

The Lord Incognito

Gen 18:1-15, 19:1-11

Chase Fluhart

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I. Introduction

When we think about God testing us we usually have in mind a trial by suffering, by *fire*. But this isn't the only way God tests mankind. God doesn't just test our faith and mold our character through hard times, He also does so by *visiting* us. This is what we see in our passages this morning. The Lord makes two house calls—one to Abraham, one to Sodom & Gomorrah. He visits them to test their character, and He does so _____, that is, He visits them with His identity concealed.

II. The Lord Visits Abraham (Gen 18:1-15)

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. . . .

The Lord visits Abraham to test him, and Abraham shows himself faithful. He receives the Lord incognito with eagerness. Abraham gets to practice being like _____—even to God. He gave these three apparent strangers an honorable and exceptional welcome, providing for them against the heat of the day, and going above and beyond the call of duty. The Lord was satisfied with His servant, and He confirmed once again His _____ to Abraham; He, again, confirms that He will give to them a son who would be for them laughter.

III. The Lord Visits Sodom & Gomorrah (Gen 19:1-11)

Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground. . . .

The Lord likewise visits the Sodomites since an outcry went up to Him against them. His visit was confirmation: these Sodomites were as filthy as their accusers made them out to be. They were wicked, perverse, inhospitable, and unnatural. As a result the Lord confirmed His judgment upon them by destroying them. The angels led Lot and his family out of the city, and then turned it to ashes, making it an example to all who would go after strange flesh, and to all who would give themselves over to such ungodliness.

IV. The Lord Incarnate

These two visits point us to the _____, when God visited mankind, but this time in a completely new way. It wasn't just an appearance, it wasn't through the agency of angels—but the Lord Himself visited, disguised in human nature. As we read in John, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14).

When the Lord visited mankind in the Incarnation—what did He look like? Was He recognizably *the Lord*? Not quite. They saw a Nazarene, a nobody. They saw a _____ man without a place to lay His head (see Isa 53:2-4).

Why did the Lord visit mankind incognito? He came to see for Himself the character of His people. How would they treat Him? How would they receive Him? Would they give

Him rest, like Abraham, or, like the Sodomites, would they seek to lay violent hands upon Him? John the Baptists spoke of Jesus, that He would come with “His winnowing fan in His hand;” He would come to “clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn” (Matt 3:11).

In the Gospel accounts, we have the sons of Abraham and the sons of the Sodomites, both doing the works of their fathers. The Lord visits both of them, and His very appearance drove a wedge between them. He had His winnowing fan in His hand, and He separated the wheat from the chaff.

V. Receiving the Word of God

This division that Jesus brought in His day extends down to our own day. On the one hand are those who receive Jesus with the _____ of Abraham, who hear the Gospel, the Word of God, and rejoice, bringing it into their hearts, into their homes, into their lives, just like Abraham brought the three men into His home. To these, the Lord gives the right to become children of God (Jn. 1:12).

On the other hand, however, are those who scoff at Him, who abuse the name of Christ and His redemptive work on the Cross, who toss aside their Bibles as something unworthy of their time and attention; those who twist it to serve their own devices. These take offense at the Lord. They see no beauty in the Gospel, no majesty in it, and they despise it. It is foreign and strange to them, and they refuse it a place in their lives.

VI. Receiving One Another

After Christ ascended to the right hand of the Father, He then sent His Spirit upon His people, so that He now by His Spirit dwells in our midst. We are the living _____ of God; God dwells in us and among us (see 2 Cor 6:16). But He is also hidden from view. Your eyes cannot see Him. He is, again, *incognito*, yet He tests us. Like Abraham, He visits us, too, now in the form of our brothers and sisters. And as He does so, He is attentive to how we treat one another—especially _____ among us (see Matt 25:31-46).

Jesus dwells in our midst, even in those sitting next to you—how do you receive Him? Do you honor Him by honoring one another? Do you love Him by loving one another? Now, love and honor, in biblical terms, imply _____; they are action-oriented. They are not *just* action, but they are things that can be seen and documented. Thus in Matt 25, Jesus speaks of what His disciples did or did not _____—not what they did or did not feel, or think, or believe.

As the Lord dwells in our midst, He likewise *receives* from our hand; He condescends to us so that we can practice acting and being like _____. We get to, like Abraham, be like God *to* God, reflecting His own love in our love for those in whom He dwells. As we do this, moreover, the Lord confirms His _____ to us. As we bear the fruit of His Spirit, in other words, we gain more and more confidence that we are in truth children of God (see 1 Jn 4:17).

VII. Conclusion