The Patriarchs from the book of Genesis Part 12 – October 1, 2023

With input from https://www.biblestudy.org/basicart/abraham-and-sodom.html; https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/stewart\_don/faq/does-god-know-everything/09-did-god-consult-with-abraham-about-sodom-and-gomorrah.cfm; https://www.gotquestions.org/Abraham-Sodom-Gomorrah.html; https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/king-sodom#: https://biblehub.com/commentaries/genesis/18-21.htm

Last week we ended with the thought that since only four people actually left Sodom before the destruction it showed that the determination of the Lord to destroy these evil cities was never in doubt.

Furthermore, it was well-justified. Basically, there were no righteous people in either of these cities. Hence, the judgment of the Lord needed to take place. The planned destruction was never in doubt. Consequently, we should not view this episode as an example of God not knowing what the outcome would be.

But this is a good point in this story to review an aspect of the hypostatic union in Christ; fully man and fully God.

**Genesis 18:20-33:**

*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****.”*

1. **Did God not know what was going on?**

**Bensen Commentary:** Not as if there were any thing concerning which God is in doubt; but he is pleased thus to express himself after the manner of men, and to show that he ascertains the criminal’s guilt before he passes sentence.

**Blue Letter Bible:** Basically, there were no righteous people in either of these cities. Hence, the judgment of the Lord needed to take place. The planned destruction was never in doubt. Consequently, we should not view this episode as an example of God not knowing what the outcome would be.

1. **Is there a time when God the Father possesses knowledge that Jesus does not?**

**Matthew 24: 34-36:** *Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.*

*36 “But about that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.*

The expression plainly, implies that a definite day and moment are fixed for this great appearing, but known only to God. Man is naturally excluded from the knowledge; but even to the angels it has not been revealed. A further climax is added “nor the Son.”

**Pulpit Commentary:** What is meant by this assertion? How is it true? Doubtless it is to be explained (if capable of explanation) by the hypostatic union of two natures in the Person of Christ, whereby the properties of the two natures are interchangeably predicated. From danger of error on this mysterious subject we are preserved by the precise terms of the Athanasian Creed, according to which we affirm that Christ is "equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father, as touching his manhood ... one altogether; not by confusion of substance, but by unity of Person," etc. If, then, Christ asserts that he is ignorant of anything, it must be that in his human nature he has, willed not to know that which in his Divine nature he was cognizant of. This is a part of that voluntary self-surrender and self-limitation of which the apostle speaks when he says that Christ "emptied himself" (Philippians 2:7). He condescended to assume all the conditions of humanity, even willing to share the imperfection of our knowledge in some particulars.

How the two natures thus interworked we know not, and need not conjecture; nor can we always divine why prominence at one time is given to the Divine, at another to the human. It is enough for us to know that, for reasons which seemed good to him, he imposed restriction on his omniscience in this matter, and, to enhance the mysteriousness and awfulness of the great day, announced to his disciples his ignorance of the precise moment of its occurrence.

These words do not exclude the Son's participation in the knowledge, though he willed that it should not extend to his human nature. And, with this, how futile, presumptuous, and indeed profane, it is to attempt to settle the exact date and hour when the present age shall end! – that’s the point of that passage.

It’s also important to understand that the hypostatic union is not the same as a theophany; a temporary appearance of God in a body. While the Old Testament records that God took upon Himself a human body on several occasions, there is a big difference between these appearances and what occurred with Jesus. Each of the theophanies was for a short period of time. God the Son lived for over thirty years on the earth in a human body. In other words, it was not temporary.

In addition, once God the Son took on this human body the two natures have become permanent.

When God revealed His plan to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah due to the wickedness of those cities, Abraham asked God to spare the people. In fact, Abraham engaged in a lengthy conversation to mediate for the cities.

First, Abraham wanted God to spare the righteous people who lived in Sodom and Gomorrah.

Second, Abraham’s nephew Lot lived in Sodom. God did spare Lot and his two daughters, perhaps as a direct result of Abraham’s request. Genesis 19:29 states, “So it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had lived.” Abraham certainly wanted to see his own extended family protected from God’s judgment.

Third, Abraham had compassion for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. While he understood God’s judgment of sin, Abraham asked God to spare the city even if there could be found as few as ten righteous people (Genesis 18:32). God agreed to spare the city for the sake of ten righteous people. Apparently, fewer than ten righteous were found, since God did destroy the cities, sparing only Lot and his two daughters. (God also planned to rescue Lot’s wife, but she died when she disobeyed God and turned back to look at the city as it was being destroyed.)

Abraham’s compassion for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah reveals the heart of a man who cared greatly for others, including those who did not follow God. In fact, the angelic visitors who visited Lot were threatened by men of Sodom who desired to have sex with them. Though Sodom’s citizens were wicked, Abraham did not wish to see their destruction.

Like Abraham, we are called to have great compassion for others, including those whose lives do not follow God’s ways. Also, we must ultimately accept God’s judgments, even when His decisions are not our desired choices.

Abraham’s request for these cities to be spared was denied. God sometimes says “no” to our requests, too, even when we pray with good intentions. The Lord may have other plans that we do not understand, yet which are part of His perfect will.

Finally, consider how God did answer Abraham’s request by rescuing Lot and his daughters. Although Abraham’s mediatory work did not result in the sparing of the cities, it did bring about the salvation of Abraham’s nephew. Abraham’s prayers on behalf of others were important, just as our prayers are today.

But we also remember Genesis 14:17-24:

*After Abram returned from defeating Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley).*

*18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, 19 and he blessed Abram, saying,*

*“Blessed be Abram by God Most High,*

 *Creator of heaven and earth.*

*20 And praise be to God Most High,*

 *who delivered your enemies into your hand.”*

*Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.*

*21 The king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the people and keep the goods for yourself.”*

*22 But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “With raised hand I have sworn an oath to the Lord, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, 23 that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the strap of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, ‘I made Abram rich.’ 24 I will accept nothing but what my men have eaten and the share that belongs to the men who went with me—to Aner, Eshkol and Mamre. Let them have their share.”*

**Example**: A wealthy man once became frustrated with his elders’ refusal to follow his advice for running the church more efficiently. During the capital campaign for a new sanctuary, other members of the church were greatly impressed by his generous offer to fund the entire project. Their excitement turned to dismay when the elders rejected his gift, but the leaders feared he would use his philanthropy to influence the congregation unduly.

In today’s passage, Abram, for similar reasons, rejects a proposal from the king of Sodom that he keep the booty from his successful raid. The scene depicted in Genesis 14:21–24 is vital for grasping the meaning of this chapter as a whole, and it reveals what was most important to God in those days of mighty kings.

The king of Sodom is contrasted with the king of Salem in these verses, thus accentuating the faithfulness of Salem’s ruler. Sodom’s regent offers to share the spoils from the battle with Abraham, and unlike Melchizedek, he brings no blessing with him (vv. 17–20). If Abram were to accept this offer, the king could enhance his prestige, claiming that he enriched the patriarch. The fate that befalls Sodom (19:23–29) confirms his wicked motivations.

Plainly it would have been wrong of Abram to accept the king’s offer. For one thing, it would have threatened the Lord’s promise to make Abram’s name great. John Calvin perceptively remarks that if Abram had not refused the spoils due him, others would falsely accuse him of using the rescue of Lot as a pretense to get rich.

Secondly, to accept plunder from a defeated and jealous king would have taken glory from God. The Lord promised to reward Abram (12:1–3), and though He can do so through men, Abram knew that He had not chosen to use the king of Sodom for this purpose. Instead of attributing victory to Abram, the Lord’s man, the king greeted him with an ungrateful demand, grasping for his own glory and influence, something God-fearers do not do, **1 Thessalonians 2:4-5:** *We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts. 5 You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness.*

In refusing Sodom’s offer, Abram testified of the Lord’s mighty power, and left no doubt whose hand brought the triumph.