

Genesis 18.1-15

"A Visit from God"

Abraham known as PATRIARCH – PROPHET – FATHER OF FAITHFUL

Most unique – perhaps most appreciated title > FRIEND OF GOD

“Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and *he was called a friend of God.*
James 2.23

Unique Relationship > Clearest Revelation > Genesis 18 > Nothing like it yet...

Adam: “the LORD God...was walking in the garden in the cool of the day”
Genesis 3.8

“Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.”
Genesis 5.24

Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.
Genesis 6.8

Only God’s Friend ABE received 3 Humanly IMPOSSIBLE PROMISES –

1. Elderly, Childless couple would have a Son
2. Descendents would occupy nation already inhabit by numerous hostile tribes
3. All people on earth would be blessed by Abraham’s descendents

25 years MOSTLY SILENCE FROM HEAVEN > Rare Messages from God

Friend of God > WALK BY FAITH > Holding on to Naked Promises of God

WHAT does it MEAN TO HAVE GOD AS OUR FRIEND? - BE HIS FRIEND?

100 YEAR OLD MAN TAKING AN AFTERNOON SIESTA

lying in doorway of tent / trying to catch any cool breeze / like riding bus in BJ

AWAKENS TO FIND 3 VISITORS - UNKNOWN AND UNINVITED

Snapshot of HOSPITALITY in Ancient Near East 4000 yrs. ago

1. Heavenly Delegation

a. People UNUSUAL Sight OUT IN MIDDLE OF NOONDAY SUN
 APPEARED Right THERE / NO DOGS BARKED / NO GUARDS ALERTED
 INTERESTING AND AMBIGUOUS PRESENTATION OF THESE PEOPLE

v. 1 The LORD appeared to Abraham

v. 2 Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby.

v. 10 The LORD said, "I will surely return to you..."

v. 16 When the men got up to leave

v. 22 The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the LORD.

PERHAPS AN OLD TESTAMENT FORESHADOWING OF THE TRINITY

MORE LIKELY Preincarnate Appearance LORD JESUS and 2 ANGELS

"Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it." Hebrews 13.2

b. Purpose WHAT HAD THIS HEAVENLY DELEGATION COME TO DO?

AMAZING - GOD CAME OVER TO HIS FRIEND'S PLACE FOR DINNER

OTHER TIMES IN OT PEOPLE OFFERED SOMETHING TO GOD

"Gideon ...prepared a young goat, and...he made bread without yeast. Putting the meat in a basket and its broth in a pot, he brought them out and offered them to (the angel of the Lord)...With the tip of the staff that was in his hand, the angel of the LORD touched the meat and the unleavened bread. Fire flared from the rock, consuming the meat and the bread. And the angel of the LORD disappeared." Judges 6.19-21

"Manoah (Samson's Father) took a young goat, together with the grain offering, and sacrificed it on a rock to the LORD. And the LORD did an amazing thing while Manoah and his wife watched: As the flame blazed up from the altar toward heaven, the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame. Seeing this, Manoah and his wife fell with their faces to the ground." Judges 13.19-20

THOSE WERE SACRIFICED MEALS / THIS WAS A SATISFYING MEAL
 GOD and 2 Angels & Abraham Warm BREAD Right Out of Sarah's Oven

THERE WAS NO NEED FOR THE CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE TO EAT
 LORD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH DOES NOT GET HUNGRY
 DID NOT NEED IT - COULD HAVE REFUSED ABE'S KINDNESS
 BUT TO REFUSE THE FOOD IS TO REJECT A FRIEND

“For this is what the high and lofty One says-- he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit”
 Isaiah 57.15

2000 YEARS LATER 2 DESPONDENT DISCIPLES NEAR EMMAUS
 “...urged (Jesus) strongly, ‘Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.’ So he went in to stay with them”
 Luke 24.29

2. Humble Preparation

a. Immediately VISITORS ARE MET WITH A WARM WELCOME

v. 3-5 He said, "If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way--now that you have come to your servant." "Very well," they answered, "do as you say."

v. 7 he ran IN ANCIENT WORLD IMPORTANT PEOPLE DO NOT DO RUN

SAME IS TRUE IN AFRICA TODAY - Korean miss'y nurse "SLOW DOWN"

JESUS HEARERS were SHOCKED by Father of Prodigal Son:

“his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son”
 Luke 15.20

GOD IS CALLING US TO THAT SPEEDY LOVING OBEDIENCE

b. Generously ABE DOES NOT STOP TO CALCULATE - OFFERS BEST

“Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality” Romans 12.13

WATER - BREAD - MEAT - choice and tender / Difficult to Obtain

SELFLESS HOSPITALITY OF UGANDANS- gave of their best & themselves

1980's POOR COUNTRY - PEOPLE GAVE FROM THEIR SUBSTANCE

Son's AFRICAN Friends bring Birthday GIFT of 1 EGG – Great Cost / Love

Strange REALITY – Those who HAVE THE LEAST, GIVE THE MOST!

Romans 12 > CALL TO SERVICE

“if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously” Romans 12.8

BLESSING PROMISED BY MOSES TO ISRAELITES

“Give generously to (your needy brother) and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.” Deuteronomy 15.10,11

v. 8 He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

CURDS AND MILK REMINDS ME OF MANY SUNDAYS IN UGANDA

TRAVELED TO PREACH IN CHURCHES IN VILLAGES

CUSTOM - ENTERTAIN PREACHER BEFORE THE SERVICE

SERVED DRINK to RENEW STRENGTH / Clumpy, Runny, Sour YOGURT

CURED in TREE GOURDS - STRENGTH to PREACH!!...or Something

c. Cooperatively ABE PART OF TEAM WORKING & GIVING TOGETHER

v. 6,7 Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. "Quick," he said, "get three seahs of fine flour and knead it and bake some bread." Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it.

IMAGINE A MAN PHONING HIS WIFE : "Honey, I'm on my way home for work. Also, I'm bringing some guests for dinner; my supervisor, the chairman of the board, and the president of the company...see you in a few minutes"

SARAH KNEW HOW TO WHIP TOGETHER A BANQUET

though we are not told what - if any – Private comments she gave to Abe

WITHIN THE FAMILY - Hospitality is Done as Whole Family Helps

Within CHURCH Family – All Serve as WELCOMING & RECEIVING church

“All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.” Acts 4.32

d. Humbly - TRUE GREATNESS SHOWN IN HIS HUMILITY

v. 2 bowed down low / JAPANESE? - LOWER BOW / GREATER RESPECT?

MINIMIZED WHAT WAS REALLY A LARGE AMOUNT

v. 4 a little water

v. 5 something to eat

King David realized: "Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand." 1 Chronicles 29.14

IF THIS IS THE WAY ABRAHAM SERVED HIS VISITORS

WHAT LESSON DO WE LEARN IN THE WAY WE SERVE GOD?

FITTING WORDS OF LORD JESUS "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." Matthew 25.40

"How often do we come into our meetings with idle chatter and light gossip and careless indifference...But the Lord Himself is present in the midst of His gathered saints. How important that we put ourselves in an attitude of humble, eager, excited expectancy...Abraham's haste and humility teach us the much neglected lesson of reverence in the presence of God" John Phillips

3. Holy Conversation

AFTER THE MEAL WAS OVER GOD TALKS TO HIS HOST ABRAHAM

v. 9, 10 "Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him. "There, in the tent," he said. Then the LORD said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son." Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him.

MANY PEOPLES of WORLD - MEN & WOMEN EAT SEPARATELY
 SARAH DID NOT WANT TO MISS ANYTHING - EAVES DROPPING
 EAVES Dropping > OCCUPATIONAL HAZARD might not like what U HEAR

v. 11-13 Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?" Then the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?'"

a. Laughter LAUGHTER IS AN UNCONTROLLABLE REFLEX

ABRAHAM HAD LAUGHED AT GOD'S BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT

17.17 Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?"

NOT ALL LAUGHTER IS GOOD LAUGHTER - SOME IS BAD

v. 12 Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?"

Husband Laughed JOYFUL ASTONISHMENT – Sarah > “Yeah, Right, Sure?”

SHE THOUGHT IT WAS ONLY TO HERSELF - VISITORS HEARD
 WORLD WITHOUT WALLS - ONLY SHEETS & SKINS DIVIDING THEM

PROBLEM: SARAH'S LAUGHTER – Act of UNBELIEF - GOD SEES Heart

“Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

1 Samuel 16.7

GOD HAD ENJOYED FELLOWSHIP AND MEAL WITH HIS FRIEND ABE

NOW GOD SITS UP with CONCERN - Cannot IGNORE THIS LAUGHTER

"Unbelief is not a misfortune to be pitied; it is a sin to be deplored. Its sinfulness lies in the fact that it contradicts the word of the one true God and thus attributes falsehood to Him"

John Stott

b. Lying UNBELIEF LEADS TO OTHER SINS / SHE LIED TO GOD

SHE MIGHT HAVE MADE EXCUSES - WOULD HAVE BEEN WRONG

DID WHAT WAS WORSE THAN MAKING A FALSE EXCUSE - DENIAL

v. 15 Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, "I did not laugh."

“If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.”

1 John 1.10

GREAT DANGER OF COVERING OUR SINS - NO WAY OF SALVATION

“your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear”

Isaiah 59.2

WHY GOD DOES NOT LET HER GET AWAY - v. 15 "Yes, you did laugh."

SEEMS HARSH? > TOUGH LOVE - LEADS TO REPENTANCE

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”

1 John 1.9

COVER your SIN – No Forgiveness > CONFESSION leads to Forgiveness

c. Lord HE WHO GAVE HER LIFE WILL GIVE HER NEW LIFE - SON

WHAT MAKES LIE ESPECIALLY SEVERE IS THAT IT IS IN GOD'S FACE

v. 10 "Then the LORD said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son."

ALL LIES ARE IN GOD'S FACE - HE IS GOD OF TRUTH - KNOWS ALL

v. 14 "Is anything too hard for the LORD?"

QUESTION EACH OF US MUST ASK PERSONALLY - in every area of lives

Can YOU IMAGINE ANY CIRCUMSTANCE GOD Cannot CONTROL?

DO YOU HAVE A PROBLEM TOO DIFFICULT FOR GOD TO SOLVE?

Sunday School teacher asked class: "Is there anything God could not do?"

BOY "He couldn't make my brother's mouth any bigger w/out moving his ears"

BOY > TRUTH - GOD HAS SET LIMITS ON HIS OWN ABILITY

God does not make a 2-sided Triangle OR a Square Circle

GOD'S POWER IS LIMITED BY HIS WILL AND CHARACTER

God cannot lie because He will not / He will be Faithful and True

"He is powerful enough to do all that He wills to do and adequate enough to accomplish all that He intends to accomplish" Stuart Briscoe

PROBLEM IN THE AREA OF SALVATION -

SOME SIN Cannot STOP COMMITTING - SOMETHING CONTROLS YOU PERHAPS MEMORY OF PAST - CANNOT FORGET OR FORGIVE

"For nothing is impossible with God." Luke 1.37

ABRAHAM NOT ALWAYS FAITHFUL – SAVED by GRACE thru FAITH

"Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool." Isaiah 1.18

PROBLEM IN AREA OF YOUR FAITH -

BAD HABITS – Failure to DEVELOP RIGHT HABITS - BESETTING SINS HEAR THESE TESTIMONIES

"I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted." Job 42.2

"Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you." Jeremiah 32.17

PROBLEM IN YOUR FAMILY -

Some do not KNOW JESUS, Live in OPEN CONTEMPT of His HOLY WORD
SUCH PAIN TOUCHES DEEPLY INTO OUR HEARTS

HEAR THIS TESTIMONY OF APOSTLE PAUL

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine,
according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church
and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Ephesians 3.20-21

"It may seem impossible to you that God will keep His word, in the conversion
of a friend for whom you have long prayed - Hard to vindicate your character
from the accusations with which it is slandered - Hard to keep your evil nature in
the place of death; and to cast your evil imaginings, bringing every thought into
the captivity to the obedience of Christ - Hard to make you sweet and gentle,
loving and forgiving - Hard to produce from you the fruits of a loving and holy
nature. It may be hard, but it is not too hard for the Lord." F.B. Meyer

d. Love GREAT LOVE OF GOD FOR SARAH AND ABRAHAM

God > DIGNITY to WOMEN > Speaks Directly to Sarah > Covenant Member

IN FACE OF HER UNBELIEVING LAUGHTER GOD REPEATS PROMISE
v. 14 "I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a
son."

HUMAN NATURE WOULD HAVE SAID "O.K. if you're going to laugh in my
face and refuse to believe my word - you won't have this kid!!"

THANK GOD THAT HE DOES NOT HAVE A HUMAN NATURE!!

"If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you
there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared." Psalm 130.3-4

GOD GIVES SARAH PRAISE EVEN AT HER POINT OF REBELLION

this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by
submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord.

1 Peter 3.5,6

ONLY TIME IN ALL OF SCRIPTURE SHE CALLS ABE LORD -

v. 12 Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?"

GOD'S LOVE COVERS OVER A MULTITUDE OF SINS

"in the midst of great unbelief, God picks out the one little thread of faithfulness to divine principle and writes it down forever" Donald Barnhouse

GOD FULFILLS HIS PROMISE & GRANTS SARAH A HOLY LAUGHTER

Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." And she added, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

Genesis 21.6-7

A MAN AND WOMAN WHO WERE FRIENDS OF GOD - how about you?

UNEXPECTED Knock on Your Door – Look out Peep-Hole

See God coming for Surprise Visit – Would you LET HIM IN?

GOD WHO APPEARED MYSTERIOUSLY > Full Revelation in Jesus Christ

"For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" Colossians 2.9

FULL EXTENT OF HIS FRIENDSHIP

"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

John 15.13

GAVE HIS LIFE > Payment of our Sin's Penalty > Reconcile us to God

HE IS ASKING FOR YOUR FRIENDSHIP TOO –

"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." Revelation 3.20

Genesis 18:1 And the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. 2 He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth 3 and said, "O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant. 4 Let a little water

be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, 5 while I bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.” So they said, “Do as you have said.” 6 And Abraham went quickly into the tent to Sarah and said, “Quick! Three seahs of fine flour! Knead it, and make cakes.” 7 And Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to a young man, who prepared it quickly. 8 Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them. And he stood by them under the tree while they ate. 9 They said to him, “Where is Sarah your wife?” And he said, “She is in the tent.” 10 The LORD said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. 11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. 12 So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?” 13 The LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’ 14 Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son.” 15 But Sarah denied it, saying, “I did not laugh,” for she was afraid. He said, “No, but you did laugh.”

1. This text records both menu details and an appearance of God himself. Are you conscious of God’s presence in your ‘ordinary’ life?
2. How well do you cope with ‘hospitality surprises’? Do you ‘welcome strangers’?
3. Why did God get in Sarah’s face about a little chuckle?
4. What has been ‘too hard for God’ in your life? Are you gonna change that?