

Genesis

Creation, Covenants, All Grace — study 17



COVENANT, COMMUNION, COMMITMENT

WHO APPEARED to ABRAHAM? (18:1-8)

18:1 *How many times must the Word testify before we accept its testimony? (12:7; 17:1)*

(1) *The LORD* here means the three angels (verse 2)... First the Lord appeared to him in a prophetic vision and then he saw three men... God's appearance to him was a reward for his obedience and indicated that He was pleased with him... -- **H. Friedman**, *The Soncino Chumash* p. 86

(2) In this section we have an illustration of fellowship with God and some of its essential features. Fellowship is the crowning purpose of God's revelation (1 John i. 3). There is nothing higher than this, for man's life finds its complete realisation in union and communion with God. -- **W.H. Griffith Thomas**, *Genesis* 1-25 p.213

18:2,3 *Who are these "three men" Abraham beholds? (19:1)*

(3) Christian commentators have been tempted to discern the three Persons of the Trinity here; but the passage differentiates clearly between the Lord and His two companions (see verse 22, and 19:1). -- **Derek Kidner**, *Genesis* p. 131

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-- **W.H. Griffith Thomas**



(4) *And bowed himself toward the ground.* This token of reverence was in common use with oriental nations. The mystery which some of the ancient writers have endeavoured to elicit from this act; namely, that Abraham adored one of the three, who he saw, and, therefore, perceived by faith, that there are three persons in one God, since it is frivolous, and obnoxious to ridicule and calumny, I am more than content to omit. -- **John Calvin**, *The Book of Genesis* p. 470

18:4-8 *Was Abraham so hospitable because his guests were special? (Heb. 13:1)*

(5) The almost royal honours paid to a chance visitor -- the fervent welcome however inconvenient the moment (it was the midday siesta, 1b), the assurance that his arrival is an honour (3), even a providence (5b, AV), and the lavish meal deprecated as *a morsel of bread* (5ff.) -- are still characteristic of bedouin hospitality, even to the host's insistence in some cases on standing (8b) until his guests have finished. The reader can see how appropriate beyond all imagining was this deference; the New Testament goes on to show that there is more than coincidence here (*cf.* Heb. 13:2; Mt. 25:35). -- **Derek Kidner**, *Genesis* p. 131

(6) But the fact that God honoured his benignity, and granted it to him as a reward, that angels should be presented to him for guests, was what he was not aware of, till they had made themselves known at the conclusion of the meal. It was therefore a merely human and civil honour, which he paid them. -- **John Calvin**, *op.cit.*, p. 470

(7) It was thus that the Son of God anticipated His incarnation; and was found in fashion as a man before He became flesh. He loved to come *incognito* into the homes of those He cherished as His friends, even before He came across the slopes of Olivet to make His home in the favoured cottage where His spirit rested from the din of the great city, and girded itself for the cross and tomb. "He rejoiced in the habitable part of the earth, and His delights were with the sons of men" (Prov. viii. 31). ... Nor is this all. There is no heart so lowly but that He will enter. There is no home so humble, but that He will make Himself a welcome inmate. There is no table so poorly provided, but that He will sit thereat, turning water into wine, multiplying the loaves and fishes, and converting the simple meal into a sacrament. When seated at meat with those He loves, He still takes bread, and blesses it and breaks, and gives to them (Luke xxiv. 30). To each and all He says, as He stands laden with raiment, eyesalve, gold, and viands for the evening meal: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him; and he with Me" (Rev. iii. 20). -- **F.B. Meyer**, *Abraham* pp. 114-115

Do not neglect to
show hospitality to
strangers, for
thereby some have
entertained angels
unawares.
— Heb. 13:2

The COMMITMENT of COVENANT (18:9-12)

18:9-12 *Is Yahweh's eternal commitment conditional on reasonable grounds or human response?* (17:7; Rom. 11:29-33)

(8) The angel was not announcing that he would return to him, but he was speaking to him as God's agent (meaning that God would return). Similar is, (XVI. 10) "And the angel of the Lord said to her, I will greatly multiply thy seed, but he had no power to multiply, *and was speaking* only as God's agent. -- **Rashi**, *Genesis* p. 72

(9) Sarah received this message with the utter astonishment of unbelief. She could not credit the possibility of it. This is only one out of several indications in the course of the story that Sarah's spiritual kinship with Abraham was not very close, and that she had never really risen with him to his clear faith in God. -- **W.H. Griffith Thomas**, *op.cit.*, p. 212

(10) It is Yahweh, the faithful covenant God, who is concerned about the matter of having the child of promise come in due season to believing parents. But at the same time, it is a part of the faithful care of Yahweh for the covenant people that leads Him to resort to acts of retributive and punitive justice in order to clear the path for the normal development of His people. -- **H.C. Leupold**, *Genesis* Vol. 1 p. 533

(11) Abraham was now ninety-nine years of age, and Sarah was ninety, and the idea that they would have a child made Abraham laugh (17), as later Sarah laughed (xviii. 12); but *his* laugh indicated delight, and *hers*, doubt; but when the promised son came, he was called *Laughter*, *Isaac*. -- **W. G. Scroggie**, *The Unfolding Drama of Redemption* Vol. 1 p. 106

BELIEVING EVEN WHEN REASON FAILS (18:13-15)

18:13-15 *What is at the root of cultists' rejection of the Trinity?* (1 Cor. 1:18-25; 2:10-16)

(12) Imagine the astounding nature of this revelation to Sarah: her secret thoughts have been correctly read; the very motive she had referred to, namely that she had grown old, is also displayed to her. This attitude is rebuked by Yahweh as being the equivalent of saying that something is "too difficult for Yahweh." -- **H.C. Leupold**, *op. cit.*, p. 542

(13) The censure also shows that the laughter of Sarah was joined with incredulity. For there is no little weight in this sentence, 'Can anything be wonderful with God?' But the angel chides Sarah, because she limited the power of god within the bounds of her own sense. An antithesis is therefore implied between the immense power of God, and the contracted measure which Sarah imagined to herself through her carnal reason. -- **J. Calvin**, p. 475

"Is anything too wonderful for Yahweh?"

– Genesis 18:14