

Abraham 7 - An Interview with God

We have watched Abraham go through his calling from God, separating from his past and his past relationships, received the promise of a son. Some of the events in the life of Abraham are defining moments, such as the times God established and affirmed His covenant with him. Other times are more personal, like his failure to trust God when he went down into Egypt, and we get to see Abraham's "faith life." Genesis 18 gives us an insight on Abraham's relationship with God when He was on His way to deal with Sodom and Gomorrah. He was going there to visit judgment on those cities, but first God dropped in on Abraham and Sarah for a visit. If God called and said, "I'm in the neighborhood and thought I would stop in have a cup of coffee," what would *your* reaction be?

1. An interview with God

Gen 18:1-5 And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day;

2And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw *them*, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground,

3And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant:

4Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree:

5And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said.

There are three who appear here as men. We know that this is only in appearance because two are identified as angels in the next chapter even the men of Sodom and Gomorrah perceive them

as men. The third is the LORD. The word *LORD* is in all capital letters which indicates that the name *Jehovah* is being used here. This could be a *Theophany* (God in a form that appears to be human) or a *Christophany* (the pre-incarnate Jesus in a form that appears to be a man). Because He is traveling with others whose angelic form is as that of a man, I believe this is Jesus appearing to Abraham. If so, He identifies Himself as the I AM.

Abraham's reaction is very telling. He *is not* surprised. He doesn't react like Manoah, the father of Samson, did when he thought he would die because he had seen the angel of God. He didn't have to be told to fear not like the shepherds were when they saw the heavenly host at the birth of Christ. There are a number of times when an angelic visitation was cause for concern. Abraham recognized the Lord right away. He saw Him coming, but instead of waiting for the Lord to approach *him*, he ran to meet them, humbled himself, and bowed himself to the ground. He then invited the Lord in to rest and come to dinner, which would mean that He would stay awhile. If the Lord came to hang out awhile with you, and He gave you audience, how would you use that time? Although we have that time every time we go to the Lord in prayer, this is something different. If you could interview Jesus, what would you talk about? If Jesus was *visibly* sitting at the dinner table with you and you could hear Him with your ears and not just your heart, what would you want to know from Him? Maybe you would want to know why certain things are happening in your life. Maybe you would want to know where one of your departed loved ones is. These would be interesting but they are about the past and nothing you could fix. Would you want to ask Jesus what is in your future, how are your children going to fare in life? Would you take advantage of His attention and ask Him for a blessing to be given wealth? This should remind us of Solomon who was *explicitly* given the option to ask.

2Chr 1:7,10-12 In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee.

10Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, *that is so great?*

11And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king:

12Wisdom and knowledge *is* granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that *have been* before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like.

He asked for wisdom on what he could do to affect the future. Wisdom would suggest that it might be good to know about the past if it served to instruct us for the future. Or, it might be good to have an idea of the future so we can do more than just be braced to face what is coming. Merely finding out if our children have a fate that they cannot avoid could be very discouraging. If I knew that my children were facing a terrible end, what I would really like to find out is what I could do to *change* that. Charles Dickens powerfully captured this sentiment in *A Christmas Carol*. Unlike the two previous spirits of the past and present, the spirit of Christmas yet to come is silent forcing Scrooge to second guess his meaning. Dickens has Scrooge brought to a churchyard after he is shown some distressing yet unclear visions,

Here, then; the wretched man whose name he had now to learn, lay underneath the ground. It was a worthy place. Walled in by

houses; overrun by grass and weeds, the growth of vegetation's death, not life; choked up with too much burying; fat with repleted appetite. A worthy place!

The Spirit stood among the graves, and pointed down to One. He advanced towards it trembling..."Before I draw nearer to that stone to which you point," said Scrooge, "answer me one question. Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of things that May be, only?"

Still the Ghost pointed downward to the grave by which it stood.

[Scrooge then said], "Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead...But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show me!"

The Spirit was immovable as ever.

Scrooge crept towards it, trembling as he went; and following the finger, read upon the stone of the neglected grave his own name, Ebenezer Scrooge.

"Am I that man who lay upon the bed?" he cried, upon his knees.

The finger pointed from the grave to him, and back again.

"No, Spirit! Oh no, no!"

The finger still was there.

"Spirit!" he cried, tight clutching at its robe, "hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been but for this intercourse. Why show me this, if I am past all hope!"

For the first time the hand appeared to shake.

Dickens does not have the spirit give any actual indication whether the future can be altered, but what is unmistakable

is the lesson that if we know what awaits us our anguish would certainly motivate us to change just as it did to Scrooge.

In Abraham's case, he didn't even *need* to ask the LORD what he needed to know from Him, God just told him what he needed to know. He affirmed Abraham that he was on track with what he was doing, commanding his children and house to follow the Lord.

Gen 18:17-19 And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do;

18Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

19For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

The children of Abraham that would come did not all do well but neither did they always face worldly or spiritual failure. Parents can never guarantee one outcome or another, but Abraham was commended for the fact that whatever he did to raise his family in the Lord was the thing that could definitely affect their future which would then bring God's blessing upon them.

2. An object lesson

Two of these visitors then moved on to their mission in Sodom and Gomorrah while God stayed behind and continued to deal with Abraham.

Gen 18:19-22 For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

20And the LORD said, Because

the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous;

21I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.

22And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.

God is not merely letting Abraham in on a little secret. In the context of this passage, God had just pointed out the future of Abraham's children based on what the responsibility he was going to exercise in commanding his children after him. Now, in contrast, we see the end of a people who had lost their way in sin and the end that was to come to them. In chapter 19 we see just how wicked the men had become:

Gen 19:4-11 But before they lay down, the men of the city, *even* the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter:

5And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where *are* the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them.

6And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him,

7And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly.

8Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as *is* good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof.

9And they said, Stand back. And they said *again*, This one *fellow* came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee, than with

them. And they pressed sore upon the man, *even* Lot, and came near to break the door.

10But the men put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door.

11And they smote the men that *were* at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door.

This is consistent with how Paul wrote to the Romans about becoming reprobate.

Rom 1:21-32 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

22Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

23And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

24Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:

25Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

26For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

27And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

28And even as they did not like

to retain God in *their* knowledge,
God gave them over to a
reprobate mind, to do those
things which are not convenient;
29Being filled with all
unrighteousness, fornication,
wickedness, covetousness,
maliciousness; full of envy,
murder, debate, deceit, malignity;
whisperers,
30Backbiters, haters of God,
despiteful, proud, boasters,
inventors of evil things,
disobedient to parents,
31Without understanding,
covenantbreakers, without
natural affection, implacable,
unmerciful:
32Who knowing the judgment of
God, that they which commit
such things are worthy of death,
not only do the same, but have
pleasure in them that do them.

Sin, uninterrupted, leads to
devastation. At every moment our future
unfolds before us but we are active
participants in the direction it takes.

3. The measure of the man

The character of Abraham is revealed
further in this moment. The same man
who would take charge of his life and his
family acted according to his character
and the measure of the man is revealed.
Abraham, true to how the Lord had
described him, was concerned about how
he could effect change in the situation.

Gen 18:23-33 And Abraham
drew near, and said, Wilt thou
also destroy the righteous with
the wicked?

24Peradventure there be fifty
righteous within the city: wilt
thou also destroy and not spare
the place for the fifty righteous
that *are* therein?

25That be far from thee to do
after this manner, to slay the
righteous with the wicked: and
that the righteous should be as
the wicked, that be far from thee:

Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

26And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

27And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which *am but* dust and ashes:

28Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for *lack of* five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy *it*.

29And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do *it* for forty's sake.

30And he said *unto him*, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do *it*, if I find thirty there.

31And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy *it* for twenty's sake.

32And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy *it* for ten's sake.

33And the LORD went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place.

There was no time left to take any more action in Sodom and Gomorrah so Abraham finished off the last effort to spare them by praying. Certainly if Lot had done his job, as one might suppose, and there were ten righteous in the city. All Abraham could do was plead on their behalf, and so he did.

This plea is astounding. Remembering Solomon, one of the

things he did not ask for was the lives of his enemies. Solomon was concerned with how he might wisely govern. Abraham has a similar concern. The men of Sodom were wicked and filthy. If Abraham's concerns were met, it would stand to give them a chance to get a step closer to salvation.

Throughout human history, the people of God have been faced with that challenge. Do we merely look for comfort in this world that is plagued with sin? If the world is unchecked, we will, like Lot, certainly not escape totally unscathed as the world is destroyed around us. Just as Abraham, we need to have a compassion on the world. He was blessed with a direct message from God about what was coming. But, do we *really* need to know specifically what is coming before we act? Our desire should be to, like Abraham with his family, take action on what is in front of us and pray for what is not.

If you were blessed with an interview with God, what changes would you like Him to tell you about so that the things that may be will not be? Unlike Scrooge, we have the sure word of prophecy in God's Word. There are some things that will *definitely* be, like the Rapture and the Tribulation to come. For those who have not turned to God and sought His pardon for sin, your journey will take you into the wrath of God in the Tribulation with the danger of no escape. For those who have been born again, the journey we take on our way to the Rapture is filled with many things that will depend on the changes we make. This is very much like the passengers on the Titanic. The Titanic was definitely going down while all the time the people were free to move about its decks. If you were a passenger, you might not change the destination of the ship, but would you be one who helped someone change their *eternal* destiny? You are blessed with the opportunity to work with God to bring a change to this world. A question to ask is are we set to make an *eternal* difference in the world? This should be why we are here. We are looking to make a difference. We should come to stand in

awe of God and then be moved to action to bring the world to Christ.

1. An interview with God Gen 18:1-5, 2Chr 1:7,10-12, Gen 18:17-19
2. An object lesson Gen 18:19-22, Gen 19:4-11, Rom 1:21-32
3. The measure of the man Gen 18:23-33