***The Age of the Jews, No. 1

DS3A***

This is number five in the series of the dispensations. We have so far learned that God has a plan for the ages, and He takes His plan, and He divides it up into certain eras of time. These eras of time are called dispensations or stewardships. We may view it as God's world household. In various ways He arranges His household. He arranges who's in charge of it. He arranges how things are done; who is responsible for doing what; and, so on.

We have, first of all, looked at the dispensation of the gentiles. This dispensation began with eternity past, and it moved on through three stages. Stage number one was the period when man was positive toward God, and we call it the stage of innocence. Stage or phase number two was the period when man was negative toward God, and we call it the period of the conscience. The first period ended in the fall and being driven out of the Garden of Eden. The second period ended with the flood which wiped out all the human beings that were on the face of the earth (except for Noah's family) including most of them who were mixed breeds--half angels and half men. The third phase was from the flood to the time they came off the ark, for a couple of generations, until things began to deteriorate. Then we come to the Tower of Babel. With the Tower of Babel, the period of gentile stewardship over God's world household comes to an end.

We are now going to proceed into the second dispensation which is the dispensation of the Jews. We also found that during this period of the dispensation of the gentiles, four divine institutions were established. I trust that you have these well in mind. When we tell you about divine institutions, I hope you also understand that this is God's purpose for all humanity--believers or unbelievers. Nobody; no human being; no society; and, no government is authorized to violate any one of these four divine institutions. Much of the grief that we have in our society and in our world today is the direct result of violation of these divine institutions.

The first one was volition. It is God's desire and will that you should be free in the exercise of your deciding mechanism that He has placed within you. You have guidance for making decisions, but you are to be free to decide. You can see how that includes many things, not the least of which is the privacy of your own priesthood as a believer to exercise your freedom before God in taking care of your own Christian life. This volition is not to be encroached upon by governments, nor by other people. Also, your volition is not to encroach upon that of others.

Secondly, we had the institution of marriage which you can readily see was important for the protection of the human race. This is under great fire today, and there is a certain type of insanity which is adrift in our society today that thinks marriage is out of style. However, it cannot be out of style because it's a divine institution. Therefore it will always be.

The third divine institution is the family. That institution provides for the rearing and the care of children. A child comes into the world a blank. There are many things which he needs to learn, such as: authority; lines of authority; good manners; his heritage of freedom; his heritage of spirituality; and, so on. All of these are areas that he has to learn from his parents.

Then the fourth divine institution was the institution of nations where God established Noah as a civil authority and gave mankind the right to take the life of another person in the form of capital punishment for the crime of willful first degree murder. Unfortunately again, this institution is being challenged in our day, and many people guilty of murder one are not receiving the punishment that God has ordained for that crime.

All of this ended in the Tower of Babel which was the termination of the first dispensation. The Tower of Babel was man's first open attempt to listen to Satan concerning the organization of world society. Remember that Satan is constantly saying, "Everybody in the world get together under one organization and under one government. Then everything will be better for everyone." But the Word of God says, "No, you are to be in separate nations, and you have to defend that nation with military force if necessary."

**Israel**

So there are many principles concerning our life here on earth which have been revealed to us in this first dispensation from the way that God ordered his world household. So let's begin now the dispensation of the Jews. We look at phase one. This dispensation, just as a preview, also will be divided into three segments. We're starting to look at phase one. This is the phase of promise. This is phase one of the dispensation of the Jews. The background now of the period is that mankind no longer just speaks one language. There are many many languages in the world after the Tower of Babel confusion. Now people have divided themselves up into tribes and nations, but God's interest begins to center on a little piece of land, the country of Israel.

We know it today as the land of Palestine. This is a very small part of the earth's surface. You could put Israel into the state of Texas about 267 times, so it isn't much in the way of the land territory. It's actually 90 miles wide at its wide point, and about 150 miles long. It lies in the location with Syria at one end and Egypt down at the other end, both of which are giving Israel a great deal of trouble today, as you know. This little piece of land has been the source of much friction between nations, and again it is today a source of friction. It will be here in this little piece of real estate that the most decisive battle of all history will be fought. This is the coming campaign of the battles of Armageddon. The Jewish people have been the source of the Savior and the source of our written Bible. These people have survived in this land in spite of monumental persecutions because God has a plan for them and for this little piece of real estate.

During the dispensation that we are looking at now (the dispensation of the Jews), God has appointed this nation of the Jews to be his stewards for his world household. They became God's representatives and God's spokesmen in order to resist evil in the world and to teach the rest of the nations (Deuteronomy 14:2, Psalm 147:19-20). In other words, they became custodians of the Scriptures; that is, the Old Testament bible. Other nations, as God deals with them in Scripture, are only viewed as they come in contact with this small little insignificant nation by the world's standards. As they touch this nation, the history of gentile nations comes into Scripture.

The Jewish people were responsible for a missionary outreach to other nations with the Word of God. They were to be blessed for their obedience (Leviticus 26:3-13), but they were also to be disciplined for disobedience (Leviticus 26:14 and following). Salvation for this dispensation was, again, as always, through faith in Jesus Christ. They were looking forward to the Savior which was to come in keeping with the promise of Genesis 3:15. This age had a way of being spiritual. To be a spiritual Christian in the age of the church means to have all known sins confessed to the Father so that God the Holy Spirit is free to teach you. You are rightly related and in fellowship with the spirit of God. That's spirituality for our age. I think you understand that spiritual maturity is what a spiritual person develops. Spiritual maturity is one thing. Spirituality is something else.

In the age of the Jews, God the Holy Spirit did not indwell every believer. He indwells every one of us. Consequently, He is there to be in fellowship with each of us. However, in the age of the Jews, He did not indwell every believer. Consequently, their basis of spirituality was something else. Their basis of spirituality is what is referred to as faith rest. They listened to the promises of God; they listened to the doctrines that were taught them; and, they listened to the prophecies that were given to them, and they believed them. On the basis of their faith and confidence and belief in the doctrines, the prophecies, and the promises of God they rested in the Lord. In the Old Testament, acting on faith on these promises, doctrines, and prophecies constituted a spiritual believer. That's what made him spiritual. He was faith resting. He was trusting in the Lord. The believers of this dispensation were instructed. They knew the things upon which they should rest. It was a matter of their entering into those promises. Hebrews 11 is the great faith chapter which tells you about a list of heroes who acted upon a faith rest principle. It is a list of spiritual believers in the Old Testament.

This dispensation of the Jews goes through three phases. Phase number one goes from Abram, who was the first Jew, to Moses. Then from Moses, we go to the Lord Jesus Christ, and then there is an interruption. This is the church age which you know was a mystery, unrevealed in the Old Testament. So the dispensation of the Jews had an interruption. It's been almost 2,000 years old. From the rapture of the church until the Second Coming of Christ, that is the part called the tribulation. That is the end of the dispensation of the Jews. The church falls between phases two and three.

**Promise**

This first stage of promise is a stage that deals with the great patriarchs of the Jewish people. The patriarchs meant the fathers who were the heads of the families. They were in complete charge of the family group until they died and a new patriarch took over. The first of the patriarchs, of course, was Abram. That's the man that we start with now. He was the first Jew. Abram lived in a city called Ur of the Chaldees very near the plain of Shiner where they had built the Tower of Babel. The land of the Chaldeans was a very prosperous land, and the city of Ur was a particularly prosperous city. Archaeological discoveries and digs on the site of Ur have shown that this was a very advanced civilization. It was a city that had many engineering marvels. It had quite a rich culture, and was also a commercial center. Ur of the Chaldees was located along the Euphrates River in the Tigris Euphrates Valley. The Euphrates River had two very good harbors. The city had a network of canals. It was divided by these canals, into residential and commercial sectors. All over this city were many towers and many temples, mostly to the moon god and his wife. The true God was rejected. It was a very cultured city but it was a city of spiritual darkness.

Remember that all of the people now were gentiles. In this city lived one idolater whose name was Terah. His family had descended from Shem (Joshua 24:2). His family, we find in Genesis 11:26-30, consisted of two surviving sons. He had three sons, but at this time, as they come into the Scripture story, one of them is dead. He has two surviving sons. One was named Abram (later changed by God to Abraham) whose wife's name is Sarai. Another son was named Nahor whose wife was named Milkah. There is a granddaughter Iskah and an orphaned grandson named Lot. The gentile Abram was evidently positive for a knowledge of the living God. He lived in the midst of a sophisticated idolatrous city, and yet somehow he knew that out there was a God who was for real. He was interested in knowing about that God. As always, as for any heathen any place in the world, when you go positive toward the evidence that the world gives you that there is a God out there, God brings the information of salvation of the gospel that you need. So to Abram, in some way, God revealed Himself, and Abram moved from the position of a heathen to a position of a believer in the true God.

The gentile Abram was born again (Romans 4:3). This man, with this new birth, moved from the position of being a gentile now to being a Jew. He was the first of what was to be a totally new group of humanity. During this dispensation, God was going to appoint the Jews to be his stewards, but it necessitated bringing this people into being because they didn't even exist. In other words, He was going to look at all of humanity now (the gentile world), and He was going to siphon off one little trickle of people who would form a special nation with whom He would exclusively deal henceforth. God called on him to leave Ur of the Chaldeans. He also called on him to leave his family, and to go to a new land that he was going to give him called the land of Canaan. The way you had to go was by what is called a Fertile Crescent route. You could not go directly because of the desert. So they had to go up to where there was a way station called Heron, and then they had to follow the crescent around down into the land of Canaan which God had promised to this man. Genesis 12:1, Acts 7:2-3, and Hebrews 11:8 tell us about this call for Abram to leave his family. He was just to take himself and his wife Sarai, and to move on up across the Fertile Crescent to the land of Canaan.

**The Abrahamic Covenant**

This direction for this move was also accompanied by certain promises which set the tone for the dispensation of the Jews. These promises were made by God to Abram. Genesis 12:1-3 are pivotal verses in Scripture. They're one of those points in the Word of God upon which everything else hangs thereafter. We're going to look at what we call the Abrahamic Covenant or the Abrahamic agreement. Genesis 12:1: "Now the Lord had said unto Abram (and his name was Abram in his heathen days, before it was changed later by God), 'Get out of your country and from your kindred and from your father's house, and unto a land that I will show you. And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great. And you shall be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless you and curse them that curse you. In you shall all the families of the earth be blessed.'"

Here are three basic promises, and these three basic promises form what is called the Abrahamic Covenant. In this covenant, there were three promises. The first promise was that of land. We get this because God told Abram, "If you will leave Ur and go to Canaan, I will make of you a great nation." Now you cannot have a great nation unless you have a territory for that nation. That territory was the land of Canaan, or as we know it today, the land of Palestine. What God promised to Abram was from the river Euphrates down to the river Nile through Egypt. This was a vast span of territory which the Jew has never to this day fully possessed. It's important that you understand that. The Jew has never possessed the land that God promised to give him. There were times under Solomon when he had tribute being paid by the people who lived in it. The Jews actually did not live in the land and possess it as such. They had it under military control, but God has not yet kept this promise.

This is why the amillennialist is so ridiculous when he tries to establish that the church today is the inheritor of these promises made to Abram and to the Jewish people. I want you to realize that we are talking in literal terms which is the way the Bible always speaks. When God said, "Abram, I am going to give you a land," be sure that you understand that He was talking about Palestine. That was the land that God had promised, from the Euphrates down to the Nile.

**The Palestinian Covenant**

We have this promise amplified later in another covenant that we shall briefly study at a future time called the Palestinian Covenant. You find this in Deuteronomy 30:1-8. In the Palestinian covenant, we have certain things amplified concerning the Abrahamic Covenant relative to the land. One was that the ownership was to be unconditional. Secondly, they would have possession of the land based on obedience to the Lord. That is, they would be in the place of blessing or they would be driven out of the land. That doesn't mean that if they are disobedient, they will lose this land. It just means that they will lose their place of blessing until they come in obedience, then they will be restored to the land. The Jews' point of blessing is always in the land. The Jew is never blessed outside of Palestine. He's only blessed when he's inside the Promised Land. That's where the promises apply. Then, thirdly, we must add that the Palestinian covenant makes clear that they are to have this land forever.

When God said to Abram, "I'm going to give you the land of Canaan forever," can you enter into what Abram must have thought? What kind of a promise was that? Forever means forever. Don't go through this ridiculous routine that people go through today to try to evade the fact that God has a future for the Jewish people, and that that future is in the land that is in the newspapers today over which battles are being fought. That's why the battles are being fought--because we are moving toward the day in preparation for the time when the Jew is going to have this land as God once promised it to Abram, and as they have never had it to this very day.

There was another promise, and that relative to the seed. We read that God said, "I will make of you a great nation. I will give you a great name." In those days, it was very clear that if you had a great name it meant that you had quite a few children, particularly sons. To be a great nation would obviously require quite a progeny--many descendants. So Abram's descendants would have to be very numerous in order for him to become a nation and for him to have a great name as a result of that. Because this was going to be true of him, that's why his name was changed to Abram in Genesis 17:1-6--that he would be the father of these many nations.

**The Davidic Covenant**

The Davidic Covenant was later given to amplify this promise concerning the seed that was going to descend from Abram. You find this in 2 Samuel 7:12-16. In that covenant there was promised that there would always be a people. Secondly, there was promised for them a kingdom--they would always be an earthly kingdom. And they were always promised a throne, and this meant that there would always be a ruler. The last ruler that was entitled to rule on the Jewish throne was Jesus Christ. This kingdom is still going to be established upon this earth, and again we are speaking literally. You cannot take the Bible and symbolize it.

These Scriptures are particularly symbolized by those who do not believe that there is coming a 1,000-year reign of Christ upon the earth that we call the millennium. Those people are called amillennialists (from the Greek "a" which means "no"). They say that there will be no millennium. You can ask them, "Well, what about the kingdom?" They say, "Oh that's what we're doing now. We're bringing in the kingdom. Every time you give the gospel to somebody and somebody is saved, we're bringing in the kingdom." That's ridiculous. The Bible does not refer to that kind of a kingdom.

Furthermore, all of you know it if you will read the Christmas story. What was promised to Mary? That her son should rule over the house of Jacob from his father David's throne. You know what Mary thought? Mary thought of this promise back here in the Davidic Kingdom. She knew exactly what the angel was talking about. Her son was the fulfillment of what Israel had been looking for all these centuries--the Messiah Savior. So there would be a throne forever; there would be a kingdom to rule over; and, there would be a house--a ruling line of kings--and a people to rule over, and it would be, again, forever. Now do you know how long forever is? The Jewish people are forever going to enjoy heaven on this earth under the rulership of David's greater son the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now all of this is the background of the dispensation of the Jews. I'm belaboring this because this is the dispensation that everybody wants to get hung up in and live in today. This is the one that most Christians are misinformed on and misunderstand. So they try to take things that belong to God's arrangement in this household era and put it over into the age of grace.

**The New Covenant**

Now there was a third thing in this Abrahamic Covenant, and that was blessings that were also promised to this man. We have, in the passage that we read, the word "bless you." Abram and his descendants were to be blessed spiritually, and they were to be made the channel of blessings to others. This was later amplified in the New Covenant that you read about in Jeremiah 31:31-34. In that covenant there was promised the indwelling and the filling of the Holy Spirit. There was promised a new nature, a new heart, and a new mind to the Jewish people. There was also promised forgiveness of sins. These were spiritual blessings which were to come to this people.

The Abrahamic Covenant that you have in these three verses forms the basis for all the rest of the Bible. The rest of the Bible is simply an explanation of God fulfilling these three verses. That's the whole story. You must catch these three verses. They're so small that you could just read right past them, and then the rest of the Bible is a very confusing book unless you understand that everything else that God is doing is fulfilling this Abrahamic Covenant. It was all later confirmed in the Palestinian, the Davidic, and the New covenants. The Abrahamic Covenant itself was further confirmed. You can read this at your leisure in Genesis 12:6-7, Genesis 16:14-17, Genesis 15:1-21, Genesis 17:1-19, and Genesis 22:15-18.

There's another thing about this covenant. I'm going to read these verses again and I want you to watch for one word. As we read, keep your eye open and see if you can see the word "if". "Now the Lord God said unto Abram, 'Get out of your country and from your kindred and from your father's house, unto a land that I will show you (the land of Palestine). I will make of you a great nation (territory), and I will bless you (spiritual blessings, as well as material blessings), and make your name great (a progeny--many descendants), and you shall be a blessing. I will bless them that bless you; curse them that curse you; and, in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed.'" You see there is no "if." We call this, therefore, an unconditional covenant. Abram is going to have this done for him no matter how he behaves himself and no matter what he does or does not do, providing he does one thing.

God has given him an offer. God says, "I will put the offer into operation," and once this covenant goes into operation, then God says, "It's all up to me. You don't have anything more to do with its fulfillment." What do you think he had to do? He had to do what God commanded him to do: get himself out of Ur of the Chaldees; cross over the Euphrates River; head up the Fertile Crescent; and, get into the land of Canaan. Once he said, "Okay, I believe you, God, and I will go," the covenant had been ratified. From that moment forward, it was in effect, and it is in effect till this day. Abram's move out of Ur indicated that he believed God. Genesis 11:31-32 tells us that this is what he did. He got up and he went.

However, he didn't exactly obey God because you notice that it says that he took with him his father and Lot, as well as himself and his wife. He took two of the family with him and then moved out. Because of that, he moved up and he came up here to Heron, and he stayed there for about five years. These were comparatively wasted years which could have been years of blessing had he gone into the land. Instead, he stayed here until his father Terah died, and then, when he was 75 years old and his wife was 65 years old, he finally moved out of Heron and came across the rest of the way into the land that God had promised him. However, the covenant was now in operation.

There was one other thing that was added. Abram was told that when he got into the land, and thus obeyed God completely, he would be a blessing to all the families on the face of the earth. That meant that he would be a blessing in the form of being the channel of the Savior the Lord Jesus Christ. Please remember that Jesus Christ was a Jew. You have this in Genesis 3:15, the promise that He would come, and John 8:56 tells us about this Savior coming and fulfilling this promise. Our revelation of Bible doctrine has come through these descendants of Abram. For that, all of the families on the face of the earth have been blessed.

Verse three tells us that there have been blessings on the gentiles who will bless the Jew. The worst thing you can do is to be anti-Semitic. If you really want to get God's judgment upon your head, just be a Jew hater. Historically, every nation that has ever exercised hatred and persecution toward the Jews has been a nation that has come under destruction, not the least of which in our own recent history has been the Third Reich of Adolf Hitler in Nazi Germany. Every nation, including the United States, that has treated the Jew with kindness and consideration has been a nation that God has protected and blessed. This stipulation of Genesis 12:3 has never been changed. It still is in effect today. Satan is still trying to destroy God's plan by destroying that people.

So what do you do with the Jew today? You treat them like any other gentile. When you have business dealings with him, what do you do? When he tries to Jew you up, you try to "gentile" him down. You treat him just like any other unsaved unbeliever. That's what you do with the Jew today. However, you do not direct hatred and persecution toward him.

This covenant has been declared eternal. I want you to understand that. In Genesis 17:7, this Abrahamic Covenant is declared to be an eternal covenant. The Lord says, "I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your seed after you in their generation for an everlasting covenant to be a God unto you and to your seed after you." So here are certain basic concepts that we want to understand about this Abrahamic Covenant which is the background and the basis of the dispensation of the Jews. Everything else in this dispensation flows from this. So if you understand this covenant, you will be on your way to understanding what's taking place in this dispensation, and what takes place all the way down the line for the rest of the Bible.

**The Abrahamic Covenant**

1. **Literal**

Point number one is that the Abrahamic Covenant is to be interpreted literally. It was an actual piece of real estate--the land of Palestine. There were actual real people called the Jews, and they were the ones to whom this land has been given. We take it literally. I know that there are some times when the Bible uses symbols. However, even when the Bible uses symbols, the symbol has a literal meaning. When the bible quotes the Lord Jesus Christ as saying, "I am the door into the sheepfold," it would take quite a lame brain to think that we are saying that Jesus Christ is a slab of wood with hinges on it. Obviously, we understand that is a symbol of entrance. But the entrance idea is real. It's literal. So, first of all, we always take the Bible literally. This land is the land of Palestine. You can go to the average liberal, and to the average non-instructed Christian, and you can ask him, "Do you think the Jew is going to own Palestine from the Euphrates to the Nile River forever?" If he doesn't say, "No," he'll at least be not sure of it. So, first of all, you interpret the Abrahamic Covenant literally.

1. **Eternal**

Secondly, it is eternal in its extent. It is forever.

1. **Unconditional**

Thirdly, it is unconditional no matter what Abram does. It is the character of God that is involved--not the character of Abram.

1. **Israel**

Fourth, it was made with the nation Israel; with Abram; and, with his descendants, and not with Gentiles. There is no gentile nation that is forever going to possess the land of Palestine. Only those who are descendants of Abram are entitled to that land. They are the only ones who will someday possess it forever. They will not, however, possess this land entirely until Jesus Christ returns. The Jew will never be able to keep what he now has, perhaps on the Sinai Peninsula. Certainly he will never be able to move up to the Euphrates River until Christ has returned.

The Arabs today say, "We have a right to Palestine." Well, the Arabs do have a right, but it's squatter's rights. They moved in on land and been permitted to stay there for centuries because of the Jews disobedience and consequent discipline of God. The Arabs have been permitted to move in on their land. However, the land is the Jews' land. They have the right to the title of it. The line of promise of this covenant goes through Isaac who was a Jew--not through Ishmael through whom the Arabs have come. The line of promise of the Abrahamic Covenant relative to the land goes through Isaac. Therefore, it's to the Jews.

So Jesus Christ is the founder and the head of His spiritual nation the church (Matthew 16:18, 1 Peter 2:9). So too He is the founder of His earthly people the Jews (Act 7:2). In Genesis 12:2, He does this through Abram.

**Hebrew**

Well, what was Abram's response to all this? Well, his response was that he went up to Heron and he took the family with him. He not go all the way to the Promised Land. He went part of the way. He was 70 years old, and his wife was 60 years old. He left Ur and he crossed the river, but he placed an obstacle between himself and the Lord. In time, about five years later, his father died, and the wasted period ends, and he moves on. He leaves Heron; he follows the Fertile Crescent; and, he follows the route into Canaan (Genesis 12:4-5, Acts 7:2, 4). By the way, when did he believe God? He believed God back in Ur of the Chaldees. That's where he became a believer. After he believed God there, he became a Jew. Genesis 14:13, for the first times him a Hebrew. Genesis 14:13 says, "And there came one that had escaped and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt by the oaks of Mamre."

The word Hebrew means "one who crosses over." The reason he was called a Hebrew was because he crossed over the river to follow the route of the Fertile Crescent into the Promised Land. So it simply means "the one who crossed over the Euphrates River." We have this in Joshua 24:2-3 where Joshua says, "And Joshua said unto all the people, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel, 'Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the river (the river Euphrates) of old, even Terah the father of Abram, and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods (they were idol worshipers). And I took your father Abram from the other side of the river and led him throughout all the land of Canaan and multiplied his seed and gave him Isaac.'" So this word "Hebrew" means "the one who crossed over." That's why he was called Abram the Hebrew. He chose to cross over from the place of cursing and darkness which is what was on that side of the river in Ur. He chose to cross over to the side of promise and to the side of enlightenment by obeying God.

After the time of the Babylonian Captivity in Jeremiah's day, most of the people who returned from that captivity were from the tribe of Judah. That's where they began to be called "Jews," because they were from the tribe of Judah. But up to then they were called the people who had crossed over the river. And so they were called Hebrews.

**Faith**

We are told that faith made Abram the friend of God. He took God at His Word, and God's complement was to call him his friend in James 2:23. You and I can also qualify for that kind of an honor to be called the friend of God. To do that, we must believe without question what He has given us. If you were to stand on the brink of Niagara Falls, as some of you have, you would see a very imposing body of water going over that precipice. Once in a while somebody strings a line across--a tightrope--and walks across it.

You can imagine yourself someday standing there as a man says, "Do you think I can walk across that tightrope with this pole?" And you say, "Yes I certainly do." The man begins walking across that tightrope using the pole for balance. He walks across and turns around and comes back, and you cheer him. As soon as he comes back, you say, "You see, I told you that you could." So he says, "Well I have a wheelbarrow here. Do you think I can push this wheelbarrow across and use that to balance myself?" And you look down at that raging water, and man, that water is raging. And you say, "Yes I think you could push that wheelbarrow across," because you'd kind of like to see whether he could or not. It would be a show either way. So he starts pushing it across. Sure enough, he gets across; turns around; and, comes back. And you say, "I told you that you could." And he says, "Well, listen, do you think I could push it across with somebody sitting in the wheelbarrow?" And you say, "Absolutely--no doubt about it." Then he says, "Hop in."

And you say, "Uh," and you don't hop in. Now tell me. Have you believed him? That's what God is talking about. This is what God said to Abram: "Abram, look at this beautiful city. You live in a very cultured family. You live in a family with money and a family with prestige. You live the good life. But I am the living God, and I'm going to do something tremendous. I'm going to ask you to go out here and cross this river and head up north, and swing around down to a land that I'm going to show you that I'm going to give you. I'm going to make you the most magnificent people, with your descendants, on the face of the earth. And the point of belief came that day when Abram said to the family, "OK, let's go," and they crossed the river.

If you have not crossed the river tonight from the side of darkness and spiritual blackness, we would invite you to receive the Lord Jesus Christ and cross over the river tonight. It isn't a matter of how good you and I are because you and I deal in comparative goodness. We find other people that are not as good as ourselves, and therefore we think that we have some credit with God.

Do you remember the last time you were out of gas on the freeway? That's a miserable place to be out of gas. When you're out of gas, your condition is out of gas. What you need is gas. Suppose that some fellow drives up in a nice car, and he hops out, and he whips open his trunk. You say, "Oh boy, here's one of those clever people that carries an extra can of gas in his trunk." Instead, he takes his tool case out. He runs up to you and he says, "Are you having trouble buddy." You say, "Yes, I am." He throws up your hood. And you say, "I think I'm out of gas." And he starts pulling spark plug wires off; gets his wrench down; unscrews a spark plug; takes a look at it; and, he says, "Yeah, dirty." And he cleans the spark plugs; sets the gap; puts everything in; checks the carburetor; tightens all the bolts; and, he fools around there.

All the while you're saying, "The needle says empty. What I need is gas. Do you have any gas? Could you give me a ride down to the gas station?" And he says, "Yeah, right. I'm taking care of you." And so he polishes it all off and takes the air cleaner off and shakes it on the pavement. He gets that nice and clean and screws it back on. Then he slams the hood down and runs back to his car. He gets one of those little foam simonized cans and starts spraying all over your car and cleaning it up. He says, "I'm going to get you going, friend. I'm going to get you going." Pretty soon you stand there while you're helplessly saying, "I need gas," and he gives you a nice shiny car and he says, "Good luck, friend." He loads his tools; slams the trunk down; hops in his car; and, drives off. You're standing there with this beautiful shiny car here on the expressway--out of gas.

Now that's what you have to understand relative to you and God. The gas that you need to get into heaven is absolute righteousness. Your minus righteousness--less than perfect--is out of gas. What you have to have is God's absolute righteousness--his plus righteousness--that's the gas that takes you into heaven.

Now once Abram said, "I believe you God," The Word of God tells us in Galatians 3:6, "It was accounted to him for righteousness." What that means was that Abram, who at that moment stood looking down this river thinking this thing over, believed God and he crossed over. The minute he came over to this other side, he ended up with plus righteousness. He ended up with God's perfect righteousness. That gave him the gas to go all the way to the Promised Land. If you're going to have the gas to go all the way to the Promised Land of heaven, it's going to take the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

So the Word of God tells us that He, Christ, who knew no sin, took upon him our sins. He became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God; we might become plus righteousness in Him. He is willing to swap you plus righteousness for your sins. Abram did it, and here we are thousands of years later remembering this man whose name shall be remembered forever. He was a man who believed God; became righteous by that act; produced a fantastic nation; was carried all the way to heaven; and, today all the world stands and applauds the Israeli people. All the world stands except those who never crossed the river. Those on Satan's side grit their teeth in indignation in hatred toward the people that descended from Abram.

What will follow you and me? What will follow depends on whether we cross that river or not. I hope you've crossed into the family of God and received the gas that will take you right into heaven. No matter how cleaned up, cultured, and refined you are, you are on the outside, without that righteousness, and the place that you will end up will be in the lake of fire.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1971

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