

You're of no earthly value unless you're...

Heavenly Minded

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In this issue...

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Package Deal

Enscenced and Ecstatic

Principle People of the Scripture – Part 4

Apostasy

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Dear Friends,

In a recent Bible study surrounding Jacob and his journey from the bloody scene at Shechem to where he first met God at Bethel, someone pointed out how the Terebinth tree where he buried all the family's idols was a fine picture of the cross of Christ. In like manner, we were impressed that if we are to truly journey to that place of sincere worship, we should know that to have a clean, peaceful heart the believer need only bury the burden of sin at the foot of the cross so to speak. May we all journey to and abide in Bethel, the place where God is worshipped and revealed. Whether it is a trek back to the basics of our faith or obedience to the call of God, may the Holy Spirit get our attention and guide us there. Sin and self may have hindered you, difficulties may have you down or in fear, the enemy's lies may have turned your gaze down or inward. Nevertheless, may you tarry at the Terebinth tree as long as it takes. May your hope be renewed, may your faith be rekindled and fanned into flame, may your joy be rediscovered and may your life be pleasing to our wonderful Savior Jesus. *In Christ's Love, John and Darlene*

Has the Lord ever asked you, "Will you lay down your life for My sake?" (John 13:38). It is much easier to die than to lay down your life day in and day out with the sense of the high calling of God. We are not made for the bright-shining moments of life, but we have to walk in the light of them in our everyday ways. There was only one bright-shining moment in the life of Jesus, and that was on the Mount of Transfiguration. It was there that He emptied Himself of His glory for the second time, and then came down into the demon-possessed valley (see Mark 9:1-29). For thirty-three years Jesus laid down His life to do the will of His Father. "By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16). Yet it is contrary to our human nature to do so.

If I am a friend of Jesus, I must deliberately and carefully lay down my life for Him. It is a difficult thing to do, and thank God that it is. Salvation is easy for us, because it cost God so much. But the exhibiting of salvation in my life is difficult. God saves a person, fills him with the Holy Spirit, and then says, in effect, "Now you work it out in your life, and be faithful to Me, even though the nature of everything around you is to cause you to be unfaithful." And Jesus says to us, ". . . I have called you friends. . . ." Remain faithful to your Friend, and remember that His honor is at stake in your bodily life. – Oswald Chambers

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Package Deal

900 tired eyes watched as bucket after bucket of water drenched the sacrifice upon Mt. Carmel. Earlier, the prophets of Baal had vainly prayed and danced and even drawn blood to get the attention of a lifeless god. Now, Elijah calmly commanded his temp-assistants to make the sacrifice to Jehovah as wet as possible. He was supremely confident as he spoke, *“LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again.”*

You know the story. Fire came down from heaven and consumed not only the burnt sacrifice but the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the surrounding trench. Now when all the people saw *it*, they fell on their faces; and they said, “The LORD, He *is* God! The LORD, He *is* God!” And Elijah said to them, “Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!” So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there.

After this, he boldly instructed the wicked king Ahab to eat, drink and then to ‘hit the road’ because it was going to rain (something it had not done in three years due to Elijah’s prayer). Subsequently, he prayed for rain to return and sure enough,

dark clouds and heavy showers covered the land. Then, on foot, he outran the king’s chariot arriving at the royal city ahead of Ahab. Awesome!

Hundreds of mocking eyes watched as mountains of lumber and lakes of pitch were used to erect a strange edifice, something so large in size and structure as to awe even the ridiculers. Noah and his sons labored with fantastic patience and tenacity. Simply setting the massive skeletal timbers in place required incredible planning, preparation and pulley genius. Surely, years and years of constant prayer, dialog with the designer, was necessary. Dozens of times, an exhausted Noah probably felt challenged to give up. But he didn’t. He was taunted, harassed, oppressed, and discouraged by nearly everyone. In an environment where the thoughts and imaginations of all people – every man, woman and child, had become violently evil continually, you can imagine his concern with vandalism to say the least. He was alone, but he was faithful.

And he finished! He did all that the Lord God instructed him to do. No detail was tossed aside. No effort was considered a waste of time. Finally, the time arrived. With just a week’s warning, Noah prepared to board. Perhaps it was a crisis of faith. God had to beckon him from within the ark to enter. Noah knew that in going into the ship, he was leaving behind all he knew, the entire world was going to be destroyed. He obeyed but surely with overwhelming sobriety. Shortly afterward, pair after pair of all sorts

of animals filed tamely into the monstrous structure.

Curious neighbors looked on. Rumor had it he thought it was going to rain (something it hadn’t ever done before). And there in the boat was this preacher of righteousness along with his family.

“Hey! How are you going to close the door??” they laughed. But the mirth changed to dearth when God Himself closed the doorway. Awesome!

Thousands of anxious fearful eyes gazed upon a young lad as he exited the king’s tent. Some shook their heads, some turned away, dropping their weapons in sheer disillusionment. Some shouted ‘atta-boys’ but they could barely be heard above the din of jeers and laughter coming from across the valley. Poised on opposing sides of the gulf between them which was strewn with discarded armaments and the previous days’ casualties were the hosts of the Philistines and the army of Saul. ‘Surely this was a ruse,’ some thought. Perhaps it was Saul’s way of discrediting the taunting challenges of the enormous man now standing between the armies.

They all watched in fascination as the young lad trotted down to the stream and seemed to be praying. “No, he’s not bowing, he’s picking up stones?!” said one Israeli soldier to another. Stones?? The young boy was David and before him a giant nearly twice his height.

“Eliab! Isn’t that your little brother??”

“What!??” Eliab’s face was part angry, part shocked, part afraid as he noticed it was true. He was about to run down and stop his youngest

brother when suddenly the giant roared again, “Am I a dog? Who is this pitiful little runt with a stick in his hand?” David shouted something back but it was hard to hear.

“Don’t worry Eliab,” said one of the soldiers nearby holding him back. “He’ll dance around, dodge a spear and then come back up here as fast as a mountain goat.”

‘I hope so!’ thought the older brother knowing his father was going to hold him responsible. But just then David ran headlong towards the giant. Straight at him!

“What’s that in his hand? A SLING??” someone nearby shouted.

A veteran fighter next to Eliab turned away. “I’m sorry, friend. It’ll be over quick.”

Suddenly, there was a thunderous CRACK that rang out across the valley and where the giant had stood arose a cloud of dust. In the midst of it, a large sword flashed in the sunlight.

Both hoards could not believe their eyes as the young boy held up the dismembered head of Goliath the champion of Gath. Like a mighty wave, courage filled the hearts of Saul and his men while horrible fear engulfed their enemies. The battle was engaged. Victory was complete. Awesome!

The scripture is filled with such stories of supreme faith and obedience. In considering them meditatively, we can almost hear the crowds cry out or mock or cheer. Nevertheless, these heroes inspire us to greater obedience to the Lord. As Rich Mullins sang, *“...stories like that make a boy grow*

bold. Stories like that make a man walk straight”.

But we have a particularly nasty aspect to our nature that God doesn't. We are awed by the heroic deeds of the faithful, but we are also inclined to critique anything and anyone that falls short of our personal standards. When someone fails our measurement, we are often moved to 'write them off', to look elsewhere for our picture of perfection. Thus, marriages crumble; thus, pastors fumble; thus, friends and followers grumble. Yes, even heroes fail.

Elijah sulked. Exhausted from his arduous journey to the back side of the desert, there he moped and felt the weight of the world on his shoulders. The hole he was in was more than this cave; it was darker than the mountain's hole. It was lonelier than the desert wastes. It was a fear filled depression. God spoke to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

So he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life."

Noah puked (possibly). There in the lonely tent, he fell down utterly drunken from the wine he had made. Was it because of the reality of worldwide devastation set in? Was it fear of the burden of starting a new world all over from scratch? Was it unexpected fermentation? What ever the cause, he was drunk as a skunk and as a result presented a real stumbling block to

his family. The preacher of righteousness was wasted, inebriated and probably 'in the buff'.

David stared. He had turned from leading the armies of Israel to voyeurism. His lust for the naked woman on the nearby housetop erupted. Orders were given and in a short space of time, David had violated terribly the marriage of one of his most trustworthy mighty men. Not content with betrayal, he plotted deception and when that failed, he plotted murder. In doing so, he set in motion the consequences that brought life long tragedy, personal grief, family chaos and national disaster.

Heroes and 'hienies'. Just about the time we're thinking someone is really awesome, they turn out to be awful. And we're bitterly disappointed. We break up, walk away, go to yet another church. We become 'monastic', bombastic, sarcastic and sad. But someday you'd think it would sink in – it's a 'package deal'.

Now, God is never surprised. He knew it before they blew it. He knows the 'end from the beginning'. We, however, are amazed and disillusioned by how those we admire can rise so high and yet fall so low. Why do you suppose God promised, "Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you."? Precisely because it is our inclination to believe that He is caught off guard and becomes as bitterly disappointed as we are in others' failures or our own. But He is not.

That is not to say, however, that He condones our sin or even tolerates it. He dealt with it eternally

on Calvary and deals with it even now as we submit to Him (yes both dealings are part of the 'deal'), but He made the 'package' in its original perfection and understands exactly what we have become in its corruption. When He died on the cross, He bought the whole package if you would. It's not that part of our nature belongs to us or to the devil and part to God. He owns it all, lock, stock and barrel.

So when He put you together with that spouse, it wasn't surprising to Him that you've had 'challenges'. And when He led you to that church, He knew you'd find people and situations that rubbed you the wrong way. And when He says, "I love you," it's not because you've fooled Him into thinking you're better than you are.

I submit that a significant part of the fractured, disintegrated condition of the contemporary church is related to this issue. The Bible makes it clear that our faults need to be confessed -- not so we can react to them in knee-jerk fashion but so that we will humbly "pray for one another". One thing I so greatly appreciate about my own pastor is his candor and awareness of his need for God's grace.

Understanding that we are each a 'package deal' so to speak won't make it hurt less when the ugliness of our sin nature rears its head. But, if we do, perhaps we will consciously seek to appropriate more of the heart of God when such is the case. How does the Lord deal with us?

He chastises His children to be sure but always in love. He never gives up on you – in fact, the completion of His good work in you will skyrocket your appreciation into

the heavenlies. He is so patient and longsuffering as to boggle the mind. He is always lifting up those who are bent or loaded down. He forgives and forgives and forgives and forgives and forgives and... He always welcomes back those who have strayed. In fact, He also searches them out. He guards and protects the weak. He binds up the broken hearted. He is never too busy for us. He is never insincere. On and on it goes.

Has someone let you down? Have you been the letter-downer? Step back for a moment before you react. Go to prayer. Consider the package. Seek the heart of God.

In his book "What's so Amazing About Grace," Philip Yancey tells a story about a man and wife who one night had an argument about how supper was cooked, it was so heated that night they slept in separate rooms. Neither has approached the other to say I'm sorry or to offer forgiveness, and they have remained in separate rooms years after the argument, each night they go to bed hoping that the other will approach them with an apology or forgiveness, but neither goes to the other.

"... in the final analysis, forgiveness is an act of faith. By forgiving another, I am trusting that God is a better justice-maker than I am. By forgiving, I release my own right to get even and leave all issues of fairness for God to work out. I leave in God's hands the scales that must balance justice and mercy."—Yancy

Elijah, Noah, David, you and me – we're all a package deal in God's eyes and, Praise His Name, He knows just how to deal with it.

ENSCONCED AND ECSTATIC

I've always loved that word – ensconced. I heard my pastor use it some years ago; ever since then it has been like a mental perennial that seems to blossom year after year in my heart and mind with new beauty. It means to 'shelter or conceal' and as one who longs for the Lord's appearing, for a heavenly home, I long to be ensconced in the arms of my Savior and doubtless, you do as well.

Yet this wonderful expectation, what the Bible refers to as our 'blessed hope', has been shrouded for all of us in degrees of mystery. In fact, the Thessalonian believers were quite disturbed when they were told in error that Christ had come and they'd been left behind. The apostle Paul addressed this in his letter Second Thessalonians Chapter Two. He wrote:

"Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter as it from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God showing himself that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

And now you know what is restraining that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming." (2Thes 2:1-8)

As you see, he starts by reminding them concerning two things – the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, and then he says 'Don't be shaken up by others trying to convince you that the "day of Christ" (or more accurately "day of the Lord" - that is, His second coming) already came.'

He then follows with some specifics on a series of events leading up to the Day of the Lord, clarifying their order in sequence. There are four of them we need to understand:

1. A "falling away". The Greek word here is apostasia from which we get our English word 'apostasy'. The Greek word however does not necessarily mean the exact same thing as the English descendant and it has led to some debate concerning this verse. 'Apostasia' is an adjective in the ancient Greek meaning "something seperative" and is a derivative of the word 'aphistemi' meaning "to remove". It is significant to note two things about this word – first, that it is in the feminine form and second, that its object is implied, i.e. it is not explicit in the verse but is understood based upon the context set by the previous verses.

It is used in only one other place in the New Testament – Acts 21:21 where Paul is informed of being accused of teaching believers to 'be separated' from the Law of Moses. In that case, the object is explicit and is the Mosaic Law. It could be that the object linkage in this verse may have influenced our contemporary perspective of the meaning of the word in 2 Thes 2.

Now, other scriptures such as 2 Tim 3:1; 2 Pet 3:3 and 2 Tim 3:13 make it clear that the last days church will face some serious problems from within and without. Thus, it's understandable that this passage could be considered in some aspects to be pointing to the final apostasy – certainly, the church in some areas has grown very weak and compromising. However, the church has experienced several periods of wide spread apostasy throughout its history. As an example, during the Inquisition, the church murdered millions of sincere believers.

And it should be noted that the true church of born anew believers is growing phenomenally under persecution in many parts of the world. So while some parts of the church are indeed becoming apostate, some parts are growing more fervent and fruitful. Arguably, our current apostasy is not yet universal.

So for a number of reasons, I am personally convinced that this passage in 2 Thes does not refer to the apostate church but rather to the rapture of the true church; notice that the implied object that 'apostasia' refers to is the world for the context is clearly given by Paul in verse one as our gathering together to Christ, not our separating from Him and to

faithfully interpret the scripture we must follow the author's line of thought – that's called 'context'.

(It should be noted that good Bible teachers line up on both sides of this – some, like Kenneth Weiss and Dr. E Schuyler English agree that this passage refers to the rapture while others claim it is referring to the apostate church.)

Now recall that the adjective is feminine as you would expect for it refers to the Church as the Bride of Christ separating from the world as He snatches us up to meet Him in the clouds. (See 1 Thes 4:16-18) 2. Chronologically, the event of verse seven in our passage happens at this time also. "He who restrains" is generally acknowledged to be the Holy Spirit and the word for "restrains" literally means "to hold down". Also, "...until He is taken out of the way," is equally translated 'until out of the midst He becomes'.

That is, the Holy Spirit, Who is in all true believers is holding down the lid so to speak on the full expression of evil in the world, but He is taken out of the midst and thus out of the way of the evil one. Now, He cannot be taken out of the midst of the believers or God would be lying when He said, "Never will I leave you. Never, will I forsake you." (Heb 13:5) So clearly, He is taken out of the midst of the world as He presents the church to Christ at the rapture.

Now, I am personally convinced that the Lord's Spirit will still be at work on the planet during the time of the "lawless one" – i.e. the Tribulation, because it appears that 144,000 Jewish men are sealed or anointed near the beginning of it

and huge numbers of people get saved during this time as evidenced in Revelation chapter seven.

So it could be that as Abraham's servant brought Rebecca to Isaac in Genesis 24, a beautiful Old Testament picture, so the Heavenly Father's Holy Spirit will bring us to Christ. Even now, "the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' (Rev 22:17) to our Lord Jesus and to the unsaved. The Holy Spirit and the bride of Christ are inseparable until the bride is safely ensconced and ecstatic in the presence of her Bridegroom.

3. The revealing of the "lawless one". Next, the "man of sin," otherwise known to us as the anti-Christ, will be revealed. Thus, it is not right for believers to be looking for him in this present time. He won't be 'seen' until after we are gone. On the contrary, we are repeatedly instructed in scripture to be watching for Jesus. Now, the revealing of the AC will be at the

beginning of the seven year long 'tribulation' period. Revelation chapters 6 – 19 describe it in some detail.

4. Then comes the "Day of the Lord" – that is, His second coming to earth. This could also refer to a period of time when He pours out His judgment but if so, it still culminates in His second coming. He doesn't stop at the clouds as with the rapture. This will be the literal, awesome, forceful invasion of the earth and the complete destruction of the rebellious kingdoms of man. Christ will conquer all who oppose Him, imprison Satan and establish a 1000 year righteous reign over the remnant of sinful man.

The Rapture, Tribulation and the Second Coming or the Day of the Lord is barreling down the tracks toward us and nothing will prevent them. Let's not get rooted in this world but rather ensconced in ecstasy – His presence.

of a bodily return of Christ is prompted by a desire to avoid the teaching of Scripture concerning the revelation of righteousness which will accompany fulfillment of prophecy relating to the second coming. These false teachers approach the doctrine of the second coming with a question born of unbelief as they ask, "Where is the promise of his second coming?" They attempt to support their unbelief by the statement, "Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

Both the questions raised and the supporting evidence is, of course, contradicted by the facts of history. There is no logical support of the idea that a delay in the second coming of Christ is a valid argument against its ultimate fulfillment. Many prophecies in the Scriptures were fulfilled thousands of years after their deliverance, and there is no reason to believe that the passage of time alters the sure Word of God. The argument that all things have continued undisturbed since creation is contradicted by many Scriptures.

Peter points out that their assumption that all things have continued without interruption from beginning of creation is an absolute untruth. The entire Word of God bears its testimony to the fact that God does intervene in human events, that He does guide human history, that both naturally and supernaturally the providential government of God is manifest in the history of the world.

The prediction that there will be scoffing concerning the second coming of Christ is sadly fulfilled in the twentieth century. Few pulpits today proclaim a bodily second coming of Christ to the earth. In the minds of many professing Christians, truths concerning the second coming are considered as proper items of faith only for cults and those outside the

main body of Christendom. Countless thousands of professing Christians are totally ignorant concerning the facts of Scripture which describe the second coming of Christ.

The church today is too evidently overtaken by its worldliness. The lives of its people are often indistinguishable from those outside the church. Its prayer meetings are the poorest attended meetings of the week. Its congregations build great cathedrals to house their own worship, but often have little concern for the dying millions who have never heard of Christ. In some of the major denominations, it takes over forty congregations to support one full-time missionary on a foreign field.

In II Timothy 3: 1-5, there is a graphic picture of apostasy in the last days. Paul described it as a time of peril (II Timothy 3:1), a time when *"men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away"* (II Timothy 3:2-5). His summary of the situation at the end time in II Timothy 3:13 makes it clear that the end of the age will be one of apostasy, *"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."*

The increment of evil, the growth of hypocrisy, selfishness, and unbelief within the bounds of professing Christendom are according to Scriptures the signs of the approaching end of the age. Though there are thousands of faithful congregations and many pious souls still bearing a faithful testimony to

Apostasy

(excerpts, *The Church in Prophecy*, by John F. Walvoord)

In the form of a postscript to the Apostle Peter's general description of apostates in the last days, the prediction is added that there would also be departure from the truth of the second coming of Christ. Peter writes: *"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming: for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation"*

(II Peter 3:3,4). In this passage false teachers are described as "scoffers, walking after their Own lusts:" On the one hand they are unbelievers, that is, those who will not accept the Word of God concerning the coming of the Lord, and, second, they are motivated by their own lusts and immorality.

It is an obvious fact that modern liberals scoff at the second coming of Christ, motivated primarily by their desire to avoid the doctrine of divine judgment upon sin which is commonly associated with it in Scripture. The widespread denial

Christ in our modern day, it is hardly true that the majority of Christendom is bearing a true testimony. It is the exception rather than the rule for the great fundamentals of the church to ring from the pulpit and for the pew to manifest the transforming grace of God in life and sacrificial devotion. In a word, the last days of the church on earth are days of apostasy, theologically and morally, days of unbelief, and days that will culminate in divine judgment.

In the church at Thessalonica, a misunderstanding concerning prophecy is corrected in II Thessalonians 2. Apparently through a false letter or report, they had been led to believe that the Day of the Lord had already come, and they were now in the predicted time of trouble from which they had been assured they would be delivered in I Thessalonians 5. In correcting this misunderstanding, the apostle definitely states that the Day of the Lord cannot come until apostasy of a special character takes place as defined in II Thessalonians 2:3,4: *"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."*

According to this revelation, the Day of the Lord which apparently follows the rapture of the church cannot come, that is, cannot fulfill its predicted character until there be "a falling away first" or, as it may be literally translated, "a departure first." It has been debated whether this departure refers to the departure of the church as indicated in the rapture or whether the traditional

interpretation that it refers to a departure from the faith should be in view. If it refers to the rapture, it is an explicit statement that the rapture must occur before the Day of the Lord and it constitutes a support of the pretribulational position. If it refers to the departure from faith, i.e., apostasy, it teaches that the Day of the Lord cannot come until the man of sin be revealed, a person described as *"the son of perdition; who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God"* (II Thessalonians 2:3,4).

The important conclusion which may be reached upon a careful study of prophecies dealing with the end of the church age is that all that is necessary before the rapture has been fulfilled, and that we can confidently await the coming of the Lord for His church as the next step in the fulfillment of prophecy relating to the church.

The stage is therefore set for a demonstration of the power of God, first in the period of judgment preceding the second coming, and then climaxing in the second coming of Christ and the gathering of the nations before the bar of divine justice. For the true church, it means that the days of its pilgrimage may be coming fast to a close. On the one hand, this calls for expenditure of every effort to snatch as brands from the burning those who have not yet come to Christ. On the other hand, the hope of His soon return should constitute both a comfort and a challenge to be *"always abounding in the work of the Lord"* (I Corinthians 15:58) and to purity of life and motive (I John 3:3).

Principle Men of the Bible Part 4 – Abraham (2 of 2) Ref: Genesis 17:1 – 25:8

Gen 17:1, 2

God physically appeared here to Abram.

1. What does it mean to go or come before God's face?
2. How can Abram be perfect? What does that mean?
3. What is Abram lacking? How is he incomplete or unfinished?
4. Are you 'unfinished' in some way that you're aware of? See Col 2:10

God promised to multiply Abram's seed exceedingly.

1. Who do you suppose Abram thinks He's speaking of?

Gen 17:3 – 6

God changed Abram's name to Abraham which is in synch with His promise to multiply his seed. Kings will come from him.

1. How long has it been since the last time God made this promise to him?
2. Why do you suppose God is speaking to him at this time? Why not just do it?

Gen 17:7 – 14

Here is another covenant. God will be Abraham's God and the God of Abraham's descendants.

1. Before this, was El Shaddai his God?
2. What is involved in this? What does it mean for God to be his God?
3. Is God 'choosing' Abraham and the Jews?
4. Is this the initiation of a divine relationship? What is the sign of the relationship?

5. Do we have a sign for our relationship with God in Christ? See Rom 2:29

Gen 17:15 – 18

Now it comes out that Ishmael is not the chosen seed. Rather Sarai, whose name is also changed to Sarah, will bear a child.

1. Why did Abraham laugh?
2. Why did he ask God to instead use Ishmael as the seed?
3. Have you ever insisted that God bless your own 'Ishmael'? How?
4. Isaac will be a 'miracle' baby. Why did God wait so long and then do it this way? Who does Isaac picture?

Gen 17:19 – 22

Be careful what you ask for. God granted Abraham's request and blessed Ishmael.

1. Do you think Abraham ever imagined the perpetual enmity that would exist between the two lines? The thousands of years of warfare?
2. Why do we want our 'Ishmaels' to prosper?

Gen 17:23 – 29

Ouch! Abraham was completely obedient.

1. Why did God choose such a sign, what do you think?
2. Is the circumcision of the heart a painful matter also?

This took place before Sarah got pregnant.

1. Is that significant?
2. Generally, when He gives us something to do, does God's blessing lead or follow our obedience? See Psa 84:11

Gen 18:1 – 8

First Abraham begs the Lord to stay and be refreshed. Then he runs to prepare a 'morsel' which is really a

feast. Then he stands while his guests eat.

1. How would you characterize this behavior?
2. Why do you suppose the Lord 'stopped by'?
3. Would the Lord be comfortable 'stopping by' your home?

Gen 18:16 – 19

The Lord gives Abraham perhaps the biggest compliment ever and says that He will bring him into His confidence.

1. What was the compliment?
2. What does God know about you? What's it based on?

Gen 18:20 – 23

Suddenly Abraham is emboldened. He remains completely respectful and yet he is also aggressively seeking to move the Lord to be 'righteous and merciful'. He even goes so far as to ask, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

1. What has moved Abraham to act this way?
2. What is the Lord's response?
3. Did the Lord know Abraham would ignite like this?
4. What does this tell us about our communication with the Lord?

Gen 18: 24 – 33

What a negotiator. Abraham is really determined to save some people out of Sodom.

1. Why?
2. Do you think the Lord was perturbed?
3. Do you think He may have visited Abraham for this very purpose?

Gen 19:27 – 29

Abraham saw the inferno of God's judgment upon the cities of the plain.

1. Why was Lot saved?
2. Is this a foreshadow of Christ in some way?

3. Does Abraham know that Lot is safe?
4. Do you think he grieves the loss?
5. Will this challenge Abraham's faith in the Lord?

Gen 20:1, 2

Abraham heads back south toward Egypt. He again misrepresents Sarah and acts as if he doesn't care about God's promised son through her.

1. Do you suppose he is grieving Lot?
2. Is Abraham backsliding in his faith?

Gen 20:3 – 16

Even though Abraham doesn't seem to care about the promised child, God does and He protects Sarah. Abraham is exposed as a spinner of the truth.

1. Have you ever treated the promises of God lightly?
2. Does God 'come down' on Abraham?
3. Is a 'walk of faith' always 'forward'?
4. Does Abraham still have some Abram in him?

Gen 20:17, 18

Abraham prays for Abimelech.

1. Did Abraham's failure disqualify him from God's promise?
2. Did it surprise God?
3. Have you ever failed God so badly in your own mind that you supposed yourself to be 'disqualified' from serving Him? Approaching Him? Even praying to Him?

Gen 21:1 – 5

Sarah conceives and gives birth to Isaac just as God said.

1. In light of the Abimelech incident, what do you think is running through Abraham's mind at this point?

2. Why did God wait this long?
3. As Christians, what are we waiting for?

Gen 21:6 – 13

Now his folly with Hagar begins to bear fruit – contention.

1. Are you a father and can you empathize with him in sending his son away?
2. Is his faith being tested again? How so?
3. How does v 14 demonstrate his faith?

Gen 21:22 – 24

Abimelech wants a treaty of sorts with Abraham. He doesn't trust him.

1. Why is the king distrustful of Abraham?
2. Is this another past sin that is coming back to Abraham?
3. Does sin have its wages? Are they the result of God's anger?

Gen 21:25 – 32

Water was very precious in this land.

1. How did Abraham deal with his problem?

Gen 21:33, 34

Calling on the name of the Lord was clearly not an every day affair for Abraham.

1. Why was that, do you think?
2. Why do you think he is calling on the Lord at this time?
3. Have you made assumptions that were wrong when contention arose in your own life?
4. Why did Abraham remain in this land for a long time?

Gen 22:1

This is the first mention of 'nacah' – to test or to prove. Earlier, God said that He knew Abraham and that he would

teach his descendants to follow the Lord. Now, He tests Abraham.

1. Why test if He already knows him?
2. What is the nature of God's testing? Does He ever test/tempt with evil?
3. Is the devil a tester? What is the purpose of his testing?
4. Was Jesus tested? See Heb 4:15 Why?
5. Did Jesus test anyone? See John 6:6 Did he 'pass' the test?

Gen 22:1, 2

Noah built the ark; Abraham built the altar.

1. What is this picturing? Who is Abraham picturing? Isaac?
2. Why would God even care to picture this?

Gen 22:3

Here is Abraham's initial response.

1. Did he trust God? How do you know?

Gen 22:4

Here is Abraham's journey.

1. What does the third day speak of?
2. What does "saw the place afar off" speak of?

Gen 22:5

Here is Abraham's 'boast'.

1. What makes this a statement of true faith?

Gen 22:6 – 8

Here is Abraham's ascent.

1. How old is Isaac?
2. Isaac carried the wood of his own sacrifice just like Who?
3. How is Abraham's answer to Isaac a statement of faith?

Gen 22:9, 10

Here is the culmination of Abraham's faith.

1. Was Isaac submitted to his father? Why?
2. What is going through Abraham's mind do you suppose?

Gen 22:11, 12

Here is the Lord's response.

1. Was this a muffled call, a whisper or a loud cry from the Lord?
- "Only" in only son comes from the word meaning to join or unite.
1. What's the point here? Is God saying something about Jesus?
 2. What did God learn about Abraham?
 3. What did we learn about God?

Gen 22:13, 14

In the Levitical law, the ram is the animal of substitution, specifically for sin.

1. Who does this picture? Get the picture?
2. In the mount of the Lord – could this be Mount Calvary?
3. It shall be seen – could it be the event this pictures?
4. Could God be any clearer on this prophetic picture?

Gen 22:15 – 18

The first call from heaven dealt with the sacrifice of the son. The second call deals with the blessings and rewards for faith.

1. Is this possibly picturing the two comings of Christ?
2. Seed is singular here. Who is the 'seed'?

Gen 23 – Abraham buries his wife.

1. Could this speak prophetically of God putting away, for a time, His people in order to focus on what comes, in type, in the next chapter?

Gen 24 – Abraham obtains a bride for his son, sending his unnamed servant to find her.

1. Does this remind you of the Holy Spirit and the church?

Gen 25:1 – 5

Abraham married again and had six children.

Keturah means 'incense'.
 Zimran means 'a singer of praise'
 Jokshan means 'a snarer'
 Medan means 'contention'
 Midian means 'strife'
 Ishbak means 'he releases'
 Shuah means 'wealth' coming from a word meaning 'to bow down' or 'to be humble'

1. How does this speak of Christ and the Jewish people?

Abraham gave all to Isaac.

1. Does this picture what Father God has done with Jesus?

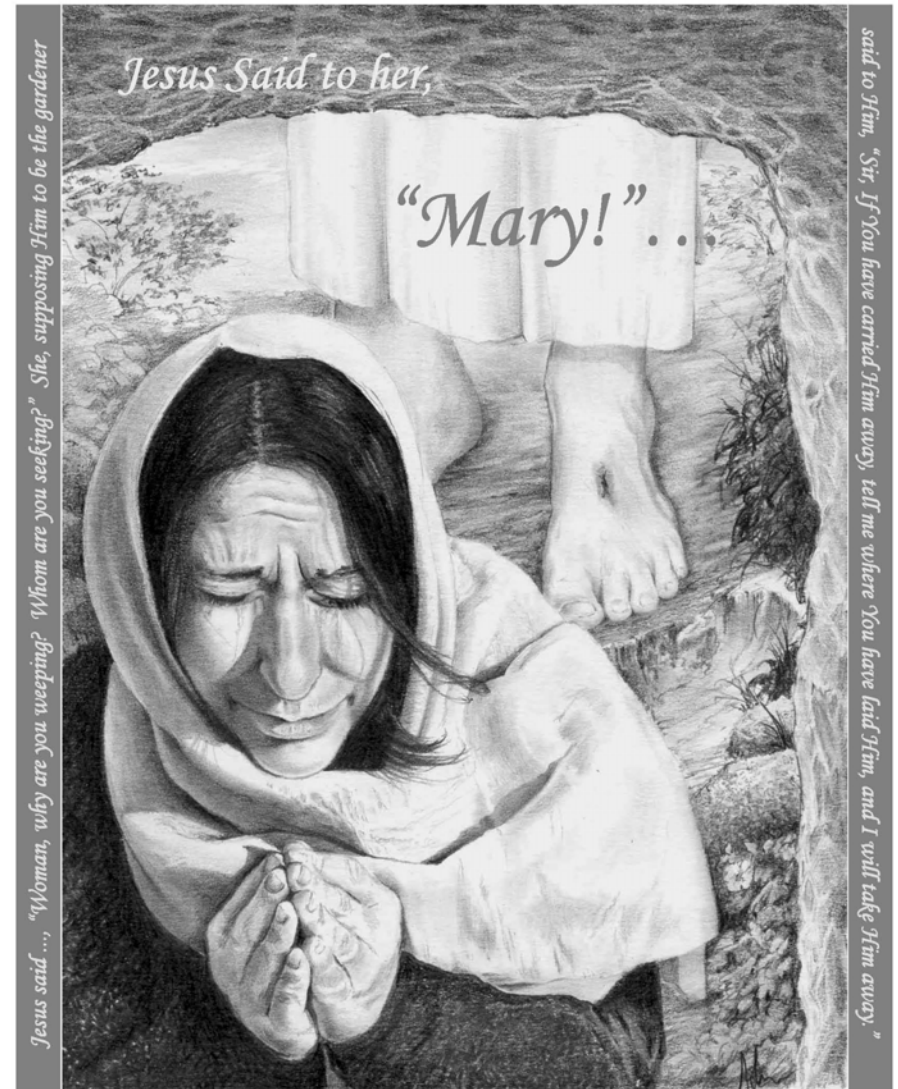
Gen 25:7, 8

Abraham lived to be 175 years old.

1. Why does it say "an old man" and "full of years"? Is this simply a redundancy?
2. What does it mean to be 'full of years'? Note: of years is not in the text.

What have you learned about the walk of faith?

What have you learned about the Lord?



Jesus said... "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" She, supposing Him to be the gardener

said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away."