

### The Lord Promised Sarah Would Have a Son

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that Abraham, Ishmael, and all of his male servants and their sons were circumcised. However, God promised that the covenant He had made with Abraham would be carried out through Isaac, who would be born to Sarah. In this topic, we will see what happened when Sarah heard she was going to give birth to a son.

The Lord came to visit Abraham. Genesis 18:1-5 says, “Then the Lord appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. So 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.’” In these verses, we see that the Lord and two angels came to visit Abraham. This appearance of the Lord is an Old Testament appearance of Christ. The two angels would later go to the home of Lot in the city of Sodom.

The Lord and the two angels came to visit Abraham during the hottest part of the day. At that time, Abraham was sitting in the door of the tent as a protection from the heat of the day. Suddenly, as Abraham was sitting there, he looked up and three men were standing fairly close to him. Abraham quickly got up from where he was sitting in the tent door and ran from the tent to meet them. When he got close to them, Abraham bowed himself to the ground. This may have been a title of respect when Abraham first called his visitor, Lord. However, by verse 14, he realized that it truly was the Lord, the creator of heaven and earth. Genesis 18:14 says, “‘Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.’” Abraham quickly asked if he could prepare a meal for his visitors.

Abraham did not want his visitors to pass by his tent until he had the opportunity to show hospitality to them. Abraham asked if some water could be brought so that the feet of his visitors could be washed. He also invited them to rest under the shade of the terebinth trees while he prepared some food for them. Abraham wanted to refresh his visitors by preparing some food for them and providing an opportunity for them to rest before they traveled on from that place. He said that after they had eaten some food, they could go on their way. In 1 Peter 4:9, we read, “*Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.*” This attitude was certainly illustrated for us by Abraham.

Genesis 18:6-9 says, “So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, ‘Quickly, make ready three measures of fine meal; knead *it* and make cakes.’ And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave *it* to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it. So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set *it* before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate. Then they said to him, ‘Where *is* Sarah your wife?’ So he said, ‘Here, in the tent.’” We see that Abraham had Sarah and the servants prepare a complete meal for his visitors. First, Abraham went to the tent and asked Sarah to mix up a large batch of bread dough. The word translated “cakes” means *a round piece of bread or cake cooked on a hot stone*. This would be similar to the tortillas that are made in many countries today.

Second, Abraham ran to the herd and got a tender and good calf. A calf is a young cow, either

male or female. A calf is usually only a few months old, so the meat is very tender and has a very good flavor. Abraham gave this calf to one of his servants and told him to prepare the meat for a meal for the guests. This would take some time, as that meant that the calf had to be butchered first and then cooked. The normal way to cook meat was over an open fire, so this meant that once the servant had finished butchering the calf, he would have to barbecue it over an open fire. This was hot work in the middle of the day, but Abraham wanted to treat his visitors as special guests. Once the bread and the meat had been prepared, Abraham got some butter and milk to go along with them. As a result, it was a complete meal that he set before his visitors. Then, Abraham stood under the shade of the tree with them and talked with them as they ate this meal.

While they were eating and talking, the visitors asked Abraham the question, “Where is Sarah your wife?” Abraham replied that she was right there in the tent. Once Abraham responded to the call of God to leave his country and go to the land that God would show him, Abraham lived the rest of his life in tents. Hebrews 11:9-10 says, “By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.” These visitors were able to see that eternal focus by the fact that Abraham said Sarah was in the tent behind where they were eating. Her location was very important as we see in the next verses.

Genesis 18:10-15 says, “And He said, ‘I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son.’ (Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.) Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; *and* Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, ‘After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?’ And the Lord said to Abraham, ‘Why did Sarah laugh, saying, “Shall I surely bear a *child*, since I am old?” Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.’ But Sarah denied *it*, saying, ‘I did not laugh,’ for she was afraid. And He said, ‘No, but you did laugh!’” Here, we see that Abraham and Sarah were given a wonderful promise even though it sounded like something that was an impossibility to them.

In these verses, it suddenly becomes clear that this is an Old Testament appearance of Christ. The One who is speaking to Abraham promises that He will return according to the time of life and Sarah, his wife, would have a son. From that point on, we see that it is the Lord who speaks to him throughout the rest of the chapter. We know that this is Christ, instead of the Father, because God the Father told Moses, in Exodus 33:20, “But He said, ‘You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.’” Christ promised that He would return and cause Sarah to become pregnant and that she would give birth to a son. Christ had given this promise to Abraham, in Genesis 17:17, where we read, “Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, ‘Shall a *child* be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a *child*?’” However, he had apparently not told Sarah.

This time, we see that Sarah was standing near the door of the tent and listening to them. She was not thinking of the fact that God could perform a miracle any time He chose. Instead, she was thinking of what she heard from a human point of view. She realized that she would soon be ninety years old and Abraham would soon be one hundred years old. She was physically past the age where she was able to give birth to a child. Sarah thought that it was physically impossible for her to have the joy of giving birth to a son even though that was her greatest desire. As a result, she began to laugh within herself. The fact that Sarah laughed within herself, and did not laugh so she could be heard, meant that this event gave Christ the opportunity to show that He knows our thoughts.

Christ then asked Abraham the question, “‘Why did Sarah laugh?’ saying, ‘Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?’” This question, by Christ, shows that He knew that two different things happened within Sarah. First, she laughed. Second, Christ knew that she had asked herself a question. David wrote, in Psalm 139:1-2, “O Lord, You have searched me and known *me*. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off.” Here, we see that whether the Lord is physically present, as He was with Abraham and Sarah, or whether He is sitting at the right hand of the Father, He knows our thoughts.

God reminded Abraham that nothing is too hard for the Lord. Christ promised that He would return and cause Sarah to become pregnant and that Sarah would give birth to a son. Sarah also teaches us an important lesson. She denied that she had laughed. Then, we are given the reason for her denial. She denied that she had laughed because she was afraid. When followers of Christ speak out of fear, instead of being led by the love of Christ, they may deny Christ if they are depending on their own strength. This happened to Peter the night Jesus was betrayed. Luke 22:60-61 says, “But Peter said, ‘Man, I do not know what you are saying!’ Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’” This reminds us of the danger of depending on our own strength.

Christ corrected Sarah as He said, “No, but you did laugh!” Sarah did not need to act out of fear because the Lord had a great love for her. In fact, the desire of the Lord was for both Abraham and Sarah to be filled with joy. They were going to have a son who would fulfill the promise that God had made to them many years earlier. This is a key lesson for all of us to remember. God will always fulfill His promises. 2 Corinthians 1:20 says, “For all the promises of God in Him *are* Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn that they can count on the promises of God because He will fulfill them. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand this great promise.