

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

“The Visitation”

Genesis 18:1-33

2002

Introduction

Sometimes when I’m coming home late at night from meetings or a Bible study, I will turn on the radio and listen to Art Bell.

People seem to be fascinated with UFOs, crop circles, Bigfoot sightings, and alien visitations. In fact, our own Garden Island News recently reported alleged UFO sightings right here on Kauai. Several different people reported seeing a “huge orange fireball the size of house falling in the sky.” I’ve seen that hundreds of times myself, but I always just called it a sunset!

Last week I was asked if I believe in alien visitations. My answer was, “Absolutely!” In fact, the Bible records scores of them for us – one of which is found in the text of Gen 18 that we are studying today!

I The Three Visitors

A. The Lord **appeared** to Abraham [Verse 1-3]

The Lord = Jehovah = “The self-Existent or Eternal God”

He is referred to as Jehovah 7 times in this chapter (1, 13, 17, 20, 22, 26, 33) This is the 4th Christophany (12:7; 16:7; 17:1) or preincarnate appearance of God the Son in physical form.

He appears as a man, accompanied by two angels in human disguise - 19:1

Apparently, this visitation occurred shortly after the close of Genesis 17 since Sarah had not yet conceived.

1. He looked up and saw them standing nearby
2. He hurried to meet them and bowed low to the ground

The salutation, "my lord" (adonai) is simply the common language of courtesy and seems to indicate that Abraham may not have immediately recognized the true identity of his visitors.

3. He requested that they not **pass** him by

Application: Divine appointments

Heb 13:1-2 “Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.”

Eph 2:10 “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

B. Abraham served the three visitors [Verse 4-8]

1. He **washed** their feet with water

Washing feet was a dirty job reserved for the lowest of servants. Certainly not the kind of work that a man of Abraham's stature should be doing.

John 13:14 "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."

Mark 10:43-45 "... whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

2. He prepared a lavish meal for them

For all Abraham knows, these three men are common nomads of the desert. But he treats them like royalty.

James 2:1-9: Warning against favoritism

3. He refreshed them for their journey

Philem 1:7 "Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints."

Application: This is one of the marks of true Christianity.

II The Lord Fellowships With Abraham

A. The Lord reaffirmed His promise [Verse 9-10a]

We need to hear God's promises over and over again in order to strengthen and develop our faith.

Romans 10:17 "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

1. Your wife will have a son by this time next year

This is a reaffirmation of God's promise stated in Gen 15:4 and 17:15.

B. The reality check [Verse 10b-12]

Sarah was listening at the entrance of the tent

1. Sarah and Abraham were past the age of childbearing

Humanly speaking, a child was out of the question.

2. Sarah laughed to herself as she thought:

a. "I am worn out and Abraham is old"

b. "Will I now have this pleasure?"

Worn out in the Hebrew literally means, "the manner of women had ceased to be with Sarah." She had stopped menstruating and had long ago gone through menopause.

This is the same dilemma that Zechariah and Elizabeth faced when the angel promised them John the Baptist in their old age (Lk 1:18-37).

C. The Lord questions Abraham regarding Sarah's **unbelief** [Verse 13-14]

1. "Why did Sarah laugh?"
2. Why did she **doubt** my promise?

I find it interesting that God confronts Abraham for Sarah's lack of faith.

Why? Abraham was the head of the home and was responsible for:

- The spiritual instruction in the home
Sarah's response of disbelief had mirrored Abraham's (Gen 17:17).
Luke 6:40 "... everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher."
- Modeling a life of faith to his wife

Application: Men, what are you modeling for your family?

When you're under pressure? Tired? In crisis? Discouraged?

1 Cor 11:1 "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."

3. "Is there **anything** too hard for the Lord?"

Jer 32:17 "Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you."

Mark 10:27 "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."

Application:

What problems are you facing in life?

Addictions? God can deliver you!

Discouragement over an unbelieving spouse? God is faithful!

A wayward child? Nothing is too hard for Him!

Despair over debt or marital problems? Nothing is impossible with God!

- a. He reaffirmed his promise of a son

If I had been God at this point, I might have said, "OK, that's it! Twice I've promised you a son and twice you've laughed in my face! You're finished! Back of the line!"

Instead, God responds by gently dealing with her unbelief.

2 Tim 2:13 "... if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself."

D. The response of Sarah [Verse 15]

1. She was afraid and so she **lied**

Illustration: Peter denying Jesus Christ three times - John 18:25-27

III The Imminent Destruction Of Sodom

A. The Lord **consulted** with the angels [Verse 16-19]

1. Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?
 - a. He will become a great and powerful nation
 - b. All the nations will be blessed through him

Ps 25:14 “The LORD confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them.”

James 2:22-24 “Abraham ... was called God's friend.”

John 15:15 “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”

2. I have chosen him so that he will **direct** his family:

a. To **keep** the way of the Lord

Eph 6:4 “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”

Deut 6:6-9 “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. **Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.** Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”

b. To do what is **right** and just

Mic 6:8 “He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

1. That the Lord might bring about His promise

B. The Lord informed Abraham of their mission **[Verse 20-21]**

1. The problem: The **outcry** against Sodom and Gomorrah

a. The outcry against these cities was great

I imagine that there must be a similar cry going up from America today with its pornography, its abortions, its immorality, and its growing rejection of God's Son, Jesus Christ.

Heb 4:13 “Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”

b. The sin of these cities was grievous

Gen 13:12-13 “Now the men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD.”

2. The plan: To personally investigate the problem

a. The Lord would go down and see for himself

He is not ‘going down’ to learn the facts. God already knows everything. He is omniscient! Rather, He is going down to personally deal with the situation in obedience to God the Father.

John 6:38-40 “For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

3. The eventual solution: Swift and total **judgment**

IV The Intercession Of Abraham

A. Abraham accurately **predicts** the Lord's decision

Abraham knows the Lord's character. He also is familiar with the unbridled wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah. He knows that the cities are doomed.

Gal 6:7-8 “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction.”

B. Abraham appeals to the Lord's **character** [Verse 22-25]

1. “Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?”

a. “Far be it from you to do such a thing!”

Abraham was appealing to God's pattern found in Mal 3:18 of making a “distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.”

Application:

This is the same distinction the Lord will make when He raptures the church prior to the Great Tribulation

1 Thess 5:9 “For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

2. “Will not the Judge of the earth do right?”

Job 8:3 “Does God pervert justice? Does the Almighty pervert what is right?”

Job 34:10-12 “Far be it from God to do evil, from the Almighty to do wrong. He repays a man for what he has done; he brings upon him what his conduct deserves. It is unthinkable that God would do wrong, that the Almighty would pervert justice.”

C. Abraham appeals to the Lord's **mercy** [Verse 26-32a]

I find it amazing that Abraham even cared about Lot or the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. He could have easily said, “Don't say I didn't warn you!”

Instead, Abraham interceded for them! He had a heart for the lost!

Luke 19:10 “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”

Illustration: Paul also had a heart for the lost

2 Corinthians 5:14 “For Christ's love compels us...”

Romans 9:3 "... I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race."

George Whitefield (1714-1770), the great American Revivalist said, "I am a broken-hearted man; not for myself, but on account of others. God has given me such a sight of the value of precious souls that I cannot live if souls are not saved. Oh, give me souls, or else I die!"

Application:

I find that when I spend time with people, my love for them grows. It's easy to remain emotionally aloof and callous when there is no relational connection. But once I enter another person's personal world, my heart begins to soften and my love grows. Abraham had already rescued these people once. He knew them. He cared about them. And as a result, he boldly interceded for them!

1. What if there are 50 righteous people in the city?

God has already confirmed Abraham's assessment of His character. God will not destroy the righteous with the wicked. The question now is, "How many righteous are required in order for God to spare the city?"

2. What if there are 45, 40, 30, 20, 10 in the city?

At this point, I'm thinking the Lord is going to get irritated with Abraham's persistent haggling. But I believe God was actually quite pleased with what He heard. Abraham was not asking anything for himself, he was standing in the gap between heaven and hell, interceding for the eternal destiny of others. This was a man after God's own heart!

1 Tim 2:1-4 "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone ... This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

Why did Abraham stop at ten?

Many believe that there were ten members in Lot's immediate family.

Lot and his wife, his two unmarried daughters, his married daughters and sons-in-law, and perhaps sons also (cf. Genesis 19:12).

But in the end, only Lot and his two daughters escaped!

This is a tragic indictment against Lot for his lack of spiritual leadership!

D. The Lord's response to Abraham's appeals: [Verse 32b-33]

1. "For the sake of 10 I will not **destroy** it."

Jer 5:1 “Go up and down the streets of Jerusalem, look around and consider, search through her squares. If you can find but one person who deals honestly and seeks the truth, I will forgive this city.”

Ezek 33:11 “I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die?”

Conclusion

People will continue to speculate about UFOs, crop circles, Bigfoot sightings, and alien visitations. They are understandably fascinated with the possibility of having encounters with intelligent life forms outside our solar system.

The truth is, we have been visited. John chapter 1 tells us that, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

John 1:10-13 “He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”

1 Thess 4:16-18 “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”

2 Peter 3:9-13 “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.”

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