

# KINGDOM SPIRIT



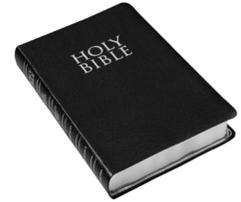
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**“SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD”**

Matthew 6:33



Issue 705

## GENESIS:31 – 50

Jacob had spent 14 years serving his father-in-law, Laban, for his 2 daughters, Rachael and Leah, whom Jacob had married. Laban asked him to continue to work for him because God had blessed him while Jacob was there. Jacob agreed to do so and for wages he said he would take all of the brown sheep and spotted and speckled goats as his own. This worked for a while until Laban realized that God was blessing Jacob so that his herds and flocks were growing faster and stronger than Laban's. Dissension began to arise between them and God told Jacob to return to his father Isaac.

Jacob took all of his family, his servants, his herds and his flocks and began the journey back to Canaan. Knowing he had to face Esau, his brother, he sent messengers ahead to tell Esau he was coming home. They met Esau and then returned to tell Jacob that Esau and 400 men were coming out to meet them. Jacob, fearing what his brother might do, divided the people that were with him into 2 companies so that should Esau attack one, the other could escape and then sent droves of animals ahead as presents to Esau.

The night before he thought he would meet Esau, he sent all his family ahead and he remained in the camp alone. Gen. 32:24-32 records a strange encounter that Jacob had that night. We're told that he wrestled a man, Jacob

later identifies as God, until the breaking of the day. As the new day began to dawn we're told that the man touched or struck the hollow of Jacob's thigh and the muscle shrank, but Jacob refused to turn loose until the man blessed him. The man changed Jacob's name, which meant supplanter, to Israel, meaning Prince with God.

Jacob met Esau then the next day. The meeting turned out to be a friendly one after which they parted company with Esau returning to his home in Seir and Jacob continued to Succoth.

In chapter 35 God told Jacob to go to Bethel and to dwell there. God appeared to Jacob there and confirmed his name change to Israel, then repeated some of the promises, He had made to Abraham, confirming that Jacob-Israel was the inheritor of those promises.

A side note that may be of interest later on, is that this was the place Jacob encountered God before as he went to Laban's house in search of a wife. (Gen.28) Both times, we are told that Jacob set up a pillar of stone and anointed it with oil. There is reason to believe that Jacob continued to carry this stone with him, as did his descendants later on.

As he continued to travel from Bethel, just before they got to Ephrath, later known as Bethlehem, Rachael travailed and brought forth another son, whom she named Benoni, but Jacob called him Benjamin. Her labor was very hard and she died after giving birth. This completed Jacob-Israel's family.

## Sons of Jacob-Israel

Reuben	}	— Leah (mother)
Simeon		
Levi		
Judah		
Zebulun		
Gad	}	— Zilpah (mother)
Asher		
Dan	}	— Bilhah (mother)
Naphtali		
Joseph	}	— Rachael (mother)
Benjamin		

With Jacob-Israel having twelve sons, the practice of passing the inheritance of the promises from one man to only one man in the next generation, as had happened with Abraham to Isaac to Jacob, came to an end. All twelve sons shared in the inheritance and began the fulfillment of the promises of being a great nation and a great multitude of people, though a little shaky at first.

Genesis 35:22 records an event which would cost Reuben, the oldest son, the birthright, as we will see later, a very great loss to him. He defiled his father's bed by sleeping with Bilhah, his father's wife or concubine, an act that would prove to have a great impact on him later on.

Finally, we're told in Gen. 35 that Isaac died being 180 years old.

Joseph was Jacob's favorite son and he made Joseph a special coat of many colors. Also Joseph had a couple of dreams that he shared with his brothers that indicated that Joseph would rule over them. All of this turned his brothers against him and they finally took him and sold him into slavery, but told their father that he had been killed and gave Jacob the coat of many colors covered with goat blood as proof. As a slave, Joseph ultimately ended up in Egypt as a servant to Potiphar, Pharaoh's captain of the guard.

Back in Gen 15:13-16, God told Abraham that his seed would be a stranger in a land not theirs for 400 years and then they would return with great substance to the land of Canaan that God had promised to Abraham's seed as part of the promises. As we read Gen. 39-47, it is interesting how God begins to bring about the fulfillment of this prophecy. As we follow the rise of Joseph to power in Egypt in spite of some very serious obstacles in his path; read of the famine that forced Jacob to send his sons to Egypt in search of food and ultimately the whole house or family of Jacob-Israel, some 70 souls in all, moving to Egypt and being re-united with Joseph, we learn to appreciate the sovereign hand of God working His plan.

It might be well to point out, at this point, that as we proceed through the Bible there is a lot of similitude used, particularly in the book of Revelation which is primarily simile. God provides the keys to this similitude as we go through the Bible. The story of Joseph, beginning with his dreams that made his brothers so jealous of him, through the dreams he interpreted for the Pharaoh, provide some of these keys.

The last three chapters of Genesis are quite important to our understanding. As Jacob-Israel neared death he called Joseph and his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, to him. Then he did a strange thing in that he took the two sons of Joseph as his own, more or less in place of Joseph. This not only now gave Jacob-Israel 13 sons, but gave Joseph a double portion of inheritance as well as a double representation in what was to ultimately become the kingdom of Israel, basically the birthright blessing. That Joseph received the birthright, so foolishly lost by Reuben, is confirmed in I Chron. 5:1-2. In addition to bestowing this birthright on Joseph, Jacob-Israel also pronounced a special blessing on each of the two sons, with the greater blessing going to the younger son, Ephraim. Ephraim was to become a multitude of nations while Manasseh was to be a great nation.

As we get to the 49th chapter, we find Ja-

cob-Israel calling all of his 13 sons together and giving each a blessing. Of special interest, we find Judah receiving the scepter, the right to rule. Normally, this would have gone with the birthright, but apparently Jacob-Israel felt Judah had done something to earn this right, though we are not told what. The result of this would eventually be the establishment of the throne of David, a descendant of Judah and ultimately the King of Kings, Jesus Christ, would come from this family. Joseph, however, with the birthright would receive the greatest material blessing and would have the largest family.

Jacob-Israel died and was taken back to the Cave of Macpelah, in the land of Canaan, for burial with Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, and Leah. As Joseph reached an old age, he made the people promise that when they left Egypt, they would take his bones with them. Joseph certainly recognized the sovereignty of God and knew all things had worked exactly as God had planned, thus he never harbored a grudge against his brothers for all that they had done to him.

Now that we know Judah had the scepter, the story of Judah as recorded in Gen. 38 needs to be read. Sometimes, as we read these stories, it is difficult at the time to appreciate their full significance. The point we need to make here is that the first born son of the twins fathered by Judah, by his daughter-in-law, was named Pharez. Pharez means breach, a break or hole in the wall. It leaves us with the feeling Pharez was so named because the midwife, thinking his brother should have been born first, felt there was a need of repair or healing. We need to remember this, as this breach must be healed and we also need to keep the son with the scarlet thread, Zarah, in mind.

A great deal of foundational information has been given in the book of Genesis. If you have not already done so as we have gone through this book, I urge you to study it thoroughly. Of particular importance are the “promises” and their significance.

Before we leave the book of Genesis, let us briefly review the “promises” and then look at a few Scriptures that will help us understand their

importance. Let me first paraphrase the “promises” and then let’s see if we can put them together to see what they mean, as a group.

1. God promises to first make a great nation of Abraham’s descendants.
2. God promises that kings or rulers will come from Abraham.
3. God promises to bless Abraham and his seed.
4. God promises to make Abraham’s name great.
5. God promises that Abraham and his seed will be a great blessing to all the nations of the earth.
6. God promises to bless those that bless Abraham and to curse those that curse him.
7. God promises to give Abraham and his seed all the land from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates River and from Egypt to the northern boundary of Canaan.
8. God promises to multiply Abraham’s seed until they be virtually uncountable like the stars or the sand upon the sea shore or the dust of the earth.
9. God promises to be God to Abraham and his seed.
10. God promises that Abraham’s seed will possess the gates of their enemies.

If we analyze these promise for a moment, we see that God is first making a nation or kingdom of Abraham and his seed. This intent is stated, but it also requires the blessing and protection of God. All this is promised. Any nation or kingdom has to have people, land, religion, and a political and economic structure. God has promised all of these, to a very great number of people, a specific land, He will be their God, and kings or rulers will come from Abraham’s seed and Abraham’s seed will possess the gates of their enemies. But there is still more to these promises. God has promised them a purpose. They are basically to become a kingdom of rulers in whom the world will be blessed. This purpose, we will see is a many faceted thing. As we study and see how this purpose is to be carried out, we

will learn a great deal about our God and our place in that plan and purpose. Again I call your attention to what the apostle Paul thought these promises meant as he made the statement in passing in his letter to the Romans, in verse 13 of chapter 4, **“For the promise, that he (Abraham) should be heir of the world,...”** It is this inheritance with which we want to be particularly concerned.

I suggest you read the following Scriptures to help you appreciate the real significance of these “unconditional promises.” There are many more, but these should give you the idea.

Ex. 33:1; Deut. 1:8; Micah 7:20; Isa. 48:9; Ezek. 20:44; Acts 26:6; Rom. 4:16; Gal. 4:28 (read Gal. 3 & 4:23-31); Eph. 2:12; Heb. 6:13 & Heb. 9:15.

Please read Exodus through Joshua for our next few lessons. **JRL**

## RESURRECTION

As promised in our last issue, we want to study resurrection. Most Christians will tell you that they believe in a resurrection, yet if asked to explain it, they usually either refrain or present a very confusing dialogue. It has been my experience that this is because they either do not understand death or refuse to accept what the Bible has to say about it. So before we can really talk about resurrection, we need to spend at least a little time discussing death. There is a great deal of confusion about death.

Most people prefer to be beguiled by the serpent in the garden, as was Eve, when he said, **“Ye shall not surely die.”** (Gen. 3:4) Yet, God specifically told Adam in Gen. 2:17, **“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eat thereof thou shalt surely die.”** Who is right?

Let us first go back to Gen. 2:7 where we read, **“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nos-**

**trils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”** Then after Adam had disobeyed God and eaten of the forbidden fruit, Gen. 3:19 tells us, **“In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”** Note that in neither of these passages does it say that just the body was formed from the dust or that just the body will return to the dust. In both passages, it speaks of the man, the complete man.

The problem comes in our attempt to divide man into three separate entities, each basically having a life of its own, the spirit, the soul and the body. “Spirit” in the Old Testament is translated from two different words, *ruach* and *neshamah* with *ruach* being the dominant word used. Both mean basically the same—breath or wind or movement of air—and both are translated both “spirit” and “breath.” They sometimes appear to be used interchangeably, though as I said, *ruach* is used the most in both cases. In the New Testament “spirit” is from the Greek word *pneuma* all but 2 times where it comes from the Greek word *phantasm* which means apparition. *Pneuma* has the same meaning as *ruach*.

“Soul” comes from the Hebrew word *nephesh* and the Greek word *psuche*. According to Strong’s Concordance, *nephesh* literally means “a breathing creature” and *psuche* literally means “breath,” i.e. (by impl.) spirit, abstr. Or concr. (The animal sentient principle only). In both cases, they are primarily translated “soul” and “life”.

An example of how the three (spirit, soul, and body) work together, is the light bulb. The bulb itself would represent the body, electricity the spirit or breath, and the light would equal the soul. None have a life of their own.

Going back to Gen. 2:7 **“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground (the complete light bulb), and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (the electricity), and man became a living soul (the light).”** Without the electricity, the light ceases to exist. Our soul

is the light, our very life. We require the breath of life to exist, but once we have the breath of life we function as a conscious personality with such identifying marks as knowledge, thought, memory, love, joy, delight, bitterness, distress, impatience, mourning, sorrow, grief, abhorrence and hate, all of which we find ascribed to the soul in Scripture. Once we lose the breath of life, all of these identifying marks of our personality that identifies us as the person we are, cease to exist in us, we no longer exist except in the memory of God. The breath of life is just that, all of the characteristics that make us the person that we are do not belong to our spirit, or breath of life, our *ruach* or *pneuma*.

Contrary to what is normally taught, once a person dies, there is no more thought, remembrance, knowledge or praise in the grave. Look at the following Scripture examples.

Psalms 6:5: **“For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?”**

Psalms 146:4: **“His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.”**

Eccl. 9:5-6: **“For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished, neither have they any more a portion for ever in anything that is done under the sun.”**

Eccl. 9:10: **“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”**

Isaiah 38:18: **“For the grave cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.”**

Moses, Job, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Daniel, Luke, Paul and Peter all liken being dead to sleeping. God told Moses in Deut. 31:16, **“Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers.”** Job says in Job 7:21, **“...for now shall I**

**sleep in the dust; and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be.”** David prays in Psa 13:3, **“...lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.”** God told Daniel in Dan 12:2, **“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake...”** Jesus, in John 11:11 said, **“Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.”** but vs 13 tells us, **“Howbeit Jesus spake of his death...”** I Cor. 15:16-18 says, **“For if the dead rise not, then is Christ not raised...then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.”** Again in vs 20, **“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruit of them that slept.”** There are many more references to death as sleeping, in fact there are 36 such references in the books of Kings and Chronicles alone.

When we are sleeping, we are no longer conscious of what goes on around us. Time makes no difference to us. We awake with no consciousness of time that has lapsed since we went to sleep. Death is likened to this.

As early as the book of Job, which is thought to be the oldest book in the Bible, the question is asked by Job in chapter 14, vs 14, **“If a man die, shall he live again?”** Job was confident that he would, as he answers his own question, **“All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.”**

Some may argue that after Christ came, things changed and Christians went to heaven when they died, so let us look at a few Scriptures from the New Testament. Jesus, speaking to Nicodemus in John 3:13 says, **“And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the son of man.”** The apostle John, in I John 4:12, which was written many years after Christ ascended to heaven, says, **“No man hath seen God at any time.”** Peter, in Acts 2:34 is preaching following the day of Pentecost and states, **“For David is not ascended into the heavens.”** One would think that if anybody were to ascend into heaven it would be David. Paul, in his first letter to Timothy, speaking of Jesus

Christ, says in vs. 16 **“who (Jesus) only hath immortality...”** Jesus says in Rev. 22:12, **“And, behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”** If He is coming back to earth and will distribute his rewards at His coming, then I’m in question as to any advantage to anyone going to heaven before then. I see nothing that indicates a change in the status of the dead from Old Testament times to New Testament times.

The Psalmist in Psa. 104:29-30 sums up man’s experience through life, death and resurrection. **“Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.”** The words breath and spirit in this passage are translated from the same Hebrew word, *ruach*.

Resurrection means being raised up from the dead. So if Christians, at least, were alive in some form it would be impossible to resurrect them. With this in mind, let’s look at what the Bible has to say about resurrection.

Rev. 20:4-6 speaks of a resurrection that we’re told is the first resurrection and then 1000 years later Rev. 20:12-13 speaks of a second resurrection. So it appears that there will be at least 2 resurrections. This is born out by several other Scriptures as well. Daniel 12:2 tells us, **“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”** To help us better understand this Scripture, as well as others we will be referring to, the word everlasting is from the Hebrew word *olam* which means age or age-lasting. In the New Testament we find the same thing. The Greek word is *aionios*. In both cases a specific age is referred to, not perpetuity.

John 5:28-29 also speaks of resurrection of those that have done good and resurrection of those that have done evil. **“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done**

**evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”** (Damnation means judgment)

There are a number of other Scriptures that we will look at next month that refer to the first resurrection. Understanding the resurrections is important for us as Christians, as the first resurrection is the goal we should be striving for. In so doing we are also striving to avoid the second resurrection, not that we don’t want to be resurrected, but if we are true followers of Christ, the first resurrection is where we want to be.

However, there is one more thought that we need to have and keep. I Cor. 15:51-52 tells us, **“Behold, I shew you a mystery we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”**

I believed every generation since Christ’s ascension has felt this verse could apply to them. We are no different. We all hope this change will come upon us so that we won’t go through death. I personally believe it is a possibility and maybe even a probability, but it is not something we should over concern ourselves with. The important thing we need to be mindful of is how we live our lives so far as Christ is concerned.

We will continue our study into resurrections next month. Again if you have questions please don’t hesitate to write, email or call. **JRL**

## ASSYRIA

We looked last month at the modern day country of Iraq as a basis for our look at Assyria this month. As we stated last time, the Assyrian Empire at times reached far beyond the boundaries of current day Iraq, but the core of the empire was within the country we call Iraq today.

The first mention we have in Scripture of Assyria is in Gen. 10. Nimrod, son of Cush, son of Ham, founded Babel and then in Verse 10 &

11 appears to have gone north into Asshur or Assyria and built the cities of Nineveh, Rehoboth, Calah, and Resen. Asshur was the name of the second son of Shem. No one seems to be sure as to whether the land is named after him or not.

Nineveh was the last capital city of Assyria and was located opposite the current city Mosul on the Tigris River. Calah, earlier the capital, was about 34-35 miles southeast of Nineveh, also on the Tigris River. Both Nineveh and Calah have been extensively excavated and for the most part the archeological findings are in agreement with Biblical mentions of these cities.

At the height of its power in the 8th –7th centuries B.C., territories Assyria controlled included Media, S. Anatolia, Cilicia, Syria, Palestine, Arabia, Egypt, Elam and Bablonia. The first contact we find of Assyria with Israel is recorded in II Kings 15:19-20. This was after the Kingdom of Israel was divided and Azariah (or Uzziah) reigned in Judah and Menahem reigned in Israel. Pul, king of Assyria, came up against Israel and Menahem bribed him with a thousand talents of silver to leave, which he did. The thousand talents of silver was raised from the wealthy men of Israel with each man paying fifty shekels of silver. This fifty shekels was considered the price of a slave so in effect these men bought their own freedom.

In the 50th year of the reign of Azariah over Judah (he reigned 52 years), Menahem died and his son Pekahiah began to reign, but he was murdered by Pekah who took over the throne of Israel in the 52nd year of Azariah. During his reign, Tiglathpileser, now king of Assyria, came up and captured seven cities and all the land of Naphtali and carried these people captive back to Assyria. Pekah reigned a total of 20 years. Meanwhile King Azariah died and Jotham his son took the throne of Judah and reigned 16 years. When he died, his son Ahaz took his father's throne, but he did that which was evil in God's sight.

Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah joined forces and came up against Ahaz at Jerusalem,

but were unable to take it. Ahaz then bribed Tiglathpileser of Assyria to come up against Rezin and Pekah, which he did, taking the people of Damascus, capital of Syria, captive back to Assyria and killed Rezin.



Hoshea became king of Israel following Pekah and he reigned over Israel for 9 years. Ahaz reigned 16 years, died, and was replaced on this throne by his son Hezekiah in the 4th year of Hoshea's reign. The new king of Assyria, Shalmaneser, came up against Hoshea and Hoshea became his servant and gave him gifts. However Hoshea conspired against Shalmaneser. Shalmaneser shut Hoshea up in prison and besieged Samaria, the capital of Israel, for 3 years. In Hoshea's 9th year, Shalmaneser took Samaria and all of Israel and took them captive and placed them in Halah and Habor by the river of Gozan and in the cities of the Medes north of Assyria. This was between and just south of the Black and Caspian Seas. The king of Assyria then brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath and Sepharviam into the land of Israel to occupy it to help keep the Israelites from returning to their land.

In the 14th year of Hezekiah, Sennacherib, the new king of Assyria came up against Judah and took all the cities except Jerusalem and put Judah under tribute. He then sent his top generals to take the city of Jerusalem.

Hezekiah sent a message to Isaiah. Isaiah told Hezekiah not to worry, that God would take care of the Assyrians. God told Isaiah to tell Hezekiah that the king of Assyria would not come into the city, that he would not shoot an arrow there nor cast a bank against it. He would return to Assyria the way he came. That night the whole Assyrian army, some 185 thousand strong died in their camp. King Sennacherib returned to Nineveh where 2 of his sons conspired against him and killed him in the house of Nisroch, his god, as he was worshipping.

This is the last actual history we have recorded in Scripture of Assyria. However, Assyria gives us a good example of God's sovereignty. They were a tool in God's hand to punish Israel for their disobedience and idolatry, but because the kings of Assyria took all the credit upon themselves for all that they did, God destroyed them. The prophets have more to say about what was going to happen to Assyria so that we may know that God was in control. The book of Nahum begins, **The burden of Nineveh.**" Then follows in the rest of the book what God planned to do to Assyria ending with verses 18-19 of chap. 3, **"Thy shepherds slumber, O king a Assyria: thy nobles shall dwell in the dust: thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth them. There is no healing of the bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?"**

Zephaniah also had a prophecy against Assyria in chap. 2:13, **"And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy As-**

**syria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness."**

Assyria declined in power and influence pretty rapidly after Sennacherib was murdered. The final blow came in 612 B.C. when a combined force of Medes, Babylonians and Scythians laid siege to the city of Nineveh which then fell due to some breaches in her defenses caused by flooding of the Tigris River, which incidentally was prophesied by Nahum in chap. 2:6-8.

One other prophet dealt with Assyria, Nineveh in particular. Jonah, the first of the prophetic books written, is an account of Jonah's experience during the reign of Amaziah, Azariah's or Uzziah's father. Jonah was told by God to go to Nineveh to warn them to repent. Jonah didn't want to go so he fled to the sea seeking a ship going to Tarshish. Once out to sea God caused a great storm upon them and the sailors finally threw Jonah overboard as Jonah told them that was the only way to quiet the storm. A great fish swallowed Jonah and three days later vomited him up on the shore. God again told Jonah to go to Nineveh. This time Jonah went and did what God told him to do and the people of the city repented from their evil ways. But this displeased Jonah as he did not like the Assyrians, so God had to give Jonah an object lesson. Read the book of Jonah to see what happened.

We do learn from Jonah that there were 120,000 people living in Nineveh at the time. We are also told that it was an exceeding great city of three days journey. This probably referred to the whole administrative district which was 30-60 miles across.

Next month we will look at Babylon or Babylonia that occupied a lot of the same area earlier occupied by Assyria. JRL