

Genesis 18:1-15

Introduction

College floor-mate, Terry: made incredible claims of what he could do in the dead-lift and softball homeruns—claims that seemed too good to be true—only to back them up; He was able to do exactly what he said he could do

A. God's blessings and promises are a result of the peace and fellowship we have with Him (Genesis 18:1-8)

1. While Abraham is sitting at the door of his tent, three visitors arrive (READ 18:1-3):
 - a. We know one of the visitors is the LORD because v. 1 tells us this (probably the pre-incarnate Christ), and the other two are identified in 19:1 as “**angels**” (Hebrew messengers)
 - b. There is debate over whether or not Abraham initially knew this was the LORD Himself:
 - 1) This is reflected in the different English translations, with the NAU, NET, and NIV translating “lord” with a lower case “l”, while the LSB, ESV, KJV and NKJV render it with a upper case “L”
 - 2) Those who believe Abraham didn’t recognize God, suggest he was just responding to the three men with an act of ANE hospitality, and it certainly has elements of this:
 - a) He bowed before them which was a standard greeting of respect
 - b) He referred to He brought them water to wash their feet
 - c) He provided them with food
 - 3) However, there are good reasons to believe he knew it was God:
 - a) First, when Abraham approaches the men, he begins by addressing the Lord first, then the other two men
 - b) Second, the Hebrew text suggests that Abraham knew it was the LORD:
 - There are primarily two different forms of the Hebrew word for Lord in the OT, and the only difference is the vowels
 - One, which is what we find in the Hebrew text here in v. 3 is adonai which is almost exclusively used as a proper name for God (Abraham used it in 15:2 & 8)
 - The other is adoni which was a polite term of respect, “my lord” and could be used of anyone; in fact, Sarah used it of Abraham in 18:12
 - The only difference between these two forms are the vowels, but since the vowels weren’t included in the original Hebrew text, we have no way of knowing for sure what Abraham said
 - The vowels weren’t added until between the 7th and 10th century AD, and some believe the Masoretes added the vowels for adonia simply because THEY knew it was the Lord, not Abraham
 - However, the Masoretes likely relied upon the LXX translation which was made in the 1-3rd centuries B.C. and translated it “lord” rather than “my lord”
 - So, as the ESV translation notes suggest, there is no reason to doubt that Abraham recognized God as one of the visitors and referred to Him as Adonai

- c) A third reason to suspect that Abraham knew it was God was that he was accustomed to interacting with the LORD—previous to this encounter, God had spoken to him at least three times, and appeared to Him on at least two occasions (Genesis 12:7; 17:1)
 - d) A fourth reason is that there is an eagerness on Abraham's part to serve the LORD in this passage: he **"ran from the tent door"** (2), **"he hurried into the tent to Sarah"** to have her prepare bread (6), he **"also ran to the herd"** to grab a young calf and **"hurried"** to have it prepared by his servant (7)
 - e) Finally, he clearly knows it's the Lord later in the story, and while it's possible it took him a little while to figure this out, there's no indication of this in the text; he doesn't appear to have some great epiphany halfway through the encounter
- 2. What Abraham does next is often misinterpreted simply as an act of ANE hospitality, but there's more to it than that (READ 18:4-8):
 - a. Providing water to wash one's feet and preparing a meal for visitors was indeed an ANE act of hospitality (Lot prepares a meal for the angels in Genesis 19)
 - b. However, meals were also an important part of covenant relationships:
 - 1) As Dustin alluded to this a few weeks when teaching on the covenant God established with Abraham in chapter 15
 - 2) The meal represented the peace and fellowship between the two parties of the covenant, and we see examples of this in the Bible:
 - a) Isaac served a feast when he made the covenant with Abimelech (READ Genesis 26:26-31)
 - b) In Exodus 24:5, Israel offered up a peace offering to the Lord when confirming the covenant at Mt. Sinai; what's significant about this is that the peace offering was the only offering that could be eaten by Israel (the details are recorded in Leviticus 7:11-21)
 - c) When Gideon was visited by the angel of the LORD in Judges 6, he prepared a meal that was consumed by the LORD and ultimately represented the peace between himself and the LORD (READ Judges 6:11-24)
 - d) Even the New Covenant we have with Jesus has a meal associated with it: the Last Supper; we even repeat this by celebrating the bread and the cup until Jesus returns; we even look forward to another meal with Him called the Marriage Supper of the Lamb
 - c. What I propose is that God's willingness to sit and eat what Abraham provided was a demonstration of the peace and fellowship He shared with him as part of the covenant:
 - 1) In a moment we'll see the primary purpose for the LORD visiting, but before He got down to business, He took time to eat what Abraham had prepared
 - 2) Now, the LORD and the angels didn't need to eat; they weren't human in need of nourishment
 - 3) This means there was another purpose to sharing the meal; it was a demonstration of the peace and fellowship He shared with Abraham
- 3. Takeaway:
 - a. One of the things we see throughout the Bible is that God's blessings and promises flow out of the peace and fellowship He has with His people

- b. This was certainly true of Abraham, and we'll see that in a moment when immediately following the meal God confirmed His promise to Abraham that he would have a son
- c. It's also true of us; the promises God has made to us are a result of the peace and fellowship we now share with Him through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1): **"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God."**
- d. Every blessing and promise we have from God is a direct result of the peace and fellowship Jesus has secured for us through the Gospel!

<p>B. God's promises are incredible, but not impossible for Him (Genesis 18:9-15)</p>
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- 1. God's promises often seem too incredible to be true (READ 18:9-12):
 - a. Immediately after the meal, the LORD announces that He will return in a year and by that time Sarah will have born him a son
 - b. To Sarah, this sounded like pure foolishness:
 - 1) She and Abraham were old; if you remember back in chapter 17 we learned that Abraham was 99 and Sarah 90
 - 2) Sarah knew she was WAY past the age of bearing children; she even remarked back in chapter 16 that the Lord had closed up her womb (the reason she attempted to have children by proxy through her maid Hagar)
 - 3) Can you blame her for laughing and thinking that what the LORD said just wasn't possible?
 - 4) After all, it just didn't make sense! It was TOO incredible; who ever hear of an old man and old woman having a baby?
- 2. But, nothing is impossible for the LORD (READ 18:13-15):
 - a. As soon as God heard Sarah laugh, He posed two rhetorical questions to Abraham:
 - 1) Why did Sarah laugh saying that she's too old to have a child, and is there really anything too difficult for me to do?
 - 2) If you remember back in chapter 17 Abraham had a very similar reaction when God promised that He would give Abraham a son through Sarah (READ 17:15-18)
 - 3) So, either Abraham forgot to share this episode with Sarah or she still hadn't come to terms with it, struggling to believe that it was possible
 - b. And, like He did when Abraham laughed back in chapter 17:19, God once again reiterated His promise that Sarah would indeed bear Him a child (14b): **"At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son."**
 - c. When Sarah realizes the LORD was privy to her laughing, she tried to deny it but the LORD knew better and offered her a gentle but stern rebuke: **"No, but you did laugh."** (can't you just see the LORD looking over His shoulder to look at Sarah behind him when He said this?)
- 3. Takeaway: obviously, the lesson here is that while God's promises might sometimes seem too incredible to be true, there is nothing He cannot do:
 - a. I think most of us would agree with this intellectually; we could declare theologically and with great conviction that God can do anything and nothing is impossible for Him, and could probably quote any number of Bible verses to back this up:

- 1) Job 42:2: **"I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted."**
 - 2) Jeremiah 32:27: **"Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh, is anything too difficult for Me?"**
 - 3) Psalm 115:3: **"But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases."**
 - 4) Psalm 135:6: **"Whatever the LORD pleases, he does, in heaven and in earth, in the sea and in all the deep."**
 - 5) Mark 10:27: **"Looking at them, Jesus said, 'With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.'"**
- b. We know this intellectually, but sometimes we struggle when it defies logic, or when it becomes personal, as it did with Sarah and Mary (READ Luke 1:28-38):
- 1) It was illogical for either one to become pregnant, Sarah because she was too old to have a child, and Mary because she was a virgin
 - 2) Yet, God promised both a child:
 - a) In spite of the apparently impossibility of a virgin having a child, Mary took the angel at His Word (Luke 1:38): **"And Mary said, 'Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.'"**
 - b) The author of Hebrews tells us that Sarah ultimately came around as well (Hebrews 11:11): **"By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised."**
- c. There is probably no more important or significant example of one of God's promises that seems too good to be true, but one that He is none-the-less able to do: save sinners and give them eternal life (READ 19:16-26):
- 1) The Bible makes at least two things abundantly clear:
 - a) The first is that we cannot save ourselves
 - b) The second is that God can save us
 - 2) READ Romans 3:10-28
 - 3) And, if He is able to save us, He is able to keep us (READ Romans 8:31-39)
- d. The bottom line: God has made some incredible promises, and He is able to keep them