

Sunday, May 14, 2023 pm

JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE (14)

The Patriarchs (3)

Life of Abraham (3)

Tonight, we continue our “journey through the Bible”. A detailed review of the 17 stages of Bible history. We are currently examining the 4th stage – the patriarchs. The patriarchs was an age when God spoke through the fathers. There are 4 primary characters in this section which covers Genesis 12-50, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. We have devoted the past 2 lessons to introducing Abraham, including: 1) A discussion of the 3 fold promise that was developed throughout the rest of scripture (Genesis 12:1-2), 2) a review of various events recorded in Genesis 12-25, and 3) we also discussed a number of “tests of faith” that he went through. Today, we want to focus on 3 of the key events in his life and their relevance to us. These are events addressed in the New Testament and thus worthy of a little closer look.

I. Abraham and Melchizedek –

- a. Genesis 14:18-24 records the account. Abram has rescued Lot and delivered Sodom. As his servants were returning from battle we are introduced to Melchizedek. He is described as, “King of Salem” and “priest of God Most High”. He blesses Abram, and then Abram gives Melchizedek a tithe (10%). That is ALL we read about him on this occasion.
- b. WHY is this event mentioned? Notice how Melchizedek appears from nowhere and that is all we hear about him in the writings of Moses (written ~1500 BC). It is believed that Salem was the forerunner of Jerusalem. Obvious a place that will be of great significance as God unfolds His plans.
- c. Psalm 110:4. The next mention of Melchizedek is in a psalm of David (~1000 BC). This is a Messianic psalm (mean prophetic about the anticipated Messiah – Jesus). Likely, this was written after the LORD established David’s throne (as recorded in 2 Samuel 7:12-17). If so, David, a prophet, is anticipating the ultimate fulfillment of the promise made to him about his throne being established forever. BUT, again notice how “out of the blue” David mentions Melchizedek.
- d. Hebrews 5:6ff – the next mention of Melchizedek is in Hebrews where the writer is seeking to establish the superior priesthood of Jesus (to that of the Levites).
 - i. The writer declares Jesus to be a priest “after the order of Melchizedek”.
 - ii. Hebrews 7:1-7 describes him as “King of Salem, priest of the Mos High God” who met Abraham, noting also that Abraham gave him a tenth and noted Melchizedek’s name meant, “King of righteousness” and “king of peace” (which is what Salem meant). NOTE that he was BOTH king and High priest.
 - iii. He then observes that he was “*without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.*” In our understanding, this does not mean he was not human or not naturally born, but simply that we do NOT have any record of his ancestors or descendants.
 - iv. He makes application that because Abraham was blessed by him, that he was greater. He also notes that in a sense, since Levi was a descendent of Abraham, when he gave Melchizedek tithes, that his priesthood was greater than the Levitical priesthood.
- e. Lessons for us to consider from this account:
 - i. It serves to apologetically declare that the Bible is God’s word. He HAD to have had a hand in the wording of the OT texts making reference to Melchizedek. The ONLY logical conclusion, it was God’s intent to help establish the priesthood of Jesus. This is a POWERFUL prophecy, a “fingerprint” of God’s hand!

- ii. This prophetic event would establish the nature of the rule of Jesus. He can be both King and priest, only as Melchizedek was. He COULD NOT be a Levitical priest and a descendent of David. This is what the Hebrew writer attempts to establish.

II. Abraham believed God –

- a. Genesis 15:6 says, *And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.*
- b. It has been a few years since the LORD made His promise to Abram (Genesis 12:1-7), likely close to a decade. In a vision, the LORD appears to Abraham. He offers the son of his servant Eliezer as fulfillment of the promise. The LORD tells him that one would be born of his seed. Abraham is then brought outside and shown the stars of heaven and promised his descendants would be as innumerable. Vs. 6 finds our statement. On this occasion, the LORD makes a covenant with Abraham. It is an intricate sacrifice and a vision. He is told that they would be strangers in a land for 400 years (Egypt) and afterward possess the land.
- c. We find Abraham trusting God in this context. He doesn't fully understand how things would be fulfilled, but he believes what God has said. It is based upon that, that God "accounted it to him for righteousness". In other words, God knew his righteousness because of his faith and his heart.
- d. NOTE: This text does not imply that Abraham had no part in the covenant. Abraham proved himself faithful to God continually in his actions.
- e. This text is found 3 times in the New Testament, each time addressing faith. When we put them together we understand the type of faith God expects AND the type of faith Abraham had.
 - i. Romans 4:3-5 – in a passage where Paul is declaring how Abraham was justified because of his faith and not of works. The point of the text is that faith is what undergirds our actions. It was NOT meritorious works. In other words, he could not by works EARN his salvation/righteousness with God. Consider vs. 4, *Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.* This is the language of merit – you earned something. Paul's point in this text and throughout Romans is that Jews (or anyone) could not merit salvation simply by keeping the Law of Moses. They NEEDED to obey, but it was based on their faith. Paul will develop that throughout this letter.
 - ii. Galatians 3:6, is an abbreviated version of Romans 4. In this letter, Paul is concerned that they were considering turning to the Law of Moses (a "different gospel"). Paul says no! One of the points emphasized in this letter (and Romans, Hebrews, etc.) is that Abraham was considered righteous BEFORE the LOM went into effect by more than 400 years.
 - iii. James 2:23 is the third mention of this verse. Here we find the TYPE of faith that justifies. It is an active, working faith (James 2:14-26)
- f. We can learn so much about the type of faith God expects us to have by looking to the example of Abraham.

III. By faith, Abraham offered Isaac

- a. Genesis 22 records Abraham's ultimate test. He has given birth to Isaac (after waiting 25 years), and now Isaac is likely a young teen. God tests Abraham and has him go to a designated place in "the land of Moriah" where he was to offer his only son Isaac as a burnt offering. NOTE: Mount Moriah is where Solomon would build the temple (2 chronicles 3:1). Of course, Abraham goes early in the morning and takes Isaac and travels for 2-3 days. He instructs the men with him to "*stay here with the donkey; then lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.*" (22:6). They go, Abraham binds and prepares to slay Isaac, but the Angel of the LORD stops him and says, "*Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.*" (22:12) Abraham lifts his eyes and there is a ram. Abraham takes the animal and sacrifices it instead of his son. They then return. The LORD repats His promise to Abraham that he would be blessed.
- b. Like the previous event, this one too is mentioned in the New Testament

- i. James 2:21-23 – NOTICE how Abraham was “justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar.
- ii. Hebrews 11:17-19 says, *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, “In Isaac your seed shall be called,” concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.* This shows the depth of his faith and why it is so worthy of imitation.
- c. I have always found it interesting that as Abraham is stopped, a Ram is caught in the thicket. Genesis 22:7-8 yet Isaac asks his father, *“Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” And Abraham said, “My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.” So the two of them went together.* While possibly in the same family, a ram is not a lamb. However, when it comes to Jesus being introduced by John, He is described as, “Behold, the lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29). Jesus is our “lamb without blemish.” See 1 Peter 1:18-19, cf. Acts 8:32 (Isaiah 53:7). We also see this in Revelation 4 & 5, etc.
- d. This again shows God’s plans “from the foundation of the world.”
- e. Let’s conclude by examining the quality of Abraham’s faith as he offered his son. In a GOT article dated June 16, 1983 by Irvin Himmel, he outlined several qualities of Abraham’s faith:
 - i. He took prompt action – Abraham did not delay. The next morning he went.
 - ii. He made thorough preparations – he didn’t leave anything behind that would have hindered the sacrifice (he took wood, servants, a knife, and even saddled a donkey for the journey).
 - iii. He had complete confidence – when Isaac asks where the lamb is, Abraham says, “God will provide”. Faith is about believing God and TRUSTING God.
 - iv. He had proper priority – when Isaac asked, again he knew God would take care of it. He was willing to offer his son because his faith was so great.
 - v. He obeyed – as we constantly emphasize, IF YOU DO NOT obey, you do not have genuine faith! Faith and obedience are NOT in conflict with one another.
 - vi. He had a perfect faith – James 2:21-22, *Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?* That word “perfect” can mean complete. We see in Abraham a mature faith that NOTHING could overcome.
- f. HOW does our faith match up to that of Abraham? Are we closer to that type of faith than we were when we first obeyed? Or last year?

A study of the Old Testament, or our Journey through the Bible, is not complete without considering the life of Abraham. Let us take careful time to study his life and learn from it. As we have seen, his example gives us hope in many ways. Not only do learn how to live, we learn WHY we should live that way – because God is in control. What about you? How is your faith? Think about it!