

Abraham - Part Nine

by Charles E. Wigg

Visitors to Mamre:

When next we see Abraham, he is dwelling again at the place of rest and fatness. It does not mean that he had no trials there; because we see him sitting in his tent door, **in the heat of the day**. He is now about a hundred years old, and the heat in such a place can be very severe, very draining on the energies. However he is dwelling again beneath the Oaks of Mamre, and these would afford shade and relief in the torrid heat.

It was at such a time that Jehovah came to visit him. It is often in the trials of life, that God draws near to us; He uses them to make us conscious of His presence with us; His interest in us; and His love for us. (See Romans 8:35 to 39).

Abraham shows his spiritual discernment, because though there were three men present, he recognizes that only one of the "men", is Jehovah, and addresses Him accordingly.

Perhaps Abraham might have complained, "what an inconvenient time for anyone to visit; they might have left it until evening when things are cooler"! But he does not complain; he quickly summons his energies, he runs to meet the heavenly visitors; he bows before them with the deepest reverence. He respectfully indicates his desire to minister to their comfort and pleasure. God graciously accepted his offer.

Though God, is not served by men's hands, as if He needs anything, (Acts 17:25,) yet in His marvelous grace it pleases Him, when His children have a desire to offer worship to Him spontaneously.

Abraham now gathers his family to share with him in this great privilege; he does not take all the privilege to himself. First he goes to Sarah, urges her to make quickly three measures of fine meal into cakes, baking them on the hearth. This is not something that Abraham could do as well as his experienced wife. Neither does he have to go and borrow from others; but he uses what he already possessed, in the worship of God. There is something beautiful about this; it is like the Psalmist says in Psalm 45; I will say what I have made, (composed), touching the King.

Next he runs to the herd, he chooses the best that he has as an offering. Then he does not dress it himself, but gives it to a young man to do. How we also should encourage the young men to have a part in the worship of God! Next the offering is cooked, and finally; it is presented, offered by Abraham. He stands by, **under the tree**, and watches with great pleasure, as what they together had prepared; was eaten by his heavenly visitors. It reminds us that we can only offer to God, what is acceptable to Him, because of the One who gave his life on **the tree!**

Such is the marvelous grace of God; that One so great as he, from whose hand we receive all that we possess; that He should deign to accept from us what we have prepared in response to His wondrous goodness!

Further light:

The "worship time" now ended: God speaks to the worshipper. "Where is Sarah thy wife?" He asks. And the reply comes; "Behold, in the tent". This shows the woman's place, in the ordering of God. Sarah had not left her God-given place. It was there; she had acquired the skills, which she used in preparing the

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cakes for the offering. This is principally the place of a godly woman's service. She was also listening to the voice of God, but she was behind Abraham; she did not push herself forward. Some would argue that this was "cultural": behavior proper for the time; but things are different today! I do not think so, but is instead, an example, (in principle), for all godly sisters

It often pleases God to speak to His people, through spiritual ministry from the scriptures; after a time of worship. Here He confirms His promise once again; it was joyful news. Sarah laughed within herself; she was not so bold as to laugh outwardly, in the face of God. It was all so wonderful, totally beyond her expectations. Her thoughts were limited to what was natural; she had not yet come to know God, as the God of resurrection.

God rebuked her unbelief: "Why does Sarah laugh", He asks. Sarah is embarrassed; and rebuked. She denied that she had laughed; (she had not laughed outwardly). However God used the occasion to reveal something more of His greatness, His majesty. He was not to be hindered by Sarah's unbelief; He would keep His promise.

Abraham, on the other hand, "Staggered not at the promise", his faith grew stronger, as he gave glory to God, (Rom.4: 16 to 23.) What an encouragement to us! What a challenge to our faith! Faith never falters; never gives up, no matter how great the obstacles.

Abraham, the Friend of God:

The heavenly visitors leave, and for the first recorded time in his life; Abraham literally walked with God. It would seem that the angels departed, but Abraham was left alone with God. Perhaps this was the most precious moment in his life up until this point. God now reveals to Abraham, what He is about to do. God takes Abraham into His confidence; thus Abraham became His friend, (His confidante). God demonstrated confidence in Abraham; in His foreknowledge, He knew what Abraham would do; how He would discipline and instruct his family after him.

This is a challenge to you and I, first to walk with God, then to so order our ways, and bring up our families, that we may earn the confidence of God; that He may be able to reveal things to us from His word.

The Lord Jesus proposes this in John 15: 15 to 17. He is not content that we should be merely servants, not understanding His mind and will; but He wants us to be His friends, those in whom He can confide. He wants us to live a life of obedience, and a life of answered prayer.

Abraham the Intercessor:

As God revealed to destroy Sodom, it awakened again in Abraham's heart, his love for his erring brother Lot. Though Lot had been a big disappointment to him, yet he could not bear to think of him coming under the wrath of God, of him being destroyed with the wicked city he had chosen for his home.

In spite of his weakness, and his failure; Abraham knew Lot to be a "righteous man," It was this, and the righteousness of God, that he used as the basis for his intercession. Humbly he pleaded with God; afraid that in doing so he might offend God's patience, and invoke his anger; but even his intercession was not

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enough to save the wicked cities of the plain. However God did remember Abraham, (showing that his intercession was effective,) and He sent Lot out of the overthrow.

The final test before Isaac's birth:

Once again, Abraham left the place of rest, fatness, and communion; and he went south again, not to Egypt this time, but to the country of the Philistines. This is the first time that these people are mentioned in the Bible, and they continue to this day. They are known today, as Palestinians. The name Philistine means "immigrant", and the name Palestine, means "the land of the immigrant". These were physically large people; and they were war like in character. They originally inhabited the Island of Crete, and from there some of them migrated to Egypt; they were cousins to the Egyptians. Later some of these immigrants, journeyed to the Western coastal Plain of Sharon, and there established five lordships. They came by the "way of the Philistines", Exodus 13; 17. They came the easy way, they never crossed the Red Sea; the land was never given to them. They represent the "carnal Christian", or the "natural man", such as were at Corinth, (1 Corinthians).

Abraham felt threatened by these people, and his latent weakness was exposed once more. No doubt Satan also saw this as one of the final opportunities to frustrate the plan of God for our salvation. So Abraham again resorted to self-preservation, and in so doing exposed Sarah to great moral danger, just when the promise of God was about to be fulfilled. Again he told a half-truth, but God intervened directly, warning the Philistine king of his great danger. Abraham was called, and with shame had to confess his weakness, his fearfulness, and was exalted by God, in spite of his failure. He gained from the experience, and was richer because of it. As we have seen earlier; this did not excuse Abraham's failure, but magnified the goodness and faithfulness of God.

God's time had come:

This test being over and Satan's ruse being defeated; then God quickened Sarah's womb, so that she could conceive. Here God demonstrated His power, as the God of resurrection.

We might have thought that God was very slow in fulfilling His promise, but God is never late, neither does He act before the time, He always acts at exactly the right time. (See Gal. 4; 4.) O but what joy it brought to them both. It is difficult for us to imagine; because they had been trying all their married lives to have a child, and now at last he had come. He was rightly named Isaac, (laughter), because he brought laughter and joy into their lives, such as they had never known before.

Sarah laughed again, but this time it was not the laughter of unbelief; but she says, "God has made me to laugh". This is the kind of joy that God wants us to have, John 16: 24, also 1 John 1: 4.