

Genesis 18 – The LORD appears to Abraham

Last week we read about how God gave the covenant of circumcision to Abraham. He told him that the time for his son to be born was near. He gave them a special sign to remind them of the promises. They would be a great people and would inherit the land. But there was an even greater Son to be born one day, through whom the world would receive eternal salvation.

A wonderful visit (v1-8)

We read now of another appearance of God to Abraham – after those in the previous chapters. Three men came; two of whom were angels, and one of whom appears to be the Lord himself (so must have been an appearance of Christ; see 19:2, 18:10, 13, 17, 33). Abraham showed them great kindness. He was very hospitable; washing their feet, giving them rest, preparing them food and serving them (see Hebrews 13:2). We should also be kind to strangers. Sometimes God tests us; and we gain surprising blessings by giving without expecting a return.

Great grace to Sarah (v9-15)

Now the Lord began to deal with Sarah, who had not been spoken to yet. She also was to be a central part of the promises. She also needed to have faith and believe God's word. When she heard the promise, she laughed (v12) – but from unbelief, not from joy. She was in the tent, but God knew her thoughts, as he knows ours. Do we not realise that God's promises of a new heavens and earth are for us too? That we are his people, and he will show us the glory of the coming age? The Lord rebuked her; not harshly, but in love. We must not doubt; it will do no good.

God's favourites (v16-19)

Some people say “God has no favourites”. It is true that God is always fair and righteous in judgment. He deals with everyone according to truth. However, he does have favourites. He told Abraham secrets that were kept from others and planned to use him to achieve his special plans for the world. That was God's own choice; we cannot tell God what to do. But we can use every opportunity we have to draw near to God, and to be closer to him. All of us are sinners and children of Adam; we can only be near because of his kindness and mercy, and because we respond with all their hearts to it. If others are doing this, why not you?

Prayer and God's judgment (v20-33)

God will judge the wicked. This is his settled decision and purpose. He is very merciful and patient, waiting for people to repent. But now the time of his patience with Sodom had ended. They had seen his mercy and deliverance before (chapter 14), but continued in their wickedness. However, we find, surprisingly, that he was still willing to spare the city for the sake of the righteous people in it. Abraham kept praying – not to change God's mind, but because he was confident that God has a purpose to be merciful. Abraham was very respectful, and also very bold. God wants us to pray big prayers – with respect and boldness. We see that even a handful of righteous people matter very much to God. What an encouragement for us to live for Jesus in Eldoret and have great faith in him! Let us also pray in faith.