

Abraham Part 6

A Personal God

Genesis 14:17-20, 18:1-8

Memory Verses: Psalm 145:18

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Do you know what this is? It is a hand written letter that was sent through the postal service. That's crazy? I can remember when I was a kid and the only way to really get a note to someone or information to someone was through the mail. Then when I was in high-school something crazy was invented that changed how we communicate. Email or Electronic Mail. From that point on no one sent hand written letters anymore. Now if they wanted to send a note they could do it through the internet on their computers. Eventually we got cell phones that could receive emails and send emails. Now our kids aren't even taught cursive in school anymore. Why would they need it? They don't even know what a hand written note is anymore. Or they know about it, like its a historical thing, but they don't know about it. They don't know the joy of receiving a note in the mail that was hand written by someone who took the time out of their day to specifically think of you and send you something penned by their own hand.

About a month ago I came home from work and Hudson ran in yelling, "dad, look what I got, look what I got in the mail?" I said what? He said.. you'll never guess. It's a letter from Eli. A hand written letter from Eli! I've never received a hand written letter in the mail except birthday cards." He was so excited. Now, why did Eli send him a handwritten letter in the mail? Because his parents grounded him from his computer and phone. He had no choice but to revert back to primitive forms of communication. But that didn't matter. Hudson was so happy. Why? Why was he so happy to get a hand written letter? I have an idea. I think because of technology everything has gotten very individualistic and mechanical in our world. People don't feel the closeness with others that they once did. Kids used to go outside and play with their friends for hours and hours. They never got bored because they just made stuff up and their friends were there with them and thats what mattered. Now they communicate to their friends through screens and microphones. It just doesn't feel real. But that letter. That felt real to Hudson. It felt meaningful. It felt personal!

I think we all want to feel a personal touch. Though we struggle to pull our eyes from our phones and computers; though we act like we can't live without them, I think many of us know we'd be better off without them. Humans were not meant to communicate through a screen, we

were meant to be in close proximity with one another. We were meant to be personally involved.

And it is the same for God. People often struggle with a sense that God is a far off and isn't really involved in our daily lives. They feel that maybe he created the world and got the whole thing going and simply watches us on a screen in heaven. Now that it's going, like a neglectful parent, he's just observing us from a distance without getting involved. Maybe we are really on our own.

But that's not our God. Our God isn't far away. Rather he's closer than we could ever realize. Today I want us to see from the life of Abraham that our God is a personal God. One who is truly involved in every aspect of our lives and wants us to draw closer to him every single day! If you are struggling with a feeling that God isn't really close to you right now, this sermon is for you! I promise you God is right here! When you feel that you are on our own, God is closer than you think!

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we need to see here is that... God Personally Reveals Himself As Christ Through Melchizedek. Look with me at Genesis 14:17-20 again. We looked at this passage a couple of weeks ago but didn't have time to dive into all that God has for us in these few verses. Abraham meets a man named Melchizedek who is the King of a place called Salem and is the priest of the Most High God. He blesses Abraham by the God Most High of heaven and earth. In response to him, Abraham gives him a tithe of ten percent of all that he has. Melchizedek is unique for a couple of reasons. He is the only person in the Bible, other than Christ, who is called both priest and King. He receives the tithe from Abraham. At face value this feels like he is receiving worship from Abraham. But there is only one who Abraham worships and it's God. So, the question that these verses make us ponder is... "is Melchizedek God?"

When we see God in the flesh in the Old Testament, we are seeing one of two things. We are seeing a theophany, which would be a physical representation of God. One such example would be the burning bush in Exodus 3, or any time the Angel of the Lord shows up and the response of the people is, "we have seen the face of God." Or we are seeing a Christophany. A Christophany is when Jesus shows up in the flesh before his birth in the Gospels. A classic example of this would be in Daniel 3 when Jesus joins Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace. One of the oldest theological questions is whether Melchizedek is merely a unique man, or whether or not he is a Christophany—a pre-incarnate Christ.

Hebrews 7 helps us put the clues together. Let's look at Hebrews 7:1-10. His name means king of righteousness, his title means king of peace, he has no mother or father or genealogy, he has no beginning or end, he continues a priest forever. In vs.7 he's superior to Abraham, and in

vs.8 he's not mortal but "he lives". This seems pretty cut and dry. The author of Hebrews is highly suggesting that Melchizedek is a christophany. The only hang up is the word "resembling" in verse 3. This is the only place in the bible where this word is used. Some suggest that it means that Melchizedek merely was like Christ. I disagree. I believe the point being made with the usage of this word is that since Melchizedek resembles Christ so precisely, we should think of him as though he was Christ. The author of Hebrews is trying to get us to put the pieces together for ourselves. In my opinion it's clear. Melchizedek was Christ in the flesh.

So what? Great, we've discovered that Melchizedek was Christ in the flesh before his birth. What does that have to do with a personal God? Glad you asked. You see, Abraham was a man who God chose to bless for no other reason than God's will. He sent him to a new land. Told him that he would bless the world through him. A man who God spoke to and guided daily. Abraham didn't need a more personal touch did he? God was already very personal with him. And yet God said, I will be even more personal. I will show Abraham myself in the flesh. I will show him my son who will die for the sins of the world. The one who will come through Abraham's lineage. The one who will bless the whole world through his death and Resurrection. Abe keeps wanting reassurance of his heir... and God shows him Christ! He shows him Himself in the person of Christ and then personally blesses him in person. If Abraham ever thought that he was on his own in the desert or that God was far from him, or that God had left him, God wanted to reassure him that that wasn't the case. God reassured him, I'm here and I'm closer than you think. **When you feel that you are on our own, God is closer than you think!**

The second thing we need to see here today is that... **God Personally Reveals Himself As The Trinity Through The Three Travelers.** Look with me at **Genesis 18:1-8** again. We also got to look at this passage last week but I wanted to look at it again and focus this time on the travelers who visit Abraham. It says the Lord appeared to him in the flesh. What form did he take? Three men. This is a very unique Theophany in the bible. This is the only time the Lord shows up as more than one person. It's very interesting how Abraham refers to them. He calls them collectively, Lord! But he also refers to the three men as "them" in **vs. 8**. They are both one and three. This can only mean one thing. God appeared to Abraham in a way that no other person alive has ever seen. He appeared to Abraham in three persons as the trinity. Here the father takes a form, the spirit takes a form, and of course the son. And, Somehow **Abraham instinctively recognizes the three travelers as one Lord in three persons.** This is the trinity revealed in physical

human form.

And what do we see the trinity doing with Abraham? They sit down and eat a meal with him. They fellowship with him. This is personal. This is as personal as it gets. In **vs 9-14** they reaffirm that this time next year they will have a child. In **vs 16-33** they have a passionate conversation with Abraham about the fate of Sodom. This conversation is also very personal because it concerns the fate of his nephew Lot. God is personally showing Abraham that he cares about his family! Again, here we see that God isn't just involved in Abraham's life from afar, but that he is very intimately and personally a part of Abraham's life. They reveal themselves and they engage with him in conversation and fellowship. God wanted to reveal to Abraham his true nature as the trinity in order to encourage him and give him faith. If Abraham was feeling alone or left behind, or if his faith was wavering, after God shows up like this, all is well. **When you feel that you are on our own, God is closer than you think!**

Application

The application is simple today. Abraham walked closely with God. Abraham has more interactions with a physical representation of God than any other person in the Bible. He has more interactions with God's voice or presence than any other person in the Bible except for Moses. **The life of Abraham illustrates a God who wants to be involved in our lives on a personal level.** Even though Abraham struggled with faith and often felt like God was slow in fulfilling his promises, God was always closer than he thought.

Conclusion

But you may be tempted to say, that was just for people like Abraham. Special people who God chose for big purposes. That isn't for me. God doesn't care to have a personal relationship with me. If that is you, then let me correct you. God cares for you just as much as he did Abraham. And he has proven it by giving himself personally to you through Jesus Christ. **God sent himself to Abraham through Melchizedek and the three travelers, but he sent himself to you through the actual person of Jesus Christ.** Melchizedek blessed Abraham with a blessing but Jesus has blessed you by giving himself to you on the cross. The three travelers blessed Abraham with fellowship but Jesus has blessed you with a deep and intimate relationship through the holy Spirit. God was with Abraham, but God is actually living within you! It doesn't get more personal than that. You get to have an intimate personal relationship with God through the Word of God, prayer with God, and the indwelling power of the holy spirit living inside you! Look at **Psalms 145:18**: the lord is close to those who call on him Our God is a personal God and he is certainly closer to you than you think. **When you feel that you are on our own, God is closer than you think!**