

PART FOUR 18.1 -22.24 "APPEARANCES" and GOD'S PRESENCE

INTRODUCTION

THE PRESENCE OF GOD

We speak about the "practice of the presence of God" but we have to recognise that God appears to the "Holy Ones". The "child of God" who is a "Son and heir" who puts to death the flesh life (Romans 8.13) The method allied to this principle is found in Romans 6 11-14. We are to "calculate" or infer and believe that we are "dead" since we became united to Christ. (1) We are now "silver" in which Christ sees His image. Sin must not have mastery. (2) The will and desires are to be harnessed to the reign of Christ. (3) In the battle of ethics and spirituality we are to yield each member of our physical body as parts of the armoury of God for the cause of righteousness. (4) Finally we are to live to give as those who have been treated with unusual favour so that moment by moment we live to serve our LORD Christ. Thus like Paul we may come to visions and revelations of the LORD albeit to a lesser degree. Like the "Sons and Heirs" of John the Divine we look towards what we shall be when He appears in Glory. It is that "appearance" thereafter perpetually sustained that should motivate our holiness. This is the essence of Paul's "love of His appearing" (2 Timothy 4.8)

READING No.1 18.1-14

This section records a prolonged appearance of the LORD at Mamre prior to the destruction of Sodom and also eight interventions of the LORD subsequently. We are encouraged that the LORD watches over His people as the poet says, "There behind the shadow standeth God keeping watch above his own"

THE LORD APPEARS AT MAMRE

...1-8 And the LORD appeared (Preterite) to Abraham at the terebinths of Mamre and he was sitting under the open awning the door of his tent in the heat of the day. And he lifted up his eyes (consecutive) and saw three mighty ones standing literally "placed" or "set" as if they had just materialised) right upon him. And he saw them (consecutive) and he ran or rushed from the door of his tent to meet them and bowed in worship (consecutive) to the earth. And he said, "Adonai, if, I pray, I have now found grace in your eyes please do not, I pray, pass from the near presence of your servant." The last meeting recorded in 17.1-22 had been of considerable length but Abraham had only spoken a "three word" prayer Ishmael live close (may Ishmael live perfect as I would before you) Now he gets 2 prayers in pronto in a mere eleven words. He seeks God's grace and he seeks the Lord's prolonged presence. As a man getting to know the LORD and learning to understand His will. Then he adds a further eight words in Hebrew and gets another request in. (Wait till) a little water will be provided, I pray, and wash your feet and recline under the tree. And I will take broken bread (Hebrew mj | tp) and you will refresh your hearts -afterwards go your way for you have come right to this station or location to your servants. And He said, "Very well, do as you have said!" Abraham hastened to Sarah's tent and said, "Collect three seahs of barley (or flour) knead the dough and make an Egoth (a round cake made in haste under hot embers) Abraham himself rushed and took a good young calf from the herd and gave it to a servant and he rushed to create an offering. He then took cheese and milk and the prepared calf of the herd and he set it before their faces.

CONVERSATION ABOUT SARAH

...9-14 Abraham stood by them under the tree as they were eating. And Elyon said, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "Look, she's in tent" And He (Elyon) said, "I will definitely return to you at this time next year and Look there will be a son for or with Sarah your wife. Sarah was listening (if not peeping) at the door of her tent directly behind Abraham. It would seem Abraham was not willing to introduce her. Maybe they were not getting on too well or perhaps Sarah didn't want to appear through fear for she had not ever before been party to Abraham's meetings with God. This was the same LORD who previously met Hagar.

Abraham and Sarah were old and had dropped coming in to one another because there was for Sarah a time to be now and then with a man *Scripture here is diffuse. What we can say affirmatively is that the couple had given up hope of a child. This could mean she was past her natural time of childbearing and she knew that well enough from its physical signs. Equally it could mean there was still time to conceive. This was a critical moment of divine intervention when family life was at a low-Ishmael was all Abraham's interest and he was not getting on well with Sarah so family affairs were disordered....12* And Sarah laughed in her bowels mind and middle and said, "After it is become beyond my having pleasure and my Lord is old" And the LORD said, "For what reason did Sarah laugh saying, "Will I really conceive indeed and I am old?" "Can anything be too marvellous or too extraordinary for the LORD?" At this time or season next year I will return and Sarah shall have a son!" *This statement was at once a rebuke to Sarah for lack of faith-which is the answer to God's question and it would have been a tremendous encouragement to Abraham who was convinced the future lay with Ishmael.*

READING NO.2 18 15-33

ABRAM PLEADS IN GOD'S PRESENCE-GOD APPEARS AND SPEAKS TO SARAH (1)

And Sarah lied or "deeply or constantly failed" (*Hebrew Piel vjk suggesting Sarah's absence was because she was very frightened not just on account of this lie but constantly in face of the LORD on account of other actions-not least in respect of Hagar-an on account of lack of faith*) because she was afraid and said, "I did not laugh". And He (God) said, "No, you did laugh" (*Three words in Hebrew which were so deeply convicting in the heart of Sarah that she would never forget that "No, you laughed")The visit of the LORD lifted the faith of Abram, brought down the pride of Sarah and created an Intercessor. The Rabbis who included this sentence in the 2nd and not the 1st reading in this section had considerable insight recognising that God's judgement is abroad at this time and fear abides though by intercession it may be assuaged and by substitutionary sacrifice it can be turned aside though only by humbling and confession can it be averted.*

A CRY FROM SODOM THAT HAD TO INVOLVE ABRAHAM

...16-20 As the mighty ones rose up they were viewing over the land looking (*Hebrew pqv*) towards Sodom and Abraham was walking with them to put them on a direct route (*Hebrew jlv*) And the LORD said, "Shall I continue to hide what I am doing from Abraham?" *Abraham could hardly believe his ears. He was not an immediate party to the discussion between the LORD and the other men or men-like angels from heaven. Then the LORD added prophetic TORAH, "Abraham is to become a great and powerful nation and all the gentile nations of earth will bring themselves happiness or blessing in him for I know Abraham as to the way he will command his sons and his household after him and they will keep the path of the LORD to do righteousness and justice in order that the LORD may bring about the oracle which is over him." God was commending the future faithfulness of a man to angels or messengers. Paul has a saying, "We are an academy for angels-O that we had more such academies!" ...20* Then the LORD said, "An outcry against wrong and for help of Sodom and Gomorrah because of the great sin for it is very burdensome. I will go down now and see if they are doing completely according to the cry that has come to Me, and if not I will relate personally. *The LORD was saying that He would be gracious if the plea that reached him did not give the full picture. Someone in Sodom was praying because the situation had gone beyond control. Could it be that someone was Lot?*

ABRAHAM MINISTERS IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD (2)

...20-22 The men turned their faces and were walking towards Sodom and Abraham witnessed it standing on as he was before the face of God. *The presence of God in prayer is deeply reassuring to Abraham at a time when he fears for his extended family. The men had gone on-either by motion of the LORD or because they had been already previously appointed to go down on their own. We need to recall that God cannot bear to*

look upon sin -yet God had said, "**I will go down**" but "**I was going down**" and "I was to see for myself" would suffice **for now** as fulfilment of the intent since both the imperfect and the future are expressed in these terms though the future purpose is not prejudiced by the departure of the angels but delayed. The more important matter to observe is that Abraham is standing right in front of the LORD and ministering silently. He is sharing the sorrow of the "man of sorrows". This is a deep time of mutual understanding. The LORD has a friend on earth so dear that his company at this time is of great worth so that he relinquishes that of heavenly persons to maintain it a little longer. He is waiting till his beloved Abraham opens his heart.

ABRAHAM SHARES HIS HEART IN INTERCESSION WHILST GOD APPEARS TO HIM (3)

23-33 Abraham was acting decisively in urging or urgent approach or sacrifice (Hebrew *vgn* is used for "offering sacrifice" but although Abraham had an altar back at Mamre-they had walked some distance by now and the only sacrifice Abraham had to offer was "prayer"-the offering of his lips) Will you indeed sweep away in a heap the righteous with the wicked?

(a)...24 What if there are **fifty righteous** persons in the city, will you sweep away them away and not lift up the sins of the place on account of the fifty righteous in its midst?

Far be it from you (Hebrew *hlylj* for "God forbid") that you should do according to this oracle(of mine); to kill the righteous with the wicked and that the righteous should be (treated) as the wicked. Far be this from what you would own. **Shall not the judge** (Hebrew *fpvh* meaning "prince", "defender", "judge") **of all the earth do right?** The LORD replied that if He found fifty righteous He would lift up His overwhelming anger against the place.

(b)...27-33 Abraham testified, or humbly prayed, "Behold now I have been willing (Hebrew *lay* "content", "foolish enough") to speak to the LORD and I am dust and ashes,28 if the number of fifty righteous is diminished by five will the LORD destroy the whole city for five people? God promised not to destroy Sodom if He found **forty five** righteous there!

(c) ...29 Abraham added to speak again asking, "What if there are 40 found there?" I will not do it in anger if there are 40. ...30 May the LORD not be angry -I will speak again-what if there be thirty found there? He said, "I will not do it if I find **thirty** there"

(d) ...31 Abraham again apologised for being as bold or foolhardy as to continue but pleaded, "What if there are twenty?" God said, "I will not do show my wrath for **twenty**"

(e)...32 Abraham said, "May the LORD not be angry, I will speak with one final urgent word (Hebrew *m[p]*) "What if ten find themselves(Hebrew *mizmy*) there? God said He would not bring His wrath upon it for **ten**...33 As soon as the LORD had completed speaking to Abraham he was going and Abraham returned to his place. This effective pleading of Abraham teaches men and women of faith everywhere the importance of standing before God in His mercy on occasions when He through his judgement men's lives hang in the balance

READING No.3 19.1-20

THE TWO MESSENGERS (ANGELS) COME TO SODOM

The fascinating first hand report we read of Lot's Sodom and the account of its destruction comes from the pen of Abraham who thereafter must have renewed his close ties with his nephew and brother in law. Lot as a chastened and grateful kinsman was spared not least because of the intercession of a godly friend.

And the two messengers came to Sodom in the evening and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom. Officials and Judges sat in city gates to control entrance and to settle disputes. It may be Lot had a heavy day. Lot saw them and rose up to summon them and they (Lot and his fellow judges) bowed down their faces to the earth. This show of respect indicated that Lot was a leading official who could command others through his position. He said, "**Look I pray, my Lord, turn away** (Hebrew *rwS* "to turn from the gate in another or backwards direction") to the house of your servants and stay overnight and wash your feet and rise early in the morning and go on your way. They said "No, we will overnight in the square". Now so low had social morality sunk that in Sodom the citizens had a law allowing beds to be brought into the streets that men

might sleep in public with each other. But he pressed them so much that they turned in to lodge with him and came to his house and he prepared a banquet for them and unleavened bread and they ate.

SODOM'S SIN SAMPLED

Before they lay down to sleep men of the city, men of Sodom encircled the house- from youths to aged men- all the people from the extremes or from everywhere. *They called and asked where the men who came at nightfall were and demanded that they be brought out into the street that they might cavort. Quite bravely Lot went out and closed the opening of the double doors behind him. He must have had an arrangement similar to our portal in the doors-which can be independently used. His appeal "My Friends, please do not do this evil. Look I have two daughters of my own who have not known a man. I will cause them to come out now to you and do for them as is good in your eyes only to these men don't do this impious act for that is the very reason they have come under the protection of my roof. ...9 In terrible incitement they said, "Come near" and to the non-cooperative Lot, "Get out of our way". They were saying, "This one came as a stranger and he will be a judge to condemn (us) this time we will do worse things to you than them" and they were pressing against the warrior-against Lot and they drew near to break the gate.10 The mighty ones put out their arms and brought Lot in to them to the house and shut the door. ..11 They struck the fleshly men at the door with dazzling blindness (The New Jerusalem Bible Has "dazzled" for the Hebrew רָמַס)-both small and great so they wearied in vain to find the door...12 And the mighty ones said to Lot, "Is there still any of yours here-son in law, descendants, and your daughters, bring them out of this place." ...13 The mighty ones revealed themselves as the "destroyers" of the place and gave as their reason the "outcry" which as Gesenius observes they extorted from others. The mighty ones had sampled how this took place-closely observing their deeds of darkness as they attempted to corrupt even God's messengers who entered the environs of the city. Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law who were to be married to his daughters and he said, "Rise, get out of this place for the LORD Yahweh is acting definitively to destroy this city" and it seemed as if he was joking to his sons in law. The night visit with such terminal news would have been unprecedented. But Lot was speaking about an act of Yahweh whom the men knew Lot respected for he had insisted on his daughters virginity till that very evening. Lot went home with a heavy heart. ...15 At the coming of the light of dawn the messengers in Lot's presence acted to hasten, saying, "Take your wife and your two daughters who are present or "found with you" let you be swept up in the depraved guilt or calamity of the city.*

LOT APPEALS TO GO TO ZOAR AND ACKNOWLEDGES GOD'S PRESENCE & MERCY

*...16 But he kept stubbornly delaying (Hithpipel intensive of Hebrew hhm) but the mighty ones took firm grasp of his hand and of the hand of this wife and of the hands of his daughters and lead them **in the tender affection and pity and compassion of the LORD** and they escaped and they guided them out of the streets of the city. ...17And as they brought them out **he** said, "Make your escape-for your lives sake-do not look behind and do not stop in all the plain."...18 And Lot said to them, "No, my lords, please". ...19 "Look, please your servant has found grace in your eyes and your covenant which you have made with me is great to spare my soul and but I am not able to escape to the mountains lest the calamity weld itself to me and I die....20 Look at this little city near enough to flee there-and it is small; please may I deliver myself there-behold it is very small and my soul will live (God's way)Lot associated small places with freedom to live aright. He was soon to learn that sin and temptation are not limited to big conurbations.*

READING No.4 19.20-21.5

SODOM & GOMORRAH DESTROYED-GOD'S PRESENCE AS JUDGE

He said, "I have lifted up your face also on this word not to destroy the city which you have been speaking of again and again". He advised Lot to flee there speedily for he could not act till Lot had come there-hence the city was called "small" instead of "destroyed". It lay on the southern shore which might be 10-12 miles south

of Sodom. The sun was shining over the entire valley when Lot reached ZOAR. This delayed the Sulphur rain for 2-4 hours. And the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulphur or pitch (Hebrew *rpg* a word used of the covering of the ark. There it saved Noah-here it destroyed Gomorrah)The Strong One overthrew the cities and all the plain and all the inhabitants of the cities and "sprouting" vegetables of the productive earth. Lot's wife looked back and she became a fossil pillar of salt-a solemn reminder on the southern shore of the price of disobedience of the sort that looks back to the world from which the LORD would draw us.

It all fell on a lovely day and it was during the springtime of the year. And Abraham rose early at the place where he stood before the face of the LORD *There is no travel verb so it seems Abraham had camped by the ridge where he could get an early view of what took place.* ...28 He looked over the cliff upon the face of Sodom and Gomorrah and the face of the land of the plain and behold he saw a smoke of the earth rising as the smoke of a smelting furnace. ...29 And it happened in the destruction of the cities of the plain that God remembered and sent Lot from the centre of the overthrow when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt. *Lot had moved around in the plain as he set his face towards the capitol.*

LOT AND HIS DAUGHTERS

....30-38 Lot went up from Zoar and settled in a mountain cave and his two daughters with him for he was afraid to Sabbath in Zoar and he dwelt in a cave; he and his two daughters. *The death of his wife whose pillar stood outside Zoar was probably insufferable and though he had questioned the LORD as to where he was safe he now decided to live simple rather than mix with the sin of Zoar. Lot's daughters lost their men in the overthrow of Sodom and so the older first made father drunk and lay with him; next night the younger did alike. Lot was so drunk he neither knew when they came in to him or left him. The result was two sons-the first Moab ("semen") became progenitor of the Moabites and the other Ben AMMI (Son of my family) became father of the Ammonites. These peoples lived across Jordan from Israel in the settlement and Moses refers to them as settled nations when he was writing. How much better it would have been if Lot had remembered his loving uncle and sought help and found there suited partners for his daughters. He had become so attached to the world around that its ways had eaten into his soul. He was a cave-man in miserable circumstances. One has to believe that at some time Abraham welcomed home this Old Testament prodigal and heard the whole unadulterated story which we read today from a man who told it out of a repentant heart and with tears streaming from his eyes.*

ABIMELECH -THE APPEARANCE OF GOD IN A DREAM 20 1-9 (4)

...1-2 And Abraham pulled up his tent pegs to the land of the Negev and lived between Kadesh and SHUR and sojourned as a stranger in Gerar. And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my kinswoman" and the king of Gerar took her as his wife....3 And God came to Abimelech in a dream at night and said to him, "You are as good as dead because the wife you have taken is married to a husband" ...4 *Abimelech had not been near Sarah and appealed to God against the slaughter of a nation that was also righteous....5.He reminded the LORD that Abraham said Sarah was his sister and she called him his brother.* "I have done this with a sincere heart and innocence of my hands" **And God said to him in the dream, "I know you have done this with a pure heart and so I have restrained you from sin against me -for that reason I did not give you scope to touch her. Now return her to the man for he is a prophet and he will constantly pray for you and you will live but know that if you do not return her you and all those with you will die."** The presence of God to honest Abimelech the gentile probably led him to faith in God and gave deeply needed advice to him and afforded vital protection to Sarah. *Early in the morning Abimelech summoned servants and told them of the matter (the dream) and they were very frightened.*

ABIMELECH'S CONTROVERSY-GOD'S PRESENCE AS JUDGE

...9Abimelech called Abraham and said, "What have you done to us and how have I wronged you that you have brought on me and my kingdom all this great sin. You have done that which ought not to have been ministered to me (by you)" Abimelech said to Abraham, "What are you seeing as a prophet that you did this

thing to me. Abraham replied, "I said to myself, 'There is no fear of God in this place and they will kill me because of the term 'wife'" ...12 "Also she really is my sister-the daughter of my father only not of my mother and she became my wife" ...13 "Also when God made me wander (or stray) from my Father's house I said, "This is your love-covenant which you will make with me everywhere I go saying, 'he is my brother'" *Here we get a full explanation of Abraham's reasoning-lying first in the specific of his wife's spectacular beauty and second in the dangers of moving to different countries. It was not dreamed up for a particular moment-it was a life covenant to save Abraham alive. It was foreseen by this "prophet" as necessary....14 And Abimelech took sheep cattle slaves both male and female and returned Sarah...15....Abimelech gave him liberty to settle where he wished in his territory....16 To Sarah he gave a thousand shekels for her handmaids and to cover the offence and you are completely correct....17 Then Abraham prayed and God healed Abimelech's wife and slave girls that they bore children again.....18 For God had closed up every womb of Abimelech's house because of the "affair" or "promise"(Hebrew rbd) of Sarah Abraham's wife The promise Sarah made to her husband stood good in the providences of God over Abraham however rare and unusual that might seem today. Sarah's loyalty to Abraham was seen even in her subjecting herself to the humility of alliance with Abimelech. She too had faith in the presence and protection of God in that compromised circumstance. When we seem to be on the brink of a personal disaster the LORD is nigh. Sarah had learned that the God of Abraham was her shield as well as his.*

GOD VISITS SARAH-ISAAC IS BORN 21.1-5

...1-2 God visited Sarah as He promised and Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age at the precise time God promised. And Abraham gave he son Sarah bare the name Isaac. *Abraham circumcised him at 8 days as God commanded. Abraham recorded that God did this at the "festival time" or "appointed time" promised. Abraham and the patriarchs since Noah celebrated the Redemption and renewal of the earth at the altar and by festival. The sovereign timing suggests that Isaac provides a further reminder and **prophetic TORAH** of divine grace and foreshadowing of the redemption of Christ. The patriarch may not have had a calendar but he would mark the date of the promise of God and await the day one year on when God fulfilled His promise. It may only have been momentary-but God was present to heal Sarah and who can doubt that the LORD was present too at this promised delivery of Isaac*

READING No.5 21.6-21

Abraham was the son of 100 years when Isaac his son was born. *Sarah said, "God has created laughter for me and all who hear about it will laugh with me. Who would have gossiped about Abraham "Sarah is nursing sons" unless I have borne him a son in his old age? The news got out and it seems that it was circulated that there were twins. Abraham made a great banquet on the day Isaac was weaned from the breast. Lots daughters had borne sons by this time. It would be curious if they and Lot were not there too. Hundreds of persons would have been present. Ishmael was mocking in laughter and for Sarah it was the final straw. She said, "The Egyptian handmaid's son shall not share the heritage with my son Isaac".*

*12 God was present in this deep concern of Abraham. When decisions have to be made that are not clear cut-when a variety of emotions and mixed feelings wrestle with our choices. God said, "Don't tremble like a curtain of a tent-do exactly what Sarah says for in Isaac your seed will be called" God promised to constitute Ishmael as a nation because he was Abraham's seed. Abraham in kindness gave Hagar bread and a skin flask of water. **He kept on sending her off** (Hebrew hj l vy a Piel meaning "he made many attempts-for she did not want to go and he was vexed about it-but persisted and became firm of intent) 14 She was going along and she was getting lost in the desert of Beersheba. 15 When the water was spent Hagar put the youth under one of the bushes coming out in leaf. She herself sat at a distance from he youth about as far as the best of many shots from a bow for it was bitter and she was grieved to see the coming death of the child and where she sat she lifted up her voice and wept. However far she was from her son that voice must have come to his ears in the silent desert. He cried and God heard the boy. And the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven. We learn that the presence of God is imminent when sorrow increases to the extreme of endurance and when children cry. The angel of God asked Hagar what was the matter. He told her not to fear but to*

rise up and lift the boy and take his hand for God had heard his cry right where he was and would make of him a great nation. The LORD opened Hagar's eyes. She saw a well of water. She filled the flask of hide with water and gave the boy to drink. God was with the boy as he grew and he settled in the desert and became an archer. *In the light of the fact that Hagar sat at the distance of a long shot of an arrow from him it is notable that he actually became an archer. As he dwelt in PARAN, Hagar brought him a wife from Egypt.*

READING No.6 THE BEERSHEBA TREATY

At that time Abimelech and PHICOL, (“the voice of all”-a popular army leader) commander of the host, spoke to Abraham saying, “The God of strength is with you in everything you do” “Swear to me that you will not break covenant faith with my young sons or my acquaintance. As the covenant of friendship I have made with you make the same with me and with the country where you live as a stranger.” Abraham said, “I swear” Then Abraham reasoned (Hebrew hky)with or “chastised” Abimelech about causes of the claim or taking away of the well of water like a child from the breast . *Abraham acted in faith and friendship and once he had established a treaty he settled a dispute by further strait discussion. The alternative was to refuse a treaty and go to war about the well-which option he ruled out. Abraham had learned to live” as far as possible at peace with all men”.²⁶ Abimelech said, “I don’t know the reason, also you did not inform me, and in addition I only heard of it today” *It now transpires that the time for concluding a treaty on Abimelech’s part was probably dictated by the action which had just of late come to his ears and he considered it a possible cause of war.* ²⁷ Abraham took sheep and cattle and they both contracted a treaty. *This act of Abraham’s showed he recognised his fault in not conversing and Abimelech comes out a second time in the clear as a man of integrity if understandably astute.**

Reading No.7 TESTED BY ADVERSITY 22.1-19

1. And it happened after these technical things: the passing of Sarah; the dismissal of Hagar, and the “well” issue that God tested Abraham. *The test was not a nj b (touchstone)or prs (fiery test)but a hsn test by adversity.* God said, “Abraham” and Abraham said, “Here am I”. 2. He (the LORD) said, “Take now your only son Isaac whom you love and **Go in a personal state of readiness** to the land of MORIAH and offer there as an offering on the first of the mountains **that which I will tell you of (or) offer him for an offering there on the first of the mountains which I will tell you about.** Hebrew Jyl a rma rva myrhh dj a l [hl [l mv #hl [h# The most obvious translation implicates Isaac and the absence of the lamb implies a substitute to be advised by God. Both positions are accommodated within the oracle God gave. 3. There follows a tell-tale series of verbs which show us the heart of Abraham after a night’s thought on this test which lay immediately ahead.

- (1) Abraham arose (Hiphil) of a decisive act-perhaps after a very indifferent night of fitful sleep
- (2) He saddled his ass (Future) He was spending a lot of time putting on the saddle and pack. This donkey he and possibly his son would mount. The journey ahead was known to be in our reckoning about 45 miles
- (3) He was taking two young men with him and Isaac his son (Future) This process of waking the youths and getting them marshalled was slower. It demanded some explanation
- (4) And he was cutting the wood of the offering. (Piel) The NIV reads, “When he had cut enough”. The Hebrew suggests a laborious process that would wake up the camp-the women –the soldier servants and even the animals might well be disturbed. The amount of wood was considerable-perhaps beyond the amount required for offering a small animal sacrifice. It might well induce an unspoken query in Isaac’s mind.
- (5) And he was setting out for the place of which the LORD had spoken (Future) Moriah is a very interesting name. The Rabbis link it to the verb “to see” so it has these connotations (a) a place of seeing and living ; (b) a place of provision (c) a place of understanding (d) a place of letting oneself be seen (e) A place of experiencing good or evil. Moriah is all of this and more as it foreshadows Calvary on the northern slope of the same mount.

4. In the third day Abraham was lifting up his eyes and seeing the place in the distance. *He had made a stop along the way. The first day he didn’t get too far-hardly to Hebron-15 miles. The second was a full day-again he travelled perhaps just as far as Bethlehem; something on or above 20 miles-leaving at least 5 miles to go.*

When one compares the huge distance he travelled by camel in pursuit of the kings of the east 30 years before –despite increasing years (cf 23.1 Sarah was soon to die at 127 and Abraham was now at least under 121 years of age if his stay at Beersheba afterward was a “seven” [bv 22.19) 5. Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey and I and the young man will manage to get ourselves there and worship and we will return to you.” Here is a statement of faith. Abraham believed that both would be back shortly even if Isaac was to be the sacrifice. Over three days he had mulled over the words of the LORD and as Paul expounds to us had concluded that in the worst scenario and final analysis Isaac must die and be raised by God (Hebrews 11.19)so as to have seed and fulfil the earlier promise.

THE WALK TO THE ALTAR 6-8

Abraham took the wood and placed it on Isaac his son and he took the fire and the knife and they went along together. *There was unity of purpose between the two-they were in step. This walk is a **vivid prophetic TORAH** of the Father and the Son united to provide salvation for mankind at Calvary. This walk shows the weakening of Isaac as its equivalent showed the physical exhaustion of Christ. When the young Isaac arrived at the place of offering every muscle in his body would have ached. He did not leave the load down as they went uphill. Instead he asked one vital question.7. And Isaac spoke to Abraham his Father, “My Father”. He scarce had breath for more. Abraham said, “Here am I, my son” Isaac said, “Behold the fire.....and the wood....and where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” These short statements show the breathless youth had a deep fear and concern on his mind Isaac had probably stopped to gather breathe and ask the question. 8. Abraham said, “God will see or provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering-my son!” And they went on both united. Isaac was content that the provision of the lamb was not Abraham’s responsibility but God’s.*

THE ALTAR IS BUILT AND A SACRIFICE PLACED ON IT 9-12

*Every action of this torn heart and soul of Abraham should be studied carefully for love and obedience. 9. They came to the place of which God had spoken and there Abraham built an altar and estimated and put the wood in order. There would be kindling wood and larger stakes provided. And Abraham bound or fortified his son Isaac and placed him on the altar literally from above as possessor of or on to the wood. A man of 120 lifting a man of 12 stone upon an altar 4-5 feet high or more requires either artifice or sheer brawn. That Isaac was let down on the wood suggests that he may have been bound to a wooden pole on the ground and so more readily hoisted on to the altar. The Hebrew does not demand more than a tying of hands and feet and a sheer lift nor does it prevent there being a means of settling the young man down upon the wood.10 Abraham continually lifted up (Hebrew Piel of j l v)his hand and took the knife to slay his son. He was not practicing. He was praying and waiting on God. Then at length he covered the face of his son and took the knife and raised his hand.11. And the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said Abraham Abraham. He said, “Here am I”. That takes us back to the obedience of 22.1. Abraham was obedient all the way along this route of trial by adversity. He said, “Do not send your hand down on the young man; do not do to him anything whatsoever for now I know that you fear or obey God for you have not withheld , kept back or preserved your only son from me. Abraham’s obedience was complete. Here is a remarkable instance of the **presence of God** in the most critical of circumstances.*

ABRAHAM LOOKS UP AND FINDS A SUBSTITUTE SACRIFICE 13-14

*Abraham had no doubt shared a moment with his beloved Son who had been united with him even in this most extreme trial of faith and love. Then he looked up from that intimate embrace and from the joyful unbinding of his son-which was like receiving him from the dead. Abraham looked up and saw **behind** him a ram had got itself firmly held in intertwined branches by the horns and Abraham **went on a journey** and took it and offered it in place of his son “Behind” because long “afterwards” Christ would appear as the true sacrifice for sin. Abraham travelled because it was yet a long journey of his family till the appearance of Jesus.14 And Abraham called the name of the place, “The Lord will see or provide” which speaks for itself*

*(Niphal) today-who can quibble against this ancient **prophetic TORAH** forecast of Calvary? In the mount of the LORD it will be seen or provided. Moses the writer was adding his comment that the ultimate Lamb would be provided in this mountain in distant time. Moses was himself acutely aware of the Passover lamb and how it covered God's people and substituted for their sin. The God of Abraham had acted in critical times and spared his Son whom he took out of Egypt.*

THE DIVINE BLESSING 15-19

The angel of the LORD (an OT phrase for the Word of God-the coming Messiah) called a second time from Heaven and said, "I am swearing by myself, whispers the LORD that because you have done this thing or offered this offering legally and not withheld your only son that blessing I will bless you and make your seed great –numerous as the stars of heaven and the sand on the lip of the sea and your seed will possess the gate of their enemies. And in your Seed all the nations of the earth (*continually or till the latter end* The Hebrew word *bq[* is redundant as "because" since *rva* meaning "because" is present so I have taken its other meaning "till the latter end") will have been blessed because you have obeyed my voice Further **prophetic TORAH** of gospel blessing. Then Abraham returned to his young servants and they arose and returned unitedly to Beersheba and Abraham remained or "seven-ed" there at Beersheba Abraham actually lived there for fully 54 years afterward. To discount any significant time lapse between Moriah and the death of Sarah and to take this event of Isaac's offering as one closely related to his mother's death would give us an age for Isaac of 28-which accords closely with that of our LORD as His ministry began. More important we may revel in the fact that Abraham and Isaac began together; they went on together in the hope of substitution and they remained undivided by sacrifice and continued unitedly for the remainder of days. In this they symbolise the "flint like" resolution of Christ and the will of God in giving His Only Son for us.

The end of Part 4: "Experience of God's presence"