

Sunday, February 12, 2023

## JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

### The Patriarchs (1)

### Abraham Introduced (1)

Tonight, we continue our journey through the Bible. Our study is based on the 17 time periods of Bible history. Thus far, we have noted 3 of these time periods - Before the flood, the flood and its effect, and the tower of Babel. Today, we begin the 4<sup>th</sup> period - the patriarchal age.

#### I. Introduction to the patriarchal period.

- a. Genesis 11:27-50:26
- b. Timing - ~2000 BC – 1500 BC.
- c. During this time, we are introduced to 4 main characters – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, and numerous other people, some with significant and others with insignificant roles – Sarah, Melchizedek, Esau, Lot, Ishmael, Rebekah, Rachel, Leah, the 12 sons of Israel (Jacob), etc.
- d. It was a time when God communicated directly through the fathers (patriarchs). NOTE: This age began with Adam, and included Enoch and Noah (that YHWH spoke to). We find various ways and more specific communications during this age, cf. Hebrews 1:1-2.

#### II. Abraham introduced

- a. Facts about Abraham
  - i. Originally named Abram which means exalted father. His name was later changed by YHWH to Abraham when he became “father of many peoples” or nations (Genesis 17:5).
  - ii. He was known as the father of Israel (cf. John 8:39, 53, Luke 1:73, James 2:21, etc.)
  - iii. His life is recorded in Genesis 11:27-25:11 where he dies at the age of 175, *“a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people.”*
  - iv. James 2:23 – he was called, “The friend of God”; Genesis 20:7 – a prophet that could pray for you (Abimelech); Genesis 23:6, “A mighty prince among us” (as the burial of Sarah); Psalm 105:6 – a servant of God; Romans 4:16 – “father of us all” or we might say, “father of the faithful.”
  - v. One of the 3 most significant characters in the Old Testament. He is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most mentioned OT character in the New Testament – 75x in 70 verses (behind Moses-80x and David -59x), mostly in the gospels but found in several other significant passages.
  - vi. He is also described as “the father of faith” not because he was the first, but we learn so much about his faith in his life.
    1. This is a point of emphasis in the New Testament – Hebrews 11:8-19 describes some extraordinary acts of faith.
    2. Romans 4:1-3 describes Abraham’s righteous faith based upon his belief, NOT his works. Genesis 15:6 is quoted, where YHWH makes His covenant with Abram.
    3. James 2:21-24 identifies his faith BY his works. Again, Genesis 15:6 is quoted.
    4. While this seem contradictory, if you study the correlation of God’s grace, our faith and works you find that they complement each other. A study of the life of Abraham finds several tests of faith – he handled some of them better than others, as we will see in an upcoming lesson.
  - vii. Other NT references include:
    1. Genealogies (Matthew 1:1, Luke 3:34, 2 Corinthians 11:22 – “Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I, etc.)
    2. His sacrifice of Isaac (Hebrews 11:17-19)

3. His relationship with God – cf. Matthew 22:32, Acts 7:32, Hebrews 6:13, when God made a promise to Abraham.
  4. The seed promise to Abraham – Galatians 3 (mentioned 8x)
  5. His relationship to Sarah his wife – 1 Peter 3:6
  6. And in Luke 16:22ff (6x) where we find Lazarus in Abraham's bosom after death.
- b. The genealogy of Abraham – Genesis 11:10ff
- i. **11:10-26** describes the descendants of Noah through Shem to Terah and his 3 sons, much in the same way as the genealogy of Genesis 5 (from Adam to Noah). We have listed here 9 generations, identifying the age when their son was born, other children after and how long he lived (e.g. vs. 10 – Shem was 100 years old and begot Arphaxad 2 years after the flood. He then lived 500 years and begot sons and daughters. So it continues until we are told that Terah was 70 years old and begot 3 sons, Abram, Nahor and Haram (not necessarily in that order, because Abraham was born when Terah was around 130 years old (Gen 11:32 tells us Terah was 205 when he died & Genesis 12:4 notes Abraham was 75 when he departed Haran)
  - ii. **11:27-32** – These verses focus on Terah moving his family to Haran from Ur of the Chaldeans. Some considerations:
    1. Acts 7:2 tell us God called Abraham while in Mesopotamia (Ur was there) before going to Haran.
    2. Gen. 11:28 records that Haran died before his father while still in Ur (Haran was Lot's father)
    3. Gen. 11:29 – Abram and Nahor took wives (Sarai and Milcah) as they left.
    4. Gen. 11:30 notes that Sarai was barren, having no children. We also know she was 10 years younger than Abram.
    5. 11:31 – they left Ur and headed toward Canaan and stopped in Haran (which is just north of Canaan), where they dwelt until Terah died (at 205 years of age).

### III. The promise to Abraham – Genesis 12:1-9

- a. The LORD appears to Abram and tells him to Get out of your country and go to a land that He would show him. Again, Acts 7:2-4 indicates he was in Mesopotamia when he was called.
- b. Of note, excavations have shown that the region of Ur was advanced in civilization. Abram likely lived a comfortable life there, BUT at the bidding of God he was willing to leave and go where the LORD wanted him to go (Hebrews 11:8 says that he went out, "not knowing where he was going"). So this was Abram's first test of faith. He passed! **Notice Hebrews 11:8-16** which shows his extraordinary faith at that time. He KNEW there was something better waiting on the other side of THIS life.
- c. Genesis 12:1-3 is a KEY PASSAGE of the Old Testament.
  - i. In this passage we find a 3 fold promise (actually there are 6 elements addressed). This passage is significant as it is the foundation of the REST of the Bible – both Old and New testaments. Each of these promises is significant.
  - ii. Land promise - the LORD intended for Abram to live in Canaan. In Genesis 12:7, the LORD more specifically says He would give him the land of Canaan. That is repeated when he makes his covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15:18-21 – after Lot separates from him, Genesis 15:18 – when the LORD makes his covenant; Genesis 17:8 when the covenant of circumcision is established). Though it would be some 400-500 years later, Joshua records the conquest of Canaan. After Israel was victorious we read in Joshua 21:43-45.
  - iii. Nation promise – Abraham started small, with just a few people in his household. But within 4 generations, Jacob (Israel) enters Egypt through the providence of God by way of Joseph with 70 souls (Genesis 46:27), and as they exited Egypt their numbers were more than a million (with some estimating them at 2.5 million). In the wilderness they are described as a great nation – Deuteronomy 4:7-8. AND when they inherit Canaan through Joshua's

leadership, the promise was fulfilled as noted above. NOTE: A study of these refutes the doctrine of premillennialism which believes the Lord intends to return and reign on earth in physical Israel. We have studied that in times past.

- iv. Seed promise – Genesis 12:3, “And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” This promise would be repeated after Abraham is willing to offer his son Isaac (Genesis 22:18) this was ultimately fulfilled in Christ. That is Paul’s focus in Galatians 3:5-9, 15-18.
  - v. Other elements – Abraham would be blessed spiritually and materially (12:2); His name would be made great (12:2); He would be a blessing (or curse) to others depending on how they treated him (2c-3). We find these other elements developed throughout his life.
- d. Genesis 12:4-9
- i. Abraham departed following the instructions of the LORD. We note again, he is 75 years old when he leaves Haran. The LORD has made a promise that will not be fulfilled for another 25 years. Plenty of time to strengthen and develop faith to the degree that Abraham had. But as we examine the coming chapters. We see that Abraham struggles with this promise, wanting to help God.
  - ii. They come to the land of Canaan, to a place called Moreh.
  - iii. Vs. 7, the LORD appears to him there and repeats the land promise.
  - iv. Vs. 7, he built there an altar to the LORD.
  - v. Vs. 8, then he moved to a mountain east of Bethel, pitched his tent between Bethel and Ai. He built an altar there to the LORD. NOTICE as you read the life of Abraham, the first thing he does when he stops is worships God. There is much to say about priorities in this. Is God the first thing on our minds as we make big decisions. If and when you move, will you ensure that there is a faithful church to worship God? If not, what are your plans?  
NOTE: We will find multiple places mentioned that Abraham built altars, but as one observed, he did not build a house for himself. That says something about His priorities.

#### **IV. Famine in the land**

- a. Genesis 12:10-20 records a famine in the land, and Abram goes down to Egypt to dwell there.
- b. His faith is again being tested – will he trust God in Egypt?
- c. We read here that his wife, Sarai, in her 60s is a beautiful woman. So beautiful that Abram fears the Egyptians and has Sarai deceive the Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Moses is treated well and amasses some wealth because of this (vs. 16).
- d. BUT, the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house for taking Sarai.
- e. Pharaoh challenges Abraham as to why he did that. He rebukes him, gives Sarai to him and sends them away. But Abram is protected.
- f. AGAIN, we have here an example where Abraham’s faith FAILED. He did not trust God in a foreign land. BUT God is patient and with him. Remember the promise God made in vs. 3, “I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse those who curse you. We see God with Abraham, even in his weaknesses.
- g. Do NOT interpret this as acceptable behavior to God. Abraham needed to repent and do better. He is learning and growing and his faith will manifest that in coming chapters.

But for now, we conclude this lesson. In Abraham we learn not only the importance of faith, but also that God keeps His promises. What about you? Will you trust Him?