

GENESIS

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Genesis chapter 18 as we continue our study through the Word of God. Back in Genesis chapter 17 we saw God reaffirm the covenant that He made with Abraham, that through his seed they would fill the land of Canaan. In Genesis 17:21 we are told, **“But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.”**

Thus, as we move into Genesis chapter 18 tonight Sarah is not pregnant yet, so the events that transpire here in Genesis chapter 18 could not have taken place more than 3 months after the events in Genesis chapter 17. Also, keep in mind that Abraham is 99 years old and Sarah is 89 years old and she has been barren all her life. Not only that, and this is obvious, the Scriptures tell us that they were beyond the age of child bearing. With that as our background, let’s begin reading in Genesis chapter 18, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word.

GENESIS 18

VERSES 1-5

1. Here we see a Christophany or an Old Testament appearance of Jesus Christ before His incarnation and birth in Bethlehem. Now, how do we know this is Jesus and not God the Father? As you will see, I believe the Scriptures give to us a hint of who this is and who this isn’t. Let me explain.

In John 1:18 John tells us **“No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”** In other words, no one has seen the Father but they have seen God the Son! Then what about when John was taken up into heaven and in Revelation 4:2-3 we are told, **“Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and *One* sat on the throne. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and *there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.*”**

As we have seen in our study in the book of Revelation, the One sitting on the throne is God the Father and the reason I can say that with such certainty is that in Revelation chapter 5 we see God the Son mentioned and He is taking the scroll out of the Father’s hand. Thus, didn’t John see God the Father? Yes and no! You see, as John saw God the Father seated on the throne he did not see His appearance but the light that emanated from Him!

Also, in I Timothy 6:13-16 we are told, **“I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and *before* Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep *this* commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, which He will manifest in His own time, *He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom *be* honor and everlasting power. Amen.*”** Thus, as we look at this, when we see God appear in human form in the Old Testament, since no man has seen God the Father, it must be God the Son, the second person of the Holy Trinity before His incarnation and birth in Bethlehem!

2. Along with God the Son are two angels and as Abraham sees them he bows before them but he worships the Lord. That may not seem like a big deal, but it is. You see, God alone deserves our worship and thus, this must be God who appeared before Abraham. I do realize that people worship all kinds of things, even angels, but we are not to do that. Remember when the angel was telling John what would take place in the Tribulation Period and in Revelation 19:10 we are told, **“And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, ‘See *that you do not do that!* I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’”**

You see, it is a big deal and we see this repeated twice for us so we don't miss the point. In Revelation 22:8-9 we are told, **“Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he said to me, ‘See *that you do not do that.* For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.’”** Thus, Abraham is not worshipping the two angels and Jesus but the Lord alone and that is important for us to understand. Also, keep in mind that these angels and Jesus are appearing in human form.

3. Also, did you notice when the Lord came to Abraham? It was **”in the heat of the day”** or what we might call hard times, a fiery trial, things are heating up! Remember when the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar threw Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego into the fiery furnace for not bowing down to the image. And the king was so mad that he heated up the furnace seven times more than normal, more than it was usually heated. And in Daniel 3:24-25 we are told, **“Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, ‘Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?’ They answered and said to the king, ‘True, O king.’ ‘Look!’ he answered, ‘I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.’”** That is our Lord, He is always with us, even in the heat of the day, even when things are heating up in our life. May we not forget that!

4. One last point before we move on and that is in regards to the hospitality that Abraham offered these travelers. He was willing to wash their feet, allow them to rest, and to feed them. That is the fruit that is born out of a relationship with God, hospitality. Paul, in Romans 12:13 tells us, **“distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.”** Now, on the opposite end of the spectrum are the people of Sodom who mistreated travelers who came into their city. They were only interested in satisfying their own desires and they were not hospitable to others while Abraham served his guests.

VERSES 6-8

1. Once again notice the hospitality Abraham showed to these travelers. And as Sarah finishes preparing the food and Abraham brings it to the Lord and these two angels, he stands and serves them while they eat. What a servant's heart he had. Now some may argue that he was serving the Lord, and that is true, but folks, in whatever you are doing, in whatever ministry you are serving in, you really are not serving man, you are not serving me, you are serving the Lord. And yes, others are blessed by it, but you serve the Lord. That is what Paul said in Colossians 3:23-24, "**knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.**" When you approach ministry like that you will do it heartily, you will not give up because you are serving the Lord!

VERSES 9-10

1. Why did the Lord repeat this same promise to them in such a short period of time, within three months at the most since He spoke to them back in Genesis chapter 17? I believe God did this to encourage them, to remind them, to help them to trust in Him. Paul said in Romans 10:17, "**So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**" Thus, as they hear God's Word, God's promises to them, their faith will grow as they apply and believe what God has said to them and the same is true for us!

2. Folks, we need to be reminded often because it is easy for us to forget, to become discouraged at the way things are going, from a human perspective. Thus, Peter tells us in II Peter 1:10-14, **“Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I *must* put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.”**

Peter is telling them and us that he will keep reminding them of the things of God, even though they know them, until he has no more breath in him. For the most part, that is what I am doing for you, reminding you of the promises of God to encourage you, to lift you up, to help you to walk by faith as God speaks to you by His Spirit through His Word!

3. Also note that Sarah is not eating with them but is in the tent and she can hear the conversation that is taking place. You see, the Lord did not come just for Abraham, but also for Sarah so she too would hear the promise of having a son and see her faith grow. We see this information given to her by the Lord in verse 10, where we are told, **“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.)”**

Remember what the Lord told Abraham back in Genesis 17:21, “**But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.**”

God set a time for Sarah to conceive and then bring forth a son and the time frame now is less than a year away until Isaac is born! Now that sounds like great news, the promise God made is coming to pass, but how did Sarah respond to this news? Let’s look at the next few verses and see.

VERSES 11-12

1. In Sarah’s mind she is thinking, “How in the world is this going to happen? We both are very old and I am not able to have children, I have gone through menopause!” Isn’t it interesting that something she wanted all her life and now God said it is about to happen and she can’t believe it and begins to laugh in her heart. She can’t believe it because in her mind it is beyond human ability and yet, with God all things are possible! Now, according to Hebrews 11:11, that great hall of faith chapter, we are told, “**By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.**” Yes, at this point she doesn’t believe but there is a point where she trusts in the promises of God, she believed that God is faithful and what He has promised to her He is more than able to bring to pass.

2. Now it is easy to come down upon the people of the Bible and their lack of faith, but the reality is, God is showing us where we are at, not to condemn us but to cause us to trust in Him, to stretch our faith. Has God spoken to you about something and now, as it is about to come to pass are you doubting what God has said? Are you laughing in your heart, “How can God do this? I can’t do that!” If you are, God wants you to trust in Him and turn that laughter of unbelief into laughter of joy because you believe that what God has promised He is more than able to bring to pass!

VERSES 13-15

1. I thought Sarah laughed in her heart, not out loud, so how did God hear her laugh? Simply, and you know the answer, He is God and as Paul tells us in Hebrews 4:13, “**And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we *must give* account.**” Nothing is hidden from God, He not only knows our actions but also the thoughts and intents of our hearts. He knows us better than we know ourselves and thus, He is working in us, knowing what we need to help us to grow!

Also, in Psalm 33:13-15 we are told, “**The LORD looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men. From the place of His dwelling He looks On all the inhabitants of the earth; He fashions their hearts individually; He considers all their works.**” There is nothing hidden from the Lord! Now, we not only need to understand that but apply it to our lives. You see, in knowing that truth, that God knows all, it should cause us to live differently!

2. Now, with the action of both Abraham and Sarah, their laughter of unbelief even though God has made this promise to them several times, you might think God would say, “That is it! You rejected My promises to you, you laugh at what I have said, I will find someone else who will appreciate My promises. Adios!”

But the Lord does not say that. He exposes Sarah’s sin of unbelief even though she tries to deny it. He does not take away the promises He made to them. The Lord is so good, He is so kind to us, as Paul tells us in II Timothy 2:13, **“If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.”** And in The Amplified Bible this verse is stated like this, **“If we are faithless [do not believe and are untrue to Him], He remains true (faithful to His Word and His righteous character), for He cannot deny Himself.”** God will deal with our sin of unbelief to bring us to that place where we believe. But remember that His promises to us will not fail even though we might!

3. And I love verse 14 where the Lord says, **“Is anything too hard for the Lord?”** Of course it is a rhetorical question, there is nothing too hard for the Lord as long as it lines up with His holiness, His righteousness. And here God is saying that at the set time Sarah will have a son and her laughter of unbelief will be turned to laughter that is filled with joy as Isaac is born!

4. Also, the Hebrew word for “**hard**” is PALA, (paw-law’) and we see a form of this word in Isaiah 9:6 where we are told, “**For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**”

Interestingly enough, it is the word “**Wonderful**” that is related to PALA, it is the Hebrew word, PELE, (peh’-leh’). In other words, Genesis 18:14 can read, “Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?” I think both fit perfectly because our God is in the business of taking the impossible and making it very possible. You might say that the hard is made easy and the common is made wonderful! That is our God!

VERSES 16-19

1. What Abraham did here, escorting his guests as they were leaving, we still do today. We escort our guests to the door as they are leaving.

2. Now here in verse 17 it sounds like God is unsure of Himself, of what He is going to do, “**Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing?**” Folks, God knows exactly what He will do and this sentence is in the form of a question with an affirmative response. It is a rhetorical question; of course God is going to tell Abraham what He is going to do! We see this in Matthew 7:16 where Jesus says, “**You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?**” Obviously we do not gather grapes from thornbushes nor do we get figs from thistles, it is a rhetorical question, just as we see here in Genesis!

In the Septuagint translation or the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, this is how these Jewish scholars translated this verse, “I shall not conceal from Abraham My son.” It is as Amos 3:7 tells us, **“Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.”**

3. Now, as God spoke to Abraham, His friend, He speaks to us today for Jesus tells us in John 15:14-15, **“You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.”** And I guess the point for us is not, “Is God speaking to us?” but it truly is, “Are we listening to God who is speaking to us?” May our ears be open and our hearts sensitive to His voice!

4. God states once again that Abraham will become a great nation and that the nations of the world will be blessed through him. How is that going to happen? Yes, they have given to us the Word of God but even more important than that, through the seed of Abraham the Messiah, the Savior of the world, Jesus would and has come! It is as Paul tells us in Galatians 3:16, **“Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ.”**

And the last point is that through what God is going to do it will be an object lesson for Abraham and his descendents to walk in the ways of God because outside the Lord there is only death and destruction!

VERSES 20-21

1. God states that He has heard that the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was great, overflowing and He is going to go down there to see if this is really true! Now wait a minute, I thought that God was omniscient, that He knows all things? If that were true, why did He have to go down to Sodom and Gomorrah to check it out? First of all God is omniscient, He knows all things before they even happen. Secondly, He is going down there to show them that His judgment is fair, He checked it out and their sin is that bad and thus, His judgment is fair, it is righteous. He did not do this for Himself, but to show the people!

It is as Moses said in Deuteronomy 32:3-4, **“For I proclaim the name of the LORD: Ascribe greatness to our God. *He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He.*”**

And The Amplified Bible puts these verses like this, **“For I will proclaim the name [and presence] of the Lord. Concede *and* ascribe greatness to our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are law *and* justice. A God of faithfulness without breach *or* deviation, just and right is He.”**

VERSES 22-26

1. So these two angels head towards Sodom but the Lord stayed back with Abraham.

And when they are alone Abraham asks the Lord a very important question: Would God destroy the righteous with the wicked? Now before we get to that I want you to notice that Abraham “**came near**” the Lord. The Hebrew word is NAGASH, (naw-gash’) and it can mean an intimate relationship with a woman. Folks, that is what the Lord desires of us, that intimate relationship with Him and as we draw close to Him He will draw close to us! (James 4:8).

2. We see here Abraham interceding for the people of Sodom and Abraham knows the Lord, that He is righteous, that He would never slay the righteous with the wicked! What is interesting to me is that he even cared for these people of Sodom and Gomorrah in the first place. Abraham could have just prayed, “Lord, you know my nephew Lot is there in Sodom. Lord, spare Lot and his family, let them get out of the city before you toast them, before you destroy those cities!” But Abraham didn’t pray like that, he interceded for the people of those cities, which shows me that He had the love of God flowing from his life.

Remember what Peter said of the Lord in II Peter 3:9, “**The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**” We see that same love here with Abraham as he intercedes for the people, that God would not destroy them.

3. Abraham asked the Lord if there were fifty righteous people living in Sodom, would He spare the city. It seems reasonable, fifty out of a whole city! And God does agree, that He will not destroy the city if there are fifty righteous people living there. Does that mean that God has now changed His mind? Absolutely not, what we do see is that Abraham is praying in the will of God and God agreed! But it won't end here; Abraham is not done bartering with the Lord! And even today, if you go to the Middle East you will see that they will barter with you over merchandise that you want to purchase. I am terrible at that, but my pastor, Pastor Phil is really good, so we hung around him!

VERSES 27-32

1. I think the conclusion you come to after all of this, besides Abraham having a lot of CHUTZPA, is that God will not destroy the righteous with the wicked! Abraham barterers for 50 righteous people living in Sodom, then 45, then 40, then 30, and then 20 and finally he stops at 10. And the Lord says that if there is 10 righteous people living in Sodom He would not destroy the city. Seems like it is a done deal, there must be 10 in Sodom!

2. Why did God tell Abraham that He was going to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in the first place? Yes, these cities were filled with sin, with wickedness, but there is more to it than that. I think we have just seen why the Lord did this. He wanted to draw Abraham into the position of an intercessor for the people of these cities and that is born out of a heart that is filled with love for people, and yes, even the wicked! That is a hard concept for many Christians, to love those who are wicked, to care for the ungodly, to pray for those who come against us, but that is exactly what God wants us to do, just as Abraham did!

You see, isn't that what our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ has done for us? Of course it is, He died for the wicked, He died for the ungodly, He died for those who came against Him and He has done this all because He loves us! And now God wants us to love people like that, the unlovable you might say. Paul tells us in Romans 8:29, **“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”** In other words, the Lord is working in our lives to make us more like Jesus, that His actions would flow from our lives. That His nature would be manifested in our lives. That the fruit of the Spirit would flow from our lives! That we would be like Jesus!

We also read in Hebrews 7:25 of Jesus, **“Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”** Jesus came to make intercession and thus, the Lord wants us to intercede for our families, our friends, our cities, our nation, this world. To truly have a passion for the lost and not ask God to toast them, to destroy these wicked people, but to save them as He has done for us! That is the heart of God and that is what should flow from our lives! You see, God’s judgment is coming and thus, may God open their eyes, soften their hearts that they might be saved!

William Evens tells us regarding the heart of a Christian:

Paul had a passionate love for souls. He says: "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed (or separated) from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:2,3). The Apostle Paul's heart broke loose from the prolonged logical argument and poured itself out in one vehement exclamation of love, "I could wish myself accursed for my brethren's sake,"--"accursed," given over to hopeless, eternal death; accursed "from Christ," the joy, the joy of his soul; "accursed," he the loyal one, from his all in all, if only the Israel of his love could be saved!

A man may be a successful physician without having love for his patients; he may be a successful lawyer without having love for his clients; he may be a successful merchant without having love for his patrons, but no man can be a successful co-worker with God without having love for souls, and a longing desire to see them saved.

When John Knox, in the enclosure behind his house, pierced the stillness of the night with the thrice-repeated, intense appeal, "Give me Scotland, or I die!" that eager, yearning, well-nigh broken heart got its Scotland. When Brainerd went to sleep thinking of souls and dreaming dreams of them, and, waking, still thought and prayed for them, souls became his. "Tell me," says Maclaren, "the depth of a Christian man's compassion, and I will tell you the measure of his usefulness. The wealth of Egypt's harvest is proportioned to the depth of the Nile's overflow." Christ, the model Christian worker, is portrayed as "moved with compassion," as though a great surging tide flowed over his heart when he saw the multitudes standing before him in their want.

The power of these great religious leaders of all time, lay deeper than their mighty intellects — it lay in their love for souls.

Souls, souls, souls! I yearn for souls. This is the cry of the Saviour — and to save souls He died upon the cross, and remains until eternity their intercessor.

Souls, souls, souls! This is the cry of Satan — and to obtain them he scatters gold to tempt them, multiplies their wants and pleasures, and gives them praise that only infatuates.

Souls, souls, souls! This must be our one cry and passion, Christian worker; and for the sake of one soul we must be willing to spend and be spent.

- William Evens, *The Personal Worker Himself — His Qualifications*

3. Now we have seen how Abraham prayed, compare that with how Lot prayed in Genesis 19:18-21, **“Then Lot said to them, ‘Please, no, my lords! Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die. See now, this city *is* near *enough* to flee to, and it *is* a little one; please let me escape there (*is* it not a little?) and my soul shall live.’ And he said to him, ‘See, I have favored you concerning this thing also, in that I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken.”**

Did you notice the focus? It was upon himself. He thought he was good, Abraham knew that he wasn't, saying that he was like dust and ashes in Genesis 18:27. Lot sought to save himself but he did not lift up any prayers for the many people living in those cities. Yes, Lot was saved but his walk was not good. On the opposite end of the spectrum there is Abraham and what flowed from his life was intercessory prayer because he drew near to God and God drew near to him!

VERSE 33

1. Did you ever wonder why Abraham stopped at 10 righteous people? I believe, in his mind, there had to be at least 10 righteous people living in Sodom. You see, there was Lot and his wife, his two unmarried daughters, his two sons, his two married daughters and his two son-in-laws, which equals 10! So there were at least 10 in Lot's family, maybe more, but at least 10! But they were not all righteous before the Lord, in fact, only four left the city and out of that, only three made it to safety! And God saved those three because He does not destroy the righteous with the wicked and we will look at that more closely next time.

2. As I close this evening, let me leave you with these words to think about from Ezekiel chapter 18, starting in verse 20, where we are told, **“The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. ‘But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live. Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?’ says the Lord GOD, ‘and not that he should turn from his ways and live?’ . . .**

. . . 'Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways,' says the Lord GOD. 'Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,' says the Lord GOD. 'Therefore turn and live!'" Ezekiel 18:20-23, 30-32. You see, God does not destroy the righteous with the wicked and He gets no pleasure in destroying the wicked, thus, TURN AND LIVE!