

Pentwater Bible Church
God Commands Jacob to Bethel
Genesis Message Sixty-Four
Genesis 31: 1-21



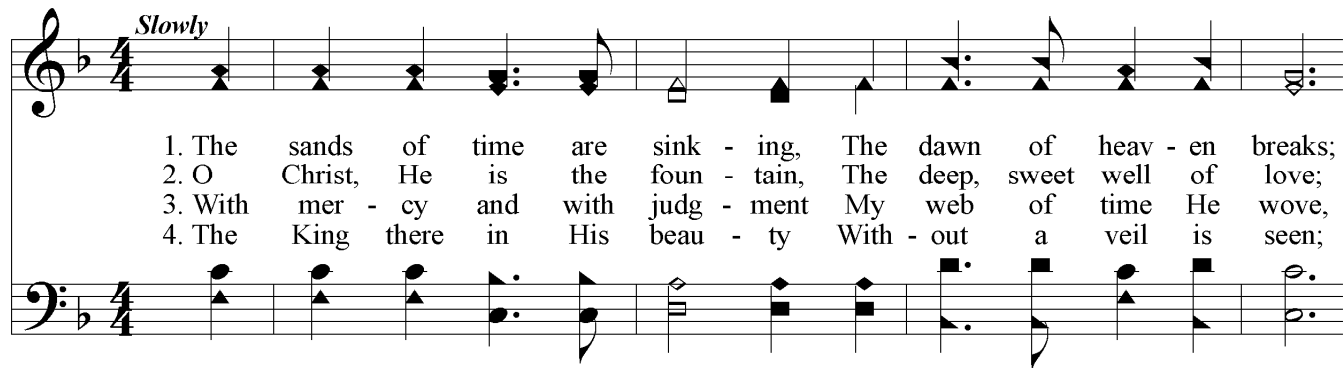
Return of Jacob with his family to Bethel by Francesco Bassano 1580

Daniel E. Woodhead – Pastor Teacher

SING Verses 1, 2 & 4

THE SANDS OF TIME

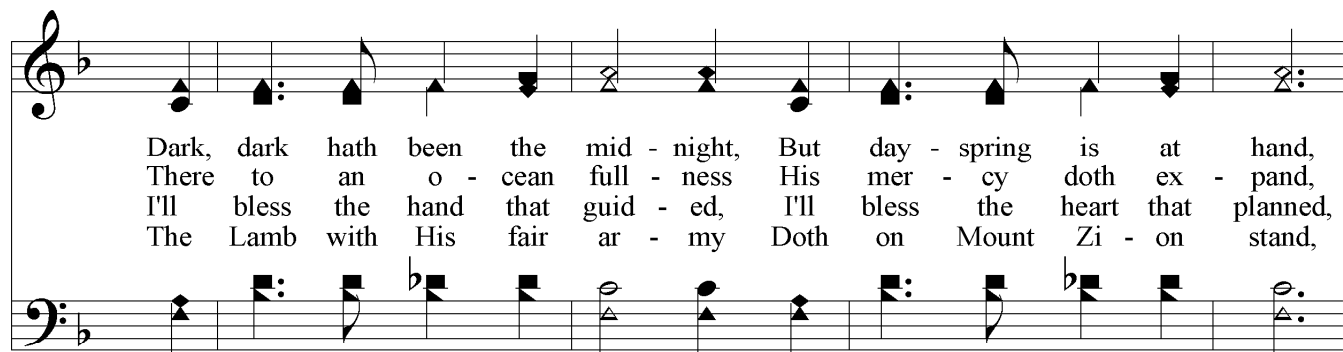
Slowly



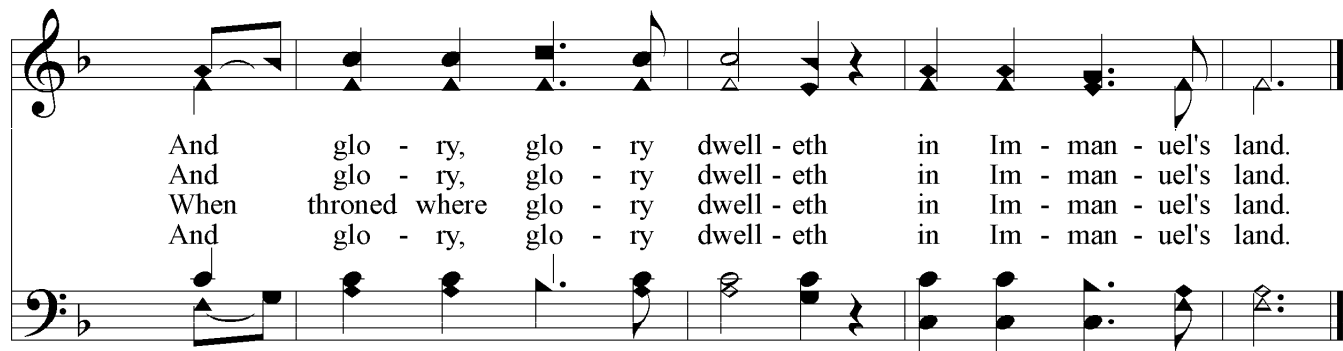
1. The sands of time are sink - ing, The dawn of heav - en breaks;
2. O Christ, He is the foun - tain, The deep, sweet well of love;
3. With mer - cy and with judg - ment My web of time He wove,
4. The King there in His beau - ty With - out a veil is seen;



The sum - mer morn I've sighed for, The fair, sweet morn a - wakes;
The streams on earth I've tast - ed, More deep I'll drink a - bove;
And aye the dews of sor - row Were bright - en by His love;
It were a well spent jour - ney, Tho' sev'n deaths lay be - tween;



Dark, dark hath been the mid - night, But day - spring is at hand,
There to an o - cean full - ness His mer - cy doth ex - pand,
I'll bless the hand that guid - ed, I'll bless the heart that planned,
The Lamb with His fair ar - my Doth on Mount Zi - on stand,



And glo - ry, glo - ry dwell - eth in Im - man - uel's land.
And glo - ry, glo - ry dwell - eth in Im - man - uel's land.
When throned where glo - ry dwell - eth in Im - man - uel's land.
And glo - ry, glo - ry dwell - eth in Im - man - uel's land.

IN HEAVEN THEY'RE SINGING

1. In heav - en they're sing - ing a won - der - ful song, A theme that shall
2. We read of its beau - ty, but some how we know, Its glo - ry has
3. What mu - sic we'll hear when the ran - somed of earth, Shall en - ter that

nev - er grow old; And glo - ri - fied mil - lions are sing - ing it now,
nev - er been told, But think of the rap - tur - ous sing - ing up there
heav - en - ly fold, When all re - deemed sin - gers shall join in that song

Chorus

In that beau - ti - ful ci - ty of gold. They're sing - ing the songs of sal -

va - tion, A sto - ry that nev - er grows old; And glo - ri - fied

mil - lions are sing - ing it now, In that beau - ti - ful ci - ty of gold.

Dentwater Bible Church

Genesis Message Sixty-Four God Blesses Jacob Materially

April 29, 2012

Daniel E. Woodhead

Review:

THE CONTRACT

Genesis 30: 25-36

Jacob's second seven-year period of servitude to Laban had expired and now they were about to negotiate a new agreement. Jacob still had not accumulated any wealth for which to independently support four women and eleven sons and some daughters. One more son would be born to him through Rachel. That would be Benjamin bringing the total of his sons to twelve. Jacob had paid the agreed upon price for both wives. He simply asked Laban to let him go back to his own country in Canaan. Jacob said to Laban, “, *Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country.* ²⁶*Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served thee, and let me go.*” There was no doubt in Laban's mind that Jacob had paid him in full. Actually, Laban realized that because of Jacob he had been blessed. What he said to Jacob was, “*If now I have found favor in thine eyes, tarry: for I have divined that Jehovah hath blessed me for thy sake.*” Laban was a pagan and did not know Jehovah. He practiced *divination* and the Hebrew word for this is *nachasti* נִחֲסִי which, has the same root as snake or serpent נָחָשׁ. It quite literally means to divine through a serpent. This is an occultic practice. Therefore, through a pagan occultic practice Laban was able to understand that Jacob's God, whom ever He might be, was blessing him. What Laban did not realize was, the blessing was a component of God's Covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12: 2-3). Certainly Laban realizing the benefits of Jacob's time with him did not want him to leave. He was concerned that this God who was unknown to him would stop blessing him after Jacob left. He counters with a negotiation.

Laban says to Jacob, “*Appoint me thy wages, and I will give it.*” Jacob seems to ignore Laban's request for a fee and goes on to describe how he had made Laban wealthy. This is a well-known negotiation tactic. One takes the lead and affirms their benefits to this deal in order to broker the best arrangement. Jacob was in a great position to get a good deal from Laban. So Laban listens to this negotiation tactic and says “what do you want then?” Jacob says that he does not want anything. What he meant was anything in advance. He wanted an opportunity. He needed the opportunity to provide some material accumulation. Up to now he only received room and board for all his efforts and Laban became wealthy as a result. Jacob said that he would continue to keep Laban's flocks. In addition he asks Laban to give him a certain type of animals from his flock while he took care of them. There were three categories he asked for:

1. Every speckled one (generalizing the characteristics)
2. Every black one among the sheep

3. Every spotted and speckled among the goats

He didn't even want them to be given to him outright. He just wanted to breed them and keep the offspring. In the Mid-East sheep are generally white and the goats are normally dark brown or black. So the number of animals he was asking for would be minimal. A minority of sheep may have dark patches, and goats white markings. It is these rare ones to be born in the future that Jacob negotiated as wages for his services. Laban readily agrees, believing that he is getting a bargain on account of the number of them being minimal. This does not seem to be an extreme measure since he could have demanded much more based upon the level of wealth he brought to Laban. This request was actually very fair and Jacob ended the negotiation with a test of his honesty.

He told Laban that he could test his honesty by looking over the flock and see *“before thee: every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, and black among the sheep, that if found with me, shall be counted stolen.”* Laban agrees to this, but takes some precautions of his own. He promptly withdraws all the livestock that already possess the specified characteristics and moves them a considerable distance away to avoid contact with the rest of the flocks that remain in Jacob's care. So what he did was to handicap Jacob by not give him a good start on building his own flock. Jacob made a bonafide fair offer and Laban was trying to prevent Jacob from being successful. This is the second time Laban has successfully deceived Jacob. However, Jacob succeeds in outwitting Laban in the course of the next six years.

It is real clear here who the cheater is in this situation with Jacob and Laban. Laban took the animals that were supposed to be Jacob's and gave them to his own sons. This is the first mention of sons in Laban's household. Finally Laban leaves and separates a substantial distance between them *and he set three days' journey betwixt himself and Jacob: and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.*

So Jacob sets to work as agreed and Laban does as *not* agreed. God is with Jacob not the pagan occultic Laban. He used Laban to correct Jacob, but he will not allow Laban to benefit from Jacob any longer.

GOD GROWS JACOB'S FLOCK

Genesis 30: 37-43

We have to view the increase as God given which today is called selective breeding. It originated with Jacob and clearly was a blessing in knowledge as part of the Covenant. In the face of adversity with Laban God is going to prosper Jacob as He promised. The contemporary advantages of the Jacob sheep in a commercial operation are that they are small and hardy, economical to feed and have few health problems. They can occupy for feeding about six sheep per acre, compared to about five per acre with the other breeds. The small, fine-boned Jacob sheep has no lambing problems in contrast with the improved breeds that often need birthing assistance. Jacob ewes are also good mothers, and often have twins and occasional triplets.

So how did Jacob accomplish the selective breeding known today to have originated with him? ¹ First he made spotted rods out of fresh poplar, which he cut to provide streaks. After he carved the bark so they had a tiger stripe effect. Then he placed the rods in the place where the flocks watered and mated. *And the flocks conceived before the rods, and the flocks brought forth ringstreaked, speckled, and spotted.* He then separated out those that would be his. He *separated the lambs, and set the faces of the flocks toward the ringstreaked and all the black in the flock of Laban: and he put his own droves apart, and put them not unto Laban's flock.* Meaning he separated the ringstreaked, speckled or black out for his wages as agreed. What was actually happening here was that Laban's pure white sheep or pure black goats produced the ringstreaked, the speckled and the striped, which now belonged to Jacob. In that time there was a superstition that stated whatever the animal fixed its attention upon while copulating would make an impression on its embryo. However, God was working on blessing Jacob and this is the miracle, which caused these offspring. Jacob had many years of experience in working with flocks.

God had given him the ability to identify the animals with heterosis or hybrid vigor (occurrence of a genetically superior offspring from mixing the genes of its parents). An amateur in flock management would not observe those symptoms. Jacob further only used the rods when the stronger came to the mating area so as to increase them. He did not use the rods when the weak sheep mated. This was Jacob's revenge for Laban's deceit. The weak or feeble ones were born either all white or all black. Another words the weak ones were black among the goats or white among the sheep. Jacob kept only the strong ones, which were speckled, spotted or striped.

In the next section of Scripture we will see that the desired characteristics were indeed obtained through controlled propagation and transmitted from parent to progeny. Scientifically, the required results could be achieved by the successive interbreeding of the monochrome heterozygotes, or the single colored animals that carried recessive genes for spottedness. Such animals are detectable by the characteristic previously mentioned as hybrid vigor and also known as heterosis. But these processes are recent (19th century) animal husbandry procedures. Further development in the twentieth century came about with an understanding of DNA. They were not known in antiquity. Only God can be given the praise for it was not lucky that Jacob grew the flock from *no* basis. It was not superstition either. God alone gave Jacob these skills.

Today's Message:

JACOB RECEIVED ORDERS FROM GOD

Genesis 31: 1-13

¹And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's; and of that which was our father's hath he gotten all this glory. ²And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it was

¹ Thomas, Heather Smith, Jacob Sheep – S Unique Sheep Breed, from Hobby farms.Com Internet accessed April 21, 2012 <http://www.hobbyfarms.com/livestock-and-pets/unique-sheep-breed-14784.aspx>

not toward him as beforetime. ³And Jehovah said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee. ⁴And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field unto his flock, ⁵and said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it is not toward me as beforetime; but the God of my father hath been with me. ⁶And ye know that with all my power I have served your father. ⁷And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me. ⁸If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages; then all the flock bare speckled: and if he said thus, The ringstreaked shall be thy wages; then bare all the flock ringstreaked. ⁹Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me. ¹⁰And it came to pass at the time that the flock conceive, that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream, and, behold, the he-goats which leaped upon the flock were ringstreaked, speckled, and grizzled. ¹¹And the angel of God said unto me in the dream, Jacob: and I said, Here am I. ¹²And he said, Lift up now thine eyes, and see, all the he-goats which leap upon the flock are ringstreaked, speckled, and grizzled: for I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee. ¹³I am the God of Beth-el, where thou anointedst a pillar, where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy nativity (ASV 1901).

Now Jacob heard what Laban's sons were saying about how they thought he had stolen from their father. Envy, a fruit of the flesh, never leads to a Godly end for those who choose to embrace it. Jacob needed this as additional motivation to leave Haran and journey back to his home in Bethel. They thought they would continue to receive the benefit of Jacob's servitude to Laban but now Jacob had become wealthy. Their principal complaint was that, *Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's; and of that which was our father's hath he gotten all this glory.* Their statements were certainly false. Untruths does not seem to deter the worldly in their quest to acquire or advance at all cost. Laban had chosen not to abide to the agreement he made with Jacob and that was reflected in his son's attitude. Our children will see what we do and follow it as appropriate behavior. Further Jacob saw the Laban's negative attitude reflected in his countenance. He knew it was time to leave.

Proverbs 21: 29

A wicked man hardens his face, But as for the upright, he establishes his way (NKJV).

He had the problem though that he had not heard from his mother Rebecca that Esau was no longer planning on killing him. This was a dilemma for Jacob. He knew he had to leave but didn't know if it was safe to return or not. Jehovah God then came to Jacob again for the second time. It had been twenty years since the first appearance. This time he received instructions from Jehovah, to return to his home, together with assurance of divine protection. With God saying to Jacob *and I will be with thee*, he now had the promise that whatever happened when he returned he would be in God's will and therefore protected.

The rest of the family had never known Canaan. Their lives had always been lived in Haran. Jacob took that into consideration when he explained the situation to them. He sent for Rachel and Leah. He wanted them to come to him at work in the field. Jacob's trust of Laban and his sons had disintegrated to the point of needing to discuss this matter in the field so they could not eavesdrop. He simply told them that he saw it in Laban's face that his attitude toward him had changed and that God had assured him that he was with him. He further went on explaining that he served Laban for almost fourteen years and now Laban had changed his wages ten times and was forcing him out despite the good and faithful service he rendered to him. Jacob realized the true source of his wealth and protection and was now prepared to act upon God's command. Laban's deviousness had worked against him as it always does in the long run. God sees everything and *hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me*. Jacob then went on to elaborate just exactly what God did to cause the increase in Jacob's wealth and the reduction in Laban's.

The Lord said to Jacob that He was the source of the multi-colored flocks he had gained. Jacob still thought that it was the rods, which was the prevalent superstition utilized at that time to force the recessive genes' to production of the desired characteristics in the flock's offspring's. God was essentially telling him (*God said unto me in the dream*) that the outcome would have been favorable to him regardless of whether he used the rods or not. The vision God gave him showed him that, *all the he-goats which leap upon the flock are ringstreaked, speckled, and grizzled: for I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee*. What God had allowed Jacob to see as the flock mated were the characteristics of the recessive genes, which would become the characteristics of the offspring. God did not fault Jacob for anything. He saw Laban's manner and now put him under the cursing aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant. Prior to this while Laban was being blessed through Jacob God was allowing the blessing aspect of the Covenant to be rendered to Laban. The Lord reminded Jacob of the vow twenty years earlier and told him to return to the Land of Canaan.

LEAH AND RACHEL REACT

Genesis 31: 14-16

¹⁴*And Rachel and Leah answered and said unto him, Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? ¹⁵Are we not accounted by him as foreigners? for he hath sold us, and hath also quite devoured our money. ¹⁶For all the riches, which God hath taken away from our father that is ours and our children's: now then, whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do (ASV 1901).*

Jacob did not consult the concubines only his wives in the decision to leave Haran. The concubines are excluded because their lower social status as acquired staff. They were not from the family of Laban so that makes it unnecessary for Jacob to seek their agreement to his plan. Both Leah and Rachel resented what Laban had done. Their inheritance was lost and they believed that Laban their father was treating them as outsiders and not family members. Instead of having some money for them he *hath sold*

us, and hath also quite devoured our money. Laban was an unworthy father and used them as well as Jacob to advance himself. Their pent up feelings of bitterness come pouring out when Jacob told them that they would be leaving for Canaan. So they were delighted at the prospect of leaving a difficult situation and making a new life in Canaan away from the constricting grip of their father Laban. They realized that it was God making the provisions for their family and blessing Jacob. All they could say was *whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do.* They were all for leaving and told Jacob to do whatever God said. Go For It!

JACOB'S ESCAPE

Genesis 31: 17-21

¹⁷Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon the camels; ¹⁸and he carried away all his cattle, and all his substance which he had gathered, the cattle of his getting, which he had gathered in Paddan-aram, to go to Isaac his father unto the land of Canaan. ¹⁹Now Laban was gone to shear his sheep: and Rachel stole the teraphim that were her father's. ²⁰And Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian, in that he told him not that he fled. ²¹So he fled with all that he had; and he rose up, and passed over the River, and set his face toward the mountain of Gilead (ASV 1901).

Jacob then began his journey with his family, and all the property that he had acquired in Paddan-Aram, to return to his father in Canaan. He set them on camels, which is actually a “camel cushion” for hiding. He had traded some of the cattle affirming his skills as a businessman as well as at animal husbandry. At that time Laban had gone to the sheep shearing, which kept him a goodly distance from his home on account of the size of his flock. The JPS commentary describes the ancient practice of sheep-shearing.

Sheep-shearing in Mesopotamia was carried out in the spring. It entailed much hard work on the part of a large number of men who often had to labor at a considerable distance from their homes for extended periods of time. Mesopotamian documents from the eighteenth century B.C. refer to severe labor shortages on such occasions. In one case a gang of 1,000 men was said to be insufficient. One letter from the Mari archives records the need for 300–400 men for a period of three days, while another states that the shearing would have to take as long as a week and a half due to rains and an inadequate labor force. The completion of the arduous work would be marked by festivities:²

It is quite clear why Jacob selected this particular time to leave. All of the men of Laban's house would be far away and busy with the sheep-shearing task.

Rachel then decided to rob him of his *teraphim*. These were small images of household gods in human form, which were worshipped as givers of earthly prosperity,

² Sarna, N. M. (1989). *Genesis*. The JPS Torah commentary (216) Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.

and also consulted as oracles, and whosoever had possession of them could claim the family property. It was quite possible that she had not give herself over fully yet to Jehovah God in spite of the blessing He had given this family. Or since she was angry at being disinherited she wanted to take something of value from Laban. She did steal them. and had no right to take them. One does not retaliate for a wrong by doing an unjustified act.

The Nuzi tablets as well as Roman writings record their perceived value.

That possession of the household gods was connected to birthright or clan leadership is to be inferred from an adoption contract from Nuzi, which stipulates: “If Nashwi has a son of his own, he shall divide [the estate] equally with Wullu, but the son of Nashwi shall take the gods of Nashwi. However, if Nashwi does not have a son of his own, then Wullu shall take the gods of Nashwi.” (Nuzi Tablets)³ The Nuzi texts in general appear to reflect common Mesopotamian legal practice (as now known from Emar on the Syrian Euphrates), and thus cannot be used to fix the date of certain biblical traditions in the 2nd millennium.³

Nuzi was a Hurrian administrative center near the Hurrian capital at Kirkuk in northern Iraq. The Hurrians are near to the Horites in the Old Testament. Some believe that they were also the Hivites and Jebusites. Archaeological digs were carried out at Nuzi by American teams from 1925 to 1933. They found more than 5,000 family and administrative archives spanning six generations, ca. 1450-1350 BC. They deal with the social, economic, religious and legal institutions of the Hurrians. The tablets tell of practices similar to those in Genesis such as adoption for childless couples (Genesis 15:2) children by proxy (Genesis 16; 21:1), inheritance rights (Genesis 25:29), marriage arrangements (Genesis 28) and levirate marriage (Genesis 38; Deuteronomy 25:5). These and other ancient Near East documents give us some idea of the nature of life in the ancient world.

In the case of Jacob, however, the *terafim* could not have assured inheritance rights since he claimed nothing from Laban and, was leaving Mesopotamia for good. He left without Laban’s knowledge.

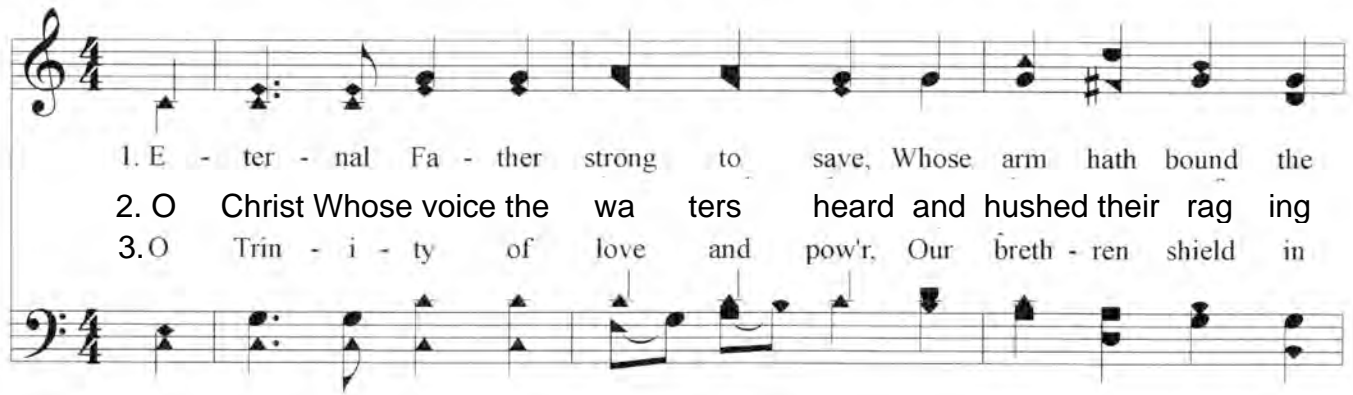
NEXT WEEK: LABAN CONFRONTS JACOB

Please Call or e-mail with any questions or comments.

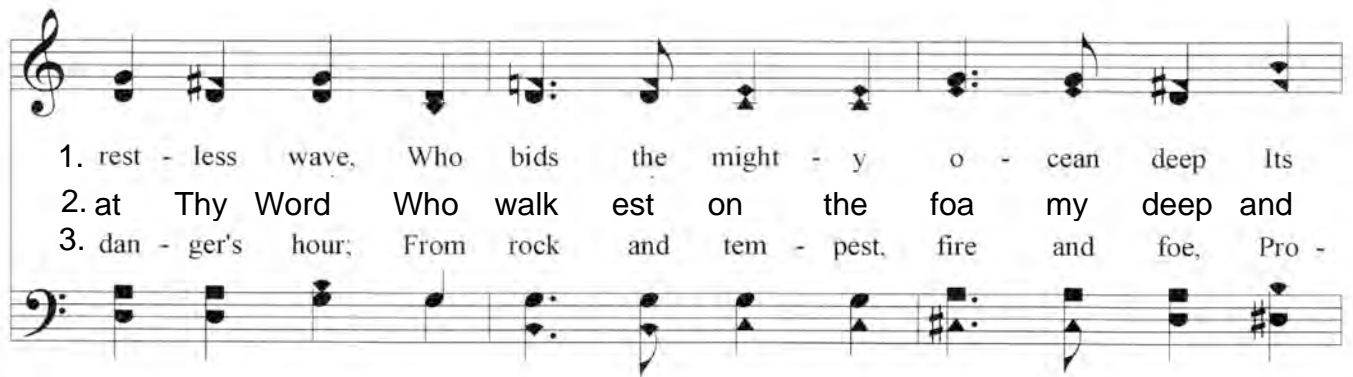
Info@pentwaterbiblechurch.com Toll Free 877-706-2479

³ Freedman, D. N., Myers, A. C., & Beck, A. B. (2000). *Eerdmans dictionary of the Bible* (977). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

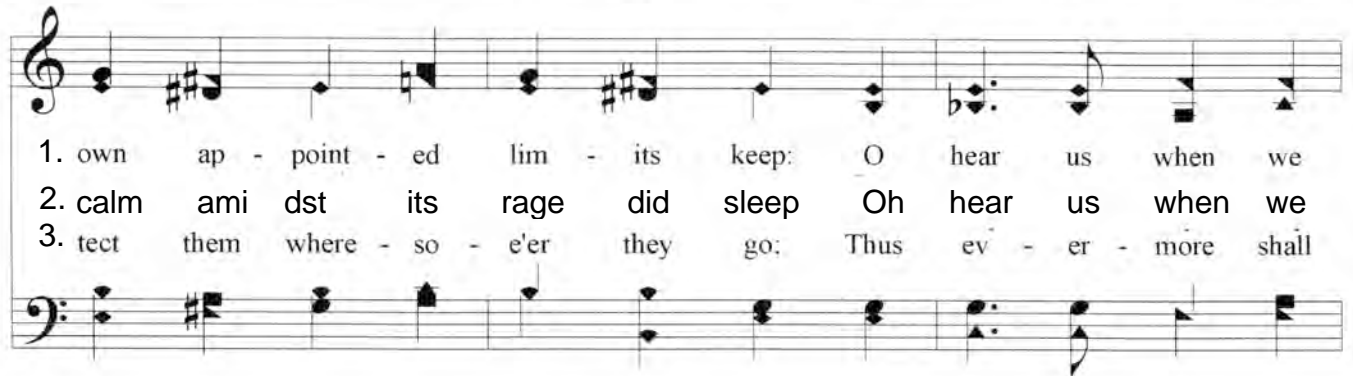
ETERNAL FATHER, STRONG TO SAVE



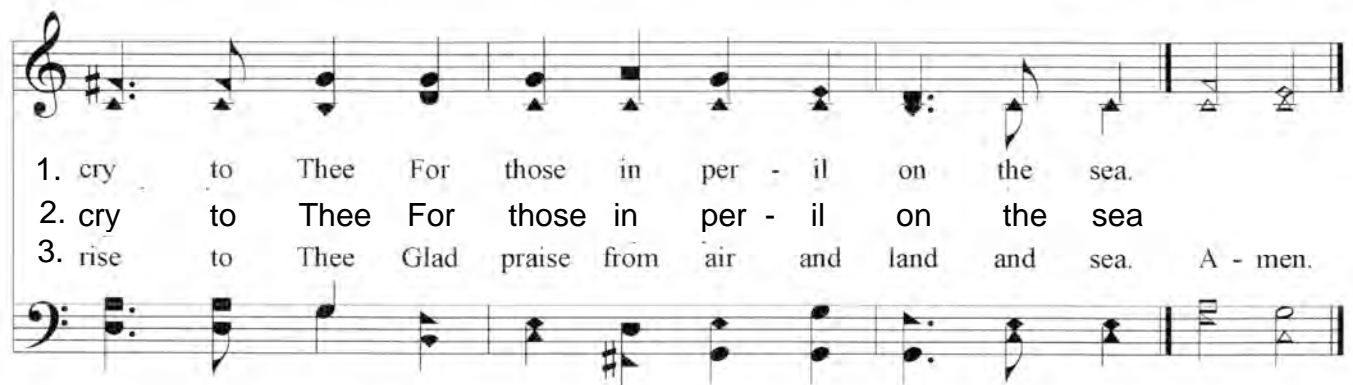
1. E - ter - nal Fa - ther strong to save, Whose arm hath bound the
2. O Christ Whose voice the wa ters heard and hushed their rag ing
3. O Trin - i - ty of love and pow'r, Our breth - ren shield in



1. rest - less wave, Who bids the might - y o - cean deep Its
2. at Thy Word Who walk est on the foa my deep and
3. dan - ger's hour; From rock and tem - pest, fire and foe, Pro -



1. own ap - point - ed lim - its keep: O hear us when we
2. calm ami dst its rage did sleep Oh hear us when we
3. tect them where - so - e'er they go: Thus ev - er - more shall



1. cry to Thee For those in per - il on the sea.
2. cry to Thee For those in per - il on the sea
3. rise to Thee Glad praise from air and land and sea. A - men.