

THE ORIGINS OF IT ALL!: A STUDY OF GENESIS

XXI.) COMMUNION WITH A WONDERFUL & JUST LORD

GENESIS 18:1-33

Q: What things of the LORD tend to be hard for you to believe?

Q: What is the point and purpose of intercessory prayer?

A.) A VISIT FROM A WONDERFUL GOD (vv. 1-15)

1.) The Appearance (vv. 1-2)

- The three “men” appeared unexpectedly and 'out of thin air.' Sitting in front of his tent, Abraham sensed their sudden presence, looked up and there they were.
- The immediately preceding context makes it clear that at one of these 'men' was the LORD Himself and the other two were angels – all appearing in the flesh as men.
- More specifically, this was most likely an appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ (**John 1:1,8**).

2.) The Reception of the Faithful (vv. 3-8)

- Abraham's response demonstrates a level of urgency and honor that is greater than the normal customs of hospitality to guests.

a.) He *ran* to meet them.

b.) He “*bowed to the ground*” (*shachah*) before them. This is the same Hebrew word used throughout the OT to describe worship. This is also its first usage in Scripture. While the Hebrew word can also be used to refer to a show of obedience to men, its greater meaning is unmistakable in this context. So, too, it should be noted that the term's first use in Scripture is a reference to worship of the LORD. According to hermeneutical 'law of precedence' (or, first use), this is then to be understood as the primary meaning of the word as it appears throughout the rest of Scripture.

c.) He addressed them as “*My lord*” (*Adonai*) and himself in relation to them as “*your servant*” (as opposed to host). Taken apart, there may not be much significance. Taken together, however, they seem to indicate that Abraham at least sensed that there was something particularly great and royal about his visitors.

d.) Abraham, in preparing the meal, continued to hurry and run with intentional haste.

→ **Hebrews 13:2**

- Abraham seemed eager not only to serve his guests, but to hear what message they might have for him!

Q: But, why would the messengers wait until they had eaten with Abraham to deliver such a divine and important message?

→ It was not likely mere coincidence or custom of hospitality, that the Lord and His angels would wait until after they have shared a meal with Abraham before delivering their message.

1) Covenants in the ancient world were frequently arranged around fellowship meals

(Gen. 26:28-30; Ex. 24; Lev. 3; 7:11-21).

2) It is also the LORD's repeated practice to use a meal as a means of bringing people together in order to share in the peace of God!

(Judges 6:11-24; John 6:26-58; Lk. 19:5-9; Matt. 26:26-30; John 21:1-19; 1 Cor. 11:17-34; Rev. 3:30; 19:6-9).

3.) A Wonderful **Promise** (vv. 9-15)

a.) *“Where is your wife Sarah?”*

→ First words, first concern.

→ The specific uttering of her name (“Princess”) is a reminder of the Promise.

→ According to custom, Sarah was inside the tent behind a flap that separated her from the rest of the tent. Therefore, she could hear them, but they could not see her.

→ It was a rhetorical question to be sure she would also be listening to their message and her importance to it.

b.) **Promise**

→ Now, it is the LORD (singular) who speaks and re-affirms the original Promise – that Sarah would yet bear a son who would be a blessing unto all peoples!

c.) **Laughter**

→ Sarah laughed *“to herself.”* That is, she made no sound and, because she was hidden, her laughter could not be deduced by body language either. Yet, as we shall see, the LORD in His omniscience 'heard' her unvocalized laughter.

→ *“passed the age of childbearing . . . become shriveled up”* Clearly, Sarah is indicating incredulity at the idea that after decades of infertility and then having passed through menopause, anyone could suggest her becoming pregnant.

→ *“my lord is old . . . delight”* Not only that, but her husband is now an old man. It is uncertain if Sarah's reference to a lack of “delight” (“pleasure”) is to her barrenness or the current state of their intimate life. It is at least plausible that she is here making a further assertion that the physical intimacy required for reproduction is not even something that is much practiced at this point in their lives.

d.) **The Question of Faith: “Is anything impossible for the LORD?”**

→ *yippale*, literally “to be wonderful, extraordinary, surpassing.”

(Psalms 139:6)

This extraordinary knowledge is beyond me. It is lofty; I am unable to reach it.

(Isaiah 9:6)

For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on His shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

- ➔ What is beyond mind, is not beyond God. What is impossible or even unimaginable for man, is not so for God.

(Matthew 19:26) But Jesus looked at them and said, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

(Philippians 4:13) I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me.

B.) PERSONAL INTERCESSION TO A JUST LORD (vv. 16-33)

1.) The Lord Wants The Righteous To Understand His Plans (vv. 16-19)

- ➔ As the two 'men' (angels) head out toward Sodom, the LORD stays with Abraham and makes known His thoughts about His plans.

Why tell Abraham?

- ➔ As the heir to the promise that God would make him a blessing to all nations, he should be made to understand why one of those nations is now being 'removed from the equation.'
- ➔ If Abraham is to teach his descendants about righteousness and justice, he needs to understand these qualities in the Lord and His actions.

What is the relationship to the Promise?

- ➔ Clearly, fulfillment of the Promise for each nation (people/tribe) is contingent on their faithfulness to the Lord and His Word by doing what is right and just in His eyes.

2.) Even To The Wicked – The Lord Is Just (vv. 20-21)

- ➔ Without question, it was not necessary for the omniscient LORD to physically go and examine the situation in Sodom to correctly ascertain the true existence, nature and seriousness of their sin.
- ➔ He does so for the benefit of Abraham and all after Him who would be taught of the LORD, as an example that He neither judges nor sentences without full and personal knowledge and understanding of the relevant situation.
- ➔ As such, His judgments are always perfectly just and never made in haste – even against the most wicked of men!
- ➔ There is also a key word play here that graphically asserts the contrast between the LORD and the sinful people of Sodom. The “cry” (*za-aqa*) from Sodom speaks of evil, but the response from the LORD will be righteous (*se-daqa*).

3.) The Intervention Of The Righteous (vv. 22-33)

- ➔ Abraham, of all people, must have been well aware of the utter depravity, sinfulness and godlessness of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah – a people who already saved from destruction once (the battle of the kings, chap. 14).

- ➔ Yet, rather than walk back to his home content in his own salvation and blessing or even encouraged that these wicked and ungrateful people would finally get their “comeuppance,” Abraham stays and boldly intercedes on behalf of the people before the awesome presence of the LORD Himself! AMAZING!!!
- ➔ From this dialogue (intercession, negotiation) we learn **several important principles**:
 - (a) **It is not God's desire to bring destruction upon any (cp. 2 Peter 3:9).**
 - (b) **God will never destroy the righteous (innocent) along with the wicked (guilty).**
 - (c) **Even a tiny remnant of the righteous within a community may provide God's mercy for all. No ministry that is faithful to the LORD, no matter how small in number, should be seen as insignificant!**
 - (d) **Abraham's approach to intercessory prayer is bold and persistent and yet reverent, respectful, specific and ultimately deferential to the will of the LORD.**