

Text: Genesis 18:1-15

Title: "Sharing a Meal with Yahweh"

Time: July 27, 2008 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: The food channel is one of the more common TV selections in the Hobi home, and one of the shows on that channel that we enjoy watching is called "Dinner Impossible." It is about a chef with an English accent who each week has to prepare a complicated dinner for a multitude of distinguished and important guests. Something always goes wrong, and it is interesting to watch how the chef and his crew overcome that obstacle to get the meal served.

Have you ever had to prepare a meal for an especially distinguished guest? It can be a difficult time. Genesis 18:1-15 tells us of such a time in the life of Abraham. Here we read about what it is like to share a meal with the Lord of glory, Yahweh Himself. Now if we were to sit down for a meal this afternoon with the Lord, I am sure that we would expect to learn a thing or two, wouldn't we? Well, thanks to Abraham we can learn what he learned by sharing a meal with Yahweh. I want us to see four things about this meal.

I. Theophany was a part of sharing a meal with Yahweh (vv. 1-2). Note that a theophany is a revelation of the Lord in visible form.

Illustration: Anne Sullivan was the famous teacher who disciplined the blind and deaf Helen Keller, taking her from learning her first word *doll* to eventually graduating from Radcliffe College and writing her own autobiography. In that autobiography, Keller describes the day she met Sullivan as follows:

“The most important day I remember in all my life is the one on which my teacher, Anne Mansfield Sullivan, came to me. I am filled with wonder when I consider the immeasurable contrasts between the two lives which it connects. It was the third of March, 1887, three months before I was seven years old.

“On that afternoon of the eventful day, I stood on the porch, dumb, expectant. I guessed vaguely from my mother’s signs and from the hurrying to and fro in the house that something unusual was about to happen, so I went to the door and waited on the steps. The afternoon sun penetrated the mass of honeysuckle that covered the porch, and fell on my upturned face. My fingers lingered almost unconsciously on the familiar leaves and blossoms which had just come forth to greet the sweet Southern spring. I did not know what the future held of marvel or surprise for me. Anger and bitterness had preyed upon me continually for weeks, and a deep languor had succeeded this passionate struggle.

“Have you ever been at sea in a dense fog, when it seemed as if a tangible white darkness shut you in, and the great ship, tense and anxious, groped her way toward the shore with plummet and sounding-line, and you waited with beating heart for something to happen? I was like that ship before my education began, only I was without compass or sounding-line, and had no way of knowing how near the harbor was. ‘Light! Give me light!’ was the wordless cry of my soul, and the light of love shone on me in that very hour.

“I felt approaching footsteps. I stretched out my hand as I supposed to my mother. Someone took it, and I was caught up and held close in the arms of her who had come to

reveal all things to me and, more than all things else, to love me.”

Application: Verse 1 tells us succinctly that the Lord or Yahweh appeared to Abraham. In verse two we learn that He did so as one of three men. The other two men were angels who accompanied Him (19:1).

What must it have been like to have the Lord appear to you in this way? How blind and deaf we are when it comes to spiritual things, and yet the Lord is willing to reveal Himself to man.

As she remembered meeting Anne Sullivan, Helen Keller says: “I am filled with wonder when I consider the immeasurable contrasts between the two lives which it connects.” Well, if the contrast between Helen Keller and her teacher is immeasurable, far more so is the contrast between Abraham and the Guest who had condescended to have a meal with him that day.

That Guest is the Creator God of the Universe. That Guest is the only begotten Son of the Holy Trinity. John 1:18 tells us “No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.” In 1 Tim. 6:15-16 Paul tells us of Him “who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see.”

Clearly there is mystery here, but the Son of God leaves the unapproachable light of the Father to condescend to be with man. In the words of Helen Keller, when we meet Him we meet the One “who had come to reveal all things to us and, more than all things else, to love us.”

God loves Abraham. Yahweh appears to Abraham and shares a meal with him. Jesus Christ is this Mediator between God and man who establishes this personal relationship between two whose contrasts are truly immeasurable.

Do you have a personal relationship with the God of the universe through Jesus Christ this morning? Do you take your meals with Him? A theophany was part of this meal with Abraham, but we do not need the theophany to have the relationship. Jesus promised His own: "And lo, I am with you always, even until the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20).

II. Hospitality was a part of sharing a meal with Yahweh (vv. 3-8).

Illustration: You do not have to look far at our church for examples of hospitality. Some of our cooks have called themselves "second stringers." First string or second string, it doesn't matter; our devotion to hospitality is one of the wonderful blessings of being a part of New Boston Baptist Church. It does, of course, require that we have a rigorous exercise program, but it is well worth it.

I want us to notice some practical lessons regarding hospitality from Abraham's example this morning.

1. Abraham's hospitality was an act of humility (lord vs. servant; v. 3). It was Abraham's desire to please his Guest ("favor in your sight," v. 3). He offers them simple, humble kindness, nothing necessarily extravagant or ostentatious ("a little water" and "a morsel of bread" vv. 4-5). God is pleased with acts of hospitality because acts of hospitality are acts of humble service. We need not create a state-dinner each time we serve with hospitality. We need only humbly serve.

2. Abraham's hospitality was an act of generosity. He was generous with his time ("Quickly, prepare," v. 6; "Abraham also ran . . . and hurried," v. 7). He was generous with his provisions (3 seahs of flour, a tender and choice calf, curds and milk, vv. 7-8).

3. Abraham's hospitality was an act of appreciation for God's providence ("for therefore are ye come to your servant," v. 5). Abraham saw God's providential purpose in the opportunity he had to show hospitality. Heb. 13:2, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it."

How neglectful have we been of showing hospitality? Scripture clearly commands us to not be neglectful of this important responsibility. Some have entertained angels obeying this command, but all have shown the love of Christ who have done so in His name. Hospitality is an important part of this meal with Yahweh. We should have many such meals as well.

III. Promise was a part of sharing a meal with Yahweh (vv. 9-11, 14).

Illustration: None of my kids were natural-born swimmers. Each of them knew a healthy fear for the water in their younger days. I can remember how much, as a Dad, I wished that they would trust me so that I could teach them to swim and not be afraid of the water. I wanted them to jump into the deep end and let me catch them, but they wanted to always stay in the shallow end, clasping the railing on the kiddy steps, content to splash and sit in the water there. Sure they had a great time, but learning to have fun in the shallow end does not make someone a good swimmer, the kind of swimmer that can rescue himself or someone else in the deep water.

Application: God wants us to trust Him in the deep end. It would have been easy for the Lord to give Sarah and Abraham a child before Sarah went through menopause, but He did not. He waited until the situation seemed hopeless, because He wanted Abraham and Sarah to never forget the answer to this very important question for the believer: "Is anything too difficult for the Lord?"

In Hebrew, the word for *thing* and *word* is the same word, so that phrase could be translated, "Is any word or promise too difficult for the Lord?" (see 15:1, 4 and 17:3, 22). God wants Abraham and Sarah to understand that nothing He has promised to do is too difficult for Him. Nothing He has claimed to do is too difficult for Him.

We have some believers today who cannot bring themselves to trust the very first chapter of God's Word, that God created the universe in six days some six thousand years ago. They know that science requires an old universe just like science requires that women cannot bear children after menopause. The real problem here is that some believers have concluded that there are some words of the Lord that are too difficult for the Lord. God wanted the faith of Abraham and Sarah to get past that shortcoming so that He could use them in a mighty way.

It is in the deep end that we learn to trust the strong arms of God's promise, because in those situations nothing else is working. God brings us there so we can learn that his word is truth, whether or not the dominant views of science or other authorities tend to agree. When we learn to trust, we find that the deep end is no longer a threat.

IV. Transparency was a part of sharing a meal with Yahweh (vv. 10b-13, 15).

Illustration: Have you ever had a conversation you would not want recorded? Have you ever had a conversation you would not want recorded be recorded? Perhaps you have known the embarrassment of that kind of situation. It seems to happen more and more in our day of digital media and internet.

Application: The God of Abraham and Sarah is a God who can see our hearts and hear our thoughts. The writer of Hebrews tells us that “there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:13). How ought we respond to this truth? Two answers to that question are made plain in this passage:

1. Don't laugh when you should believe.
2. Don't deny when you should confess.

Sarah laughed and denied instead of believing and confessing because she forgot that nothing is hidden from the one Abraham had a meal with that day. So it is with us. God knows and sees what no one else does. Laughing and denying will not provide cover for our unbelief and dishonesty. We need to come clean and live transparent lives before the One before whose eyes all things are open and laid bare.

Conclusion: Abraham had a meal with God. Do you know the Lord as he did? We may not be the recipient of the theophany Abraham enjoyed, but we have a book that tells us of what it was like for Abraham as well as for Hagar, and Manoah, and Moses, and so many others.

The revelation we have received in the incarnation, sinless life, and resurrection of God's Son is so very much more

than Abraham could have ever hoped for, and we can read about that revelation in this book of God's truth.

Do you know God this morning because of the revelation of Jesus Christ? Did you take a meal with Him yet today? Do you see how hospitality honors God, how believing His word honors Him, and how all things in our hearts and thoughts are completely transparent to Him, and so must honor Him too? What change does Genesis 18 call for from your life this morning?

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*