

ver. 5 occurred during, or before, sunrise. Now the sun is going down; and, with external darkness, a feeling of deep horror seizes his mind. This would fill him with feelings of reverence, and be, in accordance with the dark future, awaiting his seed. Here Abraham is taught that his seed are to be strangers and sufferers in a foreign land for 400 years; that God will at length execute judgment against their oppressors; that he himself shall die in peace; that, in the fourth generation, his seed shall enter on the possession of Canaan; that all this must be deferred in the mean time, till the time of the probation of the Amorites, the present possessors, shall have been fulfilled. How remarkably was all this fulfilled!

Vv. 17-21.—The *smoking furnace*, and the *burning lamp*, may refer to the future history of his posterity; the former signifying their affliction in Egypt, as deep in Deut. iv. 20, an *iron furnace*; and the latter, their deliverance. Or if, like the pillar of fire, the burning lamp represented the divine majesty, its passing between the pieces of the slain victims would denote God's entering into covenant with Abraham. Thus covenants were made. Lev. xxxiv. 18. In this way God entered into covenant with Abraham, giving Canaan to his seed, the boundaries of which, with the nations included in it, are next mentioned. The promised land thus extended from the Nile to the Euphrates. Jer. ii. 18.

LESSONS.

1. God has a promise to meet our every want and every difficulty.
2. Those who follow God may count on his protection. 1 Pet. iii. 13.
3. Learn here the importance of faith in Christ. See Short. Cat. 2. 86.
4. Our whole future is known to God, and in wisdom and mercy provided for.
5. God enters into covenant with his people; and Jesus is the surety of it.

DOCTRINE TO BE PROVED.

We have acceptance with God only through faith in Christ. Rom. v. 1, 2; iii. 28; Eph. ii. 8; John xiv. 6; Eph. i. 6.

FIFTH SABBATH.

SUBJECT: *The covenant renewed and sealed.* Gen. xvii.

The sixteenth chapter describes the plan Abraham adopted to secure the promised seed. God permitted this plan so far to succeed; and Abraham had a son. Though that son has been obtained by a course worse than doubtful, Abraham yet seems to have been satisfied. His crooked policy has succeeded, and thirteen years pass away in this unsatisfactory state. But God is faithful, and again visits Abraham.

V. 1.—*I am the Almighty God.* Of this Abraham needs to be reminded. *Perfect.*—Sincere, upright, and implied reproof. Our duty is to walk before God in sincerity, leaving him to accomplish his own designs in his own way.

Vv. 2-8.—This covenant includes (1) a numerous seed, including the descendants of Isaac, Ishmael, Esau and Keturah; and, indeed, all believers. Rom. iv. 16, 17. (2) Illustrious kings, as those of Judah and Israel, the kings of Edom, the Saracen kings of Arabia, Babylon and Egypt. and, above all, Jesus the Kings of kings, (3) a new name, Abram, meaning great father, and Abraham, father of a multitude. This is the first recorded change of name. The practice became common afterwards; and the change of name expresses a change in the position and circumstances of the individual. Thus, Jacob was changed to Israel. Gen. xxxii. 28; and Simon to Peter. Mat. xvi. 18. In like manner all believers obtain a new name. Isa. lxii. 2; Rev. iii. 12, (4) an interest in God. Ver. 7. See Heb. xi. 16; Jer. xxxi. 33; xxxii. 38-40. This is the covenant of grace made with Jesus, and all believers in Jesus. (5) A renewed grant of Canaan. Ver. 8.

Vv. 9-14.—To this covenant Abraham's consent is required, and the rite of circumcision is to be the expression of that consent. Circumcision was the sign, the seal of God's covenant; and Abraham and his posterity were to wear it, as a badge, to distinguish them from the gentile nations. To reject the seal of the covenant was regarded and treated as rejecting the covenant itself; and the person so acting was to be cut off—excommunicated from the church and privileges of an Israelite. This rite is expressive of moral purity. Deut. xxx. 6; Phil. iii. 2. Under the gospel baptism is the seal of the covenant, corresponding to circumcision.

Vv. 15-22.—Saraï was included in the covenant, in token of which her name was changed. Saraï means *my princess*, or as some understand the word, *contentious*.—Sarah means *princess of a multitude*. Abraham *laughed*, not in scorn, as Sarah did. Gen. xviii. 12. His words were much the same as hers, but the feeling was very different. The same act may possess a different character, according to the motive that prompts it. Ver. 18. Hitherto Abraham has regarded Ishmael as the promised seed, and when Isaac is promised, he can with difficulty let Ishmael go from his place in his heart. But though Isaac is to be the heir of the covenant, yet, from his relation to Abraham, Ishmael is not to go unblest. Gen. xxv. 12-16.

Vv. 23-27.—All Abraham's objections are silenced, his difficulties vanish. Mark three features in his obedience 1.—It is