

GENESIS 18

THE STORY CONTINUES OF THE WAY THAT GOD INTERACTS WITH ABRHAM AND SARAH. REMEMBER LAST WEEEK THAT THEY HAD NAME CHANGES. HERE THEY GET VISITED.

A. Abraham welcomes drop in visitors.

1. (1-5) Abraham invites the LORD and two others to a meal.

Then the LORD appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, and said, "My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant. Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant." They said, "Do as you have said."

a. **Then the LORD appeared:** Apparently, this happened a short time after the events of Genesis 17. In Genesis 17:21, God said Sarah would give birth one year later, and at this time she was not yet pregnant; so this couldn't be more than three months after the events in Genesis 17.

b. **Then the LORD appeared to him by the terebinth trees:** Here again, the LORD came to Abraham in human appearance. This is another presentation of Jesus in human form before His incarnation, here among the **three men** visiting Abraham.

i. We can assume that this was God, in the Person of Jesus Christ, appearing to Abraham before His incarnation and birth at Bethlehem. We assume this because of God the Father it says, *No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him* (John

1:18), and no man has ever seen God in the Person of the Father (1 Timothy 6:16). Therefore, if God appeared to someone in human appearance in the Old Testament (and no one has seen God the Father) it makes sense the appearance is of Jesus, the eternal Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, but before His incarnation in Bethlehem. Crikey God can do some weird stuff.

c. **The terebinth trees of Mamre**: This was a significant place in Abraham's life. Abraham moved to **Mamre** when he came back into the promised land from Egypt and built an altar there (Genesis 13:18), and apparently stayed there some time (Genesis 14:13). Further down the track, Abraham purchased a field and cave at **Mamre**, using it for Sarah's burial (Genesis 23:17-19). Abraham himself was also buried there (Genesis 25:9), and his son Isaac was also buried there (Genesis 49:30, 50:13).

d. **Behold, three men were standing by him**: Though we don't know if Abraham immediately understood the identity of his visitors, he did honor the leader of the three of them as his superior notice he **bowed himself to the ground**).

i. Though the LORD (in the Person of Jesus Christ) appeared to Abraham twice before (Genesis 12:7, 17:1), we don't know if Jesus looked the same each time, or if Abraham simply knew or recognised who it was by some sort of intuition or spiritual knowledge. It appears from the text that Abraham knew who it was.

e. **He ran from the tent door to meet them**: According to his godliness and the customs of that culture, Abraham enthusiastically offered the hospitality of his house to these travelers.

2. (6-8) Sarah and Abraham prepare a meal for their visitors.

So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quickly, make ready three measures of fine meal; knead it and make cakes." And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave it to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it. So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate.

a. **Abraham hurried into the tent:** Abraham's urgency seems to go beyond the great sense of hospitality that was common in his time. Abraham understood there was something special about these three guys.

b. **Abraham ran to the herd:** Though Abraham and Sarah hurried to prepare this meal for their visitors, it still took considerable time to make and serve the food. The sense is that Abraham and Sarah themselves did this work, instead of commanding servants to do it for them.

3. (9-10) **God reconfirms His promise of a son.**

Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" So he said, "Here, in the tent." And He said, "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son." (Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.)

a. **Where is Sarah your wife:** They called her according to her new name, given just a few weeks before (Genesis 17:15-16).

b. **I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son:** This promise of regeneration (**return to you according to the time of life**) was specifically made to Abraham. Sarah also was miraculously regenerated, but this promise was to Abraham.

c. **Sarah your wife shall have a son:** It seems that God dramatically repeated this promise to Abraham in a relatively short time (previously in Genesis 17:17-22). Like Abraham, we *need* to hear God's promises over and over again. It is a way God uses to encourage and develop our faith: *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God* (Romans 10:17).

4. (11-12) **Sarah's reaction to God's promise.**

Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, "After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?"

a. **Sarah had passed the age of childbearing:** By all outward circumstance, there was good reason for Sarah to laugh at the literal fulfillment of this promise. She **had passed the age of childbearing**, which literally seems to mean, she's too old!!

i. Even accounting for their long lives (Abraham lived to be 175 and Sarah 127), they were both well past middle age. It would take a miracle of God for them to have literal children through normal means.

b. **Therefore Sarah laughed within herself:** Significantly, this is what Sarah (and Abraham) *most wanted all their lives* – to have a child of their own. Yet they found it hard to believe God's promise when He said He would grant it to them.

i. It is strangely characteristic of us to believe God's promise for a long, long, time, enduring through much discouragement along the way, until the promise is *almost there*, and then we find doubt. We are grateful that God is greater than our doubts.

c. **After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure:** Sarah laughed within herself at this promise. She could not believe God would literally grant this child as the result of normal sexual relations.

i. Leupold translates Genesis 18:12, "After I have become worn out, have I enjoyed sexual delight and my lord too is an old man?" Leupold then observed, "The matter is not put very delicately by Sarah."

ii. It may be, even after the dramatic promises of Genesis 17, Abraham and Sarah found some way to spiritualize God's promise, making it mean something other than what God intended. Here, God made it plain: Abraham and Sarah would have normal sexual relations and produce a baby.

5. (13-15) God answers Sarah's laugh.

And the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?' Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son." But Sarah denied it, saying, "I

did not laugh," for she was afraid. And He said, "No, but you did laugh!"

a. **Why did Sarah laugh:** God heard Sarah's laugh even though she *laughed within herself*. The sense was, her laugh could not be heard normally, but God heard it nevertheless. There was nothing hidden before the LORD.

i. We might live very differently if we remembered that God hears and knows everything we think and say.

b. **At the appointed time I will return to you:** When Sarah laughed at God's twice-given promise, we might think God would take the promise away. Instead, God responded by dealing with her sin of unbelief, not by taking away the promise.

Listen to this:

i. *If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13).*

c. **Is there anything too hard for the LORD:** God would demonstrate through Abraham and Sarah that there is *nothing too hard for the LORD*, and that God can even triumph over the weak faith of His people.

Here is something interesting:

i. **Hard** is the same Hebrew word for *wonderful* in Isaiah 9:6: *For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given... And His name will be called Wonderful.* Jesus is our "wonderful" One, and He isn't too **hard** or wonderful for God to give to us.

d. **The LORD said to Abraham:** Significantly, God dealt with **Abraham** about this, not Sarah herself, because Abraham was the head of his home. God promised that it would happen, and **at the appointed time**.