

99-02-21b

We wanted to pursue our investigation of this situation that God faces Abraham with when he reveals to him that there has been an outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah that says the idea that this outcry has reached to heaven. There's a lot you can look at in the Word of God with regard to this idea. It goes all the way back to the murder of Abel where God tells Cain that the blood of his brother cries out from the ground.

This is Genesis 4.10. He says, What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. God hears the outcry. The interesting thing here is God does not say the stench of their sins has come up before my face.

When you hear an outcry, this is from the victim's standpoint. God does not present himself. He doesn't say, They have offended me to such an extent.

They have disregarded me to such an extent that I've got to do something. This is the kind of thing that God says about Israel when he says, You have offended me. Think about our scripture reading in Malachi.

God says, You have dishonored me. You have ignored me. You have disobeyed me.

You have broken faith with me. God takes these things personally when they are from believers. Sodom and Gomorrah are manifestly not towns full of believers.

God says, It is the outcry from this town that has come to me. And like the blood of Abel, it is the consequences for the victims that are the issue. It isn't the offense against the righteousness of God.

It isn't their gross immorality per se. It is the outcry. There are people who are saying, This has got to stop.

This is the cry of the victim. You get the idea here that this is like the blood of Abel crying out from the ground demanding that this be rectified, that a stop be put to it. And so God presents himself as though he wouldn't have known about it if the outcry, if somebody hadn't come and reported and demanded justice.

It isn't a personal offense the way he presents it to Abraham. He says, This outcry has come and I've got to go see if this is so. And if not, I will know it.

If for some reason this is an unfair accusation or these things are not so, I will know it. But right now I don't know. I've got to go find out.

So this is the chance for Abraham perhaps to say, Well, Sodom's not such a bad town. There are some bad elements in it, but they've got a lot of civic things going on and they've got this, that and the other. He could try to make an offense, but he does not.

Initially he doesn't do anything. In verse 22, Then the men turned away from there and went towards Sodom. But the Lord still stood before Abraham.

And remember, this is the first of 18 places in the Masoretic text of the Old Testament where a scribal correction was made and they made a note of it. There's a technical name for this and I could go into a lot of detail, but basically we know from the scribal note here that this should say, The Lord stood before Abraham. But the scribes thought this was inappropriate, that it somehow dishonored God, that God stood before Abraham and it ought to be the other way around.

And so they changed it, but they made a note. They've done this 17 other places of this type of note. They've done 17 other places where the change was made, not to straighten out a textual corruption, but because the idea of the passage didn't seem fitting.

So the Lord still stood before Abraham. So the other two companions, they go on their way and we'll return to that in a moment. But now you'll notice it is as though God is waiting for something.

He's spoken this, but he doesn't depart with the other two. He doesn't say, Well, thanks for the meal, Abraham. You're a wonderful host.

Adios. He stays there and he stands before Abraham. This sort of confronts Abraham and Abraham may have been, his mind is racing.

He's thinking, because there's been no hint up to this point what the purpose of the divine visit is. He's confirmed the covenant. Abraham may have thought that was all there was to it.

But here, God is still standing before him. And so his mind is racing and he's thinking, Lot lives in Sodom. Something needs to be done.

And so this presents Abraham with the opportunity for intercession. How does Abraham go about this intercession? Abraham came near in verse 23 and said, Would you also destroy the righteous with the wicked? And this literally means sweep away. Would you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there were 50 righteous within the city.

Would you sweep away the place and not spare it with 50 righteous being in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, or to sweep away the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked. Far be it from you. What does Abraham appeal to here? He knows something about God.

He is invoking, if you will, the character of God. He's saying, Lord, it is inconsistent with your character that in the act of judging wickedness, you should sweep the righteous

away with it, that you would not preserve the righteous out of this. There are a lot of things that this principle applies to, not the least of which are the people who think that the church is going to go through the tribulation.

Abraham makes a good point. This is a wonderful exercise of his knowledge of God, because God has put this out there. I do this with the girls all the time.

If I know they've been studying a subject, or that they've heard a Bible story, or that they've memorized a verse, or some other thing, I will ask them questions. I know the answers to all these questions. Sometimes I'll ask them, well, then should I go do this, or should I do that? I will take their words and put it in the form of a question to get them to think, so that they're clear, and they can tell me what they have learned.

I'm interested to know what's going on in their minds. Do they understand? Have they connected the dots in this particular situation? So I will posture, I will put something in front of them and ask them questions about it. This is exactly what God is doing with Abraham.

Abraham does a wonderful thing here. This is great, because he doesn't say, oh God, I've got a nephew there, please spare him for my sake. This is what we often do in prayer.

When we want to intercede for someone, we think about a loved one, or someone who's close to us, and we think, oh gosh, I'm going to be hurt if this situation, it's our stake in it. This person is related to me. This is someone I love.

This is someone I care about. Oh God, you've got to help them. You've got to fix them for my sake.

Well, here the situation is reversed. God is going to deliver a lot for Abraham's sake, but Abraham never puts the request or the intercession in those terms. He doesn't say, oh God, spare a lot for my sake.

He says, God, you need to spare a lot for your sake, for your name. What are people going to think of you if you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What about your integrity? What about your justice? What about your righteousness? And this is a very helpful example for us in terms of our prayer, because it forces us to do a little more thinking when we pray. We pray in Jesus' name.

We say, Lord, do this for the sake of the Lord Jesus. Well, is that really the content of our prayer, or are we praying because we want to see something happen? We want relief, or we want resolution. We want solution.

We want recompense. We want things to iron out and work out well. We want circumstances to turn out for the best.

And we essentially come before God and say, oh God, I really want this thing to take place. Can you make it happen? That is what Abraham's approach here. And Abraham, you will notice, is a successful intercessor, just as Moses we saw over in Exodus.

He is a successful intercessor in both cases, and we can point to many others. They invoke not, oh God, I really love this people. I brought them this far.

Just give them another chance. I am asking you as a personal favor to me, kind of a thing. Abraham and Moses both invoke the character of God.

Lord, what will people say about you if you destroy your own covenant people? Lord, will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What does that say? That is not consistent with your revealed character. That is not consistent with what you have said and done in the past and so forth. So this is a real helpful thing for us to absorb and try to follow in our own intercessory prayer life.

So he begins and he says, suppose there were 50 righteous within the city. Would you destroy the place and not spare it for the 50 righteous that were in it? So all Abraham is doing here is establishing the principle that if there were some quantity, and he starts with 50. Nobody knows why he started with 50, but this is probably some percentage of the total population.

Sodom is a large town. Actually, Sodom and Gomorrah are the two that are mentioned, although there are five cities that will be destroyed. Atma and Zeboim are also going to be caught up in this destruction, but God just mentions Abraham, Sodom and Gomorrah specifically because Lot lives in Sodom.

So he says, is there the principle of salt? Is there the principle of blessing by association? He doesn't say, Lord, if there were 50 righteous, would you deliver them out of the destruction? He says, Lord, would you spare the city for their sake? Because they are there, will you not destroy the people in their periphery? Of course, he invokes the righteousness and justice of God. In verse 25, he says, will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked so that the righteous should be as the wicked, far be it from you, should not the judge of all the earth do right? He knows that God is the judge of all the earth. He knows that God should and will do right, and so he invokes this.

In verse 26, the Lord said, if I find in Sodom 50 righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. This is like God doesn't know yet if there are 50 righteous or not. He says, I'm on my way down there to evaluate.

If I find 50, I will spare it. I don't know if they're there yet or not, but if I find 50, I'll spare the whole city. This establishes a very important principle that we have seen by example but haven't had explicitly stated.

You had the 8 who were preserved through the flood, but what does it say when the

waters receded? It doesn't say God remembered the 8. It says God remembered Noah. For the sake of Noah, God doesn't seem to be particularly impressed with Shem or Ham or Japheth or their wives or with Mrs. Noah, but God remembered Noah. The principle of blessing by association is established.

Similarly, here, God doesn't just say if there are 50 righteous, I will spare the righteous and sweep away the wicked. He says, I won't even use the broom if there are 50 in the city. I'll spare the whole thing.

Then Abraham answered and said, indeed now, I who am but dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak the Lord. You realize that there is some trepidation here, and Abraham on the one hand recognizes that he is trying to persuade God, the righteous judge of all the earth, to do something different. He is careful to point out that he understands his place.

He says, I am dust and ashes, and yet I am taking it upon myself to speak to the Lord. Of course, he is supposed to take it upon himself to speak to the Lord. That's why God came.

We have gotten kind of a fatalistic attitude about prayer. Sometimes we say, well, God knows all and God knows the end from the beginning. He hears before we ask him this and that and the other.

We get sort of perfunctory and even stop praying altogether about certain things. We don't intercede. We don't bring things before God.

It isn't that God needs us to remind him of problems or that God needs us to ask him. We need that exercise. It is for our benefit.

This is for Abraham's benefit and for ours that this whole episode is taking place. God already knows exactly what he is going to do to Sodom. He knows Lot lives there.

He knows he is going to deliver Lot. He knows all of the details of what is going to happen. This is an exercise for Abraham.

Abraham is supposed to take it upon himself to speak to the Lord, and so are we. We recognize that we are dust and ashes, and a lot of times we stop right there. We say, well, God is wise.

God knows what to do. God is going to do what is best. We don't even run ourselves through the exercise of coming before him in prayer and addressing an issue.

We are supposed to. Even if you perceive what the will of God should be, you look at a situation and you say, this requires the justice of God. I am just going to stand well back and let God deal with this situation.

We are supposed to address these things in prayer, the reason it is in our periphery, particularly things in our immediate periphery. This is Abraham's nephew. When things happen in our family, in our household, in our work environment, in our circle of acquaintances and friends, we are supposed to address those.

We are supposed to take it up before the Lord. It is our exercise in application. It is our exercise in faith.

It is our opportunity to apply the word of God, to claim the promises of God, to invoke the character of God, because we have to think our way through. This is why they make you write papers in seminary. I used to think, I have read the book, I have heard the lecture, I understand the point here.

Why don't we just do that and go on? It is a seminary education. You are trying to prepare men to study and teach the word of God. I don't want to be an academician.

I don't want to be making a book, there is no end, writing articles and things. Why do I have to write this 20-page paper, or this 15-page paper, or this 30-page paper? Why do I have to go through this? It is a good exercise to reduce your thoughts to writing. It is a good exercise.

You may know instinctively when someone comes up to you and says, Christ died for all sin at the cross. You don't need to confess it anymore. Sin is all forgiven.

That is 1 John stuff. That is for unbelievers. You say, no, I know that this is the foot-washing idea, this is cleansing in an experiential sense.

You know those things. A lot of times you will have an instinct or a knowledge that something is right or something is wrong. When you have to sit down and figure out exactly why, where is the scriptural support that you are resting this on? Where is the portion of the character of God and so on? When you write a paper, you have to organize these things and present them in a coherent manner.

You learn a lot. Every time I would start to write a paper, I would think, I already know this, it is just a hassle to have to try to reduce it to writing. But by the end of the paper, I had learned and organized and understood things much more thoroughly by going through that exercise.

That is what prayer does for us. Prayer is not an aid to God. We are not keeping an eye on things for God and letting Him know when things need to be addressed.

Prayer is for us. It is a necessary exercise. When Abraham says, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord, that is our calling as well.

Pray without ceasing. I exhort men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer. Look at all

of your prayer exhortations in scripture.

Jesus said, when you pray, this is how you should pray to the disciples. Paul gives examples of his prayers as models to follow. When you look at the prayers of Paul, they are chock full of application of the word of God.

That is what we need to do. That is what Abraham is doing here. Suppose there were five less than the fifty righteous.

If this principle is true, that there is preservation under the salt principle, we are to be salt and light in the world. The reason God does not obliterate the planet is that there is a sprinkling of believers all through it. The reason God will preserve nations and regions and so forth all down through history is that there have been a sprinkling of believers and He will not sweep up the righteous with the guilty.

Abraham first establishes and verifies that the principle is valid. Now he is going to say, well, how few grains of salt can we have and still have the preservation take place? And he begins whittling it down. If there are five less, would you destroy all the city just for a lack of five? If it is true for fifty, then it would be true for forty-five, wouldn't it? So he said, if I find there forty-five, I will not destroy it.

You notice here in the first two instances with the fifty and the forty-five, God says, if I find the fifty, if I find the forty-five, I will spare it. Then He speaks to him again in verse 29 and says, suppose there should be forty found there. Now God's verb here changes and He says, I will not do it for the sake of the forty.

A little shorter. Then He says in verse 30, let not the Lord be angry and I will speak. Suppose thirty should be found there.

So He said, I will not do it if I find thirty there. So the first two times, I will not destroy it. The second two times, I will not do it.

Then in verse 31, indeed now I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord. Another reminder of the principle we just discussed. Suppose twenty should be found there.

God says, I will not ruin it for the sake of twenty. Then He said, let not the Lord be angry and I will speak but once more. Suppose ten should be found there.

He said, I will not ruin it for the sake of ten. But you get the idea that God has had about enough of this whittling down mode and you also get the idea that Abraham feels like, well, now the city is safe. What is he basing this calculation on? Well, he's thinking about Lot.

Lot's got a family. There's Lot and his wife. That's two.

We know he has at least two daughters. That's four. He has sons-in-law or prospective

sons-in-law for these two daughters.

That's six. He has other sons and daughters apparently. And Abraham figures there are about ten in the family of Lot.

So Abraham is figuring, well the family of Lot, those are the righteous. There's at least ten of them. The city is safe.

He speaks no further. So the Lord went his way as soon as he had finished speaking with Abraham and Abraham returned to his place. So that's the end of that scene.

Then in chapter 19, now the two malakim, which is translated here angels, came to Sodom in the evening. However, this is the only place in the story where malak is used to describe these individuals. They are elsewhere called men, anashim.

And these are messengers. They have come to Lot with a message. I do not think it is appropriate to view or treat these individuals as angels per se.

They certainly don't have wings. They're not cherubim or seraphim. They are messengers.

And as we saw in our scripture reading, malak can refer to a number of different types of individuals. These messengers are sometimes human. They are sometimes divine in origin.

It's fascinating to look at the times and the places where God has sent some sort of messenger. This often comes under the term angel of the Lord in the King James or messenger of the Lord. But a messenger of the Lord in some cases is simply a human prophet.

In other cases it does appear to be a supernatural being. In this case we have supernatural beings and there's a real easy way to tell that these are more than just godly men from the east or something that happened by. One of the reasons is that we know the central figure is the Lord and he goes up from Abraham and these other two were his companions.

Secondly, you remember our map idea where Hebron is and where Sodom is? That's a distance of about 40 miles. How fast do you think? You know that it took all afternoon for the meal and the slaughtering of the animals and so forth. So it's probably not until say 3 or 4 in the afternoon at the earliest that this conversation we've just noted takes place.

Well, by sundown just a couple of hours later these two men are entering Sodom. It says in verse 1, the messengers came to Sodom in the evening and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face toward the ground.

So the sun has not yet set and they're there. How did these individuals travel 40 miles in an hour or two? Well, they're divine messengers. They didn't walk the whole way.

It's interesting though that the picture is preserved for Abraham. Abraham walks with them up to the hilltop. They walk away and walk out of sight.

But once they're out of sight of Abraham, they don't keep walking. It doesn't take them a day or a day and a half to walk down to, you think about how long it would take you to walk 40 miles. If you can walk 3 miles an hour, I mean figure it out, it's going to be quite a good time even if you're not climbing hills and having to stop for refreshment and so forth.

But basically they walk around a corner and next thing you know they're walking into Sodom. They have skipped the intervening walking because their physical presence is only useful for human eyes to see. You have these two messengers suddenly appearing and appearing in a number of places.

You remember back in Genesis 16 when we had Hagar out in the wilderness trying to get back to Egypt. There was a messenger from God that appeared to her and spoke to her, knew her name and so forth. This was in 16.7 of Genesis.

Now the angel or messenger of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness. He said, Hagar, Sarah's maid, where have you come from? Where are you going? Verse 9, the angel of the Lord said to her, return to your mistress and submit yourself under her hand. Then the angel of the Lord said to her, I will multiply your descendants exceedingly.

Who will multiply? Is it the messenger who will multiply? This is one of the interesting things about these appearances is it is very difficult to distinguish the messenger from the one the messenger represents. It says the angel of the Lord but then when he speaks he says I and he is speaking as though he is God. I will multiply your descendants exceedingly so that they shall not be counted.

But then in verse 11 he says you will call his name Ishmael because the Lord has heard your affliction. But then she calls the name of the place because the name of the Lord who spoke to her, you are the God who sees her. So we have this intermingling and in some cases it seems as though it is the Lord himself and in other cases it seems as though it is someone speaking on behalf of the Lord.

And in the ancient Near Eastern culture people did not really distinguish between the two. There's a fascinating case that I'll let you look up for yourself. I've mentioned it before but when you look at the case where Jesus has a conversation with the Roman centurion.

Behold I say to one come and he comes and to another go and he goes. He says Lord

you don't need to come under my roof. Read that account in each of the gospels that preserves it and in one gospel it says that the centurion sent messengers out to Jesus.

In the other account it appears as though the centurion is speaking face to face with Jesus. In the Word of God in that ancient Near Eastern culture it was considered to be the same thing. If a messenger came out and spoke it was basically as though the person himself was speaking.

So you'll see it phrased both ways just as you have here. It's very common in the Word of God. So this is important to understand so that we don't find it necessary to assume that this is a Christophany, a pre-New Testament appearance of Jesus Christ himself that the angel of the Lord is in fact the Lord.

It can be a messenger of what we would call an angel. It can also be a prophet as we saw in Malachi. There's another fascinating instance of this over in Joshua.

If you look in Joshua chapter 5 and verse 13 you find that Joshua had the well-known appearance of the commander of the armies of the Lord. It came to pass when Joshua was by Jericho that he lifted his eyes and looked and behold a man stood opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand. Joshua went to him and said to him, Are you for us or for our adversaries? So he said, No, but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.

Well, what creatures constitute the army of the Lord? If you go over and think about Gehazi and so forth, having his eyes open and seeing the hosts of the Lord, these are angelic armies. Who do you think the captain of those hosts is? And verse 15, the commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, Take your sandal off your foot for the place where you stand is holy. And Joshua did so.

Why is this place holy? This puts us in mind of Moses' experience at the burning bush. Then we look down in chapter 6 verse 2, Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel. None went in, none came out.

And the Lord said to Joshua, See I have given Jericho into your hand. So is the commander of the armies of the Lord the Lord himself or is he speaking on behalf of the Lord? It is something of a mystery. It is not clear which is the case.

If God is the commander of his own army, then why do you have him called the commander of the Lord's army? Why doesn't he just say, I am the Lord whom you serve or some such thing? And you don't have a clear indication of when this individual departs. He gives instructions on down there, but you don't see the idea of departure there. You have this idea of the mixture taking place.

There is a real interesting passage on the other side in Judges. If you look in Judges chapter 2 verse 1, this is near the death of Joshua, shortly before his death. The last part

of chapter 1 of Judges talks about how Israel did not completely obey the Lord.

This is something that is going to persist all the way down to the time of David where they didn't completely drive out the enemies. You should have a note there if you have a New King James at verse 27. That section is labeled incomplete conquest of the land.

It talks about all the places that they didn't drive everybody out. Verse 33, Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh or the inhabitants of Beth Anath, but they dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land. Now the Amorites in verse 34 forced the children of Dan into the mountains for they would not allow them to come down to the valley.

The Amorites were determined to dwell in Mount Heres and Eyalon and Shaalbim. Yet when the strength of the house of Joseph became greater, they were put under tribute, so forth. So there was this compromise.

They did not completely obey the Lord. They did not completely drive out the enemies. So then look at chapter 2 of Judges.

Then the messenger of the Lord came up from Gilgal. This is the Malak of the Lord. Came up from Gilgal to Bohem and said, I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers.

Now who is speaking? The Malak or God himself? It wasn't the Malak that spoke to the fathers necessarily. And I said, I will never break my covenant with you. This is God himself speaking in the person of the Malak.

He says in verse 2, continuing to quote, I will make my covenant with you and you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land. It's either my covenant or their covenant. You can either have a covenant with the people of the land or you can have a covenant with me.

You can't have both. You shall tear down their altars, but you have not obeyed my voice. The Malak says, why have you done this? Therefore, I also said, I will not drive them out from before you.

God had promised. God had made a covenant with Israel and said that he would drive out their enemies from before them. But they have breached the covenant.

So God says, you've broken my covenant. You have not been obedient. I am not going to drive out the enemies from before you.

I will not drive them out from before you. They shall be thorns in your side and their gods shall be a snare to you. So it was, in verse 4, when the angel of the Lord or the Malak of the Lord spoke these words to all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their

voices and wept.

They called the name of that place Bochim and they sacrificed there to the Lord. When Joshua had dismissed the people, the children of Israel went each to his own inheritance to possess the land. So an odd little episode here where the messenger of God starts at Gilgal, that highly significant place where Israel was circumcised, where they dedicated themselves, renewed themselves to the covenant that God established in Genesis 17.

He starts at Gilgal and he comes all the way up to Bochim and he proclaims, doesn't go to Joshua, doesn't appear to Joshua in a dream. He cries out, this may have been a man in Israel that had a prophetic gift and spoke on behalf of the Lord, may have been a divine messenger. People have made the argument that this was God himself, that this was Jesus Christ in a theophany or a pre-incarnation appearance because he speaks as though he is God in the first person.

But this is very common. You find in Judges 6-11, this is when you get into the story of Gideon, you find in chapter 6 that Israel is suffering in the land and the Midianites are oppressing them, the Amalekites are oppressing them. Verse 6 of chapter 6 of Judges, Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord.

And it came to pass when the children of Israel cried out to the Lord because of the Midianites that the Lord sent a prophet to the children of Israel who said to them, thus says the Lord God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of bondage and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of all who oppressed you and drove them out before you and gave you their land. Also I said to you, I am the Lord your God, do not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell, but you have not obeyed my voice. So this is clearly a human prophet speaking in this case.

But then in verse 11 what happens? Now the Malak of the Lord came and sat under the Terebinth tree which was in Ophrah which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress in order to hide it from the Midianites. Once again you have this presence representing God pausing to rest under the shade of the Terebinth tree. Verse 12, the angel of the Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor.

Gideon said to him, O my Lord, this is the same type of tension we have in the address of Abraham where is it Adoni or Adonai. Adonai is just a term of respect like we say Sir. Adonai is Lord God with a capital L. He says O my Lord and you may have a text note there that says this is Adonai.

Both of them have the same consonants so this is an interpretive choice made by the Masoretic scribes when they included the vowel points. O my Lord if the Lord is with us why then has all this happened to us and where are all his miracles which our fathers

told us about saying did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt but now the Lord has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. So you get the idea here that Gideon does not recognize who this divine messenger is because he talks about God in the third person.

Then the Lord turned to him and said in verse 14, go in this strength of yours, this might of yours and you shall save Israel from the hands of the Midianites. Have I not sent you? So he said to him O my Lord and now it is pointed as Adonai. O my Lord how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest I am least.

The Lord said to him I will be with you. You shall defeat the Midianites as one man. Verse 17 he said to him if now I have found favor in your sight.

Puts us in mind of what Abraham says. If I have found favor in your sight turn in and let me offer you hospitality. If I have found favor in your sight then show me a sign that it is you who talk with me.

There is some doubt in Gideon's mind. There is no doubt in Abraham's mind is there? He has no doubt with whom he is dealing. He slaughters the finest animal, puts out the bread, walks with him, talks with him.

You get the idea that Abraham knows from the beginning. Gideon is not quite so sure. At first he thought he was just a man.

Now he suspects that it is the Lord but he wants proof. He says do not depart from here I pray until I come to you and bring out my offering and set it before you. He says I will wait until you come back.

Exactly what the Lord did under the oaks of Mamre. Gideon went and prepared a young goat and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour. In all three of these cases, the visit to Abraham, the visit to Lot, the visit to Gideon, unleavened bread is involved.

Not only because of the absence of leaven as a symbol for sin but also because it is quick. That is why they ate it on the night before the exodus. It is quick to make.

The meat he put in a basket. He put the broth in a pot and brought them out to him under the terebinth tree. You get the idea that the narrative here is hammering on the terebinth tree to remind us of Genesis chapter 18.

The angel of God said to him, take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock and pour out the broth. He did so. The person here does not partake of the meal.

Why? Because the purpose in this meal is different. Gideon says if you are who I think you are then prove it to me. Let me bring you this meal.

So now the angel of the Lord in 21 put out the end of his staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread. Fire rose out of the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. The angel of the Lord departed out of his sight.

Now Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the Lord. So Gideon said, alas oh Lord God for I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face. Then the Lord said to him, peace be with you, do not fear, you shall not die.

Well that presence had disappeared but he apparently hears this voice. You are not going to die. So Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and called it the Lord is peace.

Yahweh shalom. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. Of course that is the day in which Judges was set down which was probably early in the reign of David.

Now it came to pass the same night that the Lord said to him, now it is in the night, now he is having a night vision. He is having all the same types of communication from God that Abraham had. Take your father's young bull, a second bull of seven years old, tear down the altar of Baal, build an altar and so forth.

Gideon took ten men and did so. They said who has done these things and so forth. You can read on down through.

When you get to verse 33, the Midianites and Amalekites, the people of the east gathered together and they crossed over and encamped in the valley of Jezreel. But the spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, he blew the trumpet and the Abiezrites gathered behind him, sent messengers through all the land and so forth. So you have the spirit of the Lord coming on him to accomplish that task.

Now there is one other incident here that we want to take a look at in Judges and this is over in a few chapters forward in the story of the birth of Samson in chapter 13. Again in chapter 13 of Judges, the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. The Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.

There was a certain man from Zorah of the family of the Danites whose name was Manoah. His wife was barren and had no children. And the Malak of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, Indeed now you are barren and have born no children but you shall conceive and bear a son.

More echoes of the visit to Abraham. Now therefore please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink and not to eat anything unclean. For behold you shall conceive and bear a son.

No razor shall come upon his head for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb. He shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines. The woman came and told her husband, A man of God came to me.

His countenance was like the countenance of the angel of God, the Malak of God. Very awesome. But I did not ask him where he was from and he did not tell me his name.

He said to me, Behold you shall conceive and bear a son. Drink no wine or similar drink. Don't eat anything unclean.

He will be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death. Verse 8 Then Manoah prayed to the Lord and said, O my Lord, please let the man of God whom you sent come to us again and teach us what we shall do for the child who will be born. God listened to the voice of Manoah and the angel of God came to the woman again as she was sitting in the field.

But Manoah, her husband, was not with her. Then the woman ran in haste and told her husband and said to him, Look, the man who came to me the other day has just now appeared to me. So Manoah arose and followed his wife.

When he came to the man, he said to him, Are you the man who spoke to this woman? And he said, I am. Which is, of course, one of the names of God. Manoah said, Now let your words come to pass.

What will be the boy's rule of life and his work? So the angel of the Lord said to Manoah, Of all that I said to the woman, let her be careful. He basically has to repeat everything that he said before just like he has to do for Sarah. She may not eat anything that comes from the vine, nor may she drink wine or similar drink, nor eat of anything unclean.

All that I commanded her, let her observe. Then Manoah said to the angel of the Lord, Please let us detain you, and we will prepare a young goat for you. The angel of the Lord said to Manoah, Though you detain me, I will not eat your food.

But if you offer a burnt offering, you must offer it to the Lord. For Manoah did not know he was the angel of the Lord. Then Manoah said to the angel of the Lord, What is your name, that when your words come to pass, we may honor you? The angel of the Lord said to him, Why do you ask my name, when seeing it is wonderful? Of course, this has been grist for a lot of people.

His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, and so forth. Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering and offered it upon the rock to the Lord. And he did a wondrous thing while Manoah and his wife looked on.

It happened as the flame went up toward heaven from the altar, the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar. When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell on their faces to the ground. When the angel of the Lord appeared no more to Manoah and his wife, then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the Lord.

Manoah said to his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God. But his wife

said, If the Lord had desired to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor would he have shown us all these things, nor would he have told us such things as these at this time. You can tell who is the stronger person.

This is why the man of God, the angel of the Lord, keeps appearing to the wife and not to Manoah, because Manoah is a little thick when it comes to being able to apply and to draw conclusions from the word of the Lord. She bears the sign and calls his name Samson. The child grew, and the Lord was with him.

And the spirit of the Lord began to move upon him at Mahanadab, between Zorah and Eshtael. So these are fascinating parallels, and each of them reminds us, and I think intentionally harks back to this visit to Abraham, because these are rekindlings of the flame of the covenant that God made with Abraham. God is still trying to fulfill those words, and he is confirming his word with his presence.

That's what God does in our life. He confirms his word in our souls with his presence. And it is important for us to follow the example of Abraham, to hear the word of the Lord, to draw conclusions from it, to make it the object of our faith, to engage in prayer, not only for ourselves, but intercessory prayer, to undertake to speak to the Lord, just as Abraham does.

It's a powerful reminder to us that God is very interested in us getting the message. That's why he sends the messenger in these dramatic fashions. And we have the messengers, all of the messengers of the Bible speak to us.

All of these things were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Let's close in prayer. We thank you, Father, for your word, which is the message brought to us by messengers.

We thank you for the coming of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. In the latter days you have spoken to us through him. He is the embodiment and the fulfillment of all of your words in Scripture.

We know that we have the opportunity to be like him, to reflect his image and his glory. We pray that your word will live in our souls, that God the Holy Spirit will be able to take it and use it to transform us, to show us what you are doing and what you are about to do, and that we will live our lives in that light. And in so doing, fulfill our calling, fulfill your purpose and your plan for this age.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.