

GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER

Hebrews 13:2 “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”

Much of Genesis has moments that we all think we would like to experience; the garden, riding in Noah's boat, seeing the Tower of Babel, and having dinner with God. Many times though, the reality of the situation becomes lost on us because we view events in a nostalgic lens and not a real world (in real times) lens. It is trying to see these moments in the midst of reality that will help us better understand Abraham's reactions to the presence of God.

The central issues of the previous chapter (17) included (the announcement of the birth of Isaac and the question of the fate of the righteous amid divine judgment. These issues are not only dealt with in this chapter, but fleshed out in much greater detail. The author's treatment of the themes of Isaac's birth and divine judgment (moving into chapter 18) shows Moses concern to push beyond a mere reporting of the events to develop them into a lesson in theology.

The narrative begins, in the same way as chapter 17, with the author's report that “the LORD [*yhwh*] appeared [*wayyera'*] to Abraham.” The importance of this comment at the beginning of the narrative should not be overlooked. Its effect is to help clarify one of the most puzzling features of the narrative, namely, who were the three men who visited Abraham and what was their mission?

In opening the narrative with the statement that the Lord “appeared” to Abraham, the author leaves no doubt that in some (albeit unexplained) way the three men represented the Lord's appearance to Abraham. Opening the narrative with a reference to the Lord's “appearing” to Abraham provides an important context to guide the reading of the remainder of the chapter. However the details of the story are sorted out, the fact remains that the events of the chapter constitute an account of the Lord's *appearance* to Abraham.

The biblical God is one who makes Himself known intimately and concretely to His covenant people. He can make Himself known through “speaking” (*wayyo'mer* Genesis 1:3), “in a vision” (*bammahzeh* Genesis 15:1), or through His “angel” (*mal'ak* Genesis 16:7) who speaks for Him. He even can “appear” (*wayyera'*) to individuals, as in Genesis 12:7; 17:1; and 18:1.

- Abraham didn't “find God.”
...God showed up of His own goodness.
- Abraham didn't merit God's blessing of a child, land, or hope.
...God came to Him and gave it to him (grace)

Salvation is God extending Himself to us in hope and redemption. Salvation is salvation from God and His wrath (we are not saved from hell, we are saved from God.) God not only restores Abraham and Sarah to right standing before Him, He also restores them to each other.

God uses times of hardship to train us and to grow us. The words “command his children” (V19) is a Hebrew phrase that carries the idea of legacy. After you are dead, what moral values do you want your children to carry on? This is important because the lack of moral values and character lead to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. It leads to damnation and destruction.

God is explicit that it is the responsibility of the parents to teach their children RIGHT from WRONG. It is about helping them understand TRUTH vs LIE (even when truth is not popular). It is helping them understand why God saves us.

Sodom and Gomorrah's offense lies in the moral realm; the scriptures assume the existence of a universal moral law that is binding on all people. The biblical perception of history is that there is a connection between the social and moral behavior of a people and its ultimate fate. This is why salvation is God intervening and damnation is when we continue on our own way.

Salvation and damnation, we are all sick and we need God to heal and save us because only He knows our heart. We need to allow Him to have the last word so we can and will repent, and we can be reconciled to God in Christ.

Damnation is walking our own way, but salvation is shown as OVER abundance. When the Kingdom of God TRANSFORMS our lives in understanding of who He is by His own revelation; the abundance of His life in us should work itself out of us in abundance, truth, and grace.

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