

Bible Characters for Your Weekly Bible Study

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For week of May 31 – June 6, 2010

SUBJECT: GOD THE ONLY CAUSE AND CREATOR

Sinclair, Duncan (CSB, Associate Editor, President, Normal Class Teacher, and Editor), “**God the Only Cause**,” Christian Science Sentinel, Vol.43 (22 February 1941), p. 483.

--That there is a Supreme Being is generally admitted. Men call Him God, but the beliefs which they hold concerning Him differ widely.

- Some believe that He exercises great power over the destinies of men, but in a way that is beyond their understanding, and that He is almost if not altogether inaccessible to them.
- Others believe that, although He is invisible, His presence is never absent from the world; but beyond that they cannot go.

--Christians generally admit God’s allness, goodness, and love.

- They believe that He is omnipotent, and that His presence is ever in the midst of men.

--Since God is Spirit, infinite Spirit, He alone is causative, and all that He causes is spiritual.

SECTIONS II: Isaac and the confrontation over the water wells of Philistia (Gen 26: 1, 12, 16, 17, 19, 20 [to :], 21 [to :], 22-29, 31)

TIME LINE AND AUTHOR: Ascribed to Moses, written after the Exodus (c. 1445 BC), but before Moses’ death c.1405 BC. The event occurred earlier c.1950 BC in Philistia.

“Were Genesis written in strict chronological order, much if not all of this chapter ought to have been placed before the preceding section, for obviously vv.1-11 relate to a period before the birth of Jacob and Esau: there would have been no doubt about the marital status of Rebekah if she had twin boys! This section consists of a series of flashbacks into an earlier period in Isaac’s life to demonstrate the partial fulfillment of the promises made to his father Abraham, blessings that were so evident that even outsiders like Abimelech wanted to be on good terms with Isaac (vv.28-29).” (Eerdmans Commentary)

"Once again the land of promise forced the beneficiaries of the covenant to move so as to escape the effects of a famine [v.1]." (MacArthur Commentary)

Isaac

[I’şac] (Heb. “he laughed”)

(Abbreviated)

Isaac is the only son of Abraham and Sarah, but the second son born to Abraham. "The principle stories about Isaac are found in Genesis 21-28...." (Oxford Guide to People & Places)

"Of Isaac's maturity we learn little." (Ibid) At age 40 he married his cousin Rebekah. "She became [his] wife when God directed one of Abraham's servants to her." (Who Was Who in the Bible) Driven by famine to Gerar, he acquired great wealth by his flocks, but was repeatedly dispossessed by the Philistines of the wells which he sunk at convenient stations.

"A story is told of Isaac that is almost identical to two that are told about Abraham: Because his wife was so beautiful, he was afraid that the Philistines would kill her in order to have her (they were the ruling people in Gerar, where he lived)." In Genesis 26 Isaac and Rebekah are involved in an incident with 'Abimelech king of the Philistines' (an anachronistic reference), who takes Rebekah into his harem—essentially the same incident twice reported of Abraham and Sarah." (Who Was Who in the Bible) At Gerar he practiced deception as to his relation to Rebecca, imitating the conduct of his father in Egypt and in Gerar. The Philistine king rebuked him for his prevarication....

King **Abimelech** of Gerar

[Uh bim'eh leck] ("my father a king, or father of a king")

Abimelech was a common name of the Philistine kings, as "Pharaoh" was of the Egyptian kings. It is used by five men in the Old Testament.

This Abimelech was a king of Gerar in the time of Isaac, probably the son of the preceding Abimelech. Isaac sought refuge in his territory during a famine, and there he acted a part with reference to his wife Rebekah similar to that of his father Abraham with reference to Sarah. The Abimelech of Isaac's time "*warns others not to molest Rebekah or they will be put to death, suggesting he learned from the first episode.*" (Eerdmans Dictionary)

Isaac settled for a while in Gerar, and prospered. Abimelech desired him, however, to leave his territory, which Isaac did. Abimelech afterwards visited him when he was encamped at Beer-sheba, and expressed a desire to renew the covenant which had been entered into between their fathers.

Ahuzzath

[A huz'ath] ("possession")

Ahuzzath was "a 'friend,' perhaps a minister or advisor, of King Abimelech of Gerar. He together with Phicol, commander of the army, accompanied their sovereign to Beersheba to make a covenant with Isaac (Gen 26:26)." (Easton Dictionary)

"The termination "-ath" reminds us of Philistine proper names, such as Gath, Goliath." (Ibid)

Commander **Phichol**

[Fic'kol] ("strong")

Phichol was the chief captain (commander) of the army of Abimelech, king of the Philistines of Gerar in the days of both Abraham (Gen 21:22,32) and Isaac (Gen 26:26).

Leishman, Thomas L., “**Isaac: A Link in Patriarchal History**,” THE CONTINUITY OF THE BIBLE, Christian Science Journal, Vol.81 (November 1963), p. 596.

--In Isaac, a child of promise, the long-awaited heir of his great father, Abraham, one might expect to find a character of outstanding import in the steady development of the Hebrew people toward a higher concept of Deity; but, actually, relatively little is recorded concerning him. He seems to have languished, as have many men, in the shadow of an intensely forceful and distinguished parent, while Isaac's own son, Jacob, in due course won the name of Israel, one later proudly borne by the chosen people.

--May it not be said that Isaac's primary mission lay in providing the essential link between his father and his son?

--The Bible tells us little of what transpired between the intended sacrifice of Isaac and his marriage.

--For twenty years the faith of both Abraham and Isaac in the continuity of Abraham's line continued to be tested, for Rebekah proved to be childless until eventually, when her husband was sixty, she became, in response to his prayers, the mother of twin sons. The promise repeatedly given to Abraham was soon directly renewed to Isaac (see Gen 26: 3-5), confirming his acceptance by the Lord. Then “*the Lord blessed him. And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great*” (Gen 26: 12,13)

Channing, George (CSB and Editor), “**On Living Peaceably with Others**,” Christian Science Sentinel, Vol.51 (4 June 1949), p. 987.

--Living peaceably with others is the manifest consciousness of living peaceably with oneself.

--To human sense there appear to be qualifications upon living at peace with one's fellows, but in spiritual truth there are none.

- Man is forever at peace because God is at peace.

---God expresses Himself in terms of His peace, which passeth human understanding, and man is that expression.

--How much lies in each of us to live peaceably with all men?

- Exactly as much as lies in each of us to live peaceably with the Mind of man, the individual's own true Mind, God.

---This is not to say that the degree of human necessity for traveling at times a thorny pathway, for facing and mastering the enmity and malice of mortal sense, measures the progress one is making toward knowing God.

Mace, Nellie B., “**The poor in spirit**,” Christian Science Journal, Vol.32 (November 1914), p. 461.

--Spiritual law has to do with the government of spiritual thought, and the outward material condition of so-called poverty or riches can of itself neither hinder nor help the spiritual thinking which is the very atmosphere of heaven.

- We must first be sensible of the misery and emptiness of life apart from Spirit.

--When we are disillusioned concerning the fable of life and intelligence apart from God, and have turned our whole heart's desire Spiritward, yearning to know and obey God, then, and only then, have we made room for the inflowing tides of heavenly love and harmony.

- Of such meek and importunate prayer Mrs. Eddy says: “*When a hungry heart petitions the divine Father-Mother God for bread, it is not given a stone,— but more grace, obedience, and love. If this heart, humble and trustful, faithfully asks divine Love to feed it with the bread of heaven, health, holiness, it will be conformed to a fitness to receive the answer to its desire*” (Miscellaneous Writings, p. 127).

---Surely, heaven need be nothing better than to be conformed into the likeness of God. The compassionate One has promised: "*I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*"

“Room for All,” SELECTED ARTICLES, *Christian Science Sentinel*, Vol.22 (17 January 1920), p. 387. (In *The Christian Science Monitor*, Boston,U.S.A., Nov. 21, 1919)

--For every act of daily living there is just the right place.

--When Isaac pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar to dwell there and started to dig wells of water, at once the herdmen of Gerar strove with his herdmen, saying, "*The water is ours.*"

• In other words the people of this land thought, as in many a case to-day, that there was no room in that valley for strangers.

--It was only when Isaac did his work fully and found enough wells of springing water for all that he could say, "*For now the Lord hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.*"

• With patient joy he had set to work to know his right place and to be blessed of God for being there.

---Thus he proved that good is boundless and not limited to any one special spot.

SECTION III: Hannah prays for a son; Samuel is born (I Sam 1: 2 *Hannah had*, 8, 10, 11, 18 *So*, 20)
TIME LINE AND AUTHOR: Although historically attributed to Samuel, this could not be the case since his death is recorded in I Sam 25:1. “The Books of Samuel contain no clear indication of the date of composition.” (MacArthur Bible Commentary) In all likelihood they were written 931-722 BC, and therefore, by several anonymous writers. The event occurred c. 1000 BC.

“Unlike the accounts of many Biblical figures who claim our attention only after they assume leadership, the story of Samuel, like those of Moses and Samson, begins before his birth.” (HarperCollins Commentary)

"Samuel, the last of the judges and the maker of Israel's first two kings, is presented as a significant person in this account of the extraordinary circumstances surrounding his conception and birth." (Oxford Bible Commentary)

“First Samuel begins with a family traveling to worship year by year and, like many families, annually repeating its own tiresome holiday drama.” (Theological Bible Commentary)

“Hannah’s despair [vv.9-11] drove her closer to the Lord: in her misery she trusted in God’s true grace.” (King James Bible Commentary)

Hannah

[Han’nuh] (“gracious”)

The first wife of Elkanah and mother of the prophet Samuel. Hannah lived in the town of Ramathaim-zophim [**4-5 mi NW of Jerusalem**], in the hill country of Ephraim. She grieved at being childless and her husband Elkanah was unable to console her. "Hannah's status as primary wife and her barrenness recall Sarah and Rebekah, and an implicit comparison with these earlier women underlies the entire narrative." (Women in Scripture) Elkanah's other wife Peninnah ridiculed Hannah.

The next time the family went to Shiloh [**modern Seilun, 10 mi N of Bethel**] on the pilgrimage, she stayed longer and prayed to the Lord to give her children. Hannah “vowed that if she were to give birth to a son, she would devote him to the Lord’s service.” Who Was Who in the Bible) Eli, the chief priest, encouraged her to believe that the Lord would grant her prayer.

In due time Hannah bore a child which she called Samuel. When she had weaned him she took him with her to Shiloh, and left him with Eli. “Hannah later bore three sons and two daughters (I Sam 2:21).” (HarperCollins Dictionary)

Elkanah

[El kay' nuh] ("God has taken possession")

There are eight people mentioned in the Bible with the name of Elkanah. This week’s lesson deals with the father of Samuel, husband to Peninnah and Hannah. He is a descendent of the priestly tribe of Levi.

He grew up and lived in Ramathaim-zophim, the hill country of Ephraim. His wife, Peninnah had several children; his other wife, Hannah, was barren and grieved over being childless. Elkanah sympathized with her and encouraged her to pray about it. On their next trip to Shiloh to make their annual sacrifices, she stayed behind, and the high priest, Eli, consoled her.

In due time Hannah bore a child she called Samuel, and after she had weaned him she brought him to Shiloh where he was apprenticed to the priests. “Elkanah and Hannah were blessed with five more children.” (Who’s Who in the Old Testament)

Samuel

[Sam'yu el] (Heb. “name of God”)

(Abbreviated)

Samuel was a priest, a great Hebrew prophet, judge, and counselor of Kings. He “can be called one of the last of the judges or one of the first prophets, as he oversaw the transition between two great periods in Jewish history at the end of the eleventh century [BC].” (All the People in the Bible) He was known as the “upright judge,” and was the last of the 14 judges. “Samuel gave leadership to Israel in the critical period of transition from tribal existence under the judges to the establishment of monarchy.” (Eerdmans Dictionary) You will find the story of his life in I Samuel, chapters 1-25....

- **His Godly mother** (I Sam 1- 2: 19)

Samuel’s father was Elkanah, a Levite, from the town of Ramathaim-zophim, in the hill country of Ephraim. His birth reveals the great faith of his mother, Hannah. Hannah made good on her promise to dedicate her son to the Lord’s service. At a very early age, Samuel went to live with Eli the priest in the temple at Shiloh [**northern West Bank**], who taught the boy the various duties of the priesthood....

Leishman, Thomas L., “The Early Days of Samuel, the Boy Prophet,” THE CONTINUITY OF THE BIBLE, Christian Science Journal, Vol.84 (December 1966), p. 648.

--One of the more significant and versatile characters in the long record of Israel’s history was Samuel, whose brilliant career affected many aspects of the progress of his country and of its people. Not only did he judge Israel “*all the days of his life*” (I Sam 7:15), but he became equally well known as a counselor of kings.

--His father, Elkanah, was of priestly descent, tracing his ancestry back to Jacob’s son Levi, and lived at Ramah, not far from Jerusalem (see I Sam 1:1,19).

--On one of his annual visits to Shiloh, some fifteen miles distant from Ramah, Elkanah was accompanied by his wife Hannah, who had long remained childless—a condition then considered not merely a misfortune but even a disgrace. Eagerly she offered her prayer at the sanctuary that she might have a son. She vowed to dedicate him exclusively to God's service if only her request were granted, as indeed it was within the year. No wonder she "*called his name Samuel, saying Because I have asked him of the Lord*" (I Sam 1:20)

--No sooner had Samuel been weaned than Hannah took him, young as he was, to Shiloh, where "*the child did minister unto the Lord before Eli the priest*" (I Sam 2:11).

Dillon, Ruth Marie, "[Desire Is Prayer](#)," POEM, Christian Science Sentinel, Vol.25 (26 May 1923), p. 767.

Give me an understanding heart,
Dear Love divine, Thy way to see,
That I may know no life apart
From consciousness at-one with Thee!

For daily strength Thy will to do,
My ever constant prayer would be;
For love to comfort others, too,
And prove Thy truth, which maketh free.

For gratitude which deeds express,--
My faith by daily works to show,--
That I may truly live to bless,
And ever nearer Thee to grow!

My perfect selfhood thus I'll prove,--
Through list'ning for Thy loving voice,--
The child of ever present Love,
Who in Thy allness doth rejoice!

Wilkin, Patricia L., "[A lesson from Hannah](#)," POEM, Sentinel, Vol.89 (16 November 1987), p. 12.

He was your cherished child—
evidence of prayer.
And yet you left him there,
not unattended, to be sure—
Eli was beside him,
Teacher and guide.

But it was to serve the Father
That you let Samuel go,
Watched him outgrow
From year to year
the coats you made.

(I know—I sewed for mine.)

Listening,

he heard God's word
and answered....

McCandless, Ethel M., “**Train up a child,**” Christian Science Journal, Vol.54 (January 1936), p. 553.

--Of all human obligations there is none more important and sacred than that imposed upon parents.
• Upon them rests the onus of preparing future citizens rightly to play their part in human affairs.

--Many centuries ago, a woman of the Israelites, Hannah by name, “*vowed a vow*” that should she have a son she would “*give him unto the Lord all the days of his life.*”

• Her prayer was answered, and “*she bare a son, and called his name Samuel.*”

---In course of time she took him to the temple to be trained for sacred service.

• With simple devoutness she said to Eli, the priest, “*For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him: therefore also I have lent him to the Lord.*”

--What selfless gratitude!

• How the human mother-heart must have longed to keep the child.

---But according to her highest light, she gave her dearest treasure to God.

Clements, Janet Heineman (CSB; Evanston, IL), “**Spiritual origin and childbirth,**” Christian Science Journal, Vol.110 (July 1992), p. 31.

--For prospective parents, the understanding of man's spiritual origin in God, Mind, can be an inspiring foundation for prayer.

--The month's prior to the birth of a child give parents the opportunity to understand more fully the fatherhood and motherhood of God and to see with clarity man's actual origin, substance, heritage, form, identity, individuality, and nature as spiritual. This understanding serves as a protection to the entire experience, lifting it above the possibility of chance to the natural manifestation of divine law. Seeing that man is truly born “*not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*” helps overrule supposed physiological laws, with their sometimes detrimental effects, and opens thought to seeing birth not as a material process but as the reflection of the creative power of divine Spirit.

--Building on the understanding that man's origin is in Spirit, we come to see that man's substance is not subject to discord or malfunction.

SECTION IV: Jesus heals the “nobleman's” son (John 4: 46-53 *there*)

TIME LINE: The Year of Inauguration (Jesus' 1st year of ministry) in Capernaum, 27 AD. Written c.80-90 BC.

“a certain nobleman”

This miracle cannot be the same as that recorded in Matthew 8 or Luke 7, the differences are too great. “We have here a king's officer...a father and son...a Jew...a fever...weak faith which is blamed...Jesus is asked to come...he does not go...the healing words are spoken at Cana [**south of Haifa, Israel**].” (Dummelow Commentary)

“Twice the narrator recalls the first sign at Cana (4:46,54).” (Oxford Bible Commentary) “The return to the wine-miracle site of Cana (4:46) brings out a literary tie with the opening of this section of the Gospel (2:1) and is designed to bring it to a close.” (Eerdmans Commentary)

“The language here [*besought him*, v.47] indicates that he repeatedly begged Jesus to heal his son. His approach to Jesus was out of desperation, but he had little appreciation of who Jesus was. In light of verse 46, apparently the nobleman’s motivation centered in Jesus’ reputation as a miracle worker rather than as Messiah.” (MacArthur Bible Commentary)

“[In this story] Jesus moves out not merely into Galilee [**northern Israel**] but into the heathen world, where he meets with the most favorable reception of all, for without signs and wonders (48) the officer (who may be thought of as a non-Jewish officer in the service of Herod Antipas) believes at the bare word of Jesus, prefiguring thereby the conversion of the Gentile world at large.” (Peake’s Commentary)

“Jesus met the demands of Galilean unbelief by healing the official’s son [*thy son liveth*, v.50], revealing not only [his] sympathy, but [his] marvelous graciousness in spite of such a faithless demand for miracles.” (MacArthur Bible Commentary)

"The time when the official's son improved [v.53 *at the same hour*] corresponded precisely with the time that he had spoken with Jesus." (MacArthur Bible Commentary) "Upon discovering this, the man (with his household) again believes, by which is now clearly meant he comes to faith in Jesus." (HarperCollins Bible Commentary)

“The evangelist probably records this miracle to show that the effects of faith may extend beyond the person who exercises it; perhaps also to show that our Lord’s power to heal could be exercised at a distance.” (Dummelow Commentary)

Smith, Hazel D., “**Thy son liveth**,” POEM, Christian Science Sentinel, Vol.47 (16 June 1945), p. 947.

“Weep not,” the loving Master said
To the sorrowing widow at Nain.
Then her only son whom she mourned as dead
He restored to her, whole again.

“Thy son liveth,” the nobleman heard
At Capernaum in Galilee;
For Jesus had only spoken the Word
And the lad was instantly free.

So may we hear the Word today
Above the tumult and strife.
The Father and son are one always,
Man dwells in eternal Life.

Bucher, Herbert, “**Present or Absent Treatment**,” Christian Science Sentinel, Vol.55 (11 July 1953), p. 1202.

--A practitioner of Christian Science was asked by a friend newly interested in Science, "Which is more efficacious, present or absent treatment?"

• The friend was assured that Christian Scientists know from experience that both are equally effective.

--In "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures" Mary Baker Eddy says (p.179), "Science can heal the sick, who are absent from their healers, as well as those present, since space is no obstacle to Mind."

- It must be clear then, that the distinction made by Christian Scientists between what they term absent and present treatments simply indicates either the absence or the presence of the patient, not of the treatment itself; nor does it indicate the place from which it is given.

--It is worthy of note that nowhere in her writings does our revered Leader use the term absent treatment or present treatment. In the true scientific sense, treatment is always present, for the healing Christ is everywhere and heals irrespective of the mortal belief in place, space, or time.

- There is no absence of Mind or of Mind-power.

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*The weekly Bible Lessons are made up of selections from the King James Version of the Bible and the Christian Science textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science.