them stuff, play with them, and let them do whatever pleases them. That is wrong and leads down a dangerous path for parent and child. In the same way, God is not our “buddy” and “pal.” He’s our Creator and Sustainer, our Heavenly Father, our Savior and Lord. We should be afraid of disobeying God, because there are consequences for sin. We should honor Him **highly** and fear Him **deeply**.

Notice the next thing God says to Moses – and look for the key to Israel’s future relationship of **worshipping** God. The LORD is the Lawgiver and the people of the Law must obey their God. The LORD God of Israel is not asking the people do Him a favor; He’s not pleading with them to behave; He’s not begging for their obedience. God is telling them what to do. He is giving them the Royal Law from Heaven. And the first and most important Law of all is this:

“You shall not make anything to be with Me—gods of silver or gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves.” Exodus 20:23

God makes it abundantly clear to Moses and Israel that He will not tolerate His people placing anything on the same spiritual level as Him to worship (“anything to be with Me”). Just moments earlier, God had told Israel, “You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.” This theme is repeated throughout Israel’s relationship with God, and for good reason, because the people of Israel continually wandered from their worship of God to the worship of false gods. God would not tolerate it – and He didn’t.

God gave Israel more than 600 individual laws (613 *mitzvot*) to obey, so the order He gave them would certainly have importance to the people receiving God’s Law. Here are the first Commandments God gave to Israel on “the third day.” He opened His communication with Israel by reminding them Who He Is: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.” Then, He proceeded to tell them what they must do as His Covenant people.

- 1 “You shall have no other gods before me.”
- 2 “You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the

fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand {generations} of those who love me and keep my commandments.”

- 3 “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.”
- 4 “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”
- 5 “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.”
- 6 “You shall not murder.”
- 7 “You shall not commit adultery.”
- 8 “You shall not steal.”
- 9 “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.”
- 10 “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

Yes, these are the famous **10 Commandments** that God gave to Israel. He began with these 10, then added hundreds of other commandments for Israel to obey. Notice that the first four Commandments are about Israel’s worship relationship to God. The other six Commandments are about

Israel's ministry relationship to each other. Worship must begin with the proper attitude toward God. It continues with the proper attitude toward serving those God created "in His image."

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