



... And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD....

16 And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way. 17 And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; 18 Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? 19 For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. 20 And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; 21 I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know. 22 And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD. (Gen 18:16-22)

The high Desert of Judaea is hauntingly quiet and dry. The winds evaporate every drop of water that may have arisen with the morning dews and damps. Because of this low humidity, the winds are very cooling and cause the high temperatures to be moderated by the winds that cool a man's body. There is even a serene beauty in the barren hills and greener valleys of the land. At night, the purple, pristine canopy of heaven is punctuated by thousands of brilliant stars that can barely be seen from the countries of Europe. The quiet solitude of the of the high desert lands of the Middle East belie the cruel and savage wars being waged in the more populated areas. But this is true of the world itself. The wickedness of the world today offers no peace, no solitude, and no communion with the heavens above. If a man wants to get close to God and His Creation, he must come apart from the discordant public converse and flee to a place of solitude. Abraham was greatly blessed to have been led by God to such a cherished place of silent peace as opposed to that choice made by Lot to pitch his tent toward that wickedly disposed city called Sodom.

Abraham may not have known how blessed he truly was to find himself ensconced in such a haven of rest and tranquility as the deserts and plains of Canaan. He may have considered the plight of his nephew, Lot, from time to time; but his soul, untainted by the wickedness of Sodom, could never have imagined the magnitude of

evil that persisted in the city where Lot had chosen to live. He may have mused about Lot and his other kindred who had moved with Lot to Sodom. He knew that his being near Sodom, by pitching his tent in that direction, would most likely lead to commercial concerns driving him all the way to living there.

As he contemplated these things, or some others unknown to us, he sat looking out across the blurry noon-day landscape from the vantage point of his tent door. The day had been as every other up until this present moment. There is constant flux and change taking place in the cities, but not on the high desert. Each day is pretty much as the preceding day. Such a surrounding lends a settled contentment to the heart of man without the stress of worry and doubt about the safety of one's household or possessions. The haze at noonday is caused by the heat waves rising from the desert floor much like the mirage of water standing on a roadbed as one traverses the deserts of Arizona, Southern California, and Nevada.

As Abraham's eye wandered aimlessly over the scene before him, they were suddenly attracted to three dots that seemed to fade in and out on the desert winds. Each time they reappeared, they grew stronger yet and more steady. ¹ *And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day;* ² *And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground.* (Gen 18:1-2) These were three angels, but one was no ordinary angel – it was the Angel of the Lord (a common term to represent the pre-Incarnate Christ). If these three had been simply angels, they would not have allowed Abraham to bend the knee to them – only God is worthy to receive our worship! Later verses of this same chapter definitely reveal one of the Angels to be the Lord Himself. I bring to the bar the witness of John the Revelator: ⁸ *And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, **I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.*** ⁹ ***Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.*** (Rev 22:8-9)

In debriefing military students in flight school after each flight period, it is good policy to begin by pointing out the good points of their performance prior to those that are not so good. Such a policy serves two purposes: 1) the student is given a hopeful disposition to believe that he can do well even if not in all ways; and 2) it evokes his close attention to the remainder of the debriefing. God uses the same approach now with Abraham! He first lays out the good news of His specific promise that Sarah shall conceive and bear a child near the advanced age of 100 years. Though this seems ridiculous and even humorous to Sarah, God insists that He will give conception to Sarah - after a mild rebuke for laughing at the promises of God. Sarah futilely denied laughing, but Christ knows our hearts without limits of distance or time much as He knew the character of the Woman at Jacob's Well. According to the laws of nature, men and women of advanced age cannot truly bear children, but this was not an issue limited by nature, but made possible by Nature's God. Isaac would be the child's name. It means LAUGHTER since Sarah laughed at the prospect.

So why was Isaac the child of promise and not Ishmael? It is because Ishmael came through the exertions of carnal man and of the a woman not the legitimate wife of Abraham. Isaac came through the miraculous working of the Holy Ghost – much like that of the conception of our LORD. Isaac will be a type of Christ, but much inferior in the human sense. He is the child of promise.

Now the Angels are a bit troubled and arise to go to Sodom. ¹⁶ *And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the*

way. ¹⁷ **And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do;** ¹⁸ Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? ¹⁹ For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; **that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.** (Gen 18:16-19) We have a glimpse in this passage of the perfection of mind with which the Lord thinks. The LORD already knows His judgment against Sodom. He will try the patience of Abraham in revealing His purpose in going to that wicked and abominable city of sodomites and sinners. He reveals to us as much of His mind as he knows will be of benefit to us. He both encourages, and warns, us of His intentions. Please note, also, in the above verses that the blessings of the Lord are contingent upon our fidelity to Him.

²⁰ And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; ²¹ I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know. ²² And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD. (Gen 18:20-22) I pray that no reader will go away with the thought that the LORD did not already know the extent of wickedness in Sodom, for He did! This is a manner of gentle speech He employs with Abraham to hint of the possibility of mercy to those Abraham loves. Notice that, like a good man of persistent prayer, Abraham had the audacity to stand before the LORD to plead his case. Never give up in prayer regardless the hopelessness of the circumstance for all things are possible to God.

I feel it necessary and helpful to display the entire discourse between the LORD and Abraham: ²³ And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? ²⁴ Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? ²⁵ That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? ²⁶ And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. ²⁷ And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes: ²⁸ Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it. ²⁹ And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake. ³⁰ And he said unto him, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there. ³¹ And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake. ³² And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake. ³³ And the LORD went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place. (Gen 18:23-33)

Do you see anything amiss in Abraham's prayerful petition? He is right that it is not the LORD'S intent to destroy the righteous with the wicked, however, Abraham is asking the Lord not only to spare the few righteous, but the city as well. God already knows there are not fifty, forty, thirty, twenty, or even ten righteous left in Sodom; but God will spare righteous Lot and his two daughters only and destroy that sewer of evil called Sodom.

As we continue our study, we will find other appearances of the Pre-Incarnate Christ. The faith of Abraham had been built on this, and the consummation of His promised coming. We enjoy the fulfilled fact in joyful retrospect!