

KINGDOM SPIRIT



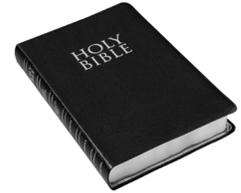
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“SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD”

Matthew 6:33



Issue 1007

GENESIS:16-20

(Read Gen. 16:1-6) In chapter 12, we were told that Abram and Sarai, his wife, and their household went down into Egypt because of a serious famine in the land of Canaan. Because Sarai was so beautiful, Abram told her and their household to say to the Egyptians that Sarai was his sister, which she actually was his half sister, so that the Pharaoh would not kill Abram and take Sarai for his wife. They did this, but the Pharaoh was so taken with Sarai that he took her into his harem. However, God plagued the Pharaoh so badly that he realized that he had made a mistake and he asked Abram to take his wife and his household and leave Egypt. To be sure he removed the plague God had brought on him, he gave Abram considerable wealth and he gave Sarai a handmaid. The book of Jasher says that this handmaid was one of the Pharaoh's own daughters he had by a concubine. This is Hagar, actually an Egyptian princess, who became a handmaid in the household of Abram.

Both Abram and Sarai are guilty of trying to help God provide an heir to them that could inherit the promises that God made to Abram and his seed. This is Sarai's attempt to do so. As we can see, this turned into a disaster so far as Sarai was concerned.

(Read Gen. 16:7-16) God had a plan for the child that was to be born of Hagar. He instructed Hagar to return to her mistress and when the child she was carrying was born, it would be a

son and she was to name him Ishmael, which means “God hears.” He also promised that Hagar's seed would be multiplied exceedingly. We know today that the Arab people are the seed of Ishmael and that the prophecies that God gave to Hagar concerning her son have come to pass.

(Read Gen. 17:1-8) In verse 1, God tells Abram that He is the Almighty God, El Shaddai. This is the first occurrence of this name for God and the meaning of the name tells us much about the circumstance here. The Companion Bible gives the following explanation as an appendix: *SHADDAI is in every instance translated “Almighty”, and is indicated by small capital letters (“ALMIGHTY”). It is God (El), not as the source of strength, but of grace; not as Creator, but as the Giver. Shaddai is the All-bountiful. This title does not refer to His creative power, but to His power to supply all the needs of His people. Its first occurrence is in Gen. 17:1, and is used to show Abraham that He Who called him out to walk alone before Him could supply all his need. Even so it is the title used in 2 Cor. 6:18, where we are called to “come out” in separation from the world. It is always used in connection with El (see above).*

Abram was 99 years old by this time and obviously concerned about not having seed, so by God telling him He was El Shaddai, He is assuring Abram that He will do as He promised. As Abram worshipped God on hearing this, God also changed Abram's name to Abraham. Abraham means “Exalted Father,” and Abraham means “Father of a Multitude.” God then reiterated some of the previous promises He had made and

added some additional ones. Not only would Abraham's seed be a great nation, but Abraham would be the father of many nations. The promise that God would be Abraham's shield and exceeding great reward are expanded as God says of Abraham's seed, "**I will be their God.**" The land promise is reiterated as well. New to the list is in verse 6 after He reiterates the fruitfulness promise, "**and kings shall come out of thee.**" While there have been a large number of kings, or rulers, come from Abraham's seed, the King of Kings Himself, by being born of the virgin Mary, is a descendent of Abraham.

(Read Genesis 17:9-14) This covenant of circumcision has since been badly abused by men. By the time we get to the New Testament, the inference is that it is part of the law that God gave to Moses and the Pharisees and Sadducees had made it a condition for eternal salvation. So it is important to note the source of the ritual and the real reason for it. This was to be a token of the covenant, or promises that God made to Abraham, not a condition for their implementation. Remember that the promises are unconditional, i.e. God took total responsibility for their implementation. Abraham, every man child of his seed, any male born in the house or purchased with money not of his seed, was to be circumcised. The babies were to be circumcised when they were 8 days old. Doctors today tell us that a baby's highest resistance to pain is on the 8th day from their birth. Anyone who is not circumcised was to be cut off from his people.

(Read Genesis 17:15-22) God is finally pinning down the birth of Isaac, Abraham's son that would inherit the promises. Abraham laughs at the thought of him and Sarah, who was 89 at the time, having a child. In Abraham's mind, the problem was with Sarah and her age, as Abraham continued to father children with another wife after Sarah died.

God reiterates his promise concerning Ishmael and enlarges it some, but He makes it very clear that the promises were to go to Isaac, the son of promise.

(Read Genesis 17:23-27) Abraham was obedient to God's requirement that he be circum-

cised as well as Ishmael and all of the men servants of his household.

(Read Gen. 18:1-8) This gives us a look at the character of Abraham. At this point, there is no indication that Abraham knew who these three men were, yet he offered the best hospitality he could offer.

We see the word "lord" used several times in this chapter. They all come from the Hebrew *adon or adonai*. In the King James translation, if none of the letters are capitalized, it is the word *adon* and refers to man. If only the L is capitalized, it is from Adon or Adonai, and can refer to either God or man. If the L is capitalized and the rest of the letters are in smaller capitals, it is from Adonai or Yahweh.

(Read Gen. 18:9-15) Very quickly, the identity of these men comes to light. Obviously one of these men is Yahweh. First we saw that Abraham laughed when told that Sarah would bear a son, now Sarah laughed when she heard the same. It is interesting then that they were to name their son, Isaac, which means laughter. The propensity to laugh has been a characteristic of Isaac's seed ever since. At any rate, God has set the time for the birth of Isaac.

However, there is a more immediate and pressing problem at the moment. (Read Gen. 18:16-22) the LORD tells Abraham the reason for Him being there. He is there to see how great the sin is in Sodom. The two men with Him travel on toward Sodom, but He stays to talk further with Abraham.

(Read Gen. 18:23-33) Abraham intercedes for Sodom. Remember that this is where Lot and his family are. In verse 25, Abraham addresses the man who stayed as the "**Judge of all the earth.**" In the gospel of John 5:22, we're told that the Father "**hath committed all judgment unto the Son** and then in vs. 27 Jesus says, "**And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.**" I think this leaves little doubt that the "man" to whom Abraham was talking was Jesus Christ. Abraham starts out asking if He would destroy Sodom if there were fifty righteous men in Sodom. When the LORD said He wouldn't destroy it if there were

fifty, Abraham thought he might better play it safe and asked if He would destroy it if only forty righteous men were found there. The LORD promised not to destroy it if there were forty, but Abraham again thought he better play it safe and lowered the amount to thirty and finally to ten and the LORD promised to not destroy it if there were only ten. They then left off communing and the LORD went His way.

(Read Gen. 19:1-3) Lot certainly knew the moral character of Sodom and seeing these two angels, who appeared as men, he sought to protect them by having them stay in his home that night. The fact that Lot sat in the gate indicates that he was a judge in the city. The men of the city derided him for being in this position later in verse 9.

(Read Gen. 19:4-11) The margin of my Bible adds the word “carnally” to the phrase “**that we may know them**” in verse 5. This is not in the original text, but adding it makes sure we know the intent of these men of Sodom. Lot tried to reason with them but to no avail. He even offered his daughters to them to do as they would with them, but the men of Sodom were determined to have the two men. Finally, the two angels smote the men with blindness so that they could no longer find the door.

(Read Gen. 19:12–14) When warned to leave the city by the angels and to take his whole family with him, Lot was unable to convince his son-in-laws and his daughters, that they had married, to leave with him. They just thought he was joking.

(Read Gen. 19:15–28) Even Lot is hesitant to leave the city. The angels had to literally physically force him to leave.

In Gen. 13:10-11 we’re told that Lot chose to move to Sodom, that was located on the plain of Jordan, because it was well watered and was like the garden of the LORD. Then in Gen. 14:10 we’re told that the vale of Siddim was full of slime pits. This was apparently where the Jordan River ran through this plain where Sodom was located. Slime, as used in the Bible, is asphalt. In Gen. 14:3, Moses tells us that the vale of Siddim is now the Salt Sea, or the Dead Sea. We discussed in our last issue that these slime pits sup-

plied the fuel for this great destruction of these cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Before the destruction of these cities, the Jordan River continued on a course between the Sinai Peninsula and Arabia and emptied into the Gulf of Akaba. Due to the burning of these slime pits and oil that was deep underground, the intense heat and the underground explosions made the area, now the Dead Sea, one of the deep depressions upon the earth’s surface. The Jordan River then ran into this depression and was never able to flow out of it. Evaporation and other causes have kept the river within these bounds so that it no longer flows beyond the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea water today is very high in various minerals.

This high mineral content, as a result of burning of the asphalt and oil, probably contributed to Lot’s wife becoming a pillar of salt when she stopped to look back. This also tells us how narrow Lot’s escape was with his two daughters. Verse 28 describes how huge the fire was as Abraham viewed it from several miles away.

(Read Gen. 19:29) It was because of Abraham and his intercession for the cities that God sent Lot out of the midst of the destruction.

Lot was first afraid to go to the mountains, but chose to go to the city of Zoar, but then he feared to live in Zoar so then went into the mountains and lived in a cave with his two daughters. (Read Gen. 19:30-38) He was aware of the wickedness of the people in the cities, but probably like most of us, felt that wickedness would not rub off on him. While he apparently maintained his own virtue, the wickedness affected his family to the point that he lost all that he had plus all of his family with the exception of his two daughters. His two daughters were affected as well. It did not seem wrong to them to decide that since they were separated from all other people, they would get their father drunk and then lie with him in an attempt to preserve his seed. They took turns and both conceived and each had a son. The oldest named her son Moab and the younger named her son Benammi who became the father of the Ammonites. We find the descendents of these two individuals quite a bit in the rest of the Bible. However, it seems that the fact that they

were conceived in sin affected their seed as the record we have of them is far from good.

(Read Gen. 20) I'm not sure whether this chapter is in chronological order or not, but it does give us the picture of God's protective hand on Abraham. As we have mentioned before, Sarah was a very beautiful woman and I assume she held her beauty into her old age. At any rate, we have a similar circumstance to the situation Abraham and Sarah had with the Pharaoh in Egypt. Abimelech, king of Gerar did the same thing that the Pharaoh did in Egypt by taking Sarah into his harem. But before he came near her, God spoke to him in a dream explaining that she was the wife of Abraham. He also closed the wombs of the women in the house of Abimelech, so when Abimelech returned her to Abraham, Abraham prayed for him and his family that they could again have children. But again, Abraham came away from the incident considerably richer than he had been. Abimelech gave him sheep, cattle, servants and silver, plus Abraham was given his choice of living anywhere in the kingdom of Abimelech he wished to dwell.

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

We are starting a new study this issue with a study of Paul's epistle to the Romans. Paul was in Corinth when he wrote this epistle and had yet to be in Rome. It was written in 58 A.D., which would have been the fourth year of Nero as Emperor.

A study of Paul's epistle to the Romans begs the question before we even begin, "Who established a church at Rome to whom Paul is writing?" We have no Biblical indication of any of the apostles or disciples going to Rome to establish a church. An answer to this question will, I believe, help us better understand what Paul has to say to these people. So I would like for us to try to answer this question before we begin our study of the doctrines that Paul lays out in this wonderful epistle. I went to my New Bible Dic-

tionary for an answer. Following are some quotes from this book. "Of the origin of this important church we know little, and it is perhaps useless to conjecture." "All that is certainly known is that by the time Paul writes to them the church was not only established but of considerable proportions." "The question of Peter's connection with Rome cannot be answered with any conciseness, although any claims that Peter was founder of the church there may at once be dismissed. The apostle was still in Jerusalem at the time of the edict of Claudius, and the church must have been started many years before this." "It is an interesting question from what source the Christian tradition within this church had been mainly derived, but there is little indication that it had been derived from the narrower Jewish-Christian stream and it is most natural to suppose that these Christians maintained an outlook similar to that of Paul himself. There is no evidence of the tension of the Jewish-Gentile controversy so apparent in the Galatian Epistle." In other words, the author of this article has no idea where this church came from.

Paul does something very different in the book of Romans in that the people he addresses the epistle to are listed at the end of the epistle instead of the beginning. So let's go to the back of the book, so to speak, and read the last page first. (Read Romans 16) Phebe is the lady who is carrying this epistle from Paul at Corinth to the church at Rome. He then greets Priscilla and Aquila whom we met back in the 18th chapter of Acts where he and they had come to Corinth and being in the same trade of tent making had become acquainted and joined forces, so to speak, and became good friends. We're not told whether they were Christians before they came to Corinth, but they certainly were when Paul left Corinth. They had been ejected along with all the Jews and Christians from Rome by the emperor Claudius. In 52 A.D. Claudius, because of a controversy that broke out publicly between Jews and Christians, agitated by the Pharisees, ejected all of the Jews and Christians from Rome as a means of settling the argument. Claudius was poisoned by his fourth wife, Agrippina, to ensure that her son Nero would become the next Emperor. Claudius

died in 54 A.D. Nero became emperor at the age of 17 then and ruled for 14 years before committing suicide in 68 A.D. at the age of 31. It may be possible that Claudius' edict to evict the Jews and Christians from Rome then became of none effect and we see that Aquila and Priscilla had then moved back to Rome.

It is important that we understand that the Roman government at this time was quite tolerant of all religions in the Empire, so long as they recognized Caesar as being in authority over them. Any religion that did not recognize this authority was considered an unlawful, or unlicensed religion. At this point, Judaism was a licensed religion and the Roman government considered Christianity to be a sect of Judaism, so did not consider it unlawful. It wasn't until several years later that Christianity began to be considered an unlicensed religion, because it refused to recognize the authority of the Caesar over Christ, their King. At that point is when persecutions began and Christians were tried for treason.

Paul had returned to Corinth some five years after he met Aquila and Priscilla and it is from Corinth in 58 A.D. that Paul is writing this epistle to the Roman church. We need to look at a little more Roman history to know what was happening when Paul wrote his epistle. Nero's first five years as emperor were very good. He married a daughter of Claudius, his half sister, Octavia. She soon fell from favor and had to move out of the palace. About this time, (58 A.D.) another woman came on the scene who became one of the worst enemies of the Christian church. Her name was Poppaea Sabina. Apparently she was a very beautiful woman with all the attributes of a beautiful woman except she did not have an honorable mind. She was married to a friend of Nero's but she wanted Nero. She persuaded Nero to give her husband a commission in a distant province, so that she could more freely be Nero's mistress. She first set about to bring about the death of Agrippina. She then set about to cause the retirement of Seneca. Seneca, the philosopher, had been Nero's tutor and was very influential in politics and with Nero. With Seneca out of the way, she then plotted the death of Octavia, Nero's wife.

Agrippina was a religious woman who worked with the Pharisees, may even have taken orders from them.

We need to back up 20 to 30 years to look at some other events that had considerable effect at the time of Paul's writing. We've discussed before that several of Christ's disciples were expelled from Judaea shortly after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. These included Joseph of Arimathea, Jesus' great uncle (younger brother of Mary's father), Mary, the mother of Jesus, Lazarus and his sisters Mary and Martha, and others. They were set adrift in the Mediterranean Sea in a boat without oars or sails. God being with them, they landed first at Cyrene in North Africa, where they obtained oars and sails and then sailed to Marseille in what is now France. Philip the evangelist was already at Marseille and we're told he sent Joseph, Mary, Christ's mother, and some of the other disciples that were with him across France and the English Channel to Glastonbury in Britain to found a church there. Joseph was referred to as "nobilis decurio" meaning that he was apparently in charge of Rome's mining interests in Britain. So he would have been to Britain probably many times before to oversee lead and tin mining in the area of Glastonbury. Legend has it that Jesus had accompanied Joseph on one or more of these trips when He was between the ages of 12 and 30 and that he taught the miners how to extract tin and purge it of ore. He is supposed to have also built a small wattle hut which became really the first Christian church building and a home for His mother.

Upon their arrival here, King Arviragus gave Joseph 12 hides of land, the record of which still exists. A hide of land would have been approximately 120 acres of land. At this time, there were several tribes of people (all of same race) living in Britain. Arviragus was king of Siluria, an area that had not submitted to Rome. This was in 37 A.D. Joseph was successful in converting most of the Silures to Christianity.

In 41 A.D. Claudius came to the throne in Rome. The following year he launched an all out campaign against Britain in an attempt to conquer it once and for all. He named his best general,

Aulus Plautius to lead the assault which began in earnest in 43 A.D.

The British were lead by Guiderius, the brother of Arviragus. Guiderius was killed in the second battle. Arviragus took over until they could elect a new "Pendragon" (military commander). His first cousin, Caradoc, was elected. Caradoc then held the Romans at bay for the next two years. Finally in 45 A.D. a 6 month truce was agreed to and Caradoc and Arviragus were invited to Rome to negotiate the treaty. While they were in Rome, the Emperor Claudius gave his daughter, Venus Julia, to Arviragus in marriage in order to cement the treaty. Caradoc was already married and the older of the two. While they were in Rome, Aulus Plautius, the Roman commander, fell in love with and married Gladys, the sister of Caradoc. Gladys was a devout Christian as were other members of the royal family.

In spite of these marriages, the truce was soon broken and Claudius recalled Aulus Plautius, presumably because he would now be fighting against his brother-in-law. When Gladys was back in Rome, because of her academic ability and education, the Romans called her Pomponia Graecina Plautius. Britain at this time had over 70 universities and many of the people were very well educated.

Meanwhile the war dragged on for another 5 years. Finally, Claudius personally took a squadron of elephants to Britain. The British horses, when they smelled the elephants, went out of control and the Britons lost a very important battle. Caradoc escaped and went north to try to rally support of the Brigantes tribe, but their Queen Cartimandua had entered into an agreement with Rome and she betrayed Caradoc and handed him over to the Romans. Caradoc and his family were taken to Rome where presumably he and possibly some of his family would be executed. This would have been shortly after Claudius issued his edict banning Christians and Jews from Rome. Caradoc was brought before the Roman Senate in order to decide his fate. Following is the speech that he gave to the Senate: "Had my government in Britain been directed solely with a view to the preservation of my hereditary do-

mains, or the aggrandizement of my own family, I might long since have entered this city an ally, not a prisoner; nor would you have disdained for a friend a king descended from illustrious ancestors, and the dictator of many nations. My present condition, stripped of its former majesty, is as adverse to myself as it is a cause of triumph to you.

What then? I was lord over men, horses, arms, wealth; what wonder if at your dictation I refused to resign them? Does it follow that because the Romans aspire to universal domination, every nation is to accept the vassalage they would impose? I am now in your power—betrayed, not conquered. Had I, like others, yielded without resistance, where would have been the name of Caradoc? Where your glory? Oblivion would have buried both in the same tomb. Bid me live. I shall survive forever in history one example at least of Roman clemency."

Because of the huge respect the Romans had for his military genius, they did let him live. He was sentenced to stay in Rome for 7 years and to agree that he, or any member of his family, would never take up arms against Rome again. He agreed to this and his family was free to return to Britain. His oldest son, Cyllinus, returned almost immediately to take over the reins of government that had been his father's. His youngest son, Cynon, stayed awhile but later went back to Britain to enter a religious order and to devote his life to service of Christ. A third son, Linus, stayed in Rome and was later ordained by Paul to be the first bishop of Rome.

Caradoc had two daughters, Eurgain and Gladys. Eurgain is said to have been the first woman converted to Christ after Joseph landed in Britain. Gladys was 16 when they all were brought to Rome as captives. The Emperor Claudius was so impressed with her character and beauty that he soon adopted her as his own daughter and renamed her Claudia. She and Linus are mentioned in II Timothy 4:21. The next year, she married Rufus Pudens Pudentius, a Roman Senator. He had been the personal aide-de-campe to Aulus Plautius who married Claudia's aunt Gladys. At this point, Caradoc's family would have been the only Christians in Rome. Later,

after Claudius's death and the return of some of the other Christians, I think we can assume that they soon joined up and established the church at Rome to whom Paul was writing.

Going back to Rom. 16, verse 7 says, **“Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.”** Quoting from a booklet, “Introduction to the Book of Romans” by Stephen E. Jones, he says, “the word ‘fellow-prisoners’ is the Greek word *sunaichmalotos*, which according to Bullinger, means A WAR CAPTIVE. Strong says that *aichmalotos* (the root word) means A PRISONER OF WAR.

This immediately leads us to suspect a connection between them and the royal family brought to Rome as Prisoners of war. And as we shall see, the probability of this being the case is greatly increased by the rest of the evidence in the verse.

They are described as being ‘of note among the apostles,’ which is no small honor, nor is Paul simply indulging in underserved flattery. The margin reads that they were ‘eminent’ in position, nobility, or of general respect. This being the case, there must be a reason why they are mentioned nowhere else in the New Testament.

It also says that they ‘also were in Christ before me.’ Paul had been converted about 21 years before this time, so again, there must be some reason why they do not figure more prominently in the rest of the New Testament and in the history of the eastern church (Asia Minor, Greece, Palestine, etc.).

The members of the British royal family had been converted at the preaching of Joseph of Arimathea in Britain just prior to Paul's conversion in Asia. Most of our knowledge of early church history comes from the book of Acts and others who wrote about the church in the east. This would easily explain how such ‘eminent’ and long-standing believers could pass almost unnoticed by the New Testament writers.

However, they are next described as being Paul's kin. Since the book of Acts was written by Luke (Paul's travelling companion), it would

seem negligent of him to not mention the conversion of Paul's kin—unless, of course, they had been converted in a far-off land and were NOT YET RELATED TO Paul.”

Let me digress momentarily and look at verse 13. **“Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.”** This could be taken to mean that Rufus, referring to Rufus Pudens, was Paul's half brother. This assumes that Paul's father had died and his mother had remarried and had another son, Rufus, after she remarried. If so, which I believe to be the case, then Paul was related to Rufus and Claudia, and thus to Caradoc and his wife.

Going back to our quote, “Thus far, then, we have 4 clues as to the identity of Andronicus and Junia. They are prisoners of war, eminent among the apostles, converted before Paul was, and they were somehow Paul's kin. Another piece of implied evidence is that they had not lived in the east, nor been converted there—otherwise, such prominent believers would have been mentioned in the book of Acts.

I believe that they were none other than Caradoc and his wife appearing with Greek names. It was common for people to take on Greek names when they moved to cities with a Greek influence. And when they picked Greek names, they were usually careful to choose names that represented a rough translation of their original name. Sometimes, though, their friends bestowed them with names that fit their position or character instead. So let us examine these names and see if they fit Caradoc and his wife.

The Greek name *Andronicus* means ‘a man of conquest, a conqueror.’ *Aner* means ‘man,’ and *nikos* means ‘conquest, or victory.’ Who else would such a name fit, but Caradoc, who had withstood the best Roman legions and had outmaneuvered the best Roman generals for 9 years? In his speech before the Roman Senate, he had told them he had been ‘betrayed—not conquered.’

It could also be an equivalent of his British title, ‘Pendragon,’ given to the British military commanders.

Modern commentators, who generally are

quite ignorant of British history, assume that Andronicus was a fellow-prisoner with Paul in some prison that Luke neglected to mention in the book of Acts. But that is most unlikely, since Luke recorded all such events in great detail and would certainly not have forgotten to mention a prison sentence served with an eminent kinsman. Is it not much more probable that Caradoc, the war captive from Britain, on parole in Rome at the time of Paul's letter, is Andronicus? Paul shows the subtle irony of the situation by calling him both the Conqueror and the prisoner of war in the same sentence.

The second name, Junia, most likely refers to Caradoc's wife. Juno was the wife (queen) of Jupiter, or Zeus, ruler of the gods to both the Greeks and the Romans. Perhaps the name Junia, then has some reference to her status as a British queen. "

Some of the other names we recognize such as Aristobulus, though the greeting is to his household since he has been in Britain for some time prior to the writing of this letter. It is possible that Amplias was Caradoc's father, Bran the Blessed, who had voluntarily substituted himself

in the place of his father, King Llyr (who was made famous by Shakespeare) who had accompanied Caradoc's family to Rome but died shortly after arriving at Rome.

To me this all tells me that the foundation of the church at Rome was this Royal Silurian family, which is the reason that the author of the dictionary article, being unfamiliar with British history, couldn't figure out where this Roman church came from. There is much more to the story of this Royal family and also of Joseph of Arimathea from whom King Arthur descended, but for now, I submit that the Royal Silurian family, a very well educated, and long time Christian family is the backbone of the church, or congregation at Rome. It is for this reason that Paul ventures into a considerably deeper theological discussion than he does with any of the other churches. JRL

We will return to our study of law in our next issue. I felt it important that we not break up this introduction to the book of Romans, so preempted our law article for this issue. JRL

REPENT YE: FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND. (Matt. 3:2) This was the message of John the Baptist as he preached prior to the baptism of Christ Jesus. It is likewise the message that we need to preach today. The answer to Israel's troubles that they brought on themselves by their unbelief and following after false gods was always REPENTENCE, turning back to the one true God. That is the answer to our troubles today. Don't underestimate what God can do! HEAVENLY FATHER: We plead for your mercy and forgiveness for our nation!