

The Book of Genesis

Chapter 18

18:1 Then the LORD appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day.

Time Frame

One Jewish tradition states that this was three days after Abraham's circumcision, while he was still living in the area of Hebron (13:18; 14:13).

18:2 Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground. (NIV)

Three Men

One of the individuals was the Word, and the other two were angels made in the similitude of God and man (DEU 10:5-6, 13, 18), possibly Gabriel and Michael. This reveals to us that God allows angels to physically appear when His will is being fulfilled.

18:3 and said, "My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant.

Abraham addressed only one of them "My Lord" (*Adonai*, singular), showing that he recognized Him as God.

18:4-6 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." So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. "Quick," he said, "get three seahs [NKJ: "measures"] of fine flour and knead it and bake some bread." (NIV)

Bread

This bread would have been unleavened because it was made so quickly. If tradition is correct about Abraham being circumcised on the Passover, this event would have occurred during the Days of Unleavened Bread in 1877 BC.

18:7-8 Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. He then brought some curds [NKJ: "butter"] and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree. (NIV)

They Ate

This example shows that a spirit can materialize and function in the same manner as a human. Both the One who became Jesus as well as the two angels were able to eat food in the normal fashion. Centuries later, after Jesus was resurrected, He appeared to the disciples and ate some broiled fish and honeycomb (LUK 24:42-43).

18:9-11 Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "Here, in the tent." And He said, "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life [NIV, REB: "about this time next year"; NRS: "in due season"], and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son." And Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well-advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing [NRS: "it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women].

Sarah's Circumstances

Sarah was 90 years old (17:17) and no longer ovulating.

18:12 So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?"
(NIV)

Questioning God

This was the same reaction that Abraham had when God told him, except that Abraham's reaction was based on surprise. Paul tells us in ROM 4:20-21 (NIV) "*Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.*"

Sarah, on the other hand, seems to have doubted. Abraham had most likely told her what God had earlier told him, so she had time to think about how outrageous the promise sounded.

18:13-16 Then the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son." Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, "I did not laugh." But he said, "Yes, you did laugh." When the men got up to leave, they looked down toward Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way. (NIV)

18:17 The LORD had thought to himself, 'Shall I conceal from Abraham what I am about to do?' (REB)

Predetermination

We are given an insight into the mind of God. The Word had not determined if He would tell Abraham about his plans for Sodom. This poses a major problem for anyone who believes in predestination—God does not already have everything decided. He makes adjustments based upon decisions made or actions taken by His servants. AMO 3:7 (NIV), "*Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing His plan to His servants the prophets.*"

18:18-19 Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him. (NIV)

Abraham's Abilities

God knew Abraham's character, as well as the help He would supply to him, so God already knew that Abraham would perform whatever was necessary.

18:20-21 Then the LORD said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know." (NIV)

Outcry

The "outcry" would have been the reports of different angels.

18:22 The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the LORD. (NIV)

Scriptural Alteration

Last part of the verse is an "emendation of the Sopherim" [scribal alteration], and should read "but the LORD remained standing before Abraham."

18:23 And Abraham came near and said, "Would You also destroy [NIV, TAN, REB, NRS: "sweep away"] the righteous with the wicked?

Abraham's Concern

Abraham is clearly concerned about Lot.

18:24-32 "Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous that were in it? "Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" And the LORD said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes." Then Abraham answered and said, "Indeed now, I who am but dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: "Suppose there were five less than the fifty righteous; would You destroy all of the city for lack of five?" And He said, "If I find there forty-five, I will not destroy it." Then he spoke to Him yet again and said, "Suppose there should be forty found there?" And He said, "I will not do it for the sake of forty." And he said, "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Suppose thirty should be found there?" And He said, "I will not do it if I find thirty there." Then he said, "Indeed now, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose twenty should be found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of twenty." And he said, "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of ten."

Abraham probably assumed that since Lot had at least four daughters, probably some sons, plus grandchildren, there would be at least ten in the city.

18:33 When the LORD had finished speaking with Abraham, He left, and Abraham returned home. (NIV)

"He Left"

We are not told where the Word went after He left. Since He had stated He was checking on the reports about Sodom and Gomorrah, it is reasonable to think He went to Gomorrah since there is no mention of Him joining the two angels at Sodom.