



KINGDOM SPIRIT

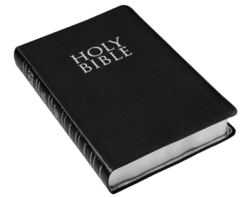
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"SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD"

Matthew 6:33



Issue 704

GENESIS :16 - 30

Last month we looked at the unconditional promises that God made to Abram. Obviously, these promises were going to take more time than the rest of Abram's life to be brought to pass, plus they promised descendants to Abram. This presented a major problem. Abram had no children! Abram and Sarai believed God, but felt they had to help God out since both of them were getting quite old. First, Abram offered to accept Eliezer, his steward, as his heir, as we read last month in Chapter 11. God rejected this offer telling Abram that his heir would be Abram's own son. So then Sarai, Abram's wife, offered her help. If you have been reading the book of Genesis as we have been going through it, you know that there was a famine in the land of Canaan that forced Abram and Sarai to go down to Egypt for a time. While in Egypt, the Pharaoh gave Abram and Sarai a handmaid whose name was Hagar, who by some accounts was the Pharaoh's daughter.

When Sarai realized that she apparently could have no children, she told Abram to take Hagar, her maid servant, as a wife and Sarai would consider children born of Hagar as her own. Abram did as Sarai asked and Hagar soon became with child. When Sarai realized that Hagar was to give birth, Sarai had a change of heart and despised Hagar and was very hard on her causing Hagar to flee. However, an angel found Hagar and told her to return to Sarai and that she,

Hagar, would have a son that she was to name Ishmael. The angel also told her that God would multiply her seed exceedingly so that there would be so many that they could not be numbered. The present day Arabs are the descendants of Ishmael.

God rejected Ishmael as the heir of the promises that He had made to Abram, but told Abram that Ishmael would beget twelve princes and would be a great nation.

When Abram was ninety-nine and Sarai was eighty-nine God repeated some of the promises to Abram and changed his name from Abram (which means "Exalted Father:") to Abraham (which means "Father of a Multitude"). He told Abraham that at the appointed time the next year, Sarai would bare a son who was to be named Isaac and changed Sarai's name to Sarah (meaning "Princess"). This was hard for Abraham to accept because of his and Sarah's ages, but God assured him this would be the case and that God would establish His covenant (the promises) with Isaac and his seed as an everlasting covenant.

At this time, God made a covenant, or agreement, with Abraham that later led to serious religious perversion, so we need to understand its origin, reason, and consequences. This covenant was the covenant of circumcision. It is recorded in Gen. 17:9-14. Abraham was to circumcise (cut off) the flesh of his foreskin, that of his sons, and that of his male servants that lived in his house. They were to continue this practice on all male children born into their households when

the child was eight days old. This applied to all males in the household whether born in the house, or servants bought with money. The reason, as given in verse 11 was that **“it shall be a token (or sign) of the covenant (promises) betwixt me and you.”** This could be compared to the rainbow, in that it was given by God to Noah as a sign or token of a covenant God established with Noah, that He would not again destroy all flesh with a flood. In Abraham’s case, Abraham had to give the sign, whereas God gave the sign in Noah’s case. But the token Abraham was to give was not anything more or less than obeying God. It was not a prerequisite for anything like we find the Pharisee’s trying to make it in the New Testament. It was not required for the promises of God to Abraham to be kept, but was simply a matter of obeying God. As we find much weight given this ritual later, remember it was only a sign or token of God’s promises. I don’t mean to relegate it to something unimportant, as anything God says to do is very important, but please keep in mind its real reason and that it was given to Abraham—not part of the law given to Moses.

Back to the special eleventh promise God made to Abraham, that Abraham would have a son by his wife Sarah that would inherit the promises God made to Abraham. When Abraham was one hundred years old, Sarah, who was ninety, bore a son. As per God’s instruction, they named him Isaac (meaning laughter).

As Isaac grew, dissension again arose between Sarah and Hagar and Sarah told Abraham to cast Hagar and her son out. This was very grievous to Abraham, but God told him not to worry and to do as Sarah had told him, as Abraham’s seed would be called in Isaac, and God would make a great nation of Ishmael. So Abraham did as God instructed him and as Ishmael grew, we are told he took a wife out of the land of Egypt.

Then God did a very strange thing. He told Abraham to take Isaac and go to the land of Moriah and to offer Isaac as a burnt offering on one of the mountains there that God would show him. Put yourself in Abraham’s position for a moment and then remember how you feel in doing so

when we get to the New Testament and the story of Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. Here Abraham was well over one hundred, his wife was also over one hundred, Isaac was his only son by Sarah and God had promised that it would be through Isaac and his seed that the promises would be carried out. Yet, here God was telling him that now he must kill Isaac and sacrifice him on an altar. Abraham gave us a very good lesson in the difference between *believing God* and *believing in God*. Though it would have had to be an unbearable thing to do, Abraham took Isaac and traveled over two days to the mountain God had designated; took Isaac up on the mountain; prepared the altar; and reached the point of taking his knife up to strike the fatal blow on Isaac. At this point, Gen. 22:10-13 tells us an angel stopped Abraham and provided a ram to be sacrificed in place of Isaac. The angel then reiterated several of God’s promises to Abraham.

An interesting part of the study of God’s Word are the types and shadows that we will see. By this we mean that there will be people and events that are like, in a sense, other people and events that we see later in Scripture. In this case, Isaac was a type of Jesus Christ and this event would be considered a shadow of His crucifixion.

Sarah died at 127 years old. Abraham purchased the field of Machpelah which had a cave that Abraham used as a burying place for Sarah.

As Isaac grew and matured, Abraham was very careful in selecting a wife for Isaac. He sent his eldest servant back to the land from which he had come, to the city of Nahor, Abraham’s brother. When there, the servant met Rebekah, a beautiful grand daughter of Nahor, at a well just outside the city. The beautiful story of how he chose Rebekah and her agreement to return with him to Isaac is in Gen. 24.

Rebekah bore Isaac twin sons, Esau and Jacob. Though twins, they were very different from each other. Esau was the first born and we’re told he was **“red, all over like a hairy garment,”** thus his name Esau, meaning hairy. Jacob was born last, but was born clutching onto his brother’s heel, thus his name, which literally

means “one who takes the heel.” It also means “Supplanter” or “Deceitful.”

Before they were born, Rebekah, recognizing something was quite different as she carried these babies, inquired of God as to what was happening to her. Gen. 25:23 tells us, **“The Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.”** The prophet Malachi, in Malachi 1:2-3, and later the apostle Paul, in Rom. 9:13 added **“Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”** This helps us understand some of the events in the lives of these twin sons, Esau the first born, and Jacob the younger. We soon see that Jacob took advantage of his older brother and “traded” him out of his birthright. Then with the help of his mother, and a little deceit of his own, he obtained his father’s blessing that had been intended for Esau. Having obtained both the birthright and the blessing, the promises made to Abraham, by God, and passed on to Isaac, now passed on to Jacob.

We might need to understand the “birthright” before we proceed. It was not a new custom. The birthright belonged to the oldest son through right of birth, and entitled him to a double portion of inheritance over his brothers, but it also gave him the responsibility to be the family patriarch upon the passing of the father. Though it was a right of birth, as we have seen here, it could be lost for cause.

Again let me say, it is important we recognize the sovereignty of God. Romans 9 is a good study on this subject. We are beginning to see a plan emerge and we will be dealing with this plan throughout the Bible. We will see that influences of both good and evil will be called upon in carrying out this plan that will ultimately all be good. Isaiah 45:7 might help us understand this as he quotes God, **“I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I the LORD do all these things.”** Please understand that this does not mean that God is evil or that He does something evil. We’ll discuss this more later when we define sin.

While that which was evil and anti-God, and that which was righteous and pro-God, were certainly in the world before the birth of these twin boys, each of these forces became embodied in these two boys and their seed. They will ultimately represent opposing religious systems, opposing economic systems, opposing nations, and ultimately world systems, one representing God’s way and the other that which is anti-God. A genuine hatred developed between the two brothers when Esau began to realize what he had lost in the birthright and the blessing. Remember the birthright carried the promises, and the promises carried the inheritance of the world. While Esau was more of a “here and now” type person and may not have realized the ultimate result of his loss, he certainly had a pretty good idea once he realized he had lost them. The hatred that developed has existed between the families from that time on.

Gen. 28:13-14 verifies that God upheld this transfer of the birthright, thus the promises from Esau to Jacob. So the line of inheritance has gone from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob.

Esau married wives from the family of Ishmael and also from the Canaanites, which earned him the title of fornicator in Heb. 12:16. Jacob was instructed by his father not to marry from the Canaanites which were descendants of Ham, son of Noah, but to marry from his mother’s family who, like Abraham and Isaac, were descendants of Shem, another son of Noah. Jacob traveled to Padanaram to the home of Laban, his mother’s brother, where he met and fell in love with Rachel, Laban’s daughter. It turned out not to be that simple as Jacob agreed to serve Laban for seven years for Rachel’s hand in marriage, but ended up serving him fourteen years and getting not one, but a total of four wives out of the deal. Gen. 29 and 30 tell us this story along with the story of the births of 11 of Jacob’s 12 sons.

Rueben was the first born, being born of Leah, older sister of Rachel, but the firstborn of Rachel was Joseph. The other two wives Jacob took were the handmaids of these two sisters whom they gave to Jacob in an effort to have more children than the other by him, as each claimed the children of their respective handmaids as their own.

Very quickly, Leah bore six sons and one daughter to Jacob; Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun and Dinah. Zilpah, Leah's maid, bore Gad and Asher while Rachel's maid, Bilhah, bore Dan and Naphtali. At this point, Joseph was the only son born to Rachel.

We will continue with the story of Jacob and his family next issue. JRL

THE BRIDE AND THE CHURCH

Last month we looked at many of the ways the Greek word "*ekklesia*," translated "church" in our King James Bible, was used by the authors of the New Testament. We also noted that the Greek word "*kyriakes*," which would be correctly translated "church", as we use the word and understand it today, is not used in the New Testament. So as we proceed in our study, let us keep in mind that the word "church" as we find it in the New Testament, does not mean exactly the same as we use church today, but rather, simply means a congregation or an assembly.

We had one more way or group to which the word church refers, that we want to look at this month. This is first found in Ephesians 1. To get the full context we need to start reading in verse 15 and then looking especially at verses 22-23, "**And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.**" Simply put, the church, or *ekklesia* referred to here, is the body of Christ with Christ being the head of the body. Other references that verify this statement include Colosians 1:18, 24.

However, this same relationship of Christ to those faithful to Him is stated by others in other ways. Peter, for example, in I Peter 1:5 refers to the *ekklesia* as living stones saying "**Ye also, as lively stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.**" Then the

position of Jesus Christ is given in the next verse, "**wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.**"

Paul, in Romans 12:4-6, explained this relationship further. "**For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us...**" He goes on to explain that we should each use these gifts to benefit the whole body, like, for example our hands, feet, eyes, etc. all work together for the benefit of our body at the direction of our head.

In I Cor. 6:15, Paul asks the Corinthians, "**know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?**" Again in 12:14, "**For the body is not one member, but many.**" and vs. 27 "**Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular** (individually)."

When the Kingdom of Israel went into captivity to Assyria and God "divorced" them, we're told as part of this bill of divorcement in Hosea 1:9 "**For ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.**" God cut His spiritual tie with Israel. We now know from archeological findings and secular history, as well as the prophetic promises God made to Israel, that these people, though they lost their identity, ultimately moved out of the land where they were sent as captives and migrated westward. That many, if not all, of the "Gentiles" that Paul and other apostles preached to were these former Israelites is verified in the writings of these apostles. Remember that "gentiles" is from the Greek "*ethnos*" meaning "nations". We need to understand that the Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah are two separate kingdoms at this time. The latter are referred to as Jews in the New Testament in particular.

After God told Israel He would no longer be their God, in vs. 10 of Hosea 1, He then told them "**and it shall come to pass, that in the**

place where it was said unto them, ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, ye are the sons of the living God.” How this could happen was a great mystery to those who were faithful to God. The Jews seized upon the former declaration to attempt to prove themselves as better than their fellow Israel descendants and are accused of lording it over the non-Jew in Romans 2. This only added to the mystery. In Ephesians 2 & 3 Paul discusses this mystery and explains it. You need to read both chapters as we don’t have the space to quote them here. Briefly in 2:12-17 we’re told, **“That at that time ye (former Israelites) were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel (been divorced by God), and strangers from the covenants of promise, (promises to Abraham) no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us (gentiles or former Israelites and the Jews): Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments (Jewish law—not the Mosaic law) contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain (former Israel and Judah) one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body (Christ’s body) by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were far off, and to them that were nigh.”** Then in 3:6 he sums up what the mystery was, **“That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.”** This not only applied to the former Israelites but now to all nations.

So now, the church, the body of Christ, was open to all people who surrendered their life to Christ. What made this such a mystery, so far as the former Israelites are concerned, is that God, being not only the law giver, but a law keeper as well, would appear to be in violation of His own law of divorce, if He took Israel back. See Deut 24:1-4. Paul gives us the principle of

law that applies here in Rom. 7:1-3. Once a man dies, his wife is free from the law of marriage. Once God, in Christ, died, the law of divorce no longer applied so all that is entailed in the remarriage could take place. The bride, as we have already discussed, is Israel as organized at Mt. Sinai, but to be a part of Israel, whether Jew or Gentile, required doing so through the blood, or sacrifice, of Christ which makes the individual then a part of the church or body of Christ as well.

Paul uses the concept of a proper marital relationship as an example to teach the relationship between Christ and His body in Ephesians 5:22-33, but this Scripture has led to some confusion leading some to think of the church as the bride. Verse 31, a quotation from Gen. 2:24, has to be considered as we look at the rest of the Scripture. In the proper marriage relationship we’re told the husband and wife come together and become one flesh, i.e. they become complete. Let’s examine these verses with this in mind. Verse 23-24 says, **“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.”** Keeping in mind that in a proper marriage the husband and wife are one (one body) of which the husband is the head just as Christ is the head over His body, the church. The church is subject to its head, Christ, so too the wife, as part of the body of she and her husband, be subject to its head, the husband. Verses 28 & 29 says, **“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.”** If a husband and wife are one as they should be, she is as much a part of his body as his own flesh is and he should care for her as much as he cares for his own flesh, as this is how Christ cares for the church, His body, His own flesh if you will. Verse 32 tells us this illustration is intended to help one understand the relationship of Christ and His body. Understand that the true relationship of husband and wife should be the same

as a man and his own flesh, thus it is an example of Christ's relationship with His body, the church.

What difference does it make? To understand the marriage of God and His bride, one must understand the bride and groom. We now have a bride, Israel, governmentally structured to govern with Christ as King and a groom, the church or congregation with Christ as its head. Neither are complete without the other. A governor without the governed is not complete just as the governed without a governor is not complete.

The marriage we read of in Rev. 19 and 21 brings these two entities together to become one. In so doing, we have a Kingdom with a King, a high priest, a land, (the world), and a people (ultimately all the people of the world). It would appear to me that whatever economics system that might be needed, if any, has already been provided by God in His law. As for a political system, if we want to call it that, it too has been provided. It is in this life that God's political system (the rulership) is developed. If we go back to the rewards that God has promised the overcomers in Rev. 2 & 3, we will find the rulership cadre, the political system if you will, that will rule in God's Kingdom.

So with the marriage of the bride (Israel) and the groom (the church) with Christ as head of both we have the perfect, or complete kingdom. It would appear to me that even after the marriage there will still be much to be done. Daniel 2 tells us the story of the dream King Nebuchadnezzar had of the great image, that we now know represented the rulers of the earth up until now. In the dream we are told in verse 35, **"And the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."** In the interpretation in verse 44, we're told of this stone, **"And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom (the stone), which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not belong to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand for ever."** How long this will ultimately take to complete, or how it will be

done from here on, I know not. But as we look back over history (His-story) and see how God has brought all this about from His promises to Abraham to the day in which we live is truly a miracle to behold. As we look forward to Rev. 21:4, **"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."** I cannot help but marvel and glorify God for how he brings it all to pass. The more we understand, the more we marvel. As for each of us, if we are true Christian, we are part of the church or congregation. Our responsibility as Christians is to work to attain to being a part of the bride. To understand this a little better, we will look at the resurrections in our next study, next issue. **JRL**

ASSYRIA-IRAQ

The next country in Biblical history that we want to look at geographically is Assyria. However, the next country after that will be Babylon and both countries were centered in the modern day country of Iraq. So to look at the country as it is today, we'll look at Iraq in this issue and then at Assyria next time. Both the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires expanded far beyond the borders of modern day Iraq at times, but the geographical core of both countries are found in today's Iraq, Assyria to the north and Babylon to the south.

Iraq, as we know it today, is a relatively new country. It was occupied and governed by the Turkish Ottoman Empire from the 1500's until 1920 when it was taken from the Ottoman Empire by the British. Following World War I, the League of Nations formed it from three Ottoman regions. Independence as a nation was not achieved until 1932 however, at which time it became a kingdom. A republic was declared in 1958 but it has really been ruled by military strongmen from then until 2003 when the United States and coalition forces deposed Saddam Hussein and a series of elections began the process of setting up a democratic republic.

Iraq covers approximately 169,285 sq miles, making it roughly a little more than twice the size of

the state of Idaho. Like many of the middle east countries, most of the land is desert. Only about 13.73% of the land is suitable for farming of which approx. 13,610 acres are irrigated. Since most of the country is desert, the climate is mild to cool winters with dry, hot, cloudless summers with the exception of the mountainous area along its northern borders with Turkey and Iran. Here they experience cold winters with occasional heavy snows that melt early in the spring, sometimes causing extensive flooding in central and southern Iraq.

The terrain is mostly broad plains with reedy marshes along the Iranian border in the south with large flood areas. There are mountains along the Iranian borders as you go north and along the Turkish border on the north. The highest peak is an unnamed one reaching approximately 11,847 ft. skyward. The lowest point is sea level in the south at the Persian Gulf shore.

Two major rivers run nearly parallel with each other running from northwest to southeast. They are the Euphrates and the Tigris. The headwaters of both rivers are in Turkey. Some smaller rivers empty into the Tigris River, but there are none that empty into the Euphrates, as it crosses Iraq. The two rivers join at Al Qurnah and then flow into the Persian Gulf. Flooding and poor drainage make much of the land from Al Qurhan marshland not farmable, except for a few herders of water buffalo.

Natural hazards of the land are dust storms, sandstorms and flooding.

As of July, 2006, the population of Iraq was 26,783,383. Seventy-five percent of these people live in the flat, alluvial plain stretching southeast from Baghdad to Basra and the Persian Gulf. The demographics of the country have been anything but stable through the centuries due to practices of relocating large populations due to various wars. At present the population is 75% to 80% Arab, 15% to 20% Kurdish, and 5%

Turks, Assyrian and others. Ninety-seven percent of the people are Muslims with small numbers of other religions including Christians. The most commonly spoken language is Arabic. However, Kurdish is the official language in the Kurdish regions of the northeast. Assyrian and Armenian are spoken some with American being the most popular western language.

The Kurdistan Region of the north and east, though a part of Iraq, is an autonomous, federally recognized political entity to itself. Its capital is Arbil. There are three governorates that are governed by the Kurdish Regional Government with three more to vote this fall as to whether they wish to join in.

The customs and traditions of the Kurds are different from the rest of their fellow Iraqis, as is their language. Their language is more Iranian than anything else. They appear to be a mix of several different peoples, but have settled into an identifiable culture of their own. Agriculture is difficult in the area due to the mountainous terrain though there

are broad steppes in area where some crops are grown and much of the land is suitable for grazing.

Baghdad is the capital of Iraq currently, and though located on the Tigris River, is near the old capital city of Babylon located on the Euphrates River.

Oil is the major export accounting for 95% of export earnings. About 50% of the oil exported comes to the United States. Much of the oil comes from the area around Mosul and Kirkuk. Iraq's known oil reserves are second only to Saudi Arabia, but much of Iraq has not been explored for oil, so the general consensus is that once its reserves are fully known, they may very well double the current reserves.

At one time Iraq supplied a large percentage



of the world's supply of dates, but political unrest and wars have curtailed that production substantially. In addition to oil, other natural resources include natural gas, phosphates and sulfur.

Neither the people nor the land of today relate much to the Assyrians or the Babylonians of the Bible. The land is very rich in history and there are many excavation sights of cities mentioned in the Bible as attempts are made to uncover much of this rich history. Even the Garden of Eden is purported to have been located in this area though there is no archeological proof of this. But many of the cities mentioned in the Bible have been found and have been or are being excavated.

One claim to fame that was unearthed in 1930

during the excavation of Ga-Sur at Nugi near Kirkuk is a clay tablet bearing the world's earliest known map. It is estimated to be at least 4300 to 4500 years old.

It is estimated that there are approximately 1,600,000 Assyrians left in the world. Approximately one half of them live in Iraq. The area has been the location of near constant wars for many centuries so the people have shuffled and re-shuffled many times, so the current Iraq people's relation to the people of the area in Bible times is tenuous at best.

We will look at the Assyria of the Bible next issue. So that you will better understand it, please study the map on page 7 plus look at a globe or larger map of the area to better reference events and places. **JRL**

GOD IS NEAR

As you watch the news and get disgusted by what you hear:
Remember our God in heaven sees and is very near.
As you get angry at a conversation accepting sin within our land:
Stop and pray, so you will know just how to take a stand.

Remember when you see evil everywhere:
God is near, the earth is His, and He cares.
He cares so much more deeply than you or I:
The first work was done on the cross when Jesus Christ did die.

God is near and He's aware of the liberalism that we see:
Everyone who does what's right in their own eyes without
regard to you or me.
But God almighty is also ever so patient and merciful to all:
He wants to give them time to repent and hear His call.

So when you see a congressman defame God on T.V.:
Or you see violence and corruption reigning heavily.
Before you get angry and let it get the best of you:
Remember getting on your knees to pray, is the best thing you
can do.

God is near, He sees what's going on"
God is near, hang on to Him and be strong.
God is near, he's not far from you or me:
God is near and our pain He truly sees:

God is near, as people scoff at Him:
He is near, ever patient, ready to forgive sin.
So you and I should take heart and forgive too:
After all, He did this for me and for you.

Yes, God is near, so don't fear and don't doubt.
God is near, and knows what is happening round about:
God is near and is in control of the thunder and the rain"
God is near my friend, and in control of all things.

This poem was submitted to us by Sandy (Ivie)
Johnson, as have others we have printed.

*Ed note: We would like to hear from Sandy again if she should
happen to read this or if anyone knows her whereabouts.*