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GENESIS 18:1 The LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day.

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The Lord appears unto Abraham in Mamre, Gen 18:1. Three angels, in human appearance, come towards his tent, Gen 18:2. He invites them in to wash and refresh themselves, Gen 18:3-5; prepares a calf, bread, butter, and milk, for their entertainment; and himself serves them, Gen 18:6-8. They promise that within a year Sarah shall have a son, Gen 18:9, Gen 18:10. Sarah, knowing herself and husband to be superannuated, smiles at the promise, Gen 18:11, Gen 18:12. One of the three, who is called the Lord or Jehovah, chides her, and asserts the sufficiency of the Divine power to accomplish the promise, Gen 18:13, Gen 18:14. Sarah, through fear, denies that she had laughed or showed signs of unbelief, Gen 18:15. Abraham accompanies these Divine persons on their way to Sodom, Gen 18:16; and that one who is called Jehovah informs him of his purpose to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, because of their great wickedness, Gen 18:17-21. The two former proceed toward Sodom, while the latter (Jehovah) remains with Abraham, Gen 18:22. Abraham intercedes for the inhabitants of those cities, entreating the Lord to spare them provided fifty righteous persons should be found in them, Gen 18:23-25. The Lord grants this request, Gen 18:26. He pleads for the same mercy should only forty-five be found there; which is also granted, Gen 18:27, Gen 18:28. He pleads the same for forty, which is also granted, Gen 18:29; for thirty, with the same success, Gen 18:30; for twenty, and receives the same gracious answer, Gen 18:31; for ten, and the Lord assures him that should ten righteous persons be found there, he will not destroy the place, Gen 18:32. Jehovah then departs, and Abraham returns to his tent, Gen 18:33.

Verse 1

And the Lord appeared - See note on Gen 15:1.

Sat in the tent door - For the purpose of enjoying the refreshing air in the heat of the day, when the sun had most power. A custom still frequent among the Asiatics.

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GENESIS 18:2 He lifted up his eyes and looked, and saw that three men stood opposite him. When he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself to the earth,

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Verse 2

Three men stood by him - נצבים עליו nitstsabim alaiv, were standing over against him; for if they had been standing by him, as our translation says, he needed not to have "run from the tent door to meet them." To Abraham these appeared at first as men; but he entertained angels unawares, see Heb 13:2.

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GENESIS 18:3 and said, "My lord, if now I have found favour in your sight, please don't go away from your servant."

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## Verse 3

And said, My Lord, etc. - The word is אֲדֹנָי Adonai, not יְהוָה Yehovah, for as yet Abraham did not know the quality of his guests. For an explanation of this word, See note on Gen 15:8.

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GENESIS 18:4 Now let a little water be fetched, wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree.

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## Verse 4

Let a little water - be fetched, and wash your feet, etc. - In these verses we find a delightful picture of primitive hospitality. In those ancient times shoes such as ours were not in use; and the foot was protected only by sandals or soles, which fastened round the foot with straps. It was therefore a great refreshment in so hot a country to get the feet washed at the end of a day's journey; and this is the first thing that Abraham proposes.

Rest yourselves under the tree - We have already heard of the oak grove of Mamre, Gen 12:6, and this was the second requisite for the refreshment of a weary traveler, viz., rest in the shade.

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GENESIS 18:5 I will get a morsel of bread so you can refresh your heart. After that you may go your way, now that you have come to your servant." They said, "Very well, do as you have said."

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## Verse 5

I will fetch a morsel of bread - This was the third requisite, and is introduced in its proper order; as eating immediately after exertion or fatigue is very unwholesome. The strong action of the lungs and heart should have time to diminish before any food is received into the stomach, as otherwise concoction is prevented, and fever in a less or greater degree produced.

For therefore are ye come - In those ancient days every traveler conceived he had a right to refreshment, when he needed it, at the first tent he met with on his journey.

So do as thou hast said - How exceedingly simple was all this! On neither side is there any compliment but such as a generous heart and sound sense dictate.

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GENESIS 18:6 Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Quickly prepare three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes."

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## Verse 6

Three measures of fine meal - The סֵאֵה seah, which is here translated measure, contained, according to Bishop Cumberland, about two gallons and a half; and Mr. Ainsworth translates the word peck. On this circumstance the following observations of the judicious and pious Abbe Fleury cannot fail to be acceptable to the reader. Speaking of the frugality of the patriarchs he says: "We have an instance of a splendid entertainment in that which Abraham made for the three angels. He

set a whole calf before them, new bread, but baked on the hearth, together with butter and milk. Three measures of meal were baked into bread on this occasion, which come to more than two of our bushels, and nearly to fifty-six pounds of our weight; hence we may conclude that men were great eaters in those days, used much exercise, were probably of a much larger stature as well as longer lives than we. Homer (Odys. lib. xiv., ver. 74, etc). makes his heroes great eaters. When Eumaeus entertained Ulysses, he dressed two pigs for himself and his guest. 'So saying, he girded quick his tunic close,

And issuing sought the styes; thence bringing two,  
Of the imprisoned herd, he slaughtered both,  
Singed them and slash'd and spitted them, and placed  
The whole well roasted, banquets spits, and all,  
Reeking before Ulysses.'  
Cowper.

On another occasion a hog of five years old was slaughtered and served up for five persons: - ' - His wood for fuel he prepared,

And dragging thither a well-fatted brawn  
Of the fifth year:  
Next piercing him, and scorching close his hair,  
The joints they parted,' etc.  
Cowper. Ibid. ver. 419.

Homer's heroes wait upon themselves and guests in the common occasions of life; the patriarchs do the same. Abraham, who had so many servants, and was nearly a hundred years old, brought the water himself to wash the feet of his guests, ordered his wife to make the bread quickly, went himself to choose the calf from the herd, and came again to serve them standing. I will allow that he was animated on this occasion with a desire of showing hospitality, but the lives of all the rest of the patriarchs were similar to this."

Make cakes upon the hearth - Or under the ashes. This mode is used in the east to the present day. When the hearth is strongly heated with the fire that has been kindled on it, they remove the coals, sweep off the ashes, lay on the bread, and then cover it with the hot cinders.

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GENESIS 18:7 Abraham ran to the herd, and fetched a tender and good calf, and gave it to the servant. He hurried to dress it.

GENESIS 18:8 He took butter, milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them. He stood by them under the tree, and they ate.

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Verse 8

And he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat - Nothing is more common in Hindostan than to see travelers and guests eating under the shade of trees. Feasts are scarcely ever held in houses. The house of a Hindoo serves for sleeping and cooking, and for shutting up the women; but is never considered as a sitting or dining room - Ward.

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GENESIS 18:9 They asked him, "Where is Sarah, your wife?" He said, "See, in the tent."

GENESIS 18:10 He said, "I will certainly return to you when the season comes round. Behold, Sarah your wife will have a son." Sarah heard in the tent door, which was behind him.

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Verse 10

I will certainly return - Abraham was now ninety-nine years of age, and this promise was fulfilled when he was a hundred; so that the phrase according to the time of life must mean either a complete year, or nine months from the present time, the ordinary time of pregnancy. Taken in this latter sense, Abraham was now in the ninety-ninth year of his age, and Isaac was born when he was in his hundredth year.

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GENESIS 18:11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age. Sarah had passed the age of childbearing.

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Verse 11

It ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women - And consequently, naturally speaking, conception could not take place; therefore if she have a son it must be in a supernatural or miraculous way.

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GENESIS 18:12 Sarah laughed within herself, saying, "After I have grown old will I have pleasure, my lord being old also?"

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Verse 12

Sarah laughed - Partly through pleasure at the bare idea of the possibility of the thing, and partly from a conviction that it was extremely improbable. She appears to have been in the same spirit, and to have had the same feelings of those who, unexpectedly hearing of something of great consequence to themselves, smile and say, "The news is too good to be true;"; see Gen 21:6. There is a case very similar to this mentioned Psa 126:1, Psa 126:2. On Abraham's laughing, See note on Gen 17:17.

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GENESIS 18:13 The LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Will I really bear a child, yet I am old?'

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Verse 13

And the Lord (Jehovah) said, etc. - So it appears that one of those three persons was Jehovah, and as this name is never given to any created being, consequently the ever-blessed God is intended;

and as he was never seen in any bodily shape, consequently the great Angel of the covenant, Jesus Christ, must be meant. See note on Gen 16:7.

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GENESIS 18:14 Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the set time I will return to you, when the season comes round, and Sarah will have a son."

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#### Verse 14

Is any thing too hard for the Lord? - **היפלא מיהוה דבר** hayippale meihovah dabar, shall a word (or thing) be wonderful from the Lord? i.e., Can any thing be too great a miracle for him to effect? The Septuagint translate the passage, Μη αδυνατησει παρα τω Θεω ρημα; which St. Luke adopts almost literatim, only making it an affirmative position instead of a question: Ουκ αδυνατησει παρα τω Θεω παν ρημα, which we translate, "With God nothing shall be impossible," Luk 1:37. Many copies of the Septuagint insert the word παν before ρημα, as in St. Luke; but it makes little difference in the sense. It was to correct Sarah's unbelief, and to strengthen her faith, that God spoke these most important words; words which state that where human wisdom, prudence, and energy fall, and where nature herself ceases to be an agent, through lack of energy to act, or laws to direct and regulate energy, there also God has full sway, and by his own omnific power works all things after the counsel of his own will. Is there an effect to be produced? God can produce it as well without as with means. He produced nature, the whole system of causes and effects, when in the whole compass of his own eternity there was neither means nor being. He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast. How great and wonderful is God!

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GENESIS 18:15 Then Sarah denied, saying, "I didn't laugh," for she was afraid. He said, "No, but you did laugh."

GENESIS 18:16 The men rose up from there, and looked toward Sodom. Abraham went with them to see them on their way.

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#### Verse 16

Abraham went with them to bring them on the way - This was another piece of primitive hospitality - to direct strangers in the way. Public roads did not then exist and guides were essentially necessary in countries where villages were seldom to be met with, and where solitary dwellings did not exist.

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GENESIS 18:17 The LORD said, "Will I hide from Abraham what I do,

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#### Verse 17

Shall I hide from Abraham - That is, I will not hide. A common mode of speech in Scripture - a question asked when an affirmative is designed. Do men gather grapes of thorns? Men do not gather grapes of thorns, etc.

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GENESIS 18:18 since Abraham has surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed in him?

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Verse 18

Shall surely become a great and mighty nation - The revelation that I make to him shall be preserved among his posterity; and the exact fulfillment of my promises, made so long before, shall lead them to believe in my name and trust in my goodness.

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GENESIS 18:19 For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice; to the end that the LORD may bring on Abraham that which he has spoken of him."

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Verse 19

And they shall keep the way of the Lord - The true religion; God's way; that in which God walks himself, and in which, of course, his followers walk also; to do justice and judgment; not only to preserve the truth in their creed, but maintain it in their practice.

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GENESIS 18:20 The LORD said, "Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous,

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Verse 20

Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah - See note on Gen 13:13.

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GENESIS 18:21 I will go down now, and see whether their deeds are as bad as the reports which have come to me. If not, I will know."

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Verse 21

I will go down now, etc. - A lesson to magistrates, teaching them not to judge according to report, but accurately to inquire into the facts themselves - Jarchi.

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GENESIS 18:22 The men turned from there, and went toward Sodom, but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.

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Verse 22

And the men turned their faces - That is, the two angels who accompanied Jehovah were now sent towards Sodom; while the third, who is called the Lord or Jehovah, remained with Abraham for the purpose of teaching him the great usefulness and importance of faith and prayer.

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GENESIS 18:23 Abraham drew near, and said, "Will you consume the righteous with the wicked?"

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Verse 23

Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? - A form of speech similar to that in Gen 18:17, an invariable principle of justice, that the righteous shall not be punished for the crimes of the impious. And this Abraham lays down as the foundation of his supplications. Who can pray with any hope of success who cannot assign a reason to God and his conscience for the petitions he offers? The great sacrifice offered by Christ is an infinite reason why a penitent sinner should expect to find the mercy for which he pleads.

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GENESIS 18:24 What if there are fifty righteous within the city? Will you consume and not spare the place for the fifty righteous who are in it?

GENESIS 18:25 Be it far from you to do things like that, to kill the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be like the wicked. May that be far from you. Shouldn't the Judge of all the earth do right?"

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Verse 25

Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? - God alone is the Judge of all men. Abraham, in thus addressing himself to the person in the text, considers him either as the Supreme Being or his representative.

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GENESIS 18:26 The LORD said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sake."

GENESIS 18:27 Abraham answered, "See now, I have taken it on myself to speak to the Lord, who am but dust and ashes."

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Verse 27

Which am but dust and ashes - עפר ואפר aphar vaepher, words very similar in sound, as they refer to matters which so much resemble each other. Dust - the lightest particles of earth. Ashes - the residuum of consumed substances. By these expressions he shows how deeply his soul was humbled in the presence of God. He who has high thoughts of himself must have low thoughts of the dignity of the Divine nature, of the majesty of God, and the sinfulness of sin.

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GENESIS 18:28 What if there will lack five of the fifty righteous? Will you destroy all the city for lack of five?" He said, "I will not destroy it, if I find forty-five there."

GENESIS 18:29 He spoke to him yet again, and said, "What if there are forty found there?" He said, "I will not do it for the forty's sake."

GENESIS 18:30 He said, "Oh don't let the Lord be angry, and I will speak. What if there are thirty found there?" He said, "I will not do it, if I find thirty there."

GENESIS 18:31 He said, "See now, I have taken it on myself to speak to the Lord. What if there are twenty found there?" He said, "I will not destroy it for the twenty's sake."

GENESIS 18:32 He said, "Oh don't let the Lord be angry, and I will speak just once more. What if ten are found there?" He said, "I will not destroy it for the ten's sake."

### Verse 32

Peradventure ten shall be found there - Knowing that in the family of his nephew the true religion was professed and practiced, he could not suppose there could be less than ten righteous persons in the city, he did not think it necessary to urge his supplication farther; he therefore left off his entreaties, and the Lord departed from him. It is highly worthy of observation, that while he continued to pray the presence of God was continued; and when Abraham ended, "the glory of the Lord was lifted up," as the Targum expresses it.

This chapter, though containing only the preliminaries to the awful catastrophe detailed in the next, affords us several lessons of useful and important information.

1. The hospitality and humanity of Abraham are worthy, not only of our most serious regard, but also of our imitation. He sat in the door of his tent in the heat of the day, not only to enjoy the current of refreshing air, but that if he saw any weary and exhausted travelers he might invite them to rest and refresh themselves. Hospitality is ever becoming in one human being towards another; for every destitute man is a brother in distress, and demands our most prompt and affectionate assistance, according to that heavenly precept, "What ye would that men should do unto you, do even so unto them." From this conduct of Abraham a Divine precept is formed: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Heb 13:2.

2. Whatever is given on the ground of humanity and mercy is given unto God, and is sure to meet with his approbation and a suitable reward. While Abraham entertained his guests God discovers himself, and reveals to him the counsels of his will, and renews the promise of a numerous posterity. Sarah, though naturally speaking past child-bearing, shall have a son: natural obstacles cannot hinder the purpose of God; nature is his instrument; and as it works not only by general laws, but also by any particular will of God, so it may accomplish that will in any way he may choose to direct. It is always difficult to credit God's promises when they relate to supernatural things, and still more so when they have for their object events that are contrary to the course of nature; but as nothing is too hard for God, so "all things are possible to him that believeth." It is that faith alone which is of the operation of God's Spirit, that is capable of crediting supernatural things; he who does not pray to be enabled to believe, or, if he do, uses not the power when received, can never believe to the saving of the soul.

3. Abraham trusts much in God, and God reposes much confidence in Abraham. He knows that God is faithful, and will fulfill his promises; and God knows that Abraham is faithful, and will command his



children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment; Gen 18:19. No man lives unto himself; and God gives us neither spiritual nor temporal blessings for ourselves alone; our bread we are to divide with the hungry, and to help the stranger in distress. He who understands the way of God should carefully instruct his household in that way; and he who is the father of a family should pray to God to teach him, that he may teach his household. His ignorance of God and salvation can be no excuse for his neglecting his family: it is his indispensable duty to teach them; and God will teach him, if he earnestly seek it, that he may be able to discharge this duty to his family. Reader, if thy children or servants perish through thy neglect, God will judge thee for it in the great day.

4. The sin of Sodom and the cities of the plain was great and grievous; the measure of their iniquity was full, and God determined to destroy them. Judgment is God's strange work, but though rarely done it must be done sometimes, lest men should suppose that right and wrong, vice and virtue, are alike in the eye of God. And these judgments must be dispensed in such a way as to show they are not the results of natural causes, but come immediately from the incensed justice of the Most High.

5. Every man who loves God loves his neighbor also; and he who loves his neighbor will do all in his power to promote the well-being both of his soul and his body. Abraham cannot prevent the men of Sodom from sinning against God; but he can make prayer and intercession for their souls, and plead, if not in arrest, yet in mitigation, of judgment. He therefore intercedes for the transgressors, and God is well pleased with his intercessions. These are the offspring of God's own love in the heart of his servant.

6. How true is that word, The energetic faithful prayer of a righteous man availeth much! Abraham draws near to God by affection and faith, and in the most devout and humble manner makes prayer and supplication; and every petition is answered on the spot. Nor does God cease to promise to show mercy till Abraham ceases to intercede! What encouragement does this hold out to them that fear God, to make prayer and intercession for their sinful neighbors and ungodly relatives! Faith in the Lord Jesus endues prayer with a species of omnipotence; whatsoever a man asks of the Father in his name, he will do it. Prayer has been termed the gate of heaven, but without faith that gate cannot be opened. He who prays as he should, and believes as he ought, shall have the fullness of the blessings of the Gospel of peace.

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GENESIS 18:33 The LORD went his way, as soon as he had finished communing with Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place.

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