The Patriarchs from the book of Genesis Part 10 – September 10, 2023

With input from https://www.holylandsite.com/oaks-of-mamre; https://dailyverse.knowing-jesus.com/genesis-18-17 https://www.bibleref.com/Genesis/18/Genesis-18-15.html

Last week we saw the commandment for circumcision by God to Abraham, his family, and his servants. As sexual debauchery abounds in all the areas around Abraham, we see the next steps God will take in dealing with it, starting in chapter 18.

**Genesis 18: 1-5**

*Now the Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre,*

We heard of the Amorite named Mamre in Genesis 14:13: *Then a survivor came and told Abram the Hebrew. Now he was residing by the oaks of* ***Mamre the Amorite****, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner, and they were allies with Abram.*

**HolyLandSite.com:** It was at the oaks, or great trees of Mamre, that God's covenant with Abraham, which would affect the entire world, would be carried out. It's an amazing and unique event that is the most important covenant in the Bible. The covenant established that all humanity would be saved by grace through faith.

**Genesis 15:1-6:** After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, *“Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; your reward shall be very great.” 2 But Abram said, “Lord God, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” 3 Abram also said, “Since You have given me no son, one who has been born in my house is my heir.” 4 Then behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, “This man will not be your heir; but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.” 5 And He took him outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” 6 Then he believed in the Lord; and He credited it to him as righteousness.*

God reaffirms this truth in the New Testament in **Galatians 3:6-11**: *Just as Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. 7 Therefore, recognize that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. 8 The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “All the nations will be blessed in you.” 9 So then, those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. 10 For all who are of works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all the things written in the book of the Law, to do them.” 11 Now, that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, “the righteous one will live by faith.”*

The Oak of Mamre in Hebron in the West Bank is a site venerated by some as the "Oak of Abraham". It is distinct from the more ancient site of Mamre. It owes its name to an ancient tree, which seems to be dead but has a young sprig growing next to it, and stands on the grounds of the modern Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia's Church of the Holy Forefathers and Monastery of the Holy Trinity.

The old tree fell in 2019, but there are plans to preserve its trunk and sustain the growth of the young shoot. A long-standing tradition is that the Oak of Abraham will die before the appearance of the Anti-Christ. The oak was officially declared dead in 1996. It is estimated that this oak is approximately 5,000 years old.

**Location:**

1. Located within Hebron, Mamre is set in the Judean Mountains about 20 miles (32 km.) south of Jerusalem.

2. It stands 3,000 feet (914 m.) above sea level, making it the highest city in Israel.

3. While there have been tensions in the past between Israelis and Arabs, the Oaks of Mamre are protected by Israeli forces, and around 250,000 tourists visit Hebron and this area annually.

There have been discovered 5 different layers of construction at this site:

1. Time of Abraham (2050 BC) Bronze Age pottery during the time of Abraham was discovered at this site which confirms that it was inhabited during the time of Abraham.

2. Time of the Kingdom of Israel (1000-586 BC)

3. Time of Herod the Great/Early Roman Period (63 BC to 70 AD)

4. Time of Constantine & the Byzantine Period (324-638 AD)

5. Time of Islamic Period (638 AD and beyond

The evidence that this is the place where Abraham met with God is extremely strong. With this being the case, this site is holy ground because God was here and met face to face with Abraham.

**Genesis 18: 1-5**

*Now the Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre,*

*while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day. 2 When he raised his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed down to the ground, 3 and said, “My Lord, if now I have found favor in Your sight, please do not pass Your servant by.*

This encounter suggests that they were viewed by Abraham as possibly “passing by” but Abraham begs them to stop. And, Abraham recognizes his Lord!

*4 Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet, and make yourselves comfortable under the tree; 5 and I will bring a piece of bread, so that you may refresh yourselves; after that you may go on, since you have visited your servant.” And they said, “So do as you have said.” 6 So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah, and said, “Quickly, prepare three measures of fine flour, knead it, and make bread cakes.”*

*7 Abraham also ran to the herd, and took a tender and choice calf and gave it to the servant, and he hurried to prepare it. 8 He took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he was standing by them under the tree as they ate.*

*9 Then they said to him, “Where is your wife Sarah?” And he said, “There, in the tent.” 10 He said, “I will certainly return to you at this time next year; and behold, your wife Sarah will have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him. 11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing.*

*12 So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I have become old, am I to have pleasure, my lord being old also?”*

What Sarah did understand is that she had been barren her entire life, unable to conceive a child with Abraham. Now at the age of 90 or so, she had passed menopause. Some commentators suggest that she and Abraham, about 100 himself, had long since stopped even having intercourse.

All of the evidence of Sarah's life told her that having a baby was impossible. So, her initial response to the idea was the same as Abraham's had been: Sarah laughed in unbelief. That response seems entirely understandable to us. The Lord, however, will gently rebuke her for it in the following verses. That rebuke, in a humorously ironic way, will include the name of the child she is about to conceive: Isaac, meaning "he laughs."

*13 But the Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I actually give birth to a child, when I am so old?’ 14 Is anything too difficult for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.” 15 Sarah denied it, however, saying, “I did not laugh”; for she was afraid. And He said, “No, but you did laugh.”*

The Lord and Sarah have been having a conversation without looking at each other. The Lord has been speaking to Abraham, fully aware that Sarah, behind him inside of a tent, is hearing every word. In this conversation, He has told Abraham for the second time, Sarah for the first, that she will have a son by this time next year. When Sarah laughed at the idea, the Lord revealed He knew she laughed to herself and He even knew her thoughts. He revealed that He was the Lord, that nothing was too hard for Him, and that she would have a son.

Now, oddly, Sarah chooses to deny that she had laughed. This silly lie feels beside the point when the Lord has told her that she will, miraculously, have a baby in a year's time. The Lord repeats that she did laugh. And yet, we're told Sarah was afraid. Perhaps she thought the Lord may punish her in some way for her unbelieving laughter. Or, for listening in on a conversation in which she was not explicitly involved.

He does not condemn her, though. In fact, as God revealed to Abraham in the previous chapter when Abraham also laughed at such an idea, their son's joyful name would be Isaac, which means "laughter." This name not only evokes happiness, it also serves as a subtle, almost playful rebuke of Abraham and Sarah's mutual doubt.

*16 Then the men rose up from there, and looked down toward Sodom; and Abraham was walking with them to send them off. 17 The Lord said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, 18 since Abraham will certainly become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? 19 For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him.”*

**Daily Verse: Knowing Jesus:** The Lord knew that men's hearts are only evil continuously. There are none that are good - not even one, for all have sinned and fall short of God's glorious righteousness. Adam's sin in the garden caused all his offspring to be born dead in trespasses, stained with sin, having an old sinful nature that is at enmity with God, and a disposition that nurtures evil and sinfulness.

Many years had passed since the world was purged of the wickedness that predominated in the pre-diluvian (pre-flood) world. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord and was saved with seven others to continue the human race. But the sin nature of man is such that it cannot be changed by training or teaching. It can't be altered through resolutions or vows, self-denial or self-cleansing, mortifying the flesh or undertaking good works of the flesh. Wherever man went, sin travelled with him!

God knew the only way to change man's heart of stone, was to completely replace it with a new heart of flesh. The Lord knew that the only way for sinful man to be declared righteous and have their sins forgiven was if a 'Kinsman-Redeemer' was willing to spill his own, innocent blood to pay the price for man's sin. God knew that the only One good enough was the Seed of Abraham, Who would one day be born into the world as the sacrificial substitute for the sin of the world - Jesus Christ - the Seed of the woman - the Seed of Abraham - the Messiah of Israel - the Son of God.

The wickedness of the world continued to corrupt the children of Adam and Noah and infiltrate every city. The evil in mans' heart continued to gravitate towards wickedness as humanities very soul was flooded with rebellion and their evil plans were translated into ungodly practice. The Lord had purposed in His heart to judge these evil cities on the plain because the outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah was very great, and their sin was exceedingly grave. And so the Lord said to Himself, "shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?"

God knew why He said this. God knew what He would do. God knew the outcome of man's slide into debauchery and sin. But the Lord recorded this for our learning and He revealed to His servant Abraham, the gravity of judgement that was about to fall on five, wicked and prideful cities that only did evil continuously. God wanted Abraham to abhor evil and choose the good. He wanted him to follow God's way and teach His children what is righteous and pure. His question was to challenge His servant towards a godly hatred of sin and a godly compassion for His creation.

May we hate sin with a godly hatred but love the sinner in need of redemption, and may our hearts be filled with compassion and love for those that are lost as we plead with God for their salvation.

*20 And the Lord said, “The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave. 21 I will go down now and see whether they have done entirely as the outcry, which has come to Me indicates; and if not, I will know.”*

*22 Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham was still standing before the Lord.*

Notice in **chapter 19:1** *Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting at the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he stood up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground.*

*23 Abraham approached and said, “Will You indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? 24 Suppose there are fifty righteous people within the city; will You indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it?*

*25 Far be it from You to do such a thing, to kill the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?” 26 So the Lord said, “If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare the entire place on their account.” 27 And Abraham replied, “Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord, although I am only dust and ashes.*

*28 Suppose the fifty righteous are lacking five, will You destroy the entire city because of five?” And He said, “I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there.” 29 And he spoke to Him yet again and said, “Suppose forty are found there?” And He said, “I will not do it on account of the forty.” 30 Then he said, “Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak; suppose thirty are found there?” And He said, “I will not do it if I find thirty there.”*

*31 And he said, “Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord; suppose twenty are found there?” And He said, “I will not destroy it on account of the twenty.” 32 Then he said, “Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak only this once: suppose ten are found there?” And He said, “I will not destroy it on account of the ten.” 33 As soon as He had finished speaking to Abraham the Lord departed, and Abraham returned to his place.*