



The Book of Genesis

Lesson Number 28



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

TRANSLATION LEGEND: ABP=Apostolic Bible Polygot m(1992); ALT=Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED =Amplified Bible (1965), ABP=Apostolic Bible Polygot with Greek Interlinear (2003); ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), BRENT=Brenton's English Septuagint; CEV=Contemporary English Version (1995); DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV =English Revised Version (1885), ESV=English Stand Version (2001), GENEVA=Geneva Bible (1599), GNB=Good News (1966), GWN=God's Word (1995), IE= International English (1973), ISV=International Standard Version (1967), JPS=Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV=King James Version (1611), LITV= Literal Translation of the Bible (1976), LIVING=Living Bible (1971), MESSAGE=The Message (1993), MKJV= Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY=Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD=Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB=New American Bible (2002), NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV=New King James Version (1979), NLT=New Living Translation (1996), NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS=J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT=Bishop's New Testament (1595), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), WEB=Webster Bible (1833), WEYMOUTH=Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS=William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE=Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE=Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT =Young's Literal Translation (1862)

GREEK LEXICON LEGEND

LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = Barclay-Newman, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT = Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER = Thayer's Greek Lexicon, LEH = LEH Lexicon, GINGRICH = Gingrich Lexicon

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF THE BEGINNING OF ALL THINGS: THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH, MANKIND, SIN, THE FIRST CHOSEN AND BLESSED NATION, THE FIRST CURSE, THE FIRST PROMISE, AND THE FIRST FAITH.

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

GOD REVEALS THE IMMINENT DESTRUCTION OF SODOM

Gen 18:16 "And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way. ¹⁷ And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; ¹⁸ Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? ¹⁹ For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him. ²⁰ And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; ²¹ I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto Me; and if not, I will know. ²² And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD. ²³ And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt Thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? ²⁴ Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt Thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? ²⁵ That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from Thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? ²⁶ And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. ²⁷ And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes: ²⁸ Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt Thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And He said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it. ²⁹ And he spake unto Him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake. ³⁰ And he said unto Him, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And He said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there. ³¹ And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And He said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake. ³² And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And He said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake. ³³ And the LORD went His way, as soon as He had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place" (Genesis 18:16-33)

INTRODUCTION

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

Abraham's hospitality did not end with the messengers stay at his tent. He journeyed a way with them, during which some remarkable communication took place. **We learn from this text that the main reason for these messengers coming to Abraham was not confined**

to his interests, or even the promise made to him. The Kingdom of God benefits men, but is not centered in them. Yet, there was a need for this contact with Abraham – to inform him of the birth of Isaac, and to confirm through him that some places cannot be favorably influenced for righteousness'

sake. These angels were on a mission, and it concerned Sodom. In this mission, the angels were not on an equal level. **One of them did not continue on the journey, and was particularly identified with the Lord.** We also learn something further about Abraham, and the impact of faith upon

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him. The Lord comments upon him – something that was exceedingly rare up to this time. **Here is the first instance in Scripture where anyone reasoned with the Lord.** It is therefore of particular significance to us.

DIVINE CONTACTS WITH MEN DURING THE FIRST TWO THOUSAND YEARS OF HUMAN HISTORY

It is important to note the recorded contacts of God with men during the first two thousand years of history. To gather some perspective about the length of two thousand years, the time in which we are living is two thousand years from the entrance of Christ into the world.

Here are the people with whom God directly involved Himself.

CONTACT	EST YEAR
▶ ADAM/EVE	1
▶ CAIN (NOT FAVORABLE).	2-30?
▶ ENOCH (AT AGE 65)	557-987
▶ NOAH (AT AGE 480)	1675
▶ ABRAHAM (AT AGE 70-74)	2000

There is an important aspect of God that is made known in these infrequent revelations.

First, consider that the redemption of man was purposed down to the finest detail before the world – the

environment for man – was ever created.

- ▶ **THE BIRTH OF JESUS.** *"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."* (Micah 5:2)
- ▶ **A PREPARED KINGDOM.** *"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."* (Matthew 25:34)
- ▶ **HIS WORKS ALL KNOWN.** *"Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world."* (Acts 15:18)
- ▶ **A MYSTERY KEPT SECRET.** *"Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began."* (Romans 16:25)
- ▶ **ORDAINED WISDOM FOR OUR GLORY.** *"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory"* (1 Cor 2:7)
- ▶ **CHOOSING.** *"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love"* (Eph 1:4).
- ▶ **A MYSTERY HIDDEN IN GOD.** *"And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ."* (Ephesians 3:9)
- ▶ **AN ETERNAL PURPOSE.** *"According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

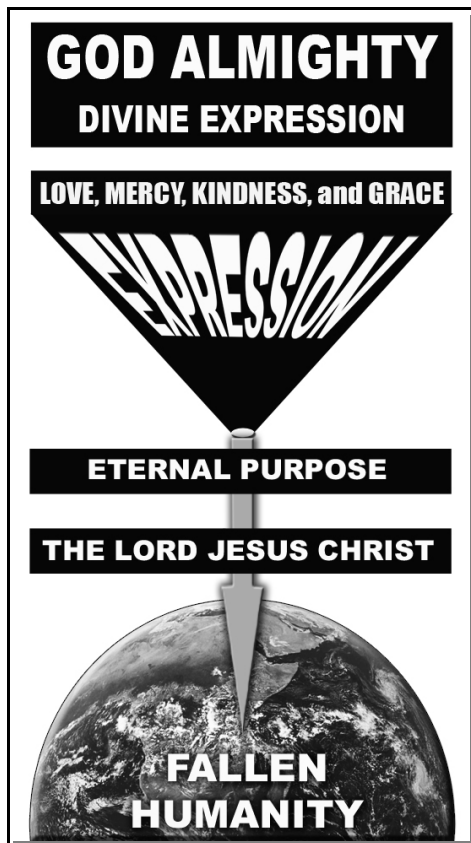
(Ephesians 3:11)

- ▶ **A HIDDEN MYSTERY.** *which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints."* (Colossians 1:26)
 - ▶ **PURPOSE AND GRACE.** *"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began"* (2 Tim 1:9).
 - ▶ **ETERNAL LIFE PROMISED.** *"In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began"* (Titus 1:2).
 - ▶ **THE LAMB ORDAINED.** *"But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you"* (1 Pet 1:19-20 KJV).
 - ▶ **NAMES WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF LIFE.** *"And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."* (Revelation 13:8)
- "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is."* (Revelation 17:8)

It is difficult to conceive of anything being made more plain than this: **the purpose encapsulated in redemption is an eternal purpose which had its genesis in, for want of a better term, in eternity past.** This means that, in a sense, redemption was more than a reaction to the sin of man, for it was purposed before sin was committed.

Man may speculate and philosophize about this matter. Saying that Divine prescience was the driving factor – what God saw men were going to do. **However, it is more difficult to establish that opinion than men have dared to imagine.**

First, it is categorically stated that God's "will" was "purposed in Himself" (Eph 1:9). He is described as the One who "worketh all things after the counsel of His will" (Eph 1:9) – not after He had considered what He foresaw would occur. Redemption is said to be "according to the good pleasure of His will" (Eph 1:9) – not according to foreseen circumstances.



A Question By Paul

Paul challenges our thinking with this salient phrase, "Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Rom 11:35-36). The Amplified reads, "Or who has first given God anything that He might be paid back or

that he could claim a recompense? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. [For all things originate with Him and come from Him; all things live through Him, and all things center in and tend to consummate and to end in Him.] To Him be glory forever! Amen (so be it)."

There is a thread of reasoning here that must be comprehended. **God is nowhere represented as responding to human corruption by showing mercy.** This is not the manner in which God seeks to be comprehended. Think of His response to the sin of Adam, the transgression of Cain, the iniquitous world of Noah's day, the united workers in Shinar, and Sodom and Gomorrah. When considering their transgression, He did not determine to show them mercy.

For God to show mercy, bestow grace, and provide a great salvation, there must be a greater incentive than human need! Let me be clear about this. The pathetic condition of humanity was not sufficient to awaken the great love of God. It could not stir up His mercy, kindness and grace. **Mark it well, the Divine nature is repulsed by iniquity.**

Again, this was clearly seen in God's response to the sin of Adam and Eve, Cain, the world of Noah's day, the builders of Shinar, and Sodom and Gomorrah. What additional proof is needed? **Is it not abundantly clear that provoking the Lord does not stir up mercy, and that living contrary to Him does not constrain Him to be merciful and gracious?** Anyone passingly familiar with the Word of God should need no further tutelage in this area. Sinners are not objects of mercy, they are objects of Divine wrath – duly described as "enemies" (Rom 5:10), "alienated" (Eph 4:18; Col 1:21), and "children of wrath" (Eph 2:3). Jesus said the person who did not believe is "condemned already" (John 3:18). Further, the Gentiles are described as those who "had not obtained mercy" (1 Pet 2:10) – and it certainly was not because they did not need it!

WHAT IS THE ANSWER?

What is the answer to this dilemma? For men to be saved, they need mercy and grace – yet their condition does not summon these required expressions to the surface. The condition is an impossible one – like Abraham and Sarah having a child in their old age! **We must find the constraining influence in some area other than human need!**

Here is where the "eternal purpose" of God comes in. **God will be constrained by His purpose, which was developed in Himself before He made the world.** That "purpose" will become expressible in a special Person, outside of whom it would be utterly impossible. The Person is the Lord Jesus Christ, and the purpose is fulfilled in Him alone.

Although God does show mercy to sinners, it is not because they are sinners, but because Jesus is the Christ who has paid the debt in incurred, and made it righteous for God for God to save men (Rom 3:26). Let it be clear to your heart, "God for Christ's sake has forgiven you" (Eph 4:32). God has given you both to believe on Christ and to suffer for Him "in the behalf of Christ" (Phil 1:29).

If it is countered that Noah "found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen 6:8) prior to Christ, it must be seen that God gave him grace in anticipation of the coming Seed – and Noah was the progenitor of the appointed race in the new world – Shem, the appointed one, being his son.

Further, it cannot be that humanity improved following the flood, having learned from it. God Himself said of the post-flood world, "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Genesis 8:21). **If another Person is not found that causes the grace and mercy of God to focus on humanity, humanity is doomed, with no hope.** However, praise God, a purpose was developed before the foundation of the world, and absolutely centered in the coming Messiah, the Seed that was loved by God before He came to earth (John 17:26). He will provide a just reason for God to "love the world," provide a

salvation that accents and reveals His nature, and save to the uttermost those who come to Him through that Seed, Christ Jesus (Heb 7:25).

THE RELEVANCE TO OUR TEXT

All of this has great relevance to our text. Commencing with Abraham, the “eternal purpose” of God was the focus of His dealings among men. **Prior to that, there was more of an accent on the punishment of sinners, with the exception of Noah and those with him being saved from the deluge.** The only hint of a coming One was given to Satan, and overheard by Adam and Eve – and that was not a message of the salvation of men, but of the bruising of the head of the serpent. The withholding of the promise of blessing lasted for a staggering two thousand years. But now, praise God, Abraham is told of a Seed through whom the entire world would be blessed (Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). Even then, there was an amazing conservatism in the declarations. **Including our text there is only two mentionings of the world being blessed through Abraham’s seed** (Gen 12:3; 18:18). The next will come many years later, after Isaac has been born and Abraham has been commanded to offer him as a burnt sacrifice to God (Gen 22:18).

WHY IS THERE SUCH A DIFFERENCE

Why is there such a difference in the amount of revelation on the subject of the Messiah in our time? Even in the time of the Prophets, there was a very conservative number of clear prophecies about the coming Savior, and many of them were shrouded in mystery. Only the spiritually astute really picked up on the significance of these prophecies.

The difference in the amount of revelation is accounted for by Christ making an “end of sins” (Dan 9:24), putting away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb 9:26), and taking away the sins of the world (John 1:29). When God saw “the travail of His soul” (Isa 53:11), He was “satisfied,” and focused on the bestowing of the promised blessing.

Now, in Abraham, God has a person with whom He can share more particularly about what He has purposed to do.

Ponder What Could Have Been Known of God at This Time of Abraham’s Life

- ➔ That God is a Creator.
- ➔ That the devil’s defeat is cast in stone (Gen 3:15).
- ➔ That God finds out the transgressor (Adam, Eve, Cain, world).
- ➔ God’s attitude toward sin – Adam, Eve, Cain, the builders at Shinar, the world of Noah’s day.
- ➔ That there are sacrifices God receives, and sacrifices He does not receive (Cain and Abel).
- ➔ God requires men to do certain things (Noah, Abraham).
- ➔ God saves some people because of another (Noah, Lot).
- ➔ That God monitors and responds to the works of men (Shinar).
- ➔ That God is a Destroyer (the flood).
- ➔ That God calls people, exercising

from one place to another (Abraham).

- ➔ That God is an Enabler (Abraham).
- ➔ God visits those He calls informing and leading them (Noah, Abraham).
- ➔ God is Almighty (Gen 17:1).
- ➔ That God requires men to walk before Him in a perfect manner (Gen 17:1).
- ➔ God is a Protector (Gen 15:1).
- ➔ God Himself is a Reward (Gen 15:1).
- ➔ What God gives, He expects men to examine and perceive (Gen 13:17).
- ➔ That God gives an inheritance.
- ➔ That God can work in a manner transcendent to nature (Abraham and Sarah).
- ➔ That God makes promises (Noah, Abraham).
- ➔ That God visits through human forms (Abraham and the three men).

Things that had not been revealed included redemption, atonement, forgiveness, His eternal purpose, life after death, the determination to destroy the heavens and the earth, eternal judgment, the resurrection of the dead, a criterion for righteousness (i.e., the Law), the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, the ascension of Christ, the enthronement of Christ – and everything related to those facts.

an initiative toward them (Abraham).

- ➔ That God calls people to move

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destroy the heavens and the earth, eternal; judgment, the resurrection of the dead, a criterion for righteousness (i.e., the Law), the death of Christ, the

resurrection of Christ, the ascension of Christ, the enthronement of Christ – and everything related to those facts.

It is important for us to discern that the lives of Abraham and Sarah are not to be assessed as though they knew all of these things.

ABRAHAM WENT WITH THEM TO BRING THEM ON THEIR WAY

Gen 18:16 *“And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way.”*

THE MEN ROSE UP FROM THENCE

“And the men rose up from thence . . .” Other versions read, *“rose up from there,”* ^{NASB} *“got up to leave,”* ^{NIV} *“set out from there,”* ^{NRSV} *“got up from their meal,”* ^{NLT} *“stood up from their meal and started on,”* ^{LIVING} *“got ready to leave,”* ^{CEV} *and “the men left.”* ^{GNB}

The stopover to see Abraham, therefore, was deliberate, yet, in a way, incidental. It is not that it was not important, or involved in the mission of these messengers – **but it was not the primary reason for them coming.**

Son when He walked among men.

When God is unknown, there is a tendency in religious men to oversimplify the view of His associations with men. He is often represented as wanting His people to fulfil their ambitions, dreams, and intentions – and that is a pleasant contemplation to those who are driven by their own lusts, or desires.

You see in this text, that when the heavenly messengers had completed their mission, they simply left. They did not ask Abraham if there was anything he needed or wanted.

AND LOOKED TOWARD SODOM

“...and looked toward Sodom...” Other versions read, *“looked down*

not the only mission they had been given. They also were to inform Abraham that Sarah would have the promised son during the next year.

We see from the account that they were faithful stewards, as angels are described. *“Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word”* (Psa 103:20). Therefore, having fulfilled their appointment regarding Abraham and Sarah, they proceeded with their mission.

Note, they *“looked toward Sodom.”* That is, they fastened their eyes on where they were going.

A Kingdom Posture

In this, they typify a certain mindset that exists among the saints, with whom they have been joined (Heb 12:22). Believers are admonished to run the race set before them, *“looking unto Jesus,”* who is in heaven (Heb 12:2). Grace effectively teaches them to adopt the posture of *“looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ”* – who will come *“from heaven”* (Tit 2:13; 1 Thess 1:10; 4:16; 2 Thess 1:7). They also *“look for a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness”* (2 Pet 3:13). Abraham is described as one who *“looked for a city, whose Builder and Maker is God”* (Heb 11:10).

One of the great concerns of our time is the absence of a heavenly mindset within the professing church. Like the swine, their eyes are set downward, and it appears they cannot look up. They are, as Israel was, *“stiffnecked”* (Ex 32:9). All of the problems of the modern church are owing to its eyes

Heavenly involvements with men always center in the purpose and will of the Lord, not the will and objectives of man. God has never represented Himself as a kind of “chum,” “buddy,” or “pal,” to men. He has personal dealings with men, but never with their desires or status taking the priority.

There is something to be learned here concerning the workings of the Lord. **Heavenly involvements with men always center in the purpose and will of the Lord, not the will and objectives of man.** God has never represented Himself as a kind of “chum,” “buddy,” or “pal,” to men. He has personal dealings with men, but never with their desires or status taking the priority. His associations with men always revolve around His purpose and will. That was even true of His identity with His own

toward Sodom,” ^{NASB} *“went on from there in the direction of Sodom,”* ^{BBE} *“turned their eyes towards Sodom,”* ^{DOUAY} *“arrived within sight of Sodom,”* ^{NJB} *“started on toward Sodom,”* ^{LIVING} *“looked down upon the face of Sodom,”* ^{ABP} *and “looked toward Sodom and began walking in that direction.”* ^{ERV}

We learn later that these messengers were actually sent to remove Lot from Sodom, and then destroy it (Gen 19). However, that was

being focused in the wrong direction. Is do not see how a people so described could possibly be involved in fellowship with holy angels, as Hebrews 12:22 affirms of those who are in Christ Jesus.

ABRAHAM WENT WITH THEM

“ . . . and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way.” Other versions read, “to send them on their way,”^{NKJV} “to bring them on their way,”^{ASV} “to see them off,”^{DARBY} “bringing them on the way,”^{DOUAY} “attending them on their journey,”^{SEPTUAGINT} “walking with them to see them on their way,”^{NAB} “accompanying them to speed them on their way,”^{NJB} and “went with them part of the way.”^{LIVING}

This was an act of hospitality, providing additional time with the visitors, and perhaps more conversation

and meaningful exchanges. Even in the early days of the church, this sort of thing was practiced. Two incidents in the life of Paul will serve to confirm this.

- ➔ After calling the elders of Ephesus to Miletus, and informing them they would not see his face anymore, he took leave of them. At that time, as it is written, they were “Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. **And they accompanied him unto the ship**” (Acts 20:38).
- ➔ When stopping off at Tyre en route to Jerusalem, Paul tarried several days with the disciples they found there. At the conclusion of that time, Luke writes, “*And when we had accomplished those days, we*

departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed” (Acts 21:5).

The action of Abraham was more than mere politeness or culture. It revealed how much he had appreciated the visitation given to him – how he preferred to extend the time he had spent with them.

Living in a self-centered age, this kind of action is not at all common – even among professed believers. Nevertheless, here and there, where a lot of grace has been received, and proper preferences have been cultured, brethren are not anxious to part. They prefer each other’s company, and seek to extend their times together.

SHALL I HIDE FROM ABRAHAM THAT THING WHICH I DO?

“¹⁷ And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; ¹⁸ Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? ¹⁹ For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him.”

In this text we are being exposed to Divine manners, or the ways of the Lord. God is revealing His unchangeable Self in the Scriptural record. This is more than a record of God’s reaction to Abraham. **This will make known to us how He responds to faith, faithfulness, diligence, and godly consistency.** Of course, if a person has adopted a view of God that represents Him as tolerant of inordinate human behavior, and always wanting to meet what men perceive as their needs, this perspective will be missed. In fact, those who have been dulled by false

doctrine cannot even think of God being as He is clearly set forth in this text.

- ➔ “The angel of the Lord” (Gen 22:11,15; Acts 5:19)

There is no clear statement that sets Jesus forth as ever having taken the form of an angel. That would be an act of condescension for Him, and such humility is associated exclusively with Him coming into the world to lay down His life and take it up again.

AND THE LORD SAID
“And the LORD said. . .”

At this point, there are three personalities – all of them appearing as men, but actually they were holy angels. It appears from this text that one of these angels was especially identified with God. There are several statements that suggest this possibility.

- ➔ “The angel of His presence” (Isa 63:9).
- ➔ “The angel of God” (Gen 31:11; Ex 14:19; Judges 6:20).
- ➔ “My angel” (Ex 23:23; 32:34; 33:2; Rev 22:16).
- ➔ “His angel” (Gen 13:7,40; Dan

3:28; 6:22' Acts 12:11; Rev 1:1).

There are eighty-five Scriptural references using these expressions. Sixty-seven from Genesis through Malachi, seven in the Gospels, eight in the Acts, one in the epistles, and two in the Revelation. Eighteen uses in Matthew thru Revelation confirm that this angel cannot be a pre-incarnation of Christ Jesus – as some falsely allege. **There is no clear statement that sets Jesus forth as ever having taken the form of an angel.** That would be an act of condescension for Him, and such humility is associated exclusively with Him coming into the world to lay down His life and take it up again.

I therefore conclude that one of these three messengers was the angel of the Lord, who now speaks to the other two. Apparently this angel was not sent to destroy Sodom, but primarily to deliver the promise of God to Abraham. I conclude this from the fact that only two of these personalities continued on to Sodom to deliver Lot and destroy the city – and they are particularly called *“two angels”* (Gen 19:1).

SHALL I HIDE FROM ABRAHAM

“Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do...” Other versions read: *“what I am doing,”* ^{NKJV} *“what I am about*

Here it is clear that the Lord has more in mind than Abraham and his immediate family. He and his seed will become the custodians of truth that will impact upon the entire world.

to do,” ^{NASB} *“keep back from Abraham the knowledge of what I do,”* ^{BBE} *“what things I intend to do,”* ^{SEPTUAGINT} *“Should I hide My plan from Abraham,”* ^{LIVING} and *“what I am going to do now.”* ^{ERV}

We are now reading of the determined response of God to the

people of Sodom. The Spirit introduced us to the character of these people earlier in the record. When Abram and Lot separated more than thirteen years before this, God revealed, *“But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly”* (Gen 13:13). This was before Ishmael was born, who was thirteen when he was circumcised by Moses (Gen 17:25). **Therefore, God had endured the wicked state of Sodom for at least that long.** Further, Lot, whom God described as *“that righteous man”* (2 Pet 2:8) had been there for more than thirteen years. During that time, there was no improvement in the condition, even though a righteous man sojourned among them (Gen 19:9).

As difficult as it may be for some to receive, there are some environments that cannot be changed, even though they are exposed to godly influence. There was the world, among whom not a single person was changed by the influence of Noah. The nation of Egypt is a case in point, who, after they had been exposed to Joseph, Jacob, and the Israelites, retained all of their wicked ways. There was also Jerusalem, who, although it was exposed for an extended period to *“the Light of the world”* maintained its unbelief and preference for dead religion. The people even *“killed the*

prince of life” (Acts 3:15).

Now, speaking through His angel, the Lord asks the other two angels if He would conceal his intentions from Abraham. This is really not an attempt to obtain an answer to the question. It is actually a rhetorical question that

revealed the will of the Lord. It would be equivalent to asking, *“Why should I hide from Abraham what I am doing?”* ^{NKJV} We know this is the case because of the reasoning that is presented.

The Divine Nature Confirmed

Here again, we are being exposed to the Divine nature. While the teaching on this was revealed years, even centuries, later, the Divine manner was made known here. The doctrine that is revealed is stated in the following words.

- *“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him . . .”* (2 Chr 16:9)
- *“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”* (Isa 57:15)
- *“. . . to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.”* (Isa 66:2).

The Living God, great and unsearchable, has a revealed propensity for those who tremble at His word, are humble and contrite, and whose heart is perfect toward Him – i.e. have a preference for Him.

God had found such a man in Abraham, and He will not proceed with His purpose without telling Abraham about it.

ABRAHAM SHALL SURELY

“Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? . . .”

Here it is clear that the Lord has more in mind than Abraham and his immediate family. He and his seed will become the custodians of truth that will

impact upon the entire world. What is made known to Abraham will spread throughout the whole world – that is the perspective of this verse. **This postulates the faithfulness of Abraham to make known what God reveals to him.** It must be a part of his family culture. Ultimately it will be said of the *“mighty nation”* that comes from him, *“Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.”* (Rom 9:4-5). And again, *“What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God”* (Rom 3:1-2).

I KNOW HIM

“For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment . . .”

I Know Him

Other versions read, *“I have known him,”* ^{NKJV} *“I have chosen him,”* ^{NASB/NIV/NRSV} *“I have made him Mine,”* ^{BBE} *“I have made myself known to him,”* ^{CJB} *“I have singled him out,”* ^{NAB/NJB/TNK} *“I have picked him out,”* ^{LIVING} *“I have made a special agreement with him,”* ^{ERV} *“Yes, I’ve settled on him,”* ^{MESSAGE} *and “I have known (chosen, acknowledged) him [as My own].”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

He Will Command His Children

Other versions read, *“direct his children and household after him,”* ^{NIV} *“charge his children and his household,”* ^{NRSV} *“give orders to his children and those of his line after him,”* ^{CJB} *“to have godly descendants and a godly household.”* ^{LIVING} *and “teach and command his children and the sons of his house after him.”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

This is why God chose Abraham, in order that he might teach and command his children after him.

This is a most remarkable circumstance! For forty-two generations, the promises made to Abraham were carried down – from generation to generation (Matt 1:17) – a staggering period from Abraham to Jesus: two thousand years.

When one considers that no major Christian movement has passed successfully to the second and third generation, this is most marvelous to consider. The Gentile church has waffled throughout the centuries, changing its emphasis, inventing new doctrines, allowing the foundations to be destroyed, and falling into a path of consistent deterioration in Scriptural knowledge and understanding. Many of the exceeding great and precious promises that have been vouchsafed to the body of Christ are not even known by the modern church, much less held

identify Jews by their dress and their speech, as well as their manner of living. Those in Christ can also be detected by the manners and their speech.

Do Justice and Judgment

Other versions read, *“do righteousness and justice,”* ^{NKJV} *“doing what is right and just,”* ^{NIV} *“do what is good and right,”* ^{BBE} *“judgment and judgment,”* ^{SEPTUAGINT} *“just and good,”* ^{LIVING} *“right and fair,”* ^{CEV} *and “live kindly and generously and fairly.”* ^{MESSAGE}

These are ways in which all considerate men live. It is a manner of life that does not encroach upon the rights of others, is prone to be helpful, is not prejudice, etc. In the language of apostolic doctrine, this is living in a manner that is *“acceptable to God and approved of men”* (Rom 14:18). Such

The coming Messiah would not be associated with a cruel and ruthless nation. This was largely owing to the manner in which Abraham set the tone for life along his seed.

with faith and deliberation. **Perhaps that is why so little freshness is found in it.** Unlike Abraham, it cannot be trusted to maintain what is given to it.

It ought to be observed that many professed Christian parents teach their children more about hygiene than they do the commandments and promises of the Lord.

They Shall Keep the Way of the Lord

The *“way of the Lord”* addresses the manner of life – the way a person lives. It is a God-centered life that holds His commandments and ordinances to be the primary activity. In his prophecy of the day of salvation, Isaiah referred to this as *“the way of holiness”* (Isa 35:8).

It is true that those who walk with God live in a certain manner – a manner that is observable. People were able to

people can say with Paul, *“commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God”* (2 Cor 4:2). This is the kind of living that is *“Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men”* (2 Cor 8:21). **Abraham could be trusted to direct future generations to live in a right and just manner.**

There is an observation made by the enemies of Israel that reveals something of the meaning of this text. This concerns a king of Syria named Benhadad. He had conspired with Asa, king of Judah, to go up against the king of Israel. First he threatened the king of Israel, saying he was going to send his servants to take anything and everything that was precious to him, including his wives and children. After the king had consulted with the elders of Israel, he determined not to submit

to Benhadad. To make a long story short, Israel soundly defeated Benhadad's army, and he was forced to flee on a horse. Later, when all hope was lost, the servants of the Syrian king came to him and said the following. "*Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings: let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel: peradventure he will save thy life*" (1 Kgs 20:31). **There is an example of conduct being tempered by the knowledge of the Lord. Other nations did not have such a reputation.**

The coming Messiah would not be associated with a cruel and ruthless nation. This was largely owing to the manner in which Abraham set the tone for life along his seed.

THAT THE LORD MAY BRING UPON ABRAHAM

" . . . that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him."

God was in all of this, working out His own purpose. The succeeding generations of Abraham would "*do justice mercy*" in order that God might bring the things upon Abraham that He had promised. This approach is taken because God is righteous, and cannot conduct Himself in an unrighteous manner. **Whatever a person may think of mercy and grace, God does not bestow benefits upon those who are living in contradiction of His Person and purpose.**

Living on this side of the cross, those in Christ should be familiar with this mode of Divine conduct. **While men have made much of the status of "unworthy," the Lord does speak to us of worthiness.** To be sure, no person who is blessed of God can say with integrity that he is worthy of the blessing – at least not in his own right. Consider what IS said about being worthy.

➔ *"But they which shall be **accounted worthy** to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead,*

neither marry, nor are given in marriage." (Luke 20:35).

➔ *"Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be **accounted worthy** to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."* (Luke 21:36)

➔ *"And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were **counted worthy** to suffer shame for his name."* (Acts 5:41)

➔ *"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye **walk worthy** of the vocation wherewith ye are called."* (Eph 4:1)

➔ *"That ye might **walk worthy** of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."* (Col 1:10)

➔ *"That ye would **walk worthy** of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory."* (1 Thess 2:12)

➔ *"Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be **counted worthy** of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer."* (2 Th 1:5)

➔ *"Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would **count you worthy** of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power."* (2 Thess 1:11)

➔ *"Let the elders that rule well be **counted worthy** of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine."* (1 Tim 5:17)

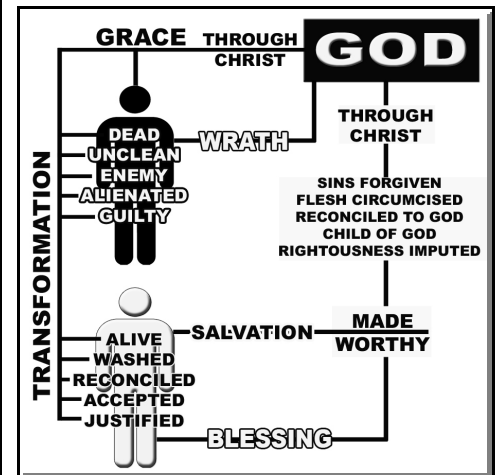
➔ *"For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer is **worthy** of his reward."* (1 Tim 5:18)

➔ *"Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their*

*garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for **they are worthy.**"* (Rev 3:4)

It is to be acknowledged that being "*made meet,*" or qualified is a large part of this kind of worthiness (Col 1:12). **However, where God's grace is received, a moral and spiritual change is accomplished that brings glory to God, and justifies His identification with us.**

This principle is being lived out in Abraham, who, the Lord declares, will receive the promise because he will "*command his children and his house after him, that they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment."*



The Role of Jesus

The nature of God to not confer benefits upon the unworthy and the transgressor is what necessitates the Lord Jesus Christ. **Salvation must be the expression of God's righteousness first, and His love second.** Divine mercy cannot be expended at the price of Divine righteousness and justice. **Therefore, in Christ a means is provided to both address sin and confer righteousness.** In summary, our transgressions were laid upon Christ, that we might become "*the righteousness of God in Him*" (2 Cor 5:21). Sin had to be judged and condemned. It could not be ignored. Therefore, once our sins were put upon Christ, and He bore them "*in His body on the tree*" (1 Pet 2:24), God "*condemned sin*" in the flesh of Christ,

judging it once and for all. Now, because of Christ, and only because of Christ, He is *“just and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus”* (Rom 3:26).

However, even more is involved in the matter than that. **Just as sin was really judged, so men must really be righteous.** Neither transaction – the judgment of sin, or being made righteous – can be superficial. This required man being transformed, regenerated, born again, and re-created. A very real *“stony heart”* was removed from him, and a very real *“heart of flesh”* was given to him (Ezek 36:26). Because the remnants of the flesh remained associated with the body, an *“operation”* was performed that severed the flesh, or sinful nature, from the individual, This is called *“the circumcision of Christ”* (Col 2:11-12).

Thus the redeemed are made *“worthy”* to receive *“all spiritual blessings,”* which have been reserved for them *“in heavenly places”* (Eph 1:3). The whole work is so precise, and so thorough, that no one can lay anything to the charge of God’s elect (Rom 8:33). Neither, indeed, can Satan accuse them without lying.

WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH ABRAHAM?

All of this has a great deal to do with Abraham being trustworthy. **God did not deal with Abraham without due consideration for the coming Christ.** We know this is the case because it has been revealed that the promise given to Abraham was fulfilled in Christ Jesus. Thus it is written, *“Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ”* (Gal 3:16).

Cause of Abraham’s Conduct

It was in anticipation of Christ Jesus that righteousness was imputed to Abraham. **That imputation had an effect upon Abraham, producing a consistency that is scarcely found in our day,** when the true Light is shining, and spiritual Substance is available to everyone who has been *“joined unto the Lord”* (1 Cor 6:17).

There are some things that are inevitable in salvation. First, those who believe God as Abraham did will have His righteousness imputed to them. Second, those who experience the imputation of righteousness will listen to and obey the Lord. All of this is because of the unquestionable impact of faith upon those who possess it. However, where faith is lacking, so is work – which reality is to be acknowledged. The absence of proper works confirms the absence of faith.

I WILL GO DOWN, NOW, AND SEE

“²⁰ And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; ²¹ I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto Me; and if not, I will know. ²² And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.”

THE CRY OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH IS GREAT

“And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous...”

There is a point of time at which iniquity crosses a certain boundary. Until that time, it may appear as though the activities of a person or group of persons is unnoticed by the Lord, or that He is indifferent or tolerant toward them. But this is not the case at all. As it is written, *“For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings”* (Prov 5:21).

The Scriptural record to this point has already testified to the fact that



there is a point in time when God will judge the sins of men. This is seen in four specific instances.

➔ First, when Adam and Eve sinned, they were expelled from the

Garden. *“And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”* (Gen 3:24).

➔ Second, there was the judgment of Cain, who slew his brother because Abel’s works were righteous and his own were not. Again, the judgment of God is clear. *“And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother’s blood from thy hand; When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond*

shalt thou be in the earth” (Gen 4:11-12).

➔ Third, Noah’s day when the earth was filled with violence, and God would no longer tolerate the situation. The record of His response leaves no doubt on this matter. *“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at His heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them”* (Gen 6:7).

➔ Fourth, the Divine reaction to prideful determination of the people in the land of Shinar. Again, there is no question about the Lord’s view of the matter. *“And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.”* (Gen 11:6-8)

Now we have the fifth revelation of the response of God to growing iniquity. In the first revelation, the response was to disobedience. In the second, it was to the aggression of man against man – murder. In the third, it was to the pervasiveness of violence. In the fourth, it was to, what may very have been the entire human race, caught up in pride.

Now, in the fifth, two specific cities are mentioned, and the sin was of a moral nature – one that contradicted even the laws of nature.

Once again, it is a group of people that are perceived and judged – the third time God has dealt with a **group** of people (flood, Shinar, and in this text). Add to that the later assessments and judgments upon groups of people.

- ➔ Egypt (Gen 15:14; Deut 6:22; I Psa 78:43-51).
- ➔ The Amorites, Hittites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites (Deut 20:17).
- ➔ The Ammonites (Ezek 25:2-3).
- ➔ Nineveh (Nah 1:1-15).
- ➔ Tyre (Isa 23:1-18).
- ➔ Sidon [Zidon] (Ezek 28:21-23).
- ➔ Israel (1 Kgs 14:15-16; Isa 9:14; Jer 44:11; Rom 11:21-22).
- ➔ Babylon (Isa 13:1-22).
- ➔ The Edomites (Isa 21:11; Obad 1:1-8).
- ➔ Jerusalem (Matt 23:37-38).

This is an aspect of the Divine nature that is rarely proclaimed in this day. Yet, it has been written of old time, more than 2,800 years ago: *“The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God”* (Psa 9:17).

Their Sin Is Very Grievous

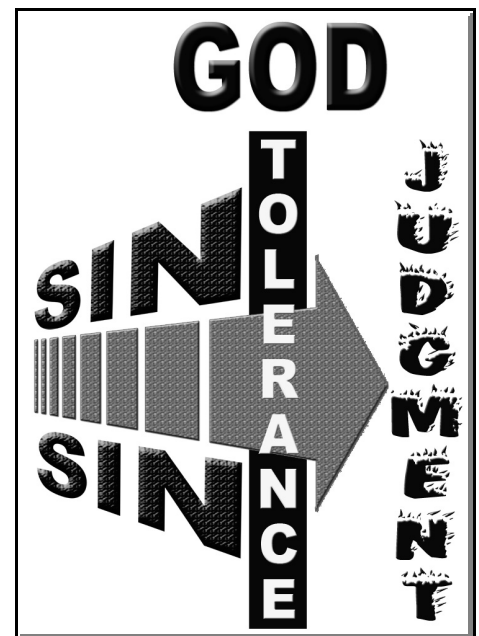
All sin is not the same, and the glib saying “sin is sin” does not make it so. Those who ignorantly say things like, “murder is no worse than overeating,” are doing nothing more than putting their ignorance on display.

This text confronts us with the word of the Lord Himself: *“their sin is very grievous.”* Other versions read, “very grave,”^{NKJV} “very evil,”^{BBE} “very serious,”^{GWN} “exceeding grievous,”^{JPS} “exceedingly grave,”^{NAU} “so blatant,”^{NET} “utterly evil,”^{LIVING} “great exceedingly,”^{ABP} “exceedingly heavy,”^{LITV} and “immense”^{MESSAGE}

The words “very grievous” are

translated from two Hebrew words. The word “very” is translated from the word **מְּוֹד** {MEH-ODE} **MEANING:** ADVANCED 1) EXCEEDINGLY, MUCH 2) MIGHT, FORCE, ABUNDANCE 3) MUCHNESS, FORCE, ABUNDANCE, EXCEEDINGLY 3A) FORCE, MIGHT 3B) EXCEEDINGLY, GREATLY, VERY (IDIOMS SHOWING MAGNITUDE OR DEGREE) 3B1) EXCEEDINGLY 3B2) UP TO ABUNDANCE, TO A GREAT DEGREE, EXCEEDINGLY 3B3) WITH MUCHNESS, MUCHNESS . . . (OFTEN WITH OTHER WORDS AS AN INTENSIVE OR SUPERLATIVE; ESPECIALLY WHEN REPEATED): — DILIGENTLY, ESPECIALLY, EXCEEDING(-LY),”^{STRONG’S}

The word “grievous” is translated from the Hebrew word **כָּבֵד** {KAW-BADE} **MEANING:** 1) TO BE HEAVY . . . BE BURDENSOME . . . IN A BAD SENSE (BURDENSOME, SEVERE, DULL) . . . BE GRIEVOUS, HARDEN, BE (MAKE) HEAVY, BE HEAVIER”^{STRONG’S}



Think of the expressions of Divine tolerance coming to an end because of increasing sin and transgression.

➔ *“When God heard this, He was wrath, and greatly abhorred Israel: So that He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which He placed among men; And delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy’s hand. He gave His people over also unto the sword; and was wrath with His inheritance.”* (Psa 78:59-62).

- ➔ *"Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions. Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people, insomuch that He abhorred his own inheritance. And He gave them into the hand of the heathen; and they that hated them ruled over them."* (Psa 106:39-41)
- ➔ *"Thou hast forsaken Me, saith the LORD, thou art gone backward: therefore will I stretch out My hand against thee, and destroy thee; I am weary with repenting. And I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land; I will bereave them of children, I will destroy My people, since they return not from their ways."* (Jer 15:6-7)
- ➔ *"Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."* (Luke 19:42-44).
- ➔ *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord"* (Mat 23:37-39).

Let it be clear, therefore, that there are attitudes and transgressions that will summon forth the wrath of God – wrath, from which the Lord will not draw back.

This is the kind of sin of which Sodom and Gomorrah were guilty. Although only these two cities are mentioned here, we learn that their iniquity had spread to surrounding cities, which were destroyed with her, These included Admah and Zeboim, with Zoar (which was slated for destruction) being spared as a place of escape for Lot (Deut 29:23; Gen 19:22-22-25).

The sin of Sodom is the subject of much disagreement among would-be theologians. Some insist that it was not destroyed because of sodomy, but for other sins. Ezekiel makes mention of them. *"As I live, saith the Lord GOD, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters. Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before Me: therefore I took them away as I saw good"* (Ezek 16:49-50).



As is confirmed in the immediate events that preceded the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the causal sin was NOT pride, fulness of bread, much idleness, and not strengthening the poor. **Those sin put those cities in a downward motion.** They concluded in, what the text refers to as, committing *"abomination"* before the Lord. The *"Abomination"* was sodomy, which is the corruption of nature: the immorality

of men with men, and woman with immoral.

Sin has this effect, always retrogressing from *"worse to worse"* (2 Tim 3:13), becoming more dominate, and more vile. God took note of this propensity, and determined to do something about it. All do well to take note of this judgment, for it is acquainting us with the nature of God.

I WILL GO DOWN NOW

"I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto Me . . ."

This does not mean the Lord was not aware of the fulness of the situation. **Rather, it is the prelude to doing something about it.** It is stated in this way to teach us that God does not have thoughtless reactions to men. Remember, God is affected by what He sees. His nature is not changed by it, but certain aspects of His nature rise to the surface, so to speak, when He focuses His attention on someone – whether good or evil.

The point of this expression is that God was going to focus His attention on this circumstance with a mind to do something about it.

IF NOT, I WILL KNOW

" . . . and if not, I will know. . ." Other versions read, *"if they are not, I will see,"* ^{BBE} *"If not, I will find out,"* ^{CSB} *"I mean to find out,"* ^{NAB} *"If not, I want to know,"* ^{NET} *"if not, I will take note,"* ^{TNK} *"I want to know about it,"* ^{CEV} and *"whether or not the accusations which I have heard are true."* ^{GNB}

He does not say, **"If so, I will know"** – –i.e. *"if the report is not true, I will, know that it is a false accusation and sound that I hear."* One version suggests that what had come up before the Lord was a report of the conditions at Sodom and Gomorrah. If this representation is true, then it may very well have been Satan who gave the report. However, Satan is the *"accuser of the brethren,"* not of the ungodly (Rev 12:10). But that does not rule out

the possibility that Satan IS the one who gave a report of Sodom and Gomorrah. It may very well have been that this was his ploy to get rid of Lot, that *“righteous man”* who was like a thorn in the side of the citizens of that area (2 Pet 2:7; Gen 19:9). That is a possibility.

However, there is something even more profound to be seen here. Later in history, God will reveal that He has no delight in the death of the wicked. *“As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live”* (Ezek 33:11). **If there is any reason NOT to judge these cities, God will defer to that reason.** On more than one occasion, when God had expressed His intention to destroy Israel, Moses stepped to present strong arguments in the favor of measured mercy. In those cases, the judgment was postponed.

As God examines Sodom and Gomorrah, He will look for a reason not to destroy them – **a reason that is compatible with His nature.** If He can find a legitimate reason to forbear, He will do so.

All of this now comes together, as Abraham comes forward to intercede. **He makes an appeal for the consideration of any righteous people in those cities.** It is apparent that this was

It is apparent that this was all in the purpose of God. It will firmly establish that there was really no cause for showing mercy on these cities. If there was, God would surely have seen it, and His longsuffering would have awakened.

all in the purpose of God. It will firmly establish that there was really no cause for showing mercy on these cities. If there was, God would surely have seen it, and His longsuffering would have awakened.

ABRAHAM STOOD STILL BEFORE THE LORD

“And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.”

The Men Turned Their Faces

Two of the three personalities, whom I gather were angels, went on toward Sodom. Later, in chapter nineteen, their arrival is stated as follows: *“there came two angels to Sodom”* (Gen 19:1). It was the two men of our text. They went, as will be confirmed, to carry out the judgment of

the Lord.

Abraham Stood Yet Before the Lord

Abraham did not go with the two men, but remained *“before the Lord”* – before the angelic messenger of the Lord. In some way, Abraham became aware of the mission that was about to be carried out. The most reasonable explanation is that it was revealed to him. If this supposition is true, then what follows is Abraham’s response to the revelation. If it is not true, then in some way Abraham senses what was going to take place, which necessarily means he knew about the conditions in Sodom and Gomorrah. He also would have known enough about God to realize the condition could not continue.

It ought to be clear that this is how a man of faith reasons.

WILT THOU ALSO DESTROY THE RIGHTEOUS WITH THE WICKED?

“²³ And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt Thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?²⁴ Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt Thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?²⁵ That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from Thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

ABRAHAM DREW NEAR

“And Abraham drew near . . .”

Other versions read, *“came near,”* ^{KJV} *“approached him,”* ^{NIV} *“stepped forward,”* ^{CSB} *“came closer,”* ^{GWN} *“confronted him,”* ^{MESSAGE} and *“came close.”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

This is the first Scriptural example of intercession. Such an activity cannot be accomplished at a distance from God. By its very nature, intercession requires closeness to the Lord, and therefore Abraham *“drew near.”*

It is apparent that this is one of the messengers who remained with

Abraham, rather than going with the other two. Apparently, this messenger came primarily for the sake of Abraham – both to deliver the promise of the Lord concerning the imminent birth of Isaac, and to provide for this man of God to intercede for Lot.

Drawing near to intercede is a requirement that is not generally known. I cannot begin to tell you of the number of prayer chains, prayer meetings, prayer requests, etc., with which I am familiar where closeness to God was in no way evident. Even in

spiritually primitive times, without a Bible, and with very limited revelation, Abraham knew enough to draw near when interceding and reasoning with the Lord – even when it involved communicating with a heavenly messenger.

Think of what boldness and confidence was required to draw near! It is no wonder that even those in Christ are told, *“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus”* (Heb 10:19). And again, *“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water”* (Heb 10:22).

Now we will behold the manner in which true intercession is carried out – and it will be by someone living before Christ, before redemption, and before scripture. Therefore, this is something very fundamental that remained consistent before the Law (Abraham), during the Law (Moses), and in the day of salvation. **If someone desires to reason with the Lord, they must “draw near” to do so, knowing that God will know of their true condition and respond accordingly.**

time of our text. **For Abraham to think of such an event, and reason upon it, would be like a person today basing his reasoning on something that took place in 1622 A.D.** I would suppose such reasoning would generally be considered obsolete. But that is only because the thinking of men is not generally sound.

Observe that Abraham does not plead for Lot, but rather speaks to God about *“the righteous.”* He mentions no name, but rather appeals to a class of people. **It is obvious that he knew Lot was in that category,** as God would reveal through Peter several millennia later (2 Peter 2:8).

IF THERE BE FIFTY

“Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt Thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?”

We are speaking of a city, in which fifty people would be a decided minority. That number was not confined to Sodom, for four cities were finally destroyed, and possibly five were slated for destruction before the sparing of Zoar for Lot’s sake. If five cities were involved, fifty righteous would be ten

cities that had been targeted for destruction. Zoar was exempted later.

The keen eye of faith is seen in this reasoning because of the sparsity of revelation on the matter of God sparing many people for the sake of a few. This manner of reasoning, while valid, had not been seen in God’s prior dealings with men. He certainly did not spare the world for the sake of Noah. And, if there were any righteous present at the time men conspired to build a city and a tower, the project was certainly not spared for their sake.

Later, Israel would be spared for the remnant’s sake – that is, they would not be extinguished like Sodom and Gomorrah. Thus, Isaiah wrote, *“Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah”* (Isa 1:9). Centuries later Paul quoted this to confirm Israel had not been totally rejected by God (Rom 9:29).

But this manner of thinking was not known in Abraham’s time. Yet, he reasoned in harmony with the very nature of God. It is obvious that faith had enabled the patriarch to see something of God that was not generally known. From his limited exposure to the Divine nature, he deduced it was proper to put forward this arresting question. He was a true student of the Lord, thinking upon the experiences he had with the Lord.

THAT BE FAR FROM THEE

“That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from Thee . . .” Other versions read, *“Far be it from You,”*^{ANKJV} *“You could not possibly do such a thing,”*^{CSB} *“It would be unthinkable for you to do such a thing,”*^{GWN} *“Do not think of doing such a thing,”*^{NJB} *“That wouldn’t be right! Surely you wouldn’t do such a thing,”*^{LIVING} *“By no means shall you do as this saying.”*^{ABP}

Considering what Abraham knew about God, this is a most remarkable

Considering what Abraham knew about God, this is a most remarkable dialog. First, it is remarkable because of the insight it revealed. Second, for the boldness and confidence with which it was spoken.

WILT THOU DESTROY THE RIGHTEOUS WITH THE WICKED?

“ . . . and said, Wilt Thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?”

So far as we know, there had only been one example of sparing the righteous while destroying the wicked. That was the flood, where the righteous were not destroyed with the wicked. That had taken place at least three hundred and ninety years before the

for each city. However, if Abraham was pleading only for Sodom, it is because Lot was there. In that case, he would be pleading for the exemption of Sodom from the destruction. If Sodom was the primary transgressing city, having been responsible for the spread of iniquity, then saving Sodom would mean not destroying the other cities. This seems to me to be the proper view, so that not destroying Sodom for the sake of fifty people would involve sparing all of the

dialog. First, it is remarkable because of the insight it revealed. Second, for the boldness and confidence with which it was spoken. All of this is within the context of a single revelation pertaining to this kind of statement – the saving of Noah and his house out of an entire world.

Follow the reasoning of God’s “friend” (2 Chron 20:7; James 2:23). He considered that God destroying the righteous with the wicked was unthinkable. **To the patriarch, it was not compatible with the Divine nature.** Therefore, he reasoned, it would not be right.

In Our Time

In our time, when the revelation of God has been honed to a fine edge in the Person of Christ, as well as the New Covenant, and four thousand years of recorded history concerning God’s dealings with men, **it would be most unusual to find a person who could reason with God in this manner.** Many would find it difficult to believe that God would destroy the wicked, causing four cities to go up in flames with their inhabitants in them.

The reason for any failure to see such a judgment as consonant with the Divine nature is that the church public has heard the declaration of another god. Bold declarations about the nature of God are too often nothing more than a commentary on false gods – gods of human making.

SHALL NOT THE JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH DO RIGHT?

“ . . . Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” Other versions read, “deal justly,” ^{NASB} “do what is just,” ^{NRSV} “do what is fair,” ^{GWN} “act with justice,” ^{NAB} “execute judgment,” ^{ABP} “judge with justice,” ^{MESSAGE} and “execute judgment and do righteously.” ^{AMPLIFIED}

Abraham’s reasoning with the Lord is not rebuked or criticized – either immediately, or hundreds of years later when Moses was inspired to write this record. **We can only conclude that his thinking was right, even though the facts on which his reasoning were**

based were extremely sparse.

There are, relatively speaking, only a few instances of God dealing with anyone on a personal basis.

- ➔ Adam and Eve (Gen 2:19-22; 38-24)
- ➔ Cain (Gen 4:6-16)
- ➔ Enoch (Gen 5:22-24)
- ➔ Noah (Gen 6:8,13-21; 7:1-4; 8:1; 9:1-17)
- ➔ Abraham (12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-22; 18:1-15)
- ➔ Hagar (Gen 16:-7-12).

There were dealings with men on an impersonal basis.

- ➔ The world of Noah’s day (Gen 6:5-7).
- ➔ The builders at Shinar (Gen 11:1-9)
- ➔ Pharaoh and his house (Gen 12:15-17).

So far as revelation is concerned, these are the dealings God had with men over the first two thousand years of human history. Until Abraham’s time, only one righteous man was spared during a Divine judgment on the wicked: Noah. Yet, Abraham is able to make this assessment. This gives us some idea of the remarkable stabilizing influence of faith, and of its impact upon man’s thinking.

OVERLY SIMPLISTIC THEOLOGY

Owing to erroneous emphases and a lack of understanding God Himself, a number of simplistic expressions have been adopted that do not allow for the kind of reasoning found in Abraham. While there is an element of truth to some of these sayings, it is very marginal. Here are some of them.

- ➔ None of us is worthy.
- ➔ No man can please God.

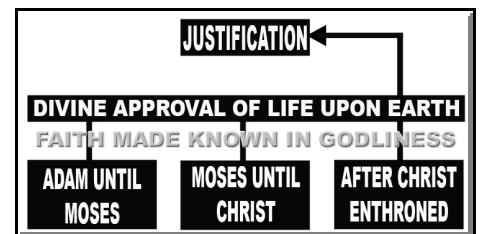
- ➔ Man is incapable of doing anything that pleases God.

I do understand that if we are speaking of “eternal salvation,” and of God accepting human accomplishments as a basis for participation in such a salvation, these sayings are true. However, while that is the preeminent consideration, it is not the only one. **Abraham reasons with God, recognizing that there was such a thing as “the righteous” in his time – before Jesus, before atonement, and before “eternal redemption”** (Heb 9:12).

God Himself saw Noah as “righteous” before Him (Gen 7:1). Even after the exaltation of Christ, Peter said of Cornelius, before he believed on Christ, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him” (Acts 10:34-35). Jesus Himself affirmed there were “many righteous men” prior to Him coming into the world (Matt 13:17), and there were “sepulchers of the righteous” (Matt 23:29). He referred to Abel as “righteous Abel” (Matt 23:35). It is affirmed that Zacharias and Elizabeth, parents of John the Baptist, “were both righteous” (Lk 1:6).

One answer is that these people were all believers, and therefore their faith was imputed to them for righteousness. **That is true, but it is not the emphasis of the statements to which I have referred.**

The kind of righteousness to which Abraham referred, and which was a declared trait of men like Abel, the godly of past ages, Zacharias and Elizabeth, Cornelius, and others, was this: **a godly demeanor in which known sins were avoided, and a quest to please the Lord was possessed.** Such people were also characterized by faith.



When reasoning with the Lord about people, it is possible to refer to a righteous person, who does not yet believe upon Jesus. Such a person would be very conscientious in doing what was right, and endeavoring to please God to the best of his knowledge. **That righteousness is not sufficient to be justified, or made accepted in the Beloved.** It does, however, get the attention of God, who will, as He did with Cornelius (Acts 10:1-7), and some in Macedonia (Acts 16:9), orchestrate a means through which such can hear the record of His Son, believe, and be “saved” (Acts 11:14).

Abraham’s reference to the “righteous” is not to be understood in the New Covenant sense as having been “justified from all things” (Acts

13:39), or being “*made the righteousness of God*” (2 Cor 5:21). Rather, it is in the sense of living a godly life, and not being given over to sinful expressions.

Something to be Learned

It ought to be noted that any view of righteousness that does not exceed the norm of those pre-New Covenant saints cannot possibly be genuine. This is precisely what Jesus was referring to when He said, “*For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven*” (Matt 5:20). An outwardly pious life can be lived without faith, and without grace, and without Christ. However, such a life cannot be the grounds for justification. Jesus referred to this circumstance

when He said to the scribes and Pharisees, “*Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity*” (Matt 23:28). Their sinful condition was within, and was hidden by the religiously punctilious manner in which they lived.

This is a solid rebuke to anyone who remains outwardly immoral and unclean, all the while professing to be a “Christian.” Those who say they cannot help but commit outward sin have not told the truth. Paul described his outward life prior to being in Christ in this way: “*Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless*” (Phil 3:6). John the Baptist required those who were being baptized to produce “*fruits worthy of repentance*” (Lk 3:8).

I HAVE TAKEN UPON MYSELF TO SPEAK UNTO THE LORD

“²⁶ **And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.** ²⁷ **And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes:** ²⁸ **Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt Thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it.** ²⁹ **And he spake unto Him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And He said, I will not do it for forty’s sake.** ³⁰ **And He said unto Him, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And He said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there.** ³¹ **And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And He said, I will not destroy it for twenty’s sake.** ³² **And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And He said, I will not destroy it for ten’s sake.”**

This dialog is most unusual for its

length. So far as we know, the next

engaging in saving sinners. This by no

There is a kind of danger associated with man engaging in saving sinners. This by no means suggests that efforts should not be expended in this direction, but they must be discerning efforts.

man to engage in such lengthy reasoning with the Lord is Moses (Ex 32:11-13; Deut 9:26-29).

FIFTY, FORTY-FIVE, FORTY, THIRTY, TWENTY, AND TEN

In view of the times during which Abraham lived, his reasoning with the Lord is most arresting to consider.

His approach to the Lord evidences the possession of “*godly fear*” (Heb 12:28). This is particularly true when addressing the matter of sinners. **There is a kind of danger associated with man**

means suggests that efforts should not be expended in this direction, but they must be discerning efforts.

Jude addresses this matter with great sobriety. “*And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh*” (Jude 1:22-23). Those on whom we are to “*have compassion*” are earnest seekers – like the penitent sinners on the day of Pentecost, who cried out, “*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*” (Acts

Although this is known only to the Lord, and those to whom He wills to reveal it, there are some judgments that cannot be averted. There are some people who cannot be changed – some individuals who cannot be corrected.

2:37). Or the eunuch who asked, “*See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?*” (Acts 8:36). Or the Philippian jailor who cried out, “*What must I do to be saved?*” (Acts 16:30). When such inquiries are not made, however, salvation is still needed. As the laborer presses in to save such people as are not yet tender, they are to do so “*with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh*” (Jude 1:23). The fear is to be on the part of the one who is endeavoring to pull sinners “*out of the fire.*” They are not to get so close that they themselves are burned. They must maintain a certain hatred for “*the garment spotted by the flesh,*” and not allow sentimentality to rob them of a sense of the danger they are facing.

There are some people who are so vile that it is dangerous to even be around them. This is owing to the powers of darkness that are associated with them, and exercise strong influences through them. It is the kind of thing Paul addressed in his warning to the church in Corinth: “*Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners,*” or “*Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character”*”^{NIV} (1 Cor 15:33).

Although, because they had not yet been revealed, and these things were not known cognitively to Abraham, he seems to have sensed them intuitively. **The contact he had with the Lord sensitized his spirit, so that he approached this matter with righteous caution.**

Abraham had already asked if

destruction could be averted by the presence of fifty righteous people. God had said He would spare the cities if fifty righteous people could be found. Sensing that this number was too high, the patriarch reduced the number to forty-five, then forty, then thirty, then twenty, and finally ten. He received an affirmative answer to each inquiry. **God would spare the city if ten righteous people could be found.**

In the end, only four people got out of the city of Sodom: Lot, his wife, and his two daughters. Although his daughters were married, and Lot warned their husbands of the impending judgment, “*he seemed as one that mocked to his sons in law*” (Gen 19:15). Additionally, although his wife escaped the city, yet she did not arrive at the place of safety, but was turned into a pillar of salt on the way, because she looked longingly back on the city of Sodom (Gen 19:26). Thus, only three people escaped – a lot less than ten!

Some Judgment Cannot Be Averted

Although this is known only to the Lord, and those to whom He wills to reveal it, **there are some judgments that cannot be averted.** There are some people who cannot be changed – some individuals who cannot be corrected. God will often confirm this is the case by harsh judgments that leave the people unchanged. Some examples are as follows.

- ➔ Cain (Gen 4:13)
- ➔ The world of Noah’s day (Gen 6:5-6)
- ➔ Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and

Zeboim (18:20-21)

- ➔ Pharaoh and the Egyptians (Ex 14:8-9)
- ➔ Generations of Israelites (Psa 78:40-42; Heb 3:10-11)
- ➔ Belshazzar (Gen 5:18-31)
- ➔ Jerusalem (Lk 13:34-35)

Many modern Christian leaders have managed to hide this aspect of Divine judgment, teaching the people that there is no such a state as a hopeless one. However, such a conclusion is seriously wrong, which fact is clearly taught in Scripture. There was a generation of Israelites who “*could not enter*” the promised land “*because of unbelief*” (Heb 3:19). A judgment was pronounced upon them that could in no way be averted. The Lord’s pronouncement is most detailed. “*Because all those men which have seen My glory, and My miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted Me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to My voice; Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked Me see it: But My servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed Me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it. (Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwelt in the valley.) Tomorrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea. And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against Me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against Me. Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in Mine ears, so will I do to you: **Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against Me. Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the***

son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. **But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness. After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know My breach of promise. I the LORD have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against Me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die**" (Num 14:22-35).

As is apparent, there was no way to avert that judgment. The provocation

had been too great and too frequent. They had crossed a moral line, and would be given no further opportunity to correct their condition.

That is precisely what had taken place with Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim. Sodom had a "righteous man" among them for at least thirteen years, for Ishmael had been born after Abraham and Lot separated, and was thirteen years old shortly before this visitation. That would have Lot in Sodom for well over a decade. He had even spoken concerning their status, as is indicated by their words to him later (Judges 19:9).

The Righteousness of God Vindicated

The righteousness of God is vindicated in this entire account. **He had been patient and longsuffering, withholding judgment unto, the cup of**

their iniquity was full. He had put a righteous man among them to be a thorn in their side, and to warn them of their wicked ways. The citizens, together with their king had even experienced deliverance by godly Abram, and the restoration of their goods. **However, they had continued in their ungodly ways to such an extent that ten righteous people could not be found among them.**

O, that there were individuals today who could discern the backward movement of the people, the deadness of the professing church, and the dominance of false doctrine, with the corresponding drop in moral standards. A condition is being created that, if not halted by godly sorrow and repentance, will conclude in the judgment of the Almighty. God is being provoked, and that is a very foolish thing to do!

AND THE LORD WENT HIS WAY

"³³ And the LORD went His way, as soon as He had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place"

THE LORD WENT HIS WAY

"And the LORD went His way, as soon as He had left communing with Abraham . . ."

The purpose having been served, the Lord went His way. As I have said, this was no doubt an angel – perhaps "the angel of the Lord" – who was sent on this mission. While Abraham had righteousness imputed to him (Gen 15:6; Rom 4:3,22-23; James 2:23), and had an extended conversation with the messenger, yet when the Lord's business was concluded, the conversation was ended. The Lord did not ask Abraham if there was anything else he needed, how he had been doing, etc. **As in all contacts initiated from heaven, this visitation centered in the will and purpose of the Lord.**

The people of God must learn from this to have a proper focus in life. It is

not right to go to God without due regard for His will. While those in Christ are invited to let their requests be made known to God (Phil 4:6), they are to be mingled with thanksgivings, **which help to tune the heart to the Divine agenda.**

The Advantage of Those in Christ

There is a distinct advantage for those who are in Christ Jesus. Both God and Christ take up their abode in them (John 14:23). Abraham had an occasional visitation from God, often

While Abraham had righteousness imputed to him, and had an extended conversation with the messenger, yet when the Lord's business was concluded, the conversation was ended.

This is the sort of thing that cannot be controlled by legislation. **As the people of God mature, ceasing to be children in their understanding (1 Cor 14:20), their priorities and perceptions change accordingly.** However, while this is taking place, it is important to know that God is summoned into action by His purpose. It is to the degree that we have fellowship in that purpose that our prayers obtain weight before the Lord.

separated by many years. **However, for the redeemed, there is a constant fellowship available to them.** They have been "called into the fellowship" of God's "Son, Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 1:9). They can be strengthened with might by God's Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ can "dwell" in their hearts "by faith" (Eph 3:17).

God Himself is said to dwell in His people. Thus it is written, "Whosoever

shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." (1 John 4:15-16).

The Holy Spirit is also given to the saints, to intercede (Rom 8:26-27) for them, lead them (Rom 8:13-14), and change them (2 Cor 3:18).

None of this was available to Abraham. This is because such benefits are based upon the foundational work of Jesus in taking away the sin of the world, destroying the devil, plundering principalities and powers, and thoroughly satisfying God. **Yet, with all of the redemptive deficiencies of the age during which Abraham lived, he appears to be better acquainted with God than the professing church of our time.** This is a travesty, and its existence cannot be rightfully defended!

The point is that redemption has added remarkable benefits to those in Christ Jesus. Here are a few of them that are avail to all believers.

- ➔ Fellowship with Christ (1 Cor 1:9).
- ➔ Christ dwelling in the heart by faith (Eph 3:17).
- ➔ Christ in us, the hope of glory Col 1:27).
- ➔ The Holy Spirit sent into our hearts (Gal 4:6).
- ➔ Fellowship with the Father and the Son (1 John 1:3).
- ➔ Having eternal life (1 John 5:13).
- ➔ The intercession of Jesus Christ.
- ➔ The intercession of the Holy Spirit.
- ➔ The leading of the Spirit in the subduing of the flesh (Rom 8:13-14).
- ➔ Grace teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, loive soberly and righteously in this world, and look for the coming of the Lord (Tit 2:11-12).
- ➔ Continual access to God with

confidence (Eph 3:12).

- ➔ All spiritual blessings in heavenly places (Eph 1:3).
- ➔ All things pertaining to life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3).
- ➔ The opening of the eyes of our understanding (Eph 1:15-20).
- ➔ Partaking of Christ (Heb 13:14).
- ➔ Partaking of the Divine nature (2 Pet 1:4).

There is every reason to expect much more from those in Christ Jesus than those living prior to His entrance into the world, vicarious death, and triumphant resurrection.

ABRAHAM RETURNED TO HIS PLACE
" . . . and Abraham returned unto his place." Abraham returned home to resume his life with Sarah. But it would not be the same kind of life. Now he would be fueled by the promise left to him, and would surely be anticipating the next visit, when Sarah would give birth to the promised child, Isaac.

CONCLUSION

While Abraham was increasing in faith, Sodom and Gomorrah were decreasing morally – sin was gaining more and more strength.

While Abraham was increasing in faith, Sodom and Gomorrah were decreasing morally – sin was gaining more and more strength. A blessing was promised to Abraham, and fiery judgment reserved for Sodom and Gomorrah. The future was glorious for Abraham, but it was dreadful for the cities of the plain. All of this was happening at the same time, and in the same general region.

In this text, we learn something about God Himself. He can have remarkable grace on one person, while pouring out wrath on another body of people – just as He could save Noah while He was destroying the world. The fact that God was blessing Noah earlier, and Abraham now, did not mitigate the judgment He was going to pour out on Sodom and Gomorrah. **And, conversely, the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah**

did not diminish the greatness of the blessing given Abraham. Men are not capable of this kind of simultaneous action.

A PICTURE OF THE END OF THE WORLD

In this we see a picture of the end of the world, when wrath and grace will be brought at the same time: wrath for the ungodly, and grace for the godly. This is how it is stated in Scripture. *"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the*

glory of His power; **When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day**" (2 Thess 1:7-10).

One event, two differing effects. The event – the Lord Jesus shall be *"revealed from heaven."* The differing impact – vengeance on those who know not God and obey not the Gospel, and being glorified in His saints.

The Words of Jesus

The same facts are emphasized in our Lord's comments concerning Himself. *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil,*

unto the resurrection of damnation. I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." (John 5:25-30).

Two different views are presented in this text. First, those who are spiritually dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and live, being quickened from a state of deadness in trespasses and sins. However, some will not hear His voice, even though they are in the same proximity as those who were quickened by it. But these will not be made alive, remaining dead in trespasses and sins. **Jesus states that this is because "judgment" has been given to the Son, enabling some to live, while others remain in death.** As he stated earlier, *"For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will"* (John 5:21). This all takes place when the Gospel is preached – the Gospel which is *"the power of God unto salvation"* (Rom 1:16).

Then Jesus affirms that we ought

not to marvel at such a circumstance – giving spiritual life to some, and not to others. He projects our minds forward to the time when the dead will all be raised. A single shout will summon of the dead to rise, and all of the graves will be emptied, death being thoroughly and once and for all defeated. However, there will be two different results that take place at the same time. Some will be raised to *"the resurrection of life,"* while others will be raised *"unto the resurrection of damnation"* – all at the same time.

Some have a great deal of difficulty with such great and contradicting things taking place at the same time. Cain's offering was rejected, and Abel's was accepted, at the same general time. Noah was saved by water, and the world perished in the same water. They forget that Egypt was judged, and Israel delivered at the same time – midnight. Israel walked through the Red Sea on dry ground, and Pharaoh and his armies drowned in it on the same day. The same judgment day will result in taking the elect in while the condemned are cast away. These are arresting things to consider, but we must do so.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 3/9/12. We will continue our series of lessons in the book of Genesis. The twenty-ninth lesson will cover verses 1 through 28 of chapter nineteen: "THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM AND THE DAUGHTERS OF LOT." The malignant nature of sin is revealed in this account, which also contains some things difficult to understand in view of the things that are known this side of the cross. We will be exposed to the severe limitations that existed when there was minimal revelation available from God. Once again we will be required to be charitable in our evaluation of those who did not have access to what we know in Christ Jesus. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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THE WORD OF TRUTH FELLOWSHIP

WORD OF TRUTH FELLOWSHIP Website: <http://wotruth.com/wotf/wotindex.htm>

A place where believers can meet, fellowship, be edified, and express themselves.

Additional Website for Word of Truth Fellowship: <http://www.forministry.com/USMOINDPTWOTFW>

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COMMENTARY on Galatians: <http://wotruth.com/Galatiansindex-new.htm>

COMMENTARY on Genesis: <http://wotruth.com/Genesis.htm>

COMMENTARY on Ephesians: <http://wotruth.com/Ephesians.htm>
