

## 99-02-07b

We resume now our study in Genesis chapter 18. We're looking at these first few verses when Abraham is sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. And he lifted his eyes and looked and behold three men were standing by him.

And when he saw them he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the ground and said, My Lord, if I have now found favor in your sight, do not pass on by your servant. Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet and rest yourselves under the tree and I will bring a morsel of bread that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by inasmuch as you have come to your servant.

They said, Do as you have said. The details of a story, we've mentioned this before, whenever you're in a narrative section of scripture, some people have that phrase, you know, the devil is in the details. Well, the wonderful truths of scripture are often in the details, especially when you're in a narrative passage.

And we sometimes are moving forward and following the plot or following the thread of a story and we don't always stop and notice the details. And many times the key to understanding what's happening is in those details. Sometimes it's the structure, the way the story is told, the things that are repeated, the parallelism that exists between two things, and we've seen a lot of those recently.

In verse 1 here, one of the details that's easy to pass on by is the location where this is taking place. God doesn't just appear and walk around in the eyes of men anywhere. When He chooses to manifest Himself in a special way, it's usually in a special place.

You think immediately of Mount Sinai, where the thunder and the dark clouds and Moses with his face glowing in the dark, literally. He was at that same place before he ever went to Pharaoh, and God told him to put his shoes off his feet because the place where he was standing was holy ground. There is no talk here of Abraham taking his sandals off or anything or that this is holy ground, but the place is significant.

And it's mentioned on purpose. We don't always get the mention of the place. You look at some of the previous appearances.

In chapter 17, it tells us the time. It tells us when Abraham was 99 years old God appeared, but it doesn't tell us exactly where he was. But here in chapter 18, verse 1, it does tell us where, and that means something.

That detail is there for a reason. Where is Abraham when God appears to him? He is by the terebinth trees. I don't know how they're ever going to resolve this.

Some people say terebinth, others say oak. Some kind of a tree. The trees of Mamre.

What is this place? Well, we have seen it before, and we want to stop and look at this location because this, believe it or not, is one of the keys to understanding that everything that's going on here is that God appears to Abraham at the terebinth trees or the oak trees of Mamre. In Hebrew, this is Alon Mamre, A-L-O-N. And it's the word Alon that we have difficulty with.

In fact, some of the ancient Talmudic commentators and Jerome and others who translated this into Latin actually used words that mean valley. There's a Latin word, V-A-L-L-I-S, from which we get our word valley, and Jerome used that to translate this portion of Genesis, this scripture. But Alon, according to our best research, is a type of tree.

I don't know the difference between a terebinth and an oak. I can barely tell an oak from the other trees in the woods just around here. But we'll say that these are terebinth trees because that's what it says in the New King James.

Terebinth trees of Mamre. Do you remember the last time we saw this place mentioned? It's been mentioned once previously in our study. Turn back with me to Genesis chapter 13, verse 12.

We had the Egypt episode. Abram went down there, said Sarah was his sister. Pharaoh got sweet on her.

They had problems, and they returned and came back to the land. And then Lot and Abram, you know, this town ain't big enough for the both of us kind of a thing. And so Lot turns his eyes eastward and sees the plain of Jordan well watered.

That was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. So Lot chose for himself, in verse 11, all the plain of the Jordan. Lot journeyed east, and they separated from each other.

This is the first time we've really seen Lot come to the fore as something other than just a name mentioned accompanying Abram. Now he's a person, he's got his stuff there, and he becomes an issue. And so he and Abram separate.

Verse 12, Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan. Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent even as far as Sodom. So the first time Lot gets mentioned, the place where Abram is living is mentioned because God speaks to Abram after he separates from Lot.

And that fact is emphasized in verse 14. The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, after Abram got himself disconnected from Lot, then God speaks and promises him the land that he turns his eyes to. Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward, southward, eastward, and westward, all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever.

I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth. If a man can number the dust, then your descendants can be numbered. Arise, walk in the land through its length and width, for I give it to you.

So verse 18, then Abram moved his tent. After Lot leaves, after God makes the promise, Abram moved his tent and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built an altar there to the Lord. This is Abram in his prime.

This is Abram when he is really hitting on all eight spiritual cylinders. He has separated himself from Lot, who lacks the heart for the calling of God, who lacks the vision to see the opportunity, who doesn't want to stay with Abram. He wants to go pursue material things.

He wants to go make a difference. He's going to go impact the culture down in Sodom and Gomorrah. Abram receives the promise of God after he disentangles himself from that relationship, and then Abram moved his tent and he builds an altar to the Lord right there at the terebinth trees of Mamre, which will later become Hebron.

This is significant. Do you remember when the five kings of the plain came down and captured all the people and carried them away? Look in Genesis 14, verse 13. In verse 12, they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom and his goods, and departed.

And then in Genesis 14, verse 13, Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, for he dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner. And they were allies with Abram. So Abram is there, and it mentions where he is, and this is the tidings that Lot has been captured.

So the first time when Lot becomes an issue and Abram separates from him, the terebinth trees of Mamre are mentioned. The second time the terebinth trees of Mamre are mentioned is when Abram gets the news that Lot's in trouble. Now this third time, we're getting into the whole Sodom and Gomorrah thing.

The whole reason for God's visit here is He has come down, remember we read last week, He's come down to see if the iniquity in Sodom and Gomorrah is as great as He has heard it is. And you've got the whole Lot and wife of the pillar of salt and daughter's business happening. So Lot is an issue again.

So the terebinth trees of Mamre, Lot keeps cropping up in that same context. The site of this encounter, the terebinth trees of Mamre, it's going to undergo a couple of name changes down through Scripture. If you look in Genesis 23, turn forward, we'll get here Lord willing in our lifetimes.

Genesis 23, verse 17, the field of Ephron which was in Machpelah, remember the cave of Machpelah is where Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are going to be buried and their wives and

so forth, some of their wives. This is the story of Abraham acquiring that cave. The field of Ephron which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field and the cave which was in it and all the trees that were in the field which were within all the surrounding borders were deeded to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth before all who went in at the gate of his city.

And after this Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre, that is Hebron in the land of Canaan. So the field and the cave that is in it were deeded to Abraham by the sons of Heth as property for a burial place. Notice the repetition and the emphasis in that little account there.

That is an important site. It's a memorial site. It's a sacred place.

It's important to Abraham. He buys it at full price from the sons of Heth. It is the place where he stood when God promised him that every place he would look and set his foot would belong to him.

And it is going to be his burial place. It is also going to be called Kiriath Arba. We find this out as we go forward in Scripture.

If you look in Numbers 13.22, Numbers 13.22, this is the account of the spies going in. The first generation of Israelites have come up near the Jordan. They want to go into the land.

They send the twelve spies, the ten guys plus Caleb and Joshua. They go into the land and they're looking around. And Moses sent them in verse 17 to spy out the land of Canaan.

They said, Go up this way into the south and go up to the mountains and see what the land is like, whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, few or many, whether the land they dwell in is good or bad, whether the cities they inhabit are like camps or strongholds, whether the land is rich or poor, and whether there are forests there or not. Be of good courage and bring some of the fruit of the land. Now the time was the season of the first ripe grapes.

So they went up and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin as far as Rehob near the entrance of Hamath. In Numbers 13.22, they went up through the south and came to where? They came to Hebron. They came back to the place where Abram had once stood, where Abram had once sat in the door of his tent, the oaks of Mamre, the terebinth trees of Mamre.

That's Hebron. Ahimai, Sheshai, and Telmai, the descendants of Anak, these are the Anakim, the giants, they dwell in this place that Abraham purchased that belongs to Abram by promise, by deed and title from the sons of Heph. But over the course of the generations and with Israel being in bondage for 400 years, there are squatters on the

land.

And they're the giants, they're the Anakim. And you have a note here, Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt. Moses would know this because he was in Egypt when Zoan was built.

Then they came to the valley of Eshkol and there cut down a branch with one cluster of grapes. They carried it between two of them on a pole. They also brought some of the pomegranates and figs.

The place was called the Valley of Eshkol because of the cluster which the men of Israel cut down there. And they returned from spying out the land after 40 days. So that field that was in front of Machpelah and that area there, now there are vineyards there.

And this great giant cluster of grapes, it's so big, they cut it down and they have to hang it on a pole and two guys have to carry it because it's so rich and luscious. God has blessed that land. And the giants have taken it because they can take anything they want and that's the most choice part of the area there.

So they departed and came back to Moses and Aaron. And you remember the report. They said in verse 27, we went to the land where you sent us.

It truly does flow with milk and honey and this is its fruit. Nevertheless, the people who dwell in the land are strong. The cities are fortified and very large.

Moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there. The Anakim, the giants. The Amalekites, and they give the roster of all the other people who inhabit the land.

The Amalekites, the Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, Canaanites. Then verse 30, Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, let us go up at once and take possession. He's ready.

For we are well able to overcome it. But the men who had gone up with him said, we are not able to go up against the people for they are stronger than we. And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out saying the land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature.

It wasn't all the people that they saw in the land. They saw the Anakim. They were men of great stature.

But now they're saying all the people we saw in the land are huge. We saw the giants. The descendants of Anak came from the giants and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight.

And so we were in their sight. Think about Hebron. Think about the terebinth trees of

Mamre.

Think about Abram and Lot. It's a decision point, isn't it? That's the place Abram goes, Lot goes to Sodom. You make a choice there.

This is the place where Abram is fruitful. This is the land and the area and the place where he builds the altar to the Lord where God appears and talks to him and makes him promises. He's about to have an experience here of the personal, physical presence of God right there outside the door of his tent under the shade of his trees in this place.

It's a place of great opportunity. But for Israel, here in Numbers, it's not a place you arrive at just by sauntering in. They're going to have to fight and hack their way through the land to get there.

They're going to have to defeat these squatters, these evil occupants of the land that God has commanded them to drive out. They're not going to be able to get back to the place that Abraham gets to at Mamre without a fight. They're going to have to slay the Anakim to regain that ground.

Abraham didn't come to Mamre as soon as he left Ur, did he? He had a long journey, a long spiritual journey before he reaches that place of really growing and trusting in God and walking by faith. And when he reaches that place, he goes to Mamre and he builds an altar there. And he builds his memorial, the tomb that is going to represent the fact that he was here on this earth.

He puts it on that ground in Machpelah because he says, this was my best spot. This is when I was really doing well. This is where God appeared to me.

This is the place of fruitfulness and function. And the place where God is pleased with me is right here at Mamre. And this is where Israel has got to get back to.

And God doesn't deliver them right across the Red Sea and say, now let's hustle on up here to Hebron. Let's hustle on up here to the place where Abraham was. It's a challenge.

And this generation is not up to it. They say, the challenge is too great. We can't get back up there to Hebron.

We can't go cut any more of those big grapes. All of that fruitfulness, all of that blessing, all of that promise. There's too many obstacles.

It's too difficult. We're just grasshoppers. And there are giants in the land.

So you can begin to see, this is a very symbolic place in Scripture. In Joshua chapter 10, we have the record of when this is in fact recaptured. Remember the 40 years? They don't go in because of the report of the 10 spies.

And that generation drops and the next generation comes into the land. We saw in the last few weeks, Joshua chapter 4 and 5, where you have the circumcision of the men at Gilgal. And they're going to go from Gilgal and they're going to take this area.

Remember the Gibeonites? Some of the people of the land come up against the Gibeonites. They're the ones that fooled Joshua with the moldy bread and the old sandals. And they made truce and they became hewers of wood and haulers of water.

Well, now that marker is called in and the Gibeonites come and say they're attacking us. You have a covenant with us. Come help us.

And so Joshua does. Look at verse 6 of Joshua 10. The men of Gibeon sent to Joshua at the camp at Gilgal because this generation has renewed their relationship with God.

They underwent circumcision at Gilgal, the place where God rolls away the reproach of Israel. And He says, Do not forsake your servants. Come up quickly.

Save us and help us. For all the kings of the Amorites who dwell in the mountains have gathered together against us. Who are these kings? Look up in verse 3. Adonizedek, king of Jerusalem, Hoham, king of Hebron, Pyram, king of Jarmuth, Japhia, king of Lachish, and Debir, king of Eglon.

One of these five kings is the king of Hebron. He's the squatter up there in the land of the Anakim. Well, it would be easy.

Oh, those Gibeonites, they fooled us. Why should we have to honor the treaty that Joshua made with them? We could put ourselves at risk. We're going to have to go up against the Anakim.

The Israelites didn't even want to go against the Anakim for their own sakes 40-something years earlier. And now they're called upon because of the terms of a covenant that they made with the Gibeonites. But in verse 7, Joshua ascended from Gilgal.

He and all the people of war with him and all the mighty men of valor. The Lord said to Joshua, Do not fear them, for I have delivered them into your hand. Not a man of them shall stand against you.

And this is one of the high, great chapters of the history of Israel. This chapter 10. This is the occasion when the sun stands still.

Joshua therefore came up on them suddenly, having marched all night from Gilgal. The Lord routed them before Israel, killed them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, chased them along the road that goes to Bethlehem and struck them down as far as Ezekiah and Makeda. And it happened as they fled before Israel and were on the descent of

Bethlehem that the Lord cast down hailstones from heaven on them as far as Ezekiah and they died.

There were more who died from the hailstones than the children of Israel killed with the sword. Then Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel and he said in the sight of Israel, Son, stand still over Gibeon and moon in the valley of Aijalon. So the sun stood still and the moon stopped until the people had revenge upon their enemies.

Is this not written in the book of Jasher? The sun stood still in the midst of heaven and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day. There has been no day like that before it or after it that the Lord heeded the voice of a man for the Lord fought for Israel. See, they're in this same region.

They're heading right back up to Hebron. And God is fighting the battle to get them there. This is the victory that that first generation could have had when they saw the grapes from Eshcol, when they heard the report from Hebron that the Anakim were there and Caleb said, let's go up and take it.

We can certainly overcome it. This is the victory they missed because they didn't have faith in God. God killed more of the enemy with hailstones than they had to kill with their swords.

So in verse 15, Joshua returned and all Israel with him to the camp at Gilgal, but the five kings had fled and hidden themselves in the cave at Makeda. It's a real interesting story there about walling up the kings and going and fighting the battle and then coming back and getting the kings out. And they wipe out all the people and then in the last half of chapter 10, you have the destruction of these cities that had come up against the Gibeonites.

Joshua passed from Makeda and all Israel with him and verse 29, they fought at Libna. They fought against it. It was delivered into their hands.

They went from there, verse 31, to Lachish. They camped against it and in verse 32, the Lord delivered Lachish into their hands. Then in verse 33, Horam king of Gezer came up to help Lachish.

Joshua struck him and his people. Verse 34, from Lachish Joshua passed to Eglon. All Israel with him.

They camped against it, fought it. They took it on that day, struck it with the edge of the sword. All the people who were in it he utterly destroyed just as he had done at Lachish.

Then in verse 36, Joshua went up from Eglon and all Israel with him to Hebron and they fought against it. And they took it and struck it with the edge of the sword. Its king, all its

cities and all the people who were in it.

He left none remaining according to all that he had done to Eglon but he utterly destroyed it and all the people who were in it. Then Joshua returned. All Israel with him to Debir.

They fought against it. Same thing happens in verse 39. Verse 40, Joshua conquered all the land, the mountain country and the south and the low land and the wilderness slopes and all their kings.

He left none remaining but utterly destroyed all that breathed as the Lord God of Israel had commanded. Joshua conquered them from Kadesh Barnea as far as Gaza and all the country of Goshen even as far as Gibeon. All the kings of the land Joshua took at one time because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel.

Then Joshua returned and all Israel with him to the camp at Gilgal. Ultimately, because of this conquest, this area is going to belong to someone. Do you know who Hebron ultimately goes to when they come and settle in the land and they have all the enemies driven out? Turn to Joshua chapter 14, verse 13.

You remember that wonderful speech? I hate to skip over it, but Caleb, when he gets ready to settle in the land, makes his request. He says, Give me that high ground. Verse 13, Joshua blessed him and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as an inheritance.

You can't think of a more appropriate man to inherit the oaks, the terebinth trees of Mamre than Caleb the son of Jephunneh who was the first to say, Let's go up and take it. He saw those grapes. He was probably on one end of that pole bringing them back, and he finally gets it.

Verse 14, Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day. Why? Because he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel. The name of Hebron formerly was Kiriath Arba.

Arba was the greatest man among the Anakim. And then the land had rest from war. So it had belonged to the Anakim.

Now it belongs to Caleb because he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel. If you look in 2 Samuel 2 and in 2 Samuel 5, you will discover that David was anointed king of Judah in 2 Samuel 2, verse 1, in Hebron. David is anointed king over all Israel.

Sometime later, 2 Samuel 5, verse 1, in Hebron, both anointings of David, his anointing over Judah and his anointing over all Israel, took place in Hebron. It's a remarkable, significant place. And in Genesis 18, we're seeing the beginning of the formation of that pattern of how significant this place is going to be in the life of Israel and in the

communication of God's plan.

This is the place of victory. This is the place of fruitfulness. This is the place where God appears as a man and talks to Abraham face to face.

Very few individuals have enjoyed that privilege. But this is the place that is going to enjoy that significance. So we don't want to lightly breeze over verse 1 of chapter 18 when it says, God appeared to Abraham by the terrible fruits of Mamre.

We have the advantage of our perspective of knowing what that means. And it tells us a lot. It's a great place of victory.

It's a great place of fruitfulness. But it is always a place you arrive at having won your battles. Having won the battles that God fights for you.

Having wholly followed the Lord. That's when God can put that open door of opportunity before us. The door that no one can shut.

There was nobody that could shut the door to Israel when they entered the land by faith and headed toward Hebron. There was nobody that could shut the door for Caleb. Not even an entire generation of people that he had to wait for to pass away.

But nobody could shut the door on him. Abraham is about to lay hold of great promises from God. He is about to experience one of the greatest privileges any human being has ever had.

The personal presence of the Lord God. And this is the place where it happens. So, it says that he appeared.

And it says the Lord appeared. But it talks about he sees three men. Well, is it the Lord or is it a man? If you subscribe to the woodenly literal mode of interpretation here, it says Abraham lifted his eyes in verse 2 and behold three men were standing by him.

Well, this is a very fascinating juxtaposition. What does verse 1 say about who appeared? It says the Lord appeared. What does verse 2 say? Three men were standing.

Well, is it one Lord or is it three men? Well, this sort of suggests to your mind the whole Trinitarian idea. Is he one God or is he three Gods? Is he one person or is he three persons? And you have a strong suggestion here of the tripartite nature of God. Because the Lord appeared to Abraham but the party that represents the Lord is composed of three individuals.

One of them stands out from the rest. That's the one that Abraham addresses. And he says, My Lord, do not pass by your servant if I have found grace in your eyes.

And that brings us to the subject that we touched upon last week of Christophanes or

pre-incarnation appearances of the Lord Jesus Christ. This has been a fairly common understanding of passages that talk about the angel of the Lord. This passage and others.

Jacob wrestling with the angel or wrestling with a man. People think, well, the principle is that Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, he is the revealed member. He's the one that comes down and speaks with men and so forth.

And so these would be Old Testament appearances of Jesus Christ. And he's the God the Son. And if there's any bodily appearing to be done, he's going to do it.

I would argue that we may have misunderstood for a couple of reasons. One of the primary things is when you look at Hebrews chapter 1 verses 1 and 2, what does it say? How does the book of Hebrews begin? The King James has real quaint language there talking about diverse ways and so forth. The New King James is a little more intelligible perhaps.

Look at Hebrews chapter 1. God who at various times, I think in the Old King James it says God who at sundry times in diverse ways. God who at various times and in various ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets has in these last days spoken to us by a Son. It's in the last days that God speaks to man through a Son whom he has appointed heir of all things.

And the idea that God communicated differently to the fathers and the prophets and in the last days spoke through the incarnate word, the Lord Jesus Christ is something to take into account. Secondly, there is a need to account for the presence of these three individuals on the assumption that this is at least a suggestion. I'm not saying that one is God the Father and one is God the Son and one is God the Holy Spirit, but that is suggested to our minds by the fact that there are three of them here.

But our relationship is with the Father. Jesus Christ emphasizes this over and over again. He says, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No man comes to the Father but by me. If you have seen me, you have seen the Father. I and my Father are one.

Jesus Christ emphasizes our relationship is with the Father. Who do we pray to? We pray to the Father. We pray in Jesus' name.

We pray in the power of the Spirit. But our relationship is with the Father. It seems remarkable that people have stopped at the way and haven't gotten to the destination.

To take nothing away from our appreciation for the Lord Jesus Christ, He's not our ultimate destination. He came to bring us to the Father. And our relationship is with the Father through Him.

And He is the firstborn among many brethren, but all of us belong to the Father. So the idea here that is suggested, at least in my mind, is that this central figure, the one before whom Abraham bows and to whom he addresses himself, is at least in representative form, God the Father. He is the one that says, I needed to come down and see if these reports are so.

And that's consistent with our understanding of the Father's role in the Trinity. He is the one who plans. He is the one who judges.

He is the one who assigns responsibility. He normally sits up in heaven, and at least as it is presented to us, reports are brought to Him about how things are going. And then from time to time, He would say, I will go down and see for myself.

Remember the Tower of Babel incident? When God speaks and He says, let us go down and see what this is that's happening. It's in Genesis chapter 11, verse 5. The Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the sons of men had built. And the Lord said, Indeed, the people are one, and they all have one language.

And this is what they begin to do. Now, nothing which they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let us go down, and there confuse their languages.

And you wonder if it isn't this same group, this same party of three, that comes down to view. What we discover when we see this language of God coming down, it's almost always in a context of judgment. When God comes down to look around, it's in a context of judgment.

We see it here in Genesis 11 at the Tower of Babel. Genesis 11, 5 and 7. Look at Exodus chapter 3 and verse 8. In Exodus chapter 3 and verse 8, the Lord says, He says in verse 7 of Exodus 3, I have seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites.

Now therefore behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh, that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt. So God says, I have come down when He's speaking to Moses out of the burning bush.

You see this same idea several chapters over in Exodus. In Exodus 33.5. I was looking at Genesis 33.5. That was an interesting switch. Exodus 33.5. After the incident of the golden calf, and the disciplinary judgment, Moses intercedes, Lord don't blow away these people, and so forth.

The Lord tells them in Exodus 33.5 to resume their journey, and head toward that same land. He says in Exodus 33.2, I will send My angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, the Jebusites. Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey.

I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people. God says, I'm not going to maintain My presence among this stiff-necked people. So, I will send My angel.

But I Myself am not going to go up. Look at verse 5. The Lord had said to Moses, Say to the children of Israel, You are a stiff-necked people. I could come up into your midst in one moment and consume you.

Now, therefore, take off your ornaments, that I may know what to do to you. So, because of their transgression, God says, I personally am not going to go up with you. I will send My angel.

So, you have the flip side of that coin, where you do not enjoy the personal presence of God. God, in effect, has knocked on that door for Israel, and they haven't valued it. The first time Moses disappears for a couple of weeks, they're down there doing the golden calf dance.

You have in Micah chapter 1 and verse 3. Don't often get the chance to go to Micah. It's right after Jonah. Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah.

Micah says, This is the word of the Lord that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. Now you have a lament song, a song of judgment. Hear, all you peoples, listen, O earth and all that is in it.

Let the Lord God be a witness against you, the Lord from His holy temple. For behold, the Lord is coming out of His place. He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth.

When the Lord leaves His holy temple, you know you have that thing in the Psalms, The Lord is in His holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him. Reverence and respect. When people lose that reverence and respect, when people start engaging in gross immorality and evil and so forth, what happens? The Lord leaves His holy temple.

And you almost get the idea that the angelic hosts are whispering to each other, The Lord has left the holy temple, stand by. Big time judgment is going to fall on someone. Because the Lord is a witness against the people in the earth from His holy temple.

He is coming out of His place. He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth. Why did God come down in Genesis 11? It was to look at and judge the people at

Babel.

Why does the Lord come down in Genesis 18? It's to look at and judge the people in Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities of the plain. Why does God come down at Mount Sinai? It's symbolic. He hands out the law.

The law of Moses is, by the law comes the knowledge of sin. This is the thing that evaluates and shows us the problem. The story of Israel in the Old Testament under the law is showing us the problem to which Jesus Christ is the solution.

So when God comes down on the mountain, there's quakings and lightnings. It's referred to over in Hebrews. We haven't come to that mountain anymore.

We come to the new Jerusalem. That judgment phase is over with. Now we're back to having that open door and having that time of opportunity.

So you have to watch. When you see God coming down, you see this in Genesis 18, right there in verse 21. He says, I will go down now and see whether they have done, so this is Sodom and Gomorrah, according to the outcry against it that has come to me, and if not, I will know.

So this is God's appearance here. This is a function. This is my contention.

This is a function of God the Father. This judgment. God the Father.

Our God is one Lord. He is the one who speaks to Moses. He is the one who commissions him.

He is the one who speaks out of the cloud. He is the one who gives the commandments. This is who is standing here, speaking to Abraham.

In this appearance, and I'm skipping the central part of this account a little bit to focus on the idea of the Lord appearing to him. He lifts his eyes. He sees these three men.

And so, he says in verse 17, after you have these intermediate things that we'll go back to, the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing? Since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him. For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has spoken to him. God says, I have known Abraham.

I know he's going to do righteousness and justice. He's going to train his children. He's obedient.

He's faithful. That's why he's dwelling here by the altar at the terebinth trees of Mamre.

That's why I have come.

He says, I'm not going to hide from Abraham what I am doing. When we dwell in that place, when we open that door, and God comes in, and we extend out hospitality, Abraham shares a meal with the Lord God Almighty here. Jesus says, I'm standing at the door and knocking, so that believers will open the door, and I can come in and share a meal with them.

When we do that, when that's our first priority, then that door of opportunity is going to open for us to go out and do the things that people try to jump to without that intermediate step. They want to walk through a door of opportunity. There are a lot of open doors out there.

They're just not ones that God has put before believers. They're not the door that has been opened and no man can shut. They're doors that people have opened themselves, or have crashed through themselves, or that the tempter has put there, disguising himself as an angel of light.

But God does not hide from Abraham what he is doing, because Abraham is in a position to know. The ones who are mature have their senses exercised to discern good and evil. God reveals his will.

This is one of the principles we studied way back when we were looking at divine guidance. If we know the Lord and if we are known by him, we're going to understand his will. We're going to see what he's up to.

God comes down personally and lets Abraham know what he's about to do, because Abraham is dwelling here at Mamre. Abraham is in this Hebron area, this place that's going to be the inheritance of Caleb, who, in my opinion, I don't think there's a greater believer in the Old Testament than Caleb. I can hardly get through that story, because he is such a great example of faith.

God says, I have known him in order that he may command his children and his household after him. Verse 20, God reveals these things. He says, Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, because their sin is very grave, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to me.

And if not, I will know. Then the men turned away from there and went towards Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the Lord. And so, once again, this central figure of the three, and this, by the way, is very fascinating in verse 22.

It says in your Bible, The men turned away from there and went towards Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the Lord. That is not what Moses wrote. This originally said, The men turned away from there and went towards Sodom, but the Lord still stood

before Abraham.

This is the first of several places in the Masoretic text of the Hebrew Scriptures where they consciously amended the text. And they put a note there to let people know that they made a change. But they changed it because it was thought to be irreverent to God, disrespectful to picture God standing before Abraham.

And so they switched it around and said, Oh no, that's not right. Abraham should be standing before God. But that's not what Moses wrote.

This place where Abraham is dwelling is a wonderful place. God comes down in bodily form. Specifically, he acts as though he's going to pass by.

But it's specifically a test for Abraham. It's a visit for Abraham. It's communication for Abraham.

God comes down and stands before Abraham. What a place of privilege. It's worth fighting the Anakim to get to this place.

It's worth fighting the five kings of the plain through the power of God and faith in God. It's worth driving out the enemies in the land. It's worth surviving your own failures the way Israel did, the way Abraham does, the way David will and will be anointed in this place as king of Judah and ultimately as king of all Israel.

It's a great place. And they should not have changed this. This is the greatest honor that can be done to a human being, for God to stand in their presence.

And it glosses over and denies Abraham the heritage of this reward. God came down and stood before Abraham. He sends the two others on to go down to Sodom and Gomorrah.

We're going to see them deal with Lot. But he still stood before Abraham and gives Abraham the opportunity for intercession that we'll study in the next section. I wanted to put before our minds this morning the special nature of this place because this is what Jesus is talking about in Revelation 3. This is the opportunity that's put before us.

We can dwell by the terebinth trees of Mamre. We can open that door of hospitality and have fellowship and enjoy the personal presence of the Lord in the person of Jesus Christ. Remember over in John 14 when Jesus says, The one who has my words and keeps them, he it is that loves me.

And I and my Father will come to him and make our home with him. We will dwell with him. Not just a one-time visit like Abraham experiences here.

But daily, if we open that door and enjoy and exploit the opportunity for the personal presence of God, we will know what God is up to. We will discern the good. We will see the evil.

There will be light on our path. The honor that has done us through what Christ has accomplished of enjoying the personal presence of God is ours and can be ours every day. That's what equips us.

That is what puts us in the place of having that door open before us that no man can shut. That we can walk through to fulfill the calling of God. It's just a tremendous opportunity and it's pictured here.