

The Third Great Age of Time

God Chooses Abraham

from Sophia Lyon Fahs, *The Old Story of Salvation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955).

[Genesis 11:27-32; 12:1-9; 15:1-6; 17:1-21; 18:9-15; 21:1-8]

In spite of many warnings and punishments, men continued to follow their own selfish desires. They even began to imagine there were many gods and they made idols of wood and stone and worshiped them, instead of giving reverence to the one true God, their creator.

Knowing how desperately wicked the hearts of men were, because of Adam's first sin (or wrong-doing), God slowly gave up the hope that all men would ever become humble and good unless he tried some new plan for helping them.

This was his plan. "I will choose out of all the people in the world the best man I can find anywhere, and he and his descendants shall be called my "chosen people." To them I will give my special guidance and teaching, and I will prosper them and make them a great nation. This people can then show the rest of mankind what is good and true. So by especially blessing and helping one people, I shall eventually help and bless all peoples."

God searched the world over for a good man after his own heart till he found Abraham, a shepherd chief and a Hebrew, living with his family in the city of Ur on the banks of the Euphrates River.

Appearing to Abraham in a vision, God said, "Leave this country where men worship false gods. Leave your father's house and go with your wife and nephew into a new land that I will

show you. I will make you and your descendants into a great nation, and they shall be a blessing to all peoples."

Obediently Abraham left his father's home, taking with him his wife, Sarah and his nephew, Lot, and all the sheep, cattle and slaves belonging to him, and set forth on a long pilgrimage to a land he had never seen. Northward and westward Abraham traveled. Whenever he stopped for a time to rest, he always built an altar of stones, and with the sacrifice of a sheep or a lamb he made a prayer of thanksgiving to God. Sometimes it was beside a bubbling spring, or under some large old tree, or on the top of a high mountain.

At last, after many months, Abraham reached the land that God intended to give him, the land of Canaan. He and his people were camping high up on a mountain. It was a dark night and the sky was studded with stars. A lamb had been sacrificed and eaten. Abraham was standing alone outside his tent door, when he heard God's familiar voice.

"Lift up your eyes, Abraham. Look northward and southward, eastward and westward, for all the land you can see I am giving you and your descendants after you forever.

"I am going to bless Sarah, your wife. She will bear you a son. She who is now childless shall become the mother of nations and of kings and peoples. Look up at the stars above you, Abraham. Can you number them all? In the years to come your descendants shall be as the stars — beyond all counting."

Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed. "Shall a child be born to him who is a hundred years old?" he asked himself. "And shall Sarah who is ninety bear a child?"

Inside the tent the wakeful Sarah overheard the conversation between Abraham and God, and she laughed too.

But God rebuked them. "Is anything too hard for God?" he said. "I promise you that after the proper number of months have gone by, Sarah shall have a son."

It happened as God had promised. Sarah gave birth to a son

and Abraham called his name Isaac, meaning Laughter. Sarah said, "Now I can really laugh. And everyone who hears will laugh with me."

When the baby was old enough to be weaned, they made a feast for him, and all the camp made merry.

Lot Makes His Choice

[Genesis 13:1-13]

Wherever Abraham journeyed, his nephew Lot went too, with his family and all his flocks and herds. As time passed, not only did the number of persons in Abraham's family increase, but the number of his sheep and cattle grew also, so that it became difficult to find enough good pasture land and enough water in any one place to supply their needs. Lot's herdsmen began quarreling with Abraham's herdsmen for the right to the wells they found.

Finally Abraham said to Lot, "Let there be no more quarreling between your herdsmen and mine. Is not the whole land of Canaan before us? Is it not ours? Let us separate. If you will choose the land on the left hand, I will go to the right. If you prefer the right hand, I will go to the left."

Lot lifted up his eyes and looked toward the east, and saw all the wide plain of the Jordan River. It was green and well watered, like a garden. But when he looked toward the west, he saw rocky mountains and forests.

Lot chose the plain. He moved as far east as the city of Sodom, beyond the Dead Sea, and settled there. But the people of Sodom were very wicked, doing only those things that gave them pleasure and forgetting to obey God. Lot and his family were gradually drawn into their wicked ways.

On the other hand, Abraham and his men moved their tents and traveled with their flocks into the hill country west of the Dead Sea, and settled for a while among the oaks on the hillside outside



The word of the Lord came to Abraham. "Your descendants shall be numberless as the stars."