

# Genesis

*walk-thru*

**Study series as posted at the website  
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The unconventional punctuation styles you will see are related to the way these studies were originally intended for the e-mail audience, using plain text to keep file sizes smaller for bulk mailing; creatively 'formatting' with punctuation, for various kinds of emphases, in the absence of formatting the actual type. You may find occasional misspellings, and the more rare cases of a Scripture reference going to a wrong passage; those will be 'typos', not intentional. With this type of POD (Print On Demand) publishing, it seems simplest, and the most prudent use of time, to not completely go through and revamp everything, but to just leave things as they are. Please accept this book, warts and all; but rather, please pay attention to, and receive God's Truth presented herein.



# Genesis

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## ***Destruction*** (Genesis 6)

Recently my Bible reading schedule put me back into Genesis. One morning as I read through half-a-dozen chapters, I was struck with God's purposes with the earth. Here's man; he has sinned and has been kicked out of the garden. Cain kills his brother and then whines, "Oh poor me, poor me...I can't take the punishment." (ch4) (Of course, his brother is -dead-!!)

Representative, geneological names are listed; and then it says that each man fathers many more "sons and daughters". In other words, the population is exploding.(6:1) Music and instruments (the "arts") develop. (4:21) Technology (bronze & iron) flourishes.(4:22)

In addition, a knowledge of God exists. "...men began to call upon the name of the LORD." (4:26) Enoch is known for being one who "walks with God" (5:24)

But the sin nature also becomes a dominant feature of the world. And when God looked at humanity it says, "...the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (6:5) And what was God's reaction to this? "...He was angry to His heart." (vs6) And what did He decide to do about it? "I will destroy man whom I have created, from the face of the earth...for I repent that I have made them." (vs7)

Far from God 'changing His mind' (as some interpret this word "repent"), this is more an expression, when combined with "angry to His heart", of God being 'livid' with anger. He's absolutely 'spitin' mad!! In human terms that we can understand, He's stomping around, slamming doors, throwing things around...He's ANGRY!! Paul uses the term "WRATH" (Rom1:18)

As we read the chapters about the flood, it is a picture of God taking a big swiping motion like an angry person swipes the chess pieces off the board. Or of someone cleaning a mechanic shop floor; hosing it down, and taking the big push-handle squeegee, and swooshing the dirt out the door, to get rid of the evil.

Now... the psalmist proclaims, "I will sing of mercy and judgment." (Ps101:1) God, in mercy, sees Noah, who hasn't become genetically corrupt. (Gen6:9) And rather than uttering the words and 'zapping' the earth out of existence, 'patiently' waits for Noah to build the ark to save "seed" to repopulate the earth. (6:19-20) But he is not without sin. After the flood, sin continues. And mankind goes into idolatry, as Nimrod begins what becomes a world-wide religious system. And God scatters humanity with new languages. And divides the earth up into continents. (10:25)

Something Jesus says about the days prior to His return, "But as the days of Noah were, so shall be the coming of the Son of man. (Mt24:37) The days of Noah were characterized by "evil continually" and "violence". (Gen6:5,11) What happened to the world of Noah's day? God 'squeezed' them off the earth.

Why does man continue to exist right now, even though humanity is full of evil, immorality, idolatry and violence? God's "mercy". "It is by the Lord's kindnesses that we are not destroyed, because His mercies never fail." (Lam3:22) But the world will not continue indefinitely in its present condition. God will again "swipe" humanity. He does not gently slap the wrist...but when He "gets going" His judgement is complete. He left an example with Sodom and Gomorah. It says that "the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord, exceedingly so." (Gen13:13) And their destruction was sudden, swift and complete.

Many from today's mentality might object to such talk, "Isn't God awfully -intolerant- of anything that's not like Himself? I mean... just who does He think He is? Does He think He's the only 'game in town'?" Exactly! He says, "I am God, and there is no other" (Is45:22)

Another objection to God goes something like, "If God is such a wonderful God, why did He make this big 'mess' the world is in?" Well, God did not "make" the mess. And that's why He's going to clean it up.

It's somewhat like something I read recently. If an employer wants to project a positive image of his company, he hires employees that conform to the image he is projecting. If he hired worthless ones, they would tarnish the company image. What people would observe about the company would not be that the employees were worthless; but rather, that the CEO was to blame. It's a "company" problem. The quote went like this, "Employers are to a great degree responsible for their servants, and it is customary to blame a master if he retains in his service persons of notorious character." Thus, God, being the holy Most High, and Ruler of the universe, cannot retain sin and those committing it without His own "character" being called into question.

But notice the psalmist's words again. "mercy and judgment" God -IS- going to clean up the mess. But His "mercy" does not wish for any to perish. (2Pt3:9) Thus, He is "long-suffering" ...always calling, ever pleading, "Turn, turn from your evil ways, for why will you die?" (Eze33:11)

But He -WILL- clean up the mess. All humanity, except for eight, were wiped off the globe. At that time God "shook the earth." But His promise is, "Yet once more I will not only shake the earth, but also the heavens." (Heb12:26,Hag2:6) The first time He dealt with humanity. Next judgment He will complete the judgment of Satan and his demons.

Satan will be cast out of heaven to the earth (Rev12:9) and then Christ is going to completely destroy every last vestige of Satan's influence as "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ" (Rev11:15) as He reigns, after Babylon with its religion, culture, commerce and the arts has been totally destroyed. (Rev18)

The judgment that is coming is more than -mere- "hard times". Many think that it will be a "wonderful" time for the "church". They both look forward to going through it, so they can welcome Jesus to a world -they- have cleaned up for Him to rule over; and also greatly fear, thinking they can hoard away supplies and "ride it out".

The thing they don't realize is that it is a time of "destruction". Over half the earth's population will be killed. Even God's "elect" of Israel will experience 67% annihilation. (Zec13:9) This time around God is using a scoop shovel and a flame-thrower. (Is41:16,Mt3:12) It is such a horrific time that Jesus said, "unless those days should be shortened, no flesh would be saved. But for the elect's (Israel) sake, those days shall be shortened." (Mt24:22)

[Ed: Watching the media resources expended to cover the high school massacre in Littleton, Co... just another example of the "violence" that covers the land. In our 'refined' society this was a horrific event. How many people realize that these kinds of events are common 'every-day' occurrences in some parts of the world!! But when God gets going with His scoop shovel and flame-thrower, there won't be enough media people to report it all. There won't be enough personnel to identify the bodies. People will not know what happened to loved ones. There won't be hundreds of police and EMTs to take care of each incident. It will be everybody for themselves...as, ultimately, billions are decimated off the planet! Littleton's school massacre will be as though it was "nothing" ..like a Sunday school picnic.. compared to what is about to come upon the world!]

The psalmist says, "I will sing of mercy and judgement." God's mercy in withholding judgment until every last soul who will be saved is saved. (Lk14:23,Acts13:48) His mercy for Israel's sake through the judgment.

And then, praise, because the evil has been wiped out and God is ruling over His -righteous- creation. God will have judged evil and destroyed it. "Rejoice, O heavens, and those tabernacling in them." (Rev12:12a) And as the earth is mopped up, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and honor and the power of the Lord our God! For true and righteous are His judgments. For He has judged the great harlot who defiled the earth... and He has avenged the blood of His servants out of her hand. Hallelujah! For the Lord God omnipotent reigns!" (19:1-2,6)

## ***Impossibilities*** (Genesis 12)

"And the LORD appeared to Abram and said, I will give this land to your seed.." (Gen12:7)

"For all the land which you see I will give to you, and to your seed forever." (13:15)

Later the Lord came to Abram in a vision, "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield and your exceeding great reward." And Abram said, Lord God, what will You give me, since I am going childless..behold, You have given no seed to me. And behold, one born in my house is my heir. And the word of the LORD came to him saying, This one shall not be your heir. But he that shall come forth out of your own bowels shall be your heir. (15:1-4)

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, did not bear...and Sarai said to Abram, Behold now, the LORD has kept me from bearing. I pray you, go in to my slave woman..and Abram listened to the voice of Sarai." (16:1-2)

And when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, I am the Almighty God! Walk before Me and be perfect. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly...you shall be a father of many nations...I will make you exceedingly fruitful, greatly so, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come out of you...and your seed after you. (~17:1-7)

Now Abraham and Sarah were old, far gone in days, and it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, "...shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? Shall I, who am old, truly bear a child?" (18:12-13)

Sarah is waaaay past menopause. No more eggs to fertilize. For years and years God has promised "seed" to Abraham, along with nations. No child. Well, what about the servant's son? Born in my house, he's my "heir". No. Years pass. Still no child. Well, here, let's make a child through the maid. Well, now, we know it's not Abraham's "problem". It's Sarah.

Now, God comes with two messages. (Gen ch18) One is that Sodom, Lot's home, is going to be destroyed. The other, "...according to the time of life, and lo, Sarah your wife shall have a son." (vs10)

Well...after years and years of promises, and NO CHILD, this is utterly preposterous!! Sarah's thinking...YaRIGHT!! I'm gonna have a child!! Who do you think you're kidding!! Don't you realize 'how' things work regarding child-bearing? I -CAN'T- have children anymore. I stopped having periods a loooong time ago!



God is rather "rude" at this point. Why did Sarah laugh?

I didn't laugh!

Oh, but you did!! "Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return again, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son." (18:14)

God says, essentially, I can do anything, and now it's time...I'm going to prove it to you.

In some other recent studies we have considered how God distinguishes Himself from all other gods by being 100% in His knowledge of past, present and future. (Is46:9-10) Another thing that distinguishes Him is His ability to purpose something, and then to carry it out. (vs11) How is He going to display this ability? By allowing 'normal' events to unfold? Or by allowing impossible-seeming situations to come about, and then working IN SPITE OF the "impossible odds"?

The -virgin- Mary was promised a child, without a man. The angel exemplified God's working the impossible by announcing her aged cousin Elizabeth being with child, and proclaiming, "for with God nothing shall be impossible." (Lk1:37)

God -tests- His own, to see whether they will follow Him fully. Whether they will believe His promises. Zacharias' unbelief was met with being struck dumb. (Lk1:20) Israel was tested daily, with -only- a daily portion of manna. (Ex16:4) God allows false prophets to test the Believer, whether they will rely solely on God's Word. (Deu13:3)

God often asks the Believer to reach the absolute limit of faith. The priests had to "walk" their faith by actually placing their feet into the waters of the Jordan river, at which point God rolled the waters back so they could walk across on dry ground. (Josh3:15) Saul did not wait for Samuel. The enemy was closing in, his troops were abandoning him, and he WENT AHEAD and made the offering. (1Sam13) And 'just' as he was finished, Samuel shows up. His lack of faith wrenched the kingdom away from him, as God sought a "man after His own heart" (vs14) and gave it to David.

After years of doubt and failings, Abraham finally has learned. God has given him a son out of his own seed. And now, God tests him again. "Take now your son, your only one, Isaac, whom you love. And go...offer him..for a burnt offering..." (Gen22:2) And 'immediately' the next morning they head off. (vs3) Abraham has the knife raised, and tradition says he was in the full-force downward plunge to kill Isaac (vs10), when God catches his hand.(vs11)

Notice His faith, to where it has grown. When Isaac asks, essentially, "where's the sacrifice lamb?" ... "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering." (vs8) And after he passed the test, "a ram behind him was entangled in a thicket..and Abraham offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son." (vs13)

Notice God's test. Take your son. Your ONLY son. This son, in whose favor Sarah has sent away Ishmael from the house saying, "...the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son.." (21:10) This son WHOM YOU LOVE. Abraham...do you -REALLY- believe Me now? Do you trust Me with your -ONLY- son, too??

It was one thing for Abraham to "believe" in his heart unto "righteousness". (Gen15:6) Now, he has been proven through the understanding of the "substance of things hoped for, the -evidence- of things not seen." (Heb11:1) Sarah "as good as dead" bore Isaac (vs12) and now Abraham believed that if God could give him this son of promise in the first place, He could also "raise him up, even from the dead". (vs19) And notice the choice of words there. "CONCLUDING that God was able.." He's been through a lifetime of learning. He's finally learned the lesson. As though to say, "If God could do all this other...He can do -this-, too."

And this is what God always strove to have Israel learn. "..remember what the Lord your God did..." (Deu7:18,24:9,etc.) The past is an example and basis for the future. It's not, as some proclaim, a "blind" faith...just leaping out into an unknown 'abyss'. The Lord has worked on our behalf in the past. We have the pioneers of faith in Abraham, Noah, Daniel, David, Mary, Abel. Thus, when we find ourselves face-to-face with a 'present' situation, we "remember" Who God is, and what He has done in the past, draw assurance from that, and trust Him for the present situation.

Not "staggering" through unbelief, but "being fully persuaded that what God [has] promised, He is also able to perform." (Rom4:21)

## ***Rapture and the Days of Lot*** (Genesis 18)

"As it was in the days of Noah, so it also shall be in the days of the Son of man. They [lived normal lives] until the day that Noah entered into the ark; and the flood came and destroyed them all...

So also as it was in the days of Lot: they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but the day Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from the heaven and destroyed them all. Even so it shall be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." (Lk17:26-30)

Naturally, in my reading in Genesis I left the 'flood' and arrived at 'Sodom'. We speak enough about the corruption and depravity of the world, we don't need to address all that this time. If people are not yet convinced that sodomy, promiscuity, abortion, violence, etc. is wrong, they won't be convinced even if we look at it from Genesis 18-19. But let's consider Lot for a little bit. The state of the righteous witness in Sodom, as well as God's provision for Lot as it relates to the destruction of Sodom.

First of all, quite a fascinating dialogue progresses between Abraham and God. Abraham asks, "Will You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" What "If there are -fifty- righteous...will You also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are in it?" (Gen18:23-24)

Remember how Jesus taught, "you are the salt of the earth." (Mt5:13) And again, "you are the light of the world." (5:14) The world lies in wickedness, but the Believer's presence adds a measure of righteousness. But when the righteous are so -few- that the flavor turns sour, God destroys the wickedness. Abraham understood the concept of God's mercy and judgment.

Now, Believer... if satan is taunting you with this notion that the "Church" is going -through- the "tribulation" because it's a time of God's "purification" of the Church, notice Abraham's question. "Will You also -DESTROY- the righteous with the wicked?" Do not let anyone deceive you! Listen carefully! The 70th week, which people collectively call "the tribulation", is NOT a time of "blessing". Yes, Israel is going to be "purified" through it. (Mal3:3) But -primarily- it is a time of DESTRUCTION. A time of God's WRATH poured out. (Rev6:17) Babylon is being destroyed (Rev18) as Christ comes and wrenches the "kingdoms of this world" away from satan, and comes to rule and reign.

[Ed: For in-depth study of this, the reader is referred to the series in VW's Library, "Covenants & Dispensations"]

OK...so, God says that for "50" He would not destroy Sodom. As the conversation progresses, Abraham talks God down to "ten". And God says, "I will not destroy it for ten's sake." (18:32) How large was Sodom? Big enough that "ten" was a -tiny- number.

The "great revival" everybody talks about, simply does not exist. I get regular e-mails & prayer requests for "revival". Or ponderous document files of false doctrine, on how we can spark the flames of revival. Folks: if "revival" were truly coming, and thousands and millions of people were turning to the Lord, the "tribulation" would not come! There would be no need for God to 'destroy' the world. But the truth of the matter is that only a mere "few" are finding eternal life. (Mt7:14) In Sodom's case it was less-than-ten.

God's judgment is coming, not because the church is being "purified", but because apostasy has been in full swing for decades. There are hardly any True Believing Christians left on this earth. People are "departing from the faith" (1Tm4:1) There is hardly any "salt" left. All that's left is to "trample" the earth (Mt5:13) which is also pictured as God trampling the "winepress" of His "wrath". (Rev19:15)

So, if there are so few, and God's Wrath is going to destroy; what of Lot? Did he need to go -thru- the fires and become purified? God "overthrew" Sodom and Gomorrah, and "He delivered righteous Lot..." (2Pt2:7)

The angels come to town to remove Lot and his family -prior- to destruction. He balks. His family balks. They are forcibly led out of town. And even then, he's whining and complaining, and receives permission to go to Zoar. And the angels hurry him along with this word...

"..Hurry and escape there! For I cannot do anything till you have come there." (Gen19:22)

You who believe the "church" is going -thru- the 'tribulation' note this well. Jesus said His return would be like the situation with Lot. Notice that Sodom's destruction COULD NOT HAPPEN until Lot had escaped to safety. Lot being labeled "righteous". "Righteous" being a term of -accounting- this to him by Faith. (Rom4:3,8,10,16,etc.) Same characteristic of the True "Church" of Jesus Christ.

Lot "escaped" the destruction. Jesus exhorts, "Watch therefore, praying in every season that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things which shall occur, and to stand before the Son of man."(Lk21:36) God will not bring His Wrath and destruction upon the world until He has -first- "rescued" His Church "out of the midst" (2Th2:7b) at the Rapture.

Abraham had asked, "Will You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?"

Answer: "No!"

See Also Addendum: "Lot was Raptured"

## ***Destroy the Righteous with the Wicked?*** (*Genesis 18-19*)

"I will go down now and see whether they (Sodom & Gomorrah) have done altogether according to the cry of it..And Abraham drew near and said, Will You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? And Jehovah said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. And He said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake." (~Gen18:21-32)

"..as it was in the days of Lot..but the day Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from the heaven and destroyed them all. Even so it shall be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed."(~Lk17:28-30)

This lesson will be straight to the point. Nothing new that we haven't addressed before. This is for those who still think the coming time of God's wrath upon "those who dwell upon the earth" (Rev3:10b) is the same "tribulation" (Jn16:33) Jesus promised that Believers would receive. It is not.

The coming "Tribulation" is most closely associated with the book of Revelation. Let us remember that its full name is, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ". A synopsis of how Jesus Christ is going to be -revealed- to the world and the rest of creation. It is the Believer's "blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." (Tit2:13) It is the time when "He shall be revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (1Jn3:2) We have obviously been "received" (Jn14:3) to him. It is when we are caught up in the clouds to "meet the Lord in the air". (1Th4:17)

Notice that Jesus in Luke says that Lot's leaving of Sodom is like it will be "in the day when the Son of Man is REVEALED". Was this a time of testing and tribulation for "righteous" Lot? (2Pt2:7) No. It was a time of -DESTRUCTION- for Sodom. Jesus said of the time shortly upon the world that "unless the days were shortened" nobody would survive. (Mt24:22) The destruction will be so vast that it speaks of those that are "left" alive. (Zech14:16)

Abraham asks God, Will You destroy the righteous along with the wicked? This is the question that those of the "post-trib" error answer wrong. They don't seem to understand that it is God's "wrath" that is being poured upon the earth. (Rom1:18, Rev6:17) But God has "not appointed us to wrath" (1Th5:9) It is not a time of God's discipline upon the "righteous" (2Cor5:21) Church. When God is "purifying the sons of Levi" (Mal3:3) -Israel- is yet in unbelief. They are not yet righteous. Their righteousness will not be in place until the end of the seven years, around the time of the battle of Armageddon. (Zech12:11)

Now, Abraham is pleading for Sodom based on percentages of righteous inhabitants. In Sodom's case, for whatever the population might have been, God's mercy would have extended to it if there had been a mere "ten" righteous people there. However, there were only 3-4. God's righteousness -MUST- destroy Sodom. But since He does not ("cannot" 19:22) destroy the righteous along with the wicked, He pulls the righteous out... -BEFORE- He destroys Sodom. Isn't that what Jesus said about when the "Son of Man is revealed"? The righteous will be taken out of the world -BEFORE- God commences His destruction in wrath.

Now, even though Lot has the label "righteous", he is dragging his feet. Remember how we spoke not long ago about "washing one another's feet"? The person can be clean, but his feet are dirty from walking along the dusty path. Lot has a reputation in Sodom for condemning their sin, "...must he judge always?" (Gen19:9) And yet, he has grown comfortable in Sodom. Life is easy. Previously he had been nomadic, always of a more uncertain life... but now he lives 'in' Sodom, with a nice house with "doors" on it. And so, in order to get him out, the angels "laid hold upon his hand...and they brought them forth and set him outside the city" (Gen19:16)

What I have just quoted is about how we typically remember this story. But notice the little part I left out of the middle of that last quote, "...the LORD being merciful to him.." As Lot and his family are dragging their feet, the angels are -forcefully- removing them to "outside" the city limits. What would you guess that their initial reaction to this force is "how unloving!!" So "cruel" they are, to grab them and yank them out! And, indeed, that is how faithful Believers are often labeled. "Unloving" and "judgmental!"

The angels were practicing "snatching them out of the fire" (Jude23) Notice the motivation in Lot's case is the same as in Jude. The Lord was being "merciful" to Lot, not wanting to destroy him. In Jude, the motivation is "pity". (vs22) Furthermore, God only gives "good things" to His children. (Mt7:9-11) When the child wants food, the father does not give a stone or snake. This is God's way. It is most unconscionable to suggest that God is going to subject His "righteous" children to his wrath! And yet, that's what many so-called "christians" are proclaiming.

Abraham asked the question, Will You destroy the righteous along with the wicked? In his mind I'm sure he's hoping, Surely not!?! Thus, as God destroys the "cities of the plain" He "sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow..." (Gen19:29) And this is how it will be when the "Son of Man is revealed" (Lk17:30)

Two final little points. Don't assume you are on solid ground because you "went forward" and "made a commitment" at some point; and now, "nothing can touch you". If you decide to be rebellious, and turn your

back upon God, you can turn out like Lot's wife. She was "on her way" out of Sodom, but at the last minute, decided she didn't -really- want to leave. God destroyed her. (Gen19:26) The same thing can happen to you. Beware!

Also, don't be fooled into complacency. The extreme at the other end of the spectrum from the "Church is going through the Tribulation" notion, is that "whole cities" will be raptured. They assume that, if a church is meeting, most of the congregation will be raptured, and a few stragglers will be left. That complete "christian communities" and countries will be Raptured. Notice how Abraham dialogues God from "fifty" down to "ten". And the actual number was even less than that. Out of all the world, only Enoch was taken prior to the flood; and only 8 were saved at the time of the flood. Jesus said that only a "few" were finding the gate to eternal life. (Mt7:14) Out of all Israel's population, only "seven thousand" were righteous. (1Kg19:18) For all those church buildings all over the place, sadly the same is true today.

Dear Reader: are you yet dragging your feet in 'Sodom'? Or are you a child of God, crying out in your heart, "Come, Lord Jesus!?" (Rev22:20)

Dear Believer: do not let world events worry you. They will continue getting worse, not better. Remember, that for Lot's wife to have been turned to salt, it means Lot's family, while outside the city, was close enough to see God's destruction. Even Abraham could see the rising smoke from where he lived. (Gen19:28) It was "on the day" of destruction, that Lot left Sodom. When Noah was entering the ark, the flood waters had already begun. (Gen7:7) We are already seeing the beginning of the "birth pangs" (Mt24:8) But do not worry, our Lord will come at the appointed time.

Remember that, just as any nation preparing for war pulls its ambassador/s out of the enemy country back to home; so too, when God prepares to "fight against those nations, like the day He fought in the day of battle" (Zech14:3), He is going to "receive" (Jn14:3) His "ambassadors" (2Cor5:20) Home. He "CANNOT do anything" (Gen19:22) until we are retrieved to safety.

See Also Addendum: "So 'few!'"



## ***Your God – My God: weakness to strength*** (Genesis 27)

Abraham's "seed" is now growing, and his son, Isaac, has had two sons, Esau and Jacob. Before they were born God proclaimed, "...the older shall serve the younger." (Gen25:23) This was -contrary- to tradition. Great importance was typically placed upon the "firstborn" -son-.

Well, years pass and Isaac has apparently -forgotten- (??) God's word, because he instructs Esau to go hunt venison, and prepare a meal, and then receive "The Blessing" of the firstborn. (Gen27) And Rebekah panics...'this cannot be!' So she devises a scheme to get Jacob in there, first, to receive the blessing. [Ed: I don't fully understand "the blessing" passed to the first-born. But it was probably -the- most important thing a father gave to his son. Even moreso than the physical inheritance of the material goods.]

Jacob stands before his father, and Isaac suspects 'something' is not right. But he's old and blind. "How is it that you have found it (the venison) so quickly..?" (vs20) And Jacob responds, "Because the LORD your God brought it to me."

Notice: Jacob is supplanting his brother, again. In essence, is "stealing" what legitimately (legally, traditionally) belonged to his brother. When God said that he would be above Esau, he was going along with his mother's plan to "take matters" into "his own hands" and effect the outcome. But, he's LYING 'through his teeth'. Who, did Jesus say, was the "father of lies"? (Jn8:44) Satan. So, you notice that he cannot make claim to God being "his" God. He says, "...the Lord -your- God.."

Jacob flees from Esau's murderous wrath (27:41,28:5) and God meets him along the way, and introduces Himself to Jacob in a dream. Gives him the same promise of Abraham and Isaac regarding the covenant land, and the nation. (28:13-14) Promises prosperity and safety. (vs15) Remember: God said to Moses, "I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." (Ex3:6)

But Jacob has not yet "received" God as "his" god. "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I DID NOT KNOW." (vs16) And notice the "deal" he strikes up with God. If God will do all these things, make me prosperous and protect me, and bring me back 'home' safely, "then shall Jehovah be my God." (vs21) But not -just- yet!! I'm still running on my own strength, wisdom and deception.

Well, he spends 20 years with Laban. Gets wives, children, and wealth. And now God tells him it's time to go 'home'. (31:3) But even more, it

is time for decision regarding God. He may have wealth, but things are not going well. He's being treated by Laban the same way he treated his brother. With deception. To say that he's finding out that it's not so wonderful would be an understatement. God appears to him in a dream again, re-introducing Himself with, "I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar (20 years ago)." So they leave by stealth.

But when Laban finds out, he gathers forces to pursue. The engineer of his wealth is leaving. Jacob could be in a real world of hurt. But God intervenes and warns Laban against any harm he might consider doing to Jacob. So they make a non-aggression pact. They swear by the "God of Abraham" and the "God of Nahor", their respective grandfathers, and Jacob swears "by the Fear (Faith) of his father Isaac" (vs53) But you notice, Jacob does not yet call God "my" god. It is not yet his -own- "Faith".

God shows Jacob more. "..the angels of God met him." (32:1) And Jacob sees how God has been protecting him as he calls the place "Refuge" (vs2) Remember when the king of Syria surrounded Dothan (2Kg6) and Elisha asks God to show his servant; and God revealed the chariots of fire surrounding the Syrian forces. "Do not fear, for those with us are more than those with them." (2Kg6:16) God has protected Jacob against Laban, but now he's off to meet Esau; the one who had threatened death to him 20 years earlier.

Jacob, again, -strategizes- how to protect himself against Esau. How to minimize the loss. How to -contrive- an 'escape route' if part of his possessions are captured. He's still not trusting God.

So, it's time for the final lesson. Jacob finds himself wrestling with God, Himself. And God allows Jacob to appear to be "winning". And then God gives him a handicap. Cripples him. God changes his name from "Jacob" (supplanter,underminer) to "Israel" (God prevails).

And notice Israel's response. "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." (vs30) He calls the place "Peniel" (facing God).

Talk about "impossibilities"!! He had run from Esau...fearing for his life. He has just narrowly escaped the hand of Laban, and is about to meet Esau again...probably a more formidable foe than Laban had just been. He has contrived 'methodologies' and 'escape plans' and now, God cripples him. He's limping. 'God, You have it all wrong! If I am to meet my brother, I need my full strength...to DEFEND MYSELF!!'

He was about to learn, "[God's] grace is sufficient for [me], for [God's] power is made perfect in weakness...for when I am weak, than I am powerful." (2Cor12:9-10) And again, "The LORD is my strength, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my rock; I will trust in Him; He is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower." (Ps18:2)

God delivers Israel and his family. The meeting with Esau is amicable. He settles in Shechem and for the first time "erected there an altar, and called it El, the God of Israel." (33:20) No longer the "God of Abraham" nor the "Fear of Isaac"

But notice the journey Jacob traversed. He spent the prime of his life supplanting, contriving, manipulating, scheming. Always with a view to "self". Self-preservation and self-empowerment. He could not see God's power and provisions for him until he faced "impossible odds", and was crippled out of any way to fend for himself. And then he saw that -God-arranged the meeting with his brother, in 'peace', as God fulfilled His promise, "I am with you, and will keep you in every place where you go, and will bring you again into this land. For I will not leave you until I have done that which I have spoken of to you." (28:15)

Once Jacob saw that all his own efforts were worthless, and impossible (in me, in my flesh, dwells no good thing -Rom7:18), and that it was in such a situation that God came and met with him "face-to-face" in his own weakness, and gave him an extra measure of disability (For we yet being without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly -Rom5:6), and saw God's working in his life, in spite of himself; then, and only then, could Jacob become Israel. God had been working in his life for so many years, drawing him (Jn6:44), providing his needs and protecting him...and FINALLY, when he reached the end of himself, Jacob SAW it! There was no way out. Realized God's deliverance. And Israel then worshipped "my" God.

There is a question that some ask. "What if a person dies before he has a chance to receive Christ in salvation?" Well, we have just seen how God preserved Jacob's life up through the time he finally recognized "his" God. The psalmist said, "The Lord is my...deliverer (from enemies and harm); He is my shield, and the horn of my salvation..." (Ps18:2) Predestination involves God's "foreknowledge" (1Pt1:2) God "knew (past tense-He already knows) those who are His" (2Tm2:19) When Paul exults, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom8:35) This is the same "love" of God that sent Christ, before sin was atoned. (Jn3:16) If God could love sinful man before the sin debt was paid, and sent His Son to die for a rebellious humanity; and in spite of the fact that man is continually running away from God (Is53:6); but He "draws" (Jn6:44) those who will be saved; if He is able to assure that salvation lasts eternally, He certainly is able to preserve the sinner until the time He knows that person will -finally- humble himself and receive Christ.

"For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things; to Him be glory forever! Amen. (Rom11:36)

## ***Take my Blessing*** (Genesis 33:11)

"And Jacob said, No, please, if I have now found favor in your eyes, then receive my present from my hand, inasmuch as I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased with me. Please, take my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me.." (Gen33:10-11)

"If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep." (Ex22:1)

"If a soul sins and commits a trespass against Jehovah by lying to his neighbor about what was delivered into his hand for safekeeping, or about a pledge, or about a robbery, or if he has extorted from his neighbor....or all that about which he has sworn falsely. He shall restore the principal, add one-fifth more to it, and give it to whomever it belongs, on the day of his guilt offering." (Lev6:2,5)

"And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, Behold, Lord...whatever I have taken from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold." (Lk19:8)

There is a Great Evil today. It is not the only evil; but it is one which characterizes western so-called "civilization". There is no "accountability" or "consequences" for one's actions.

There's been a local case where a man was crippled for life after diving in front of a child whose snow-sled was out-of-control. The man saved the child from injury; but in the process, crippled himself for life. He has been called, locally, a "hero". But you know the disgusting thing: Once a couple years have now passed, this same man and his family have successfully sued the manufacturer of that sled. On what grounds? I'm not sure. Where is the accountability to that child who was playing out-of-control with no regard for safety? Where is the accountability for the parents/guardians of that child who injured the man, to train and/or supervise the child to play in a safe manner?

Somebody is driving along, cel-phone in one hand, the 'pinkies' of the other hand barely touching the steering wheel, and because they had not taken care to make sure tires were properly inflated, suddenly at speed a front tire blows out, the steering wheel spins violently to one side, the vehicle rolls over, the occupants are injured...and what happens? The manufacturers of the vehicle and tire are sued. (Like Ford and Firestone experienced a few years ago) Drivers take no responsibility for themselves to make sure their vehicle is road-worthy, and do not drive in a manner that, if the tire did blow, they have a 'hold' of the steering wheel, and could come safely to a stop. I've never had a blow-out myself, but experienced them when I was a child, with my father

driving...and -NEVER- did we experience life-threatening circumstances, even though the tires were defective and blew (the manufacturer replaced them under warranty) ...because my father was always an attentive driver.

But even worse is the scenario I see with TV interviews of convicted prison inmates. They are guilty, they have admitted guilt; and the TV reporter asks, "Have you forgiven yourself yet, for what you did?"

WHAAAAT??? I ask!

Dr.Phil gets somebody on that 'stool' opposite himself, and they are blubbing about how terrible their life is. In how many cases did they bring on their own trouble, and the pain they caused other people. And what is part of Dr.Phil's advice? The person needs to "forgive" -themselves-!! INCREDIBLE!!!

A certain family, perhaps, despises the one their child has chosen to marry. Even after the wedding, at every turn, they manipulate and speak subterfuge in the hopes of undermining and breaking up the marriage, causing pain and sorrow not only to the child-in-law, but their own child who married. So now, after time has passed, it's supposedly "reconciliation" time. The ones who have been viciously wronged are hoping for some sign/s of remorse, contrition, confession, repentance... but there is none. All there is, is a whiny whine: "Why do you have to continue being so mean to us. Can't you just FORGIVE AND FORGET??" Don't you know that -time- "heals" all wounds? Let by-gones be by-gones. Of course, when the marriage ends in divorce, their tone is, "Nya, nya...we told you so!"

People who steal from others are rarely required to make restitution. After all, isn't that what 'insurance' is for? When I stole from you, you were supposed to have insurance...so, since you didn't have insurance, your loss is your own fault! Sure, they may spend a little 'hand-slap' prison time...but their victim is not compensated. And rather than paying restitution, counselors exhort them to 'forgive' -themselves-!!

Well, from the passages with which this study was opened, it should be obvious what God says about this. And more specifically, let's look at Jacob.

However before we do, one example from my own observation, similar in some respects to Jacob's. I think I may have shared this a few years ago...but for you who haven't heard it: When I was younger I had an uncle who was quite the playboy. He was also quite a wheeler-dealer... and any 'advantage' he could gain over another, he would take it. Then, shortly before his death, he underwent heart surgery. During that time he was hooked up to needles and tubes down his throat, the Lord finally

got his attention. When he returned from the hospital/surgery, he happened to be at our apartment. He obviously needed to lie down and rest...but emphatically WOULD NOT lie down on our bed. "That's -your-bed." "Your" meaning my (at-the-time) wife's and mine. He lay down on the couch. He had an old car that was to be wrecked. My father and I were offering to help 'strip' it of parts that could be 'useable' for other things (he was a farmer) like tires, battery, etc. "No, I promised the wrecking dealer the car in the condition, and with the things attached, as he saw it when I made the deal." He did not make loud pronouncements, and stand before media cameras to proclaim his repentant heart and changed life...like Zacchaeus, he -LIVED- IT! It was obvious.

When Jacob ran from Esau, -what- was it that he had done? He had -stolen- Esau's "blessing". (Gen27:36) Prior to that he had also conned Esau out of his birthright. (Gen25:31)

I had never noticed this before, until my recent read-through of Genesis... But notice...

As Jacob is preparing to meet Esau after 20 years, and they meet, what does Jacob say? "Take my BLESSING that is brought to you." (Gen33:11) There was nothing he could do to change Isaac's blessing upon Jacob... "I have blessed him; and moreover, he shall be blessed." (27:33) That's a done deal. But Jacob (now "Israel") is prostrating himself to Esau, no longer supplanting ("jacob"); essentially saying to Esau, I've done you great wrong; here is a token of the "blessing" that I stole from you.

Jacob was symbolically making restitution for what he had stolen from Esau. This is God's way...even before it was given through the Law. This was the Law "written in the heart" of the "conscience". (Rom2:15)

Why does the world not recognize it today?

We are living in the "latter times"; and we know it is the latter times in that, consciences are "seared". (1Tim4:1-2)

## ***Poor me, poor me!*** (Genesis 34)

And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, You have troubled me, to make me stink among those who live in the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites. And I, being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and kill me. And I shall be destroyed, my house and I. (Gen34:30)

What unmitigated selfishness!! What a self-centered little twit! Just like many today. Usually, those making a claim to "family values" are the most guilty! Parents, not showing enough love and concern, refuse to train up their children with godly discipline and often also abandon them from personal attention; but when they get old, refuse to 'let them go'. Once the grand-kids come along, what they refused with their own children, they insist is their "right" with the children's children. "Their" children. "Their" grandchildren. Not recognizing that offspring are an "inheritance of the Lord" (Ps127:3) They belong to God, as He says, "Behold, all souls are Mine. As the soul of the father, also the soul of the son, they are Mine." (Ez18:4a)

But notice the context. Someone has "defiled" his daughter. (34:2) And two of his sons have taken it upon themselves to exact justice, when the rest of the family was sitting around doing nothing. But who is -now- "guilty"? The two sons, for meting out justice. 'Sounds about the way things happen today, eh! A world leader is guilty of immorality, treason, murder, lies, etc. But the ones trying to bring about justice were the ones crucified.

Well, Jacob is -afraid-. He shows no concern for the defilement of his daughter. He doesn't seem to fathom justice. (vs31) He's not even -really- concerned about the rest of his family. But it's "me", "I", "me", "my" and "I".

When it was thought that Joseph had been torn by wild animals, he mourns the loss with "I will go down into the grave to my son mourning." (37:35) During the famine, when Joseph kept Simeon as "collateral" against his brothers bringing Benjamin along next trip, and Jacob hears the news, "you have bereaved me." Joseph and Simeon are gone. And now you want to take Benjamin, too. "All these things are against me." (42:36) Why have you treated me so badly? (43:6) Well then, "if I am bereaved, I am bereaved." (43:14)

Well... Boo Hoo!!

Ok! Lest anybody think we are unsympathetic to legitimate loss, there is a proper "time" to be sorrowful and mourn. There is a "time to weep/mourn". (Ec3:4) But, as Simeon and Levi did, there is also a

"time to kill" (Ec3:3)

While Jacob was feeling all selfish about his 'personal' safety, notice what God was doing for his benefit. God instructs Jacob to move. "Arise, go up to Bethel, and live there. And make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau..." (Gen35:1) As if to say, 'Ok, Jacob. Enough of this murmuring and self-pity. Go build an altar, and worship. Get your priorities straightened out.' God had appeared to him, and in 20 years had protected him from Esau. He seems to have forgotten that already. But, as he moves to Bethel, notice that "the terror of God was upon the cities that were around about them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob." (vs5) God's protection.

He builds the altar. Worships. God renews His covenant to Abraham, Isaac and Israel with him. When he moves to the place of God's direction and choosing, there is communion and fellowship. And the place is called, "Beth-el". The "House of God."

And notice, once 'Jacob' has moved into God's presence, 'Israel' is at peace. (35:6) When Isaac dies, it says "Esau and Jacob" buried him. (35:29) A 'joint' effort. And Esau did not kill Jacob as he had threatened so many years previously.

"When a man's ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." (Pr16:7)



## ***Daddy's boy*** (Genesis 37)

And Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons...and when his brothers saw that their father loved him more...they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him. (Gen37:3-4)

Now, a person would think that Joseph would 'understand' certain things. If people 'hate' you, you don't want to rile them up.

Hey, guys! I had a dream. You were all bowing down to me, and I was 'in charge'. Uh...what was that book? "How to win friends and influence..."

Well, you see what we have here. We have a young lad who is being trained up by a father who is finally getting his own life figured out. He is learning to follow God. And this love for God is producing a young boy full of innocence and honesty. When something is there, he spews it out in his simplicity. We know he's a 'good' boy, because he willingly obeys his father to go see the welfare of his brothers...who hate him. (37:13) But he lacks a certain "wisdom" and discretion. He hasn't yet learned that "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." (Pr25:11) He is about to learn what a world-of-hurt the tongue can get one's self into. (Jas3)

But he seems to have a pure heart. While he doesn't yet know what the dreams mean, the Lord is obviously showing this young, open heart, a little of the future. What God has in store for him. It riles his brothers, who are like their father used to be. But his father is starting to understand God's ways, and so he "observed the saying." (vs11) 'Reminds me of Mary. All sorts of things were being prophesied about 'her' baby, Jesus. And she kept them in her heart. (Lk2:19,33,35)

So...did Joseph 'sin' in telling his dreams to his brothers? Probably as much as the early apostles who replied to commands to stop preaching in Jesus' name, "we ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts5:29) When it came to the 'kind of' brothers Joseph had, I wonder if there would have been any kind of "nice way" to declare the dreams..?

Just like... when a Christian proclaims his Faith in Christ, in the process renouncing his past in sin...and quite often "exposing" sin and those who are in rebellion against God... the people of the world are "offended". When Jesus was forthright, His disciples said, "Do You know that [they] were offended when they heard this..?" (Mt15:12)

Often, the offense comes without any spoken word. Peter speaks of unsaved husbands being "won without a word" (1Pt3:1) Especially, when a person is around family or 'old' friends, and the life changes; a person does not do the things he used to. When they have their drunken parties, he does not participate. When they are sexually lude, she does

not join in. When the joke is told, he does not laugh..and they notice; "Hey, look! He's not laughing!" And quite often, a person's simple non-participation is enough to generate feelings of animosity and retorts, "You're condemning, judging, criticizing me!" When nary a single word was even spoken. You see... their "conscience" (Rom2:15) is speaking inside their heart and soul... LOUDER than any spoken words the Believer might have uttered. But "you think you're better than us! Just who do you think you are, you #@\$%\*& !!"

What happens to "daddy's boy"? He was kidnapped and sold into slavery. Jesus was crucified. Joseph was young, and not "wise" to the world's ways...and spoke God's revelation in pure simplicity. Jesus, a grown 'man', God's Son... Deity... spoke God's Word directly... perfectly. Both received sinful man's wrath.

God instructs His own to say, "So says the Lord.." It doesn't matter if we don't know 'what' to say "properly". Jeremiah was concerned, "Behold, I do not know to speak; for I am a boy." (Jer1:6) And God responds to speak "whatever I command you." And further, do not be "afraid of their faces." (vs8)

Yes, in spite of sinful man's opposition, the simplicity of 'child-like' Faith. "..whoever shall humble himself like this little child, this one is the greater in the kingdom of Heaven." (Mt18:4)

## **Grace** (Genesis 38)

"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham...and Judah fathered Pharez...of Tamar...and Pharez fathered Hezron..." (Mt1:1-3)

What's the deal here? If you read Genesis 38, you see a story of some brothers who refuse to do the right thing regarding the family tree. And so God kills them. The widow, Tamar, is not given the next son 'in-line' when he comes of age, as promised. To make a long story short, 'dad' (Judah) conceives a child by the widow that he should have given to his next son. A real mixed up set of circumstances.

Now, let's take a look at God's requirements for His priests. They were not to be "defiled". (Lev21:1) One of the things that could defile a priest was an unholy marriage; a marriage to a whore, defiled or divorced woman. (vs7) Ezekiel takes it a step further for the future temple and servants, not even a widow. (Ez44:22) A priest could only marry a "virgin". Someone who had not been with another man. In order to maintain God's pure order of "two become one". (Gen2:24)

So, Jesus is born, the "spotless..Lamb of God" (1Pt1:19,Jn1:29) And yet His lineage has this 'tarnish' to it.

What made Jesus Christ "perfect"? Was it His pure -HUMAN- "blood-line"? Or was it the "righteousness of God...in Him?" (2Cor5:21)

This little "flaw" in Jesus' genealogy should help prove what 'grace' is about. There is a false doctrine today which proclaims, "God looks down at you, and sees all the -worth- that's inside you. He realized that you were -worth-a-lot- to Him. That's why He reached down and saved you. That's graeeeeessss."

Well, first of all, anybody see the 'flaw' in that logic? If there is -already- "worth", why is "salvation" even -necessary-? It isn't it. Grace is not salvation -because-of- our "worth".

Rather, God extends redemption to us -in-spite-of- the fact that we are less than worthless. There is "none righteous, no not one" (Rom3:10) We were "without strength" (5:6) and "sinners" (5:8) when God provided for our salvation. And God provided for His grace to be even 'more' FULL by not even allowing man to be -capable- of 'contributing' to it through a 'pure' bloodline. Even the bloodline was flawed. Redemption could only be through God, through His Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit. (Lk1:35)

Man is busy messing things up, royally! Grace is God's acceptance of us, IN SPITE OF ourselves.

## ***Nor be with*** (Genesis 39)

"Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not into the way of evil. Avoid it; do not pass by it; turn from it, and pass on!(Pr4:14-15)

How do we get into sin? Is it an accident when we sin? Like someone e-mailed some time back, what about those times when we "can't help BUT sin?" Is there such a thing? What about when the temptation is just "too strong"?

Typically, there are no true "accidents". Events come together to -form- the accident. When that person ends up in the ditch, upside down, it was not an "accident". They were not driving according to the icy conditions and/or their own abilities. When, as a 10-year old, I skinned up my elbow real good because I missed the corner with the bicycle, that was no "accident". In my excitement, I was going waaaay too fast down that narrow Japanese village alley. My crash could have been predicted with 99% accuracy of a probability that I -would- crash.

The story is told of the king who was looking for a personal carriage driver, and was interviewing applicants. For each applicant he had but one question. Being situated on a high mountain, the road leading up to the castle was narrow and windy, with no guard rails.

Question: how close can you drive my carriage to the edge of the road without falling off into the canyon below?

Various ones would strut with pride, proclaiming their skills. 1 foot, 2 feet, 6 inches. Finally, one applicant quietly replied, "Your Highness! I'd stay as far away from the edge as I could." He got the job!

Notice Joseph. His brothers sold him into slavery, but the Lord is blessing him. He has a wonderful position of responsibility. He has proven himself trustworthy and has oversight for everything Potiphar owns. (39:9) So his master is always 'out' doing whatever he did as "chief executioner". So his wife is 'lonely' at home, and here's this gorgeous 'hunk', Joseph. (39:6) She -really-wants- to 'get it on' with Joseph. And she's trying to lure and seduce him on a daily basis.

But notice Joseph's reaction. I cannot "do this great wickedness, and sin against God" (vs9) And as she continues to taunt him, it says, "he did not listen to her to lie with her, or TO BE WITH her." (vs10) Oh, but Joseph, you're being so impolite and "rude" to her. Yup! You bet!!

So, Joseph received 'praise' for doing what was right. Right? Not quite! She sets him up, and then contrives false accusations. And Joseph ends up in prison. Well, something is wrong here! I thought a

Believer is "blessed" when they do right! That will come -later-.

Joseph discovers the truth of, "It is better to dwell in the wilderness [corner of a housetop] than with a quarrelsome and angry woman." (Pr21:19,9,25:24) In prison Joseph found himself in a sort of "wilderness" again. But the Lord blessed him there, too, and he continues making a name for himself in -trustworthiness-. Eventually, these lessons are preparing him for the "big one" that will come shortly. But for everything, it would "seem" that his dreams were false, eh. It 'seems' that he is languishing...for having done right.

But for now, Joseph is being faithful, even though being wrongly accused. He stays away from sin.

Many people think they can "flirt" with sin. How did you [I] end up married to an unequal yoke? It was no accident! You went on that 'first date' when you knew they were not saved. ["nor-to-be-with"] How did you end up pregnant? It started as you flirted with him. ["nor-to-be-with"] How did you end up being addicted to drugs? It started when you were 'hanging' with the crowd who used. ["nor-to-be-with"] How did you end up all messed up emotionally, with spiritual problems? It started when you were listening regularly to those rock CDs and dabbled 'just-for-fun' with horoscopes, seances and ouija boards.

["nor-to-be-with"]

Oh, I want to 'witness' to him. If I marry him, he has promised to become a Christian. It won't happen to -me-. ["nor-to-be-with"]

"Do not be deceived, evil companionships corrupt good habits." (1Cor15:33) "Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" (1Cor5:6) "He who walks with the wise shall be wise, but a companion with fools shall be destroyed. (Pr13:20)

Forget the excuses! Typically, people get into sin because that is what they -want- to do. But if a person truly desires to live Godly, then we follow the exhortation, "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not take thought beforehand for the lusts of the flesh" (Rom13:14) Here I like the NKJV/KJV better, "...and make NO PROVISION [no plans or doors open just a 'crack'] for the flesh..."

## ***Dreams: not I - God*** (Genesis 40)

"I have dreamed a dream, and none can interpret it. And I have heard it about you, saying, you can understand a dream to interpret it. And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, Not I. God shall answer the welfare of Pharaoh." (41:15-16)

As usual with rumors, only part of the story is conveyed. Pharaoh's cupbearer had told of Joseph interpreting his dream in prison; but forgot Joseph's explanation of 'how' he could do it. "Do not interpretations belong to God?" (40:8)

In another lesson a little later in this series, we'll tie Joseph's experiences with dreams, back to his brothers and family. But it is obvious that God has given Joseph a 'gift' regarding dreams. He had had some dreams...they haven't yet been fulfilled...his family has not yet bowed before him. But God apparently has been doing a work in his life.

Before the Scriptures were available in written form, it seems apparent that God spoke to people in dreams. In fact, one of the methods God, Himself, proclaimed He would use to speak to prophets, was through dreams; "If there is a prophet among you, I the LORD will make Myself known to him in a vision, and will speak to him in a dream." (Num12:6)

There was another occasion when a king had a troubling dream. This time, Nebuchadnezzar did not tell the dream, but insisted, in essence, "tell me the dream -AND- its interpretation...or else you're in big trouble." Notice who he was dealing with; "wise men, conjurers, horoscopists and fortune-tellers." (Dan2:27) And when he would not tell the dream, they replied, "there is no other who can reveal it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh." (vs11)

And so, what does Daniel say? "But there is a God in Heaven who reveals secrets and makes known to King Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days." (vs28) While Pharaoh's dream was about the following 14 years, Nebuchadnezzar's has been fulfilled, is being fulfilled even today, and is yet to be completed in the near future.

Daniel's gift from God was so well-known, that Belshazzar said, "I have even heard of you, that the spirit of the gods in in you.." (Dan5:14)

And so this brings us to the matter of -DISCERNMENT-. What is the source of dreams? Do -ALL- dreams come from God? No. The false prophets were condemned for proclaiming, "I have dreamed, I have dreamed" (Jer23:25) as they "prophecy lies" in God's name. So much of what we see today as the modern "great men of god" tighten their faces up, squint real hard, making moaning sounds and do a great "hokus-pokus" stage act, fits in the same category of the conjurers and fortune

tellers. Modern psychology also incorporates dreams into their 'craft'.

Many casual dreamings are the workings of the mind. But some are truly messages. Notice that God spoke to Jacob and Joseph in dreams. He also spoke to Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar. Jacob had not yet proclaimed Jehovah as "-my- God" when God first communicates with him.

We have already spoken in the recent past of demonic dreams. False "Jesuses" appearing to 'have sex' with women, etc. I have personally had a dream, that I came to analyze later, was satan's messenger, to bring me a false message regarding a personal matter.

On the other hand, like Joseph, I have had some dreams 8 years ago, which have not yet been fulfilled. At least, one of them, I am almost positive was a message from the Lord, regarding what 'will be'. But I am waiting to see its outcome.

At this point in Joseph's life, his dreams of his youth have not yet been fulfilled. And yet, he has grown in the Lord, that God is using him to proclaim Pharaoh's dreams, even though his own have not yet been realized. His "faith" in God...to stand before Pharaoh...and proclaim what 'will be'. Because it was not his own ability. Not even a "gift" necessarily.

But... "interpretations belong to God". Because God "[declares] the end from the beginning, and from the past things which were not done, saying, My purpose shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure."  
(Is46:10)

## ***Forgetting - Remembering*** (Genesis 41-42)

And two sons were born to Joseph before the years of famine came..and Joseph called the name of the first-born Manasseh, saying, For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house. (41:51)

It was on account-of his -dreams- that Joseph was in Egypt. His brothers had scorned, "Behold, this dreamer comes...we shall see what will become of his dreams." (37:19-20) He has interpreted Pharaoh's dreams and is now ruler in Egypt. But his own dreams have not yet been fulfilled. After being falsely accused, he was imprisoned. But now, his faithfulness is finally 'paying off'. He's doing 'OK'. He even has been given a wife, and is starting a family.

Do you suppose he has really forgotten his family, and doesn't remember them in his mind? I really doubt that. But his circumstances are such that whatever tendency to stew over his situation, and 'how' he got there, is no longer an issue. It is now 'in-the-past' and those wounds in his memory are fading away.

Many of us have been wounded deeply. Some have been abused. Perhaps a messy divorce. You grow up your whole life thinking your family consists of certain people, and then suddenly, you discover your parent/s had a 'former life' which you knew nothing about. Perhaps you have spent years in prison, having been falsely accused of some crime. Maybe the circumstances that came your way physically injured you so that you are now permanently in a wheel chair and/or bed-ridden.

One can piously chant the little righteous -placebos- of "just take it to the Lord in prayer" ... "just turn it over to the Lord, and let Him take care of it" And those who have not undergone what you're going through, expect you to 'instantly' be "cured" of all your heart-ache, because you "turned it over to the Lord". And if, after a year or two, your heart still 'aches' over it, they "counsel" you to "put the past in the past" and "get -on- with your life".

Well, you who have actually experienced it, know that it just "don't work that way" does it! In Joseph's case, while he obviously was being faithful in prison, he clearly did not desire to -stay- there, did he. He asks the cupbearer, "but remember me when it is well with you...please...make mention of me to Pharaoh." (40:14) I really would like to get outta here.

While we go through the tough times, a person who is In Christ, and seeking Him with the whole heart -will- experience "He restores my soul" (Ps23:3) But the heart can still ache, even when the soul comes to peace in Christ. Ultimately, God promises to wipe the tears from our eyes (Rev7:17,21:4) as the former things are no longer remembered.



(Is65:17) And, even in this life we can experience, from God, a measure of "forgetting" the past with it's pain.

But then, eventually, righteousness will be vindicated. Truth will win out.

Remember Joseph's dreams? That 11 stars bowed to him. That 11 sheaves of grain bowed to his. (37:7,9) Well, the famine hits, just as he told Pharaoh. And his brothers come to buy food, "and Joseph's brothers came and bowed down themselves before him, their faces to the earth." (42:6)

"And Joseph REMEMBERED the DREAMS which he dreamed of them..." (vs9) At long last, that which he knew to be from God, which everyone told him he was "crazy" about...came to pass!

But notice, again, God's 'order' of things. God did not fulfill Joseph's dreams, and -THEN- Joseph came to peace... BECAUSE the dreams were fulfilled. No. Joseph's faith grew; his peace in his circumstances came about when the dreams had not yet been fulfilled. "Until the time that his word came [to pass], the Word of the LORD refined him" (Ps105:19) He learned to trust the Lord "with all his heart" (Pr3:5) first. The Gallery-of-Faith lists all the people.. "these all, having obtained a good report through faith, did not receive the promise.." (Heb11:39) Christ had not died, and yet they believed. Joseph lived by "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Heb11:1)

Joseph now knows. His righteous faith is vindicated. But his brothers haven't the slightest inkling of a clue of their impending nightmare!

Stay tuned...

## ***Time for proving*** (Genesis 42)

"You are spies! You have come to see the nakedness of the land." (vs9)

Oh...Joseph! You are not very "forgiving". Bringing up old animosities. Dredging up the past! Can't you just "forgive and forget"?? Can't you just let "bygones be bygones"? Don't you know that "time heals all wounds"? There's a famine! They're in 'hard times'. Don't kick 'em when they're down! C'mon, Joseph...lighten up!! What they need right now is luvuv and compassion. You need to let them know you "caaaare"!!

"No, my lord, but your servants have come...." (vs10)

"It's as I said...you are spies!" (vs14)

Joseph, don't you hear them? They are showing you respect. They have just called you "lord" and said they are your "servants". Why are you being so nasty to them? Haven't they learned their lesson? Well, no. "Joseph knew his brothers, but they did not know him." (vs8) Some "learning" is now necessary for them. Joseph has learned a lot during the 13 (or so) years he's been in Egypt. Let us observe how he guides his brothers to truth with a bit of "tough love".

"We've come to buy food. We are all one man's sons. We are honest; your servants are not spies." (vs11)

You're honest, huh!? Well, let's see about that!

"We are twelve brothers...the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not." (vs13)

Uh! What's this? One "is not"...? Of course, they don't realize that -he- is the one who "is not". Not yet -quite- as "honest" as they claim, eh!

OK...if things are as you say they are, prove it. Bring your younger brother here. (vs15)

Now, notice how quickly their conscience comes to the fore. They know it's going to be like pulling eye-teeth, to get their father to release Benjamin to travel with them. And it dredges up in their memory "why" their father is so protective of him. Because they sold Joseph. You see, in his present good fortune, Joseph had begun to 'forget' his captivity. When his brother arrived, he "remembered the dreams". Now, the brothers' memories are being spurred on in preparation for their learning time.

Notice, he puts them "into custody three days." (vs17) What does it

feel like to be locked up? Is this as bad as that pit they had dropped Joseph into? (37:22) After three days of stewing, they are released to go home, but Simeon is "bound before their eyes" (42:24) after they have been frantically remembering amongst themselves how cruel they had been to Joseph, how he had struggled and cried out, begging for them to not treat him as they had. (vs21) And Reuben suggests that their 'present' experience is "pay-back" time. They are beginning to see what it "felt like". Receiving in some measure, what they had dished out. They are learning the "Golden Rule" principle, "And as you desire that men should do to you, you do also to them likewise." (Lk6:31)

You see, they are beginning to understand their "guilt". (42:21)

OK...what about those dreams? As they had contrived evil against him, they had taunted, "we shall see what will become of his dreams." (37:20) (We won't repeat the whole story; it is well-known. If you don't know it, please read these chapters in Genesis.) But Joseph's special cup is found in Benjamin's grain sack. They are all herded back to Joseph, and "they fell before him to the earth." They are -bowing-again. And Joseph 'taunts' them a bit. "Do you not know that one like me can certainly divine?" (44:15) Now, we know Joseph's true heart; because he has already said that interpretations belong to God (40:8) and that God was the one communicating to Pharaoh. (41:16) And at the end of the book, when Jacob dies, his brothers will come around again, in fear of reprisals, and Joseph is going to calm them by pointing them back to God, "am I in the place of God?" (50:19) But for right now, they need to face up to their past guilt. Not only did they sell Joseph into slavery... they had done so because he had been a messenger of God's word, through the dreams. So they need to understand their rejection of God.

And then... one more person needs to learn a little something. Remember self-centered Jacob? Poor me, poor me! ..??

Moaning about letting Benjamin go, 'If anything should happen to him, I would die.' (42:38) And Jacob's continual moanings were so ingrained into the whole family that the brothers repeated the family's "dysfunction-mantra". "The boy cannot leave his father" because "he [Jacob] would die." (44:22)

Well, you see... Joseph had once been in that spot, too. He had been "daddy's boy." And when he was sold, he probably thought -he- was going to die. But as he grew in the Lord, he realized that in God's strength he was surviving just fine. He also knew that Benjamin would be fine. And, that his father would -NOT- die! He recognized the selfish parent who was clinging to "his" child... and -manipulating- the ENTIRE FAMILY to cater to his own private selfishness, having them all wrapped around his little finger. 'had them walking around him on 'egg-shells'.

You see, children are to obey their parents (Eph6:1) and to "honor" them. (6:2) But fathers are also not to provoke their children to wrath. (6:4) They are to bring them up in the nurture and admonition "of the Lord". -NOT- some sort of sick, selfish, glomming co-dependency.

[Ed: no, I don't have much use for psychology. But most error -contains- 'truth' and these terms seem somehow 'appropriate' at this point. This family is -SICK-! Major Big Time!!]

So...bring Benjamin, or you don't see my face again. It's OK. Your father will "survive" just fine.

Well, ultimately Joseph discloses his identity to his brothers. They are fearful, but he is giving them assurance. Repentance (in their hearts) and forgiveness is yet in the future. But Joseph invites them all to move to Egypt to be sustained through the rest of the famine. So, as he knows their hearts, as he sends them on their way to bring the rest of the family down, after becoming aware that he is, indeed, alive; knowing their tendency to bicker, he exhorts...

"Do not quarrel along the way" (45:24)

## ***Messianic prophecy: From Judah, the Scepter*** (Genesis 49)

"The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a Lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come. And the obedience of the peoples to him."  
(49:10)

What a blessed little interjection into the progression of this family. Another prophecy of the -future- "Messiah". Years and years of family squabbles, moves, confrontations; and more recently, deliverance from famine at the hand of the sibling that was sold into slavery, and is now ruling Egypt. Jacob is old, and it's now time to bless his sons.

"And one of the elders said to me, Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the book..."  
(Rev5:5)

Notice the wording here. The "Root" of David. Wasn't Jesus born -after- David? But, doesn't a root come -before- and -support- the rest of the plant? Jesus said to the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced (past tense) to see My day, and he saw and was glad." (Jn8:56) As the Jews would argue with Jesus about His identity, He gave them a thought to ponder, something David had said, "Jehovah said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand until I place Your enemies as Your footstool." (Lk20:42-43) And He asks, If David calls the Messiah his "Lord" how is He is "son"? Jesus identified Himself to them, "Before Abraham came into being, I AM!" (Jn8:58) Jesus was/is Deity, come in the flesh. They didn't recognize Him 2000 years ago; and they still do not today, as they insist that the "root" is "Israel".

So then, the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" and notice Jacob's blessing, "Judah is a lion's whelp." (Gen49:9) Judah was the 'whelp' of the Messiah who was to be -physically- born later, because He actually "inhabits eternity". (Is57:15)

And thus, "Judah, may your brothers praise you.." (vs8) Well, not really Judah...but his "Seed", the Messiah. The One in Whom all families of the earth were to be blessed. (12:3) As God "has highly exalted Him" and to Him "every knee should bow" and "every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.." (Phil2:9-11)

"The scepter shall not depart..." as Jesus will "break/rule them with a rod of iron" (Ps2:9,Rev2:27,12:5)

Notice the little detail of Jesus' "triumphal entry" to Jerusalem, riding on a colt of a donkey. "Binding his foal to the vine, and his ass's colt to the choice vine." (vs11) His work of salvation, the

symbol of the covenant of His blood with the wine. (Lk22:20,1Cor11:25)

But also, the wine, the "blood" and "grapes" a symbol of His coming wrath as He treads the winepress of "anger and the wrath of Almighty God" (Is63:3-4,Rev19:13,15)

Jacob speaks of "the obedience of the peoples to him." (Gen49:10b) That will truly be the case when He has conquered and is seen with the name "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS." (Rev19:16b)

## ***Jacob learns: Contentment*** (Genesis 49)

"And Jacob said to Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life..." (47:9)

Oh, poor Jacob! All those years, and -STILL- he has a problem with his 'self-esteem'!! By now you'd think he'd'uv learned how to rely on him-SELF better, and be 'happy with him-SELF'.

Well, no! "Self" is what was always in-the-way most of his life. Remember "poor me, poor me"? God, if You'll do this for ME, then I'll follow You. But, you'd better take care of me...or else. Well, his lifetime of self-indulgence has just been shattered. All the while he has been sorrowing at his -own- loss, over Joseph; God has been making Joseph into a ruler of the world's largest, most powerful nation. And Jacob has just found out how all his years of sorrow were for naught. His self-indulgence was just that...for SELF. Wasted! While Joseph was out of his [Jacob's] hands and presumed 'protection', God was doing a much better job of caring for Joseph than Jacob ever could have!

So, what kinds of things is Jacob learning? Remember the blessing he stole from Esau? Perhaps, if he hadn't jumped in there, God would have taken care of the arrangements? Well, it comes time to bless his own sons. First, he blesses Joseph's two, Ephraim and Manasseh, with their own special blessings, including them into the sphere as "one of his own." And notice, he deliberately blesses the younger over the older. (48:14,17) Joseph brings them to him so the eldest would 'naturally' come under Jacob's 'right' hand. But Jacob -crosses- his hands to bless. One thing he has learned is that God's ways are not like man's ways. As Isaiah would proclaim from God later, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa55:9) "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Rom11:33)

And then, Jacob has finally come to a point of "contentment". He has 'now' blessed the rest of his 12 sons, each with their individual unique blessing (49:28) and then gives instructions regarding burying himself when he dies. And he says, Bury me with my fathers Abraham and Isaac, where they are buried, where they buried their wives, and where I buried my wife... "Leah" (vs31)

OK...but... wasn't it "Rachel" that he "loved"? (29:18-30,etc.) But Laban had swapped sisters on his wedding night, and Leah was his 'first' wife? God had decreed that the man "shall cleave to his wife and they shall be one flesh." (2:24) Again, 'poor me, poor me' Laban did this 'to me' but I really wanted Rachel!! And there were continual

years of family squabbles. Well, Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin, and Jacob was left with Leah. Aside from her being the "legal" -first-wife, his tone at his death-bed seems to be one of 'contentment' in the fact that Leah was -his- "wife".

He has been through a lot in his life. A lot of struggles, trying to do things on his own. God crippling him so that he could see God at work. And finally, after time-after-time of God working in this way, it finally has sunk in. Finally, at his death-bed...contentment. (49:33)

"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and it is clear that we can carry nothing out. But having food and clothing, we will be content...and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and meekness" (1Tm6:6-8,11)



## ***Brothers learn: Forgiveness*** (Genesis 50)

"And when Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will perhaps hate us, and will certainly repay us all the evil which we did to him..." (50:15)

Remember in the lesson from chapter 42 how we observed that, while Joseph had revealed himself to his brothers, and brought his family to Egypt to sustain them, there had not yet been repentance and forgiveness...? That that was yet to be in the "future"? They had spoken amongst themselves in his hearing of the evil they had done. Joseph assured them that he would take care of them. But they have never yet, actually, come to Joseph and said, "We're sorry for what we did! Is it possible for you to forgive us?"

Let us observe a few things here. First of all, their "motivation". Fear. Jacob is now dead. Joseph would have refrained from retribution out of deference to his father. But now, that "buffer" is gone. We must contrive. So, what do they do?

"Your father commanded before he died, saying, so shall you say to Joseph..." (50:16) The lies continue! 'Dad asked that you would forgive us.' Well, if 'dad' asked that of Joseph, why does it not record such a conversation occurring between Jacob and Joseph? There were quite a few years there. Or...why was that not part of Jacob's death-bed wish to Joseph? "Don't forget your promise to forgive them..." But, if we contrive our communication in this manner, how can Joseph refuse on the memory of the 'dearly departed'? They, obviously, have not yet learned the lessons that their father and Joseph have, about God's workings.

But notice, they do the best they know to do. Let's also make a mental note of the situation here. Joseph is living in palacial grandeur. He's the 'hero' of the famine years, highly respected. World-renowned. And the brothers are farmers and ranchers, 'despicable' to the Egyptians. (46:34) So-to-speak, living on the 'other side of the tracks'. Think of the effort that must have been required to get past "receptionists" and "security" to contact Joseph.

So they come and prostrate themselves before Joseph. 'We've done you evil. Please forgive us. We are your servants.' (50:17-18) Let's not forget something else here. Eleven of these are -older- than Joseph. They are "family". But they bring with them the attitude of the prodigal son, "I am no more worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants." (Lk15:19) This is "humility" exemplified!

It says, "Joseph wept when they spoke to him." (50:17b) Remember, back when he heard them speaking amongst themselves about how they had treated him, he had gone off to weep? (42:24) Way back then he was

"ready to forgive" them. (Ps86:5) But they were not yet repenting. They were not yet ready to receive the forgiveness he would have extended, had they apologized and confessed.

Well... notice Joseph's forgiveness! 'It's as though it never happened!' How do we know this?

First of all, "don't be afraid...am I in the place of God?" (vs19) During the "proving" phase, he had taunted them with, "Do you not know that one like me can certainly divine?" (44:15) But now, since they hold him in awe, and they are now humbled, he dares't usurp God's position before them. 'Let's get one thing straight, I'm -merely- a man, too.'

We also see Joseph's growth and trust in God. Even though his brothers 'physically' roughed him up and sold him into slavery, Joseph came to understand that "all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." (Rom8:28) You see, God had 'called' Joseph to the life he was living. He had announced it through those dreams all those years ago. He had "purposed" the matter, and had made it "come to pass" (Isa14:24) So, while his brothers had done the dirty deed, it was -God- Who brought Joseph to Egypt.

So, the forgiveness consists of Joseph, in effect saying, 'You think -you- did this to me. You didn't do it. God did it.' Because as Israel would later remember in the Psalms, "[God] sent a man before them, Joseph, being sold for a servant." (Ps105:17) You meant evil to me, but God meant it for good. (50:20) And you see again, Joseph's 'willingness' to forgive them back during the famine, when he said the same thing there. "God sent me before you to preserve life." (45:5) And 'back there' he also said, "you did not send me here." (45:8)

You see...true forgiveness makes the 'account' as though the sin never happened. The brothers are saying, "sorry, -we-did- it!" And forgiveness says, "No, you didn't. It's not ACCOUNTED to you." The same way our salvation is "reckoned" and/or "accounted" to us. (Rom4,etc.) And thus the proclamation, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." (Ps103:12)

However, a transgression -did- occur. When David had slept with Bathsheba and had her husband killed, and is now confessing before God, he says, "Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done evil in Your sight.." (Ps51:4) The brothers -know- they've done wrong. They come prostrating themselves to Joseph. And Joseph's forgiveness says, I hold no grudges against you. You didn't -really- do it to me; because God sent me here. When you did wrong, you did so against God. "Am I in the place of God?" (vs19)

So, now, what is the relationship? Well, OK, I've forgiven you, but don't bother me anymore. So you think times are rough? Well, tough luck to you! No. It's forgotten. Don't be afraid. Don't continue to "beat yourselves up" over it. I've forgotten it...you do, too. I'll take care of you.

And it says, "he comforted them." (50:21)

"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and tumult and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you." (Eph4:31-32)

## **Addendum:**

### **Lot was 'raptured'** (Genesis 19:16-17)

"And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, Jehovah being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him down outside the city. And it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, Escape for your lives! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed." (Gen19:16-17)

In these two verses we see three things we'd like to observe briefly. From the previous Portion we were reminded that Lot is called "righteous". (2Pet2:7) By N.T. description, Lot was a "saint", due to being a "beloved of God". (Rom1:7)

But was he "saintly"? Were all his actions and behavior 'good'? Was he continually obedient? When God spoke, did he 'hop-to' in obedience? He was still "flesh and blood" that is not able to inherit the Kingdom of God. (1Cor15:50) He was still of corruption. The angels were needing to -urge- Lot to get out of town. (vs15) He is still "lingering". (vs16) We are saved "by grace, through faith...and that, NOT OF OURSELVES..." Our salvation isn't based on our self-actualized perfection. It is a work of God. "...His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus." (Eph2:8-10)

So, notice what happens. For the sake of Abraham (v29), God's "friend" (Jac2:23), God shows "mercy" (vs16) towards Lot, and family.

What is mercy? Is it a feel-good pat-on-the-back, with sweet words of praise, bolstering one's self-esteem? According to what some teach, with another word that means something similar to "mercy" ... "graeesss", they seem to think so.

How did God's mercy for Lot get manifest through the angels? The two angels grab the four of them by the hand, and forcefully whisk them out of town. From the wording, I suspect the event would have dwarfed ET's escape on the flying bicycles. Notice after they are brought out, it says they "SET HIM DOWN outside the city". (vs16b) What sorts of things are "set down"? Things that have been first 'picked up', or are being otherwise supported, held, carried, suspended, etc. You don't "set down" something that is already 'down'. Thus, I suspect Lot's family did some quick 'flying' through the air that day!

In this case, "mercy" was like a burning building, the people have the trampoline device ready to 'catch' the person, so "mercy" grabs the child and 'throws' them out the upper window, so they can be caught by the people below. When a person is drowning, and thrashing about,

"mercy" is the rescuer punching his lights out so he will stop thrashing, so that he can be safely rescued.

Finally, an observation. Remember that the Lord's appearing is to be like the days of Lot? Now, we know that many are skeptical about what is often called the "pre-trib" Rapture... that the Lord is snatching the Church out -before- the seven years of wrath of the 70th week.

If we are correct about the mode of transportation by which Lot's family left the city of Sodom, were they not "raptured" out? They were 'raptured' out -before- Sodom's destruction. In fact, the insistence by the angels that they needed to hurry was because, "...I cannot do anything until you arrive there.." (vs22) God's destruction could not begin until Lot's family was totally -removed- from harm's way.

"Because you have kept the Word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly!" (Rev3:10-11) "...God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.." (1Th5:9) God's 'mercy'. God's 'grace'. If Lot was raptured -before- destruction, so will it be for the Church!

"...as it was also in the days of Lot...Even in the same way will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed." (~Lk17:28-30)

## **So "few"!** (*Genesis 18:32*)

"And Abraham approached and said, Would You also sweep away the righteous with the wicked?" (Gen18:23)

"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many entering in through it. Because narrow is the gate and distressing is the way which leads unto life, and there are few who find it." (Mt7:13-14)

This is something we speak of often. But in light of how often 'lone' Believers here and there are struggling with the notion that there isn't any 'group' they can fellowship with, it is fitting to observe Abraham's observation.

Remember: we are exhorted that the time when Christ comes again will be just like the days of Lot. "Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot...Even in the same way will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed." (~Lk17:28-30) Notice carefully the wording. Christ is yet coming for His "Appearing" and His "Kingdom" (2Tim4:1) The days like "Lot" are the days associated with Christ's -appearing-... meaning the same thing as "revealed". The time coinciding with the Rapture. In the 'walk-thru' studies on this passage we learned how, just as Lot was rescued out of Sodom 'prior' to destruction, so too the Church is raptured 'prior' to destruction during the 70th week of Jacob's trouble.

Just as Believers churn in their hearts today because, as the apostate state of the 'church' becomes more fully understood, the companion understanding is of just HOW FEW there are, who are righteous.

Abraham surely knew how wicked Sodom was. He would have seen their state when he rescued them, for Lot's sake, when they had been attacked and taken captive. (ch14)

So, as God tells Abraham that He is going to check and see if Sodom is as wicked as its outcry (18:21), Abraham thinks of Lot living there. Surely You wouldn't sweep away the righteous along with the wicked? What if there's 50 righteous? (vs24) If there's 50, I will spare it. What about 45? (vs28) What about 40? (vs29) What about 30? (vs30) "I will not do it if I find 30 there."

Now if you read through these verses, one thing we notice is the 'eastern' mind. They are usually not nearly so 'blunt' as we westerners are. As if to ask God, 'What's the cut-off point between mercy and destruction? What are Your operational parameters? I want to know: What about Lot and his family?' ...like we might do.

Well, Abraham starts with "50". He asks two more times and gets to "40".

He has now asked "three" times. Typically when easterners are 'negotiating', they will exchange offers and counter-offers "three" times. 1) Please take this gift...Oh, no I couldn't. 2) Oh really, won't you accept it...You are too kind, I couldn't impose. 3) Oh please, I really do want you to have it... I am really unworthy of such magnanimity... Thank you.

Abraham knows Sodom's true state: 40? 30? 20? (vs31) That's "six" times! Now notice: "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there? And He said, I will not destroy it for the sake of ten." (vs32) Seven times, he asks!! "Seven" Abraham is really 'serious'!

For Lot's family, according to the narrative, there is a possibility of at least 'eight' to be rescued. The "daughters" who are married are spoken of in the 'plural'. That's at least "two". Were there three? Is that why Abraham stopped at "10" in questioning God? (Lot, his wife, two unmarried daughters, plus the married daughters and their husbands?) Perhaps Abraham's heart yearned for the spiritual state of Lot's sons-in-law? And as a result, also, the state of those daughters who had married those heathen men?

And as the smoke is rising from Sodom, Abraham goes out and sees it. (19:27-28) What must be going through his mind and heart!! The realization that NOT 'all' of Lot's family was righteous! Because, if they 'all' had been "righteous", God would not have destroyed the place.

So, the families of the married daughters are destroyed, even though they had the -name- as being "Lot's daughters". Lot's wife surely was "righteous"? After all, she was his "WIFE"! But on the way out to safety, she turns back (19:26) "to destruction". (Heb10:39)

Only 'three' (3) make it out alive. And even of those three, the two daughters behave incestuously with their father to raise up "seed". (19:31-38)

Peter speaks of "righteous Lot" (2Pet2:7) but does not mention the two daughters. Perhaps Lot represents those who built with "gold, silver and precious stones"? Perhaps the daughters are like those who make it, "yet so as through fire"? (1Cor3:12,15) Their offspring, the Moabites and Ammonites were always a thorn in Israel's side. Some of Solomon's lusting after other gods was due to his marrying Ammonite women, descendants of Lot's daughters. (1Ki11:5) As Israel was going in to take possession of God's land, both Moab and Ammon were denied access to worship because they did not help Israel when in distress, and hired Balaam to curse them. (Deu23:3-4) That's the legacy of Lot's daughters.

What do we see today from that which calls itself "christian"? Like the sons-in-law (19:14) some scoff, saying that there will be NO RAPTURE;

why, the fires of "revival" are 'flowing' in the spirit; there is no need to prepare to leave, because we are preparing a place for Christ to come to; what we call the "church" is going to be "purified".

There are some, like Lot's wife, who have been going-with-the-flow; going to church, being active in the programs...and even talking about the Rapture. But oh...how could I leave such a life behind. I'm just coming to get my 'self' figured out, I've got a good life here, things are comfortable, I'm experiencing blessing. I really can't leave all that behind!

And then, of those who are True Believers, like the two daughters, how many will be hiding "in shame at His coming". (1Jn2:28) They will get there only by the proverbial 'skin-of-their-teeth'.

So...out of all of Sodom's population, there was a potential of "10" that had the label "church" by association. "10", a number that Abraham shuddered and worried over.

Out of those 10, only 3 survived. But what was the 'real' state of the two daughters? Did they 'really' make it? Or being the progenitors of the (figurative) 'antichrist' nations of Ammon and Moab, were they only 'pretenders'? We don't know for sure, do we. Regarding how many today do

Real Believers not 'know' for sure about, because they are soooo entrenched in the world? It's a similar scenario!

Thus, out of all of Sodom, there was -actually- only one (1) we 'know' FOR SURE about. Peter calls him "righteous". He represents the one to whom the Master says, "Well done, good and faithful servant". (Mt25:21) But even Lot was 'whining' at the angels, dragging his feet to leave.

If the days when Christ is "revealed" are like the days of Lot...WHAT DOES THAT SAY about today's CHURCH??

You who truly know the Lord, who cry out to God that you are "all alone"... Do you now UNDERSTAND 'WHY' this is so? If you feel all 'alone', it is because you are, indeed, 'alone' in your little niche of the world. Some may chide you with words like: It's not really all 'that' bad. Well, no. It's not 'that' bad... it's MUCH WORSE than we even realize!

So...take heart!

Elijah cried out thus to the Lord, too. But God reminded him, "Yet I have left in Israel seven thousand, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal." (1Ki19:18) As Paul reiterates that passage, he makes application, which is fitting even today for the Church...



"Even so then, at this present time there is a REMNANT according to the election of grace..." (Rom11:5)

And doesn't it often feel like an "offscouring"! (1Cor4:13)

Amen!