

STARS AND SAND

Sunday Morning: February 10, 2002

Text: Hebrews 11:12-16

STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS

Hebrews 11:12-16 "Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so *many* as the **stars** of the sky in multitude, and as the **sand** which is by the sea shore innumerable.

THE PROMISES

13. These all died in faith, not having received **the promises**, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were **strangers** and **pilgrims** on the earth.

SEEKING A COUNTRY

14. For they that say such things **declare plainly** that they seek a country. 15. And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

HEAVENLY COUNTRY AND CITY

16. But **now** they desire a better *country*, that is, an **heavenly**: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath **prepared** for them a **city**."

I want to focus our attention to verse 12 where reference is made to Abraham's seed being as the *stars of the sky in multitude* and *as the sand by the sea shore*. I also want to focus our attention on the promises in verse 13. This is promises plural in number.

When we read the Old as well as the New Testament we see that there are many promises. There are promises that deal with prayer. There are promises of deliverance and watch care and provision for God's people.

The promises of verse 13 I believe is talking about two promises made to Abraham. These promises given to Abraham and subsequently to Isaac, and Jacob cause them to seek a heavenly city whose builder and maker is God. Along with the heavenly city they were promised some land here on the earth. These two promises were given to Abraham and to his seed had to do with their future inheritances.

THE PROMISES

Romans 9:4 "Who are Israelites; to whom *pertaineth* the **adoption**, and the **glory**, and the **covenants**, and the giving of the **law**, and the **service of God, and the promises**;"

The promises were given to the Jews and not to the Gentiles. It was the nation of Israel that God said was his first born son. The covenant, or testaments, were given to the Jews. The nation of Israel were given the law and the service of God in the tabernacle and temple.

PROMISES CONFIRMED

Romans 15:8 "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a **minister of the circumcision** for the truth of God, **to confirm the promises** made unto the **fathers**:"

I think it is significant to see that Jesus was a minister of the circumcision. Circumcision was given to Abraham before the law. Jesus was a minister of circumcision to confirm the promises made to the fathers. When I think of the Fathers I think of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The ministry of circumcision was a ministry to those who received the seal of the righteousness which is of faith. Romans 4:9-12 "Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision *only*, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. 10. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in

circumcision, but in uncircumcision. 11. And he received **the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith** which *he had yet* being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that **believe** [present active], though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be **imputed** unto them also: 12. And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which *he had* being *yet* uncircumcised." We have already dealt with these verses in past messages.

TO ABRAHAM'S SEED

Galatians 3:16 "Now to **Abraham** and **his seed** were **the promises** made. He saith **not**, And to **seeds** (Ishmael and Isaac), as of **many**; but as of **one** (in Isaac), And to thy **seed**, which is **Christ**."

Abraham had two seeds. One was Ishmael and the other was Isaac. We have a reference to the promise singular in number in Galatians 3:14 "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." We also find the promise, singular in number, in Galatians 3:17 "And this I say, *that* the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." That promise was not made unto seeds, as of many; but as of one, Isaac. Ishmael's inheritance was in the wilderness outside the land of Canaan. Isaac's inheritance was to be in the land of Canaan. Galatians 3:18 "For if the inheritance *be* of the law, *it is* no more of promise: but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise."

FEW CHOSEN

Matthew 20:16 "So the last shall be first, and the first last: for **many** be **called**, but few chosen."

This verse tells us that the first shall be last and in the case of Abraham's sons, Ishmael, the first born would be last when it came to his inheritance. Ishmael's inheritance was a loaf of bread and a bottle of water, where Isaac on the other hand got all that Abraham had. Abraham had gold, silver, flocks, and servants. Isaac was the chosen seed.

TWO PROMISES

Galatians 4:23-26 "But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman *was* by promise. 24. Which things are an allegory: for these are the **two covenants**; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. 25. For this Agar is **mount Sinai** in **Arabia** (outside of Canaan), and answereth to **Jerusalem** (earthly) which now is, and is in bondage with her children. 26. But **Jerusalem which is above** (heavenly) is free, which is the mother of us all."

Here in Galatians 4 we see the two promises and the two seeds. The two covenants are the two testaments and are the two promises. Notice that Mount Sinai is outside the land flowing with milk and honey. Here we find that Ishmael is to be associated with Mount Sinai. What happened at Mt. Sinai? The law was given. Mt. Sinai answers to the Jerusalem that now is which is an earthly Jerusalem with an earthly promise with an earthly inheritance and is in bondage. The Jerusalem which is from above is free. This heavenly city is the new Jerusalem, and the city that Abraham and those in Hebrews 11 were looking for.

The two promises have to do with an earthly seed and their inheritance; and a heavenly seed and their inheritance. Ishmael is a type or picture of the earthly seed and their inheritance while Isaac is a type or picture of the heavenly seed and their inheritance.

THE PROMISE OF LAND

Genesis 12:7 "And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, **Unto thy seed will I give this land:** and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him."

Here in this verse we see that God promises to Abraham a land that he will give to his seed. Abraham had already entered into the land of Canaan. The Lord does not tell how much of the land that his seed would have.

THE LAND

Genesis 13:15 "For **all the land** which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever."

Here God tells Abraham that all the land that you see will be given to him and his seed. The Lord is giving Abraham more information about the land.

SEED AS THE DUST

Genesis 13:16 "And I will make **thy seed** as the **dust** of the earth: so that if a man can number the **dust of the earth**, *then* shall thy seed also be numbered."

Here God tells Abraham that his seed will be as the dust of the earth. As the dust of the earth Abraham's seed will be enumerable.

We have a little dust around our house and I have never picked up dust one grain at a time. Because dust is used to describe the number of the seed of Abraham, it is a number beyond counting. It is innumerable. We associate dust with the earth and Abraham's earthly seed will be as the dust of the earth.

ALL THE LAND

Genesis 15:18 "In the same day the LORD made a **covenant** with Abram, saying, **Unto thy seed** have I given **this land**, from the **river of Egypt** unto the great river, the **river Euphrates:**"

Here the Lord made a covenant with Abraham and his earthly seed to give the land from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates. I am persuaded that the river of Egypt is the Nile River. The Lord has promised Abraham and his earthly seed the land from the Nile River to the Euphrates River. When your seed will be as the dust of the earth, you will need a large area to put those people and they will fit easier into the large area than just in the land of Canaan.

THE PROMISE OF HEAVEN

Genesis 15:5-6 "And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward **heaven**, and tell the **stars**, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, **So shall thy seed be.** 6. And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness."

When Abraham believed God here in this verse was not when Abraham was saved. Abraham had been saved many years before so this is not his salvation experience. When Abraham believed God, he was believing what God told him about his heavenly seed.

It was at this time that Abraham asked God if his servant that had been born in his house could be his heir and the Lord said no. This heavenly seed was still in the loins of Abraham.

To day we have telescopes that will allow us to look into the heavens and see innumerable stars. In Abraham's day the stars of the heavens were countable. Abraham's seed being as the stars of heaven were not an innumerable number.

SIGN OF CIRCUMCISION

Romans 4:11 "And he received the **sign of circumcision**, a seal of the **righteousness of the faith** which *he had yet* being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all **them** (Jew and Gentile) that **believe** (present active), though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:"

Circumcision was a sign or a seal of the righteousness of faith. Abraham had the righteousness of faith imputed to him before he was circumcised. This righteousness was imputed to him before circumcision and the law so that Gentiles, who believed in the present tense, could have this righteousness imputed to them in due season. This seal that was given to Abraham before the law so that the heavenly seed of both Jew and Gentile could receive the righteousness which is of faith so they would be qualified to receive the promise of the heavenly inheritance. This blessing is given to those who believe in the present tense.

TOKEN

Genesis 17:11 "And ye shall **circumcise** the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a **token** of the **covenant betwixt me and you** (Abraham)."

Circumcision was the token of the covenant made with Abraham concerning his heavenly seed. Circumcision was the seal of the righteousness which was of faith. Because faith and righteousness were imputed to Abraham before circumcision, that opened the way for Gentiles to be a part of the seed of Abraham that would have a heavenly inheritance.

THE PROMISE

Acts 13:32-33 "And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that **the promise** which was made unto the fathers, 33. God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee."

The promise that was made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was fulfilled by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Jesus being raised from the dead made faith operative. It made it possible for us to please God. Because faith was not operative in the days of the fathers, God had to impute faith to them and the resurrection of Jesus made that possible. By the resurrection of Jesus made it possible for us to please God. Notice that the word *promise* is singular in number and has the definite article before it so it is a particular promise. We know that promise is everlasting life from 1 John 2:25. Everlasting life is the reward of the inheritance that the heavenly seed will receive because they continued faithful to the end.

STARS AND SAND

Hebrews 11:12 "Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, *so many* as the **stars** of the sky in **multitude** (bundle, Acts 28.3), and as the **sand** which is by the sea shore **innumerable**."

The word *multitude* is an interesting word. The word multitude does not mean that the count of that multitude is innumerable. This word *multitude* is found in Acts 28:3 "And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid *them* on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand." and it is translated *bundle*. The number of sticks that Paul picked up to put on the fire could be counted, so they were not innumerable. The stars of heaven that can be seen with naked eye can be counted so the count of the stars are small compared to the sands of the sea shore. We can see that in the following verses.

STARS ARE NUMBERED

Psalms 147:4 "He telleth the **number** of the **stars**; he calleth them all by *their names*."

This verse tells us that stars are numbered. Not only are they numbered they have names. Because stars have numbers means that they are countable. Grains of sand do not have names. The Lord has not assigned names to grains of dust or grains of sand. I think that there are around 6,000 stars that you can see with the naked eye. You can spend your money and have a star named after you and placed in the star registry.

STARS NAMED

Job 38:31-32 "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of **Pleiades** (seven stars), or loose the bands of **Orion** (constellation)? 32. Canst thou bring forth **Mazzaroth** (twelve signs of the constellations) in his season? or canst thou guide **Arcturus** (the Bear) with his sons?"

Here we see that the Lord calls attention to groups of stars that have been given names. Pleiades is a seven star cluster. Orion is the name of a constellation of several stars. Arcturus is the Bear that as a group of stars associated with that constellation. The Lord refers to Mazzaroth which is a reference to the twelve signs of the zodiac constellations.

STARS AND SAND

Genesis 22:17 "That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the **stars of the heaven**, and as the **sand** which is upon the **sea shore**; and thy seed shall **possess the gate of his enemies**;"

This verse I believe tells us that there are two seeds, a heavenly seed and an earthly seed. Both of them will possess the gate of their enemies. What does it mean to possess the gate of your enemies? What happened in the gates of the cities of the near East? The government went on in the gate. It was in the gate of Jerusalem that Absalom stole the hearts of the people of Israel from his father David when he judged the people. One day the heavenly seed as well as the earthly seed will possess the gates of their oppressors. Satan and his host now occupy the gates over the cities of the earth. We will one day possess those gates when Satan and his host are cast down from heaven.

THEIR CHILDREN WERE STARS

Nehemiah 9:23 "**Their** (parents, sand) **children** (twenty and under) also multipliedst thou as the **stars** (their children) of heaven, and broughtest them **into the land**, concerning which thou hadst **promised to their fathers** (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob), that they should go in to possess *it*."

Here is a type of those who are counted as the heavenly seed because they have been called stars. The word *their* is a reference to the parents of the children who were multiplied as the stars of heaven. These children were under twenty when they left Egypt. You could say that they were considered the second born. The reason that they could be considered the second born is because they were the ones who received the firstborn inheritance and blessing by entering into the land flowing with milk and honey.

The parents in Numbers 32:11 "Surely none of the men that came up out of Egypt, from **twenty** years old and upward, shall see the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob; because they have not wholly followed me:" all died in the wilderness. The wilderness is a type of the earthly inheritance where the land flowing with milk and honey is a type or picture of the heavenly inheritance. There were descendants of Abraham like Reuben, Gad, Manasseh, Esau, and Ishmael all had their inheritance outside the land flowing milk and honey.

THIS DAY, STARS

Deuteronomy 1:10 "The LORD your God hath multiplied you, and, behold, **ye are this day as the stars** of heaven for multitude."

Here we find Moses talking to those who were under twenty when they left Egypt. Stars were going into the land flowing with milk and honey.

NOW STARS

Deuteronomy 10:22 "Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons; and **now** the LORD thy God **hath made thee** as the **stars** of heaven for multitude."

Moses said that NOW the LORD thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven. Their parents were not referred to as stars.

What are we trying to say?

There are two seeds and there are two inheritances. There is an earthly seed with an earthly inheritance and there is an heavenly seed with a heavenly inheritance. The faithful of the earthly seed will possess the gates of their enemies and the faithful heavenly seed will possess the gates of Satan and his host of angels that rule over the earth to day.

In the following verse we will see that Satan does rule over the earth to day and he and his fallen angels are called the stars of heaven.

STARS RULE AND REIGN

Isaiah 14:12 "How art thou fallen from heaven, O **Lucifer** [morning star], son of the morning! *how* art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!"

The word Lucifer is a Latin word that means *morning star*. Lucifer and the angels that followed him are stars. They are ruling in the heavens today.

STARS OF HEAVEN

Isaiah 14:13 "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the **stars** (Angels) of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:"

Satan desired to exalt himself above the stars of God. Who are the stars of God? They are the angels of God. These stars are not celestial but angelic. When Satan exalted himself above the stars of God he fell because of his sin. When he fell he took a third of the stars, angels, of God with him.

STARS

Job 38:7 "When the morning stars sang together, and all the **sons of God** shouted for joy?"

We have in Job a reference made to the stars singing together and the sons of God shouting for Joy. These stars are sons of God who are in the heavenlies today.

STARS ARE SONS OF GOD

Job 1:6 "Now there was a day when the **sons of God** came to present themselves before the LORD, and **Satan came also among them.**"

The sons of God are those who rule over the earth being stars and we find Satan among them.

EARTHLY KING

Daniel 10:1 "In the third year of **Cyrus** king of **Persia..**"

Here we have a reference to an earthly king.

HEAVENLY KING

Daniel 10:13 "But the **prince** of the **kingdom** of **Persia** withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, **Michael**, one of the **chief princes**, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of **Persia**." V. 20

Here we see that there was a heavenly prince that was apparently over the earthly king Cyrus and Satan dispatched this prince of Persia to intercept the angel that God sent to help Daniel understand what would befall the nation of Israel in the latter days. Daniel 10:14 "Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision *is* for *many* days." Because this prince of Persia was a more powerful angel than the one God sent to help Daniel, God had to send Michael, one of the chief princes to release the detained angel.

STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS

Hebrews 11:16 "But now they desire a better *country*, that is, an heavenly: **wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God**: for he hath prepared for them a city."

How can we relate to all that we have heard this morning?

As the stars of God we have been called unto an heavenly city. Seeking the heavenly city and the best inheritance we need to be continually reminded of that which is to come and to forget those things which are behind. Hebrews 11:15 "And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned." If we continually remind our selves of the old way of life we may forget the better inheritance and settle for the earthly inheritance. We need to be reminded daily that we need to be just and live by faith so that we will be found pleasing to God. We need to continue to confess that we are pilgrims and strangers seeking first the kingdom of God, the heavenly city. If we do that God will not be ashamed of us but will be glad to be called our God. If we live having the heavenly city in mind, we will be overcomers. The blessings of the overcomer are found in the following verse.

STARS

Revelation 21:7 "He that **overcometh** shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and **he shall be my son**."

If we will live like stars we will inherit all things from an heavenly perspective. If we overcome, God will not be ashamed of us but will promote us to positions of honor and glory as one of his sons. I want to encourage all of us to live by faith like the cloud of witnesses in Hebrews 11. If we live by faith we will please God and he will reward us with a better inheritance. We do not want to be mindful of the old way of life or we might stop living by faith. Hebrews 11:15 "And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned." The cloud of witnesses were mindful of the heavenly country and city and they were faithful and steadfast to the end. They laid aside every weight that would cause them to turn back. Luke 9:62 "And Jesus said unto him, **No man**, having put his hand to the plow, and **looking back**, is **fit for the kingdom** of God."