

# ABRAHAM

THE FRIEND OF GOD

*“And the scripture was fulfilled which saith,  
Abraham believed God,  
and it was imputed unto him for righteousness:  
and he was called the Friend of God.”*

James 2:23



# ABRAHAM THE FI

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# ABOUT THIS STUDY OF ABRAHAM

There is a reason God has the story of Abraham recorded in His Holy Book. Finding that reason will bless your life and make you a better person. This course is intended to help you better understand Abraham's story, and the values that made his life different from any of his contemporaries.

The title of this course is a phrase taken from the New Testament. "Friend of God"! This is the absolute greatest accomplishment any human can achieve in his lifetime. This friendship began when Abraham hearkened to the call of God and made it a priority over every other goal in his life. He chose to obey a call either no one else heard or if they did hear they did not obey. The friendship deepened as Abraham showed unwavering trust in God's seemingly impossible promises. God's part of the friendship is revealed when God shared in confidentiality with Abraham His plans for Sodom, and listened to his pleadings on Lot's behalf. Finally Abraham proved his fidelity in friendship when he offered up Isaac, his beloved son not knowing how God would keep the promise to bring the Messiah and a great nation through him.

God had a great plan in mind for the human race. He one day would send a Redeemer, a Sacrifice for the needy human family. This Redeemer would be His own Son. In order to do this, He needed to choose a family and embed into this family's thinking a historical framework that explained God's character and the plan of His chosen One. In this family there would also be a pattern for His people in each generation. This is what makes the account of Abraham so important. Not only was his genetics an important link in the Messianic lineage, but his life becomes the spiritual framework of types and examples that enable believers in each generation to understand what God wants.

One of the thought provoking aspects about Abraham is how little is actually said about him in the Sacred Record for the amount of influence he has had over the entire human race. Since little is said and so much influence has been left, there is a strong temptation to fill in the gaps with speculation. Jewish and Islamic tradition have volumes that add both color and confusion. Since these are not given to us from divine inspiration we cannot accept them as truth. We do glean some details from the New Testament record, and since they are given by Holy Spirit inspiration we accept them as factual. You will find the New Testament verses brought in to the lessons to which they apply.

This study deliberately endeavors to stay away from speculation, except where a person may imagine the feelings that would accompany the decisions and sacrifices Abraham and Sarah made.

Another thought provoking aspect of the record of Abraham relates to some of his failures. Some of these have such great consequences that they continue to complicate human relations even in our generation. For all this, there is no blame leveled against him. We will examine these events as failures because it is obvious that they are. We also will endeavor to remember that Abraham lived even before the law was given, and in a setting far different from the dispensation of grace.

For example, we will remember that both polygamy and bloodshed were not forbidden in the Old Covenant, in fact under certain circumstances they were a part of God's plan.

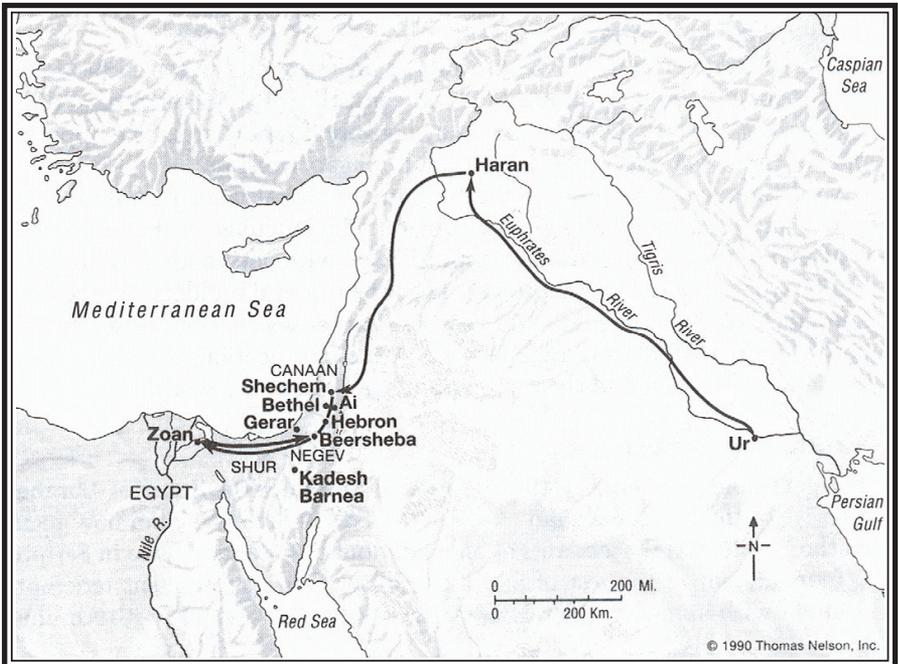
After having said these things one may wonder about the value in studying Abraham's life. Consider this. There are at least two areas where Abraham needed to make choices which we face as well. Abraham had a lifetime to dedicate to someone. He also had day by day choices of response to things God asked of Him. Both of these are very real in our experience.

The little day by day decisions that Abraham made revealed the deep loyalties that guided his life. These little decisions finally summed a life of godliness. The potential exists for each one of us to live in a way that has God's smile of approval. This is the goal we strive for and endeavor to see more clearly as we study Abraham's life.

Since the New Testament calls Abram and Sarai by the name Abraham and Sarah when it refers to incidents before their name change and since this simplifies our study, we will do the same.



## ABRAHAM'S JOURNEY OF FAITH



## GOD'S APPEARANCES TO ABRAHAM

1. Genesis 12:1-3, Acts 7:2 **The Original Call.** God appeared to Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees and directed him to go to a land that He would show him, promising to make of him a great nation. Abraham was somewhere under 75 years old.

2. Genesis 13:14 **Confirmation of the Call.** After Lot chose the best land, God promised Abraham all the land that he could see for his innumerable descendants. God used the dust as an illustration of their number. Abraham's age is unspecified.

3. Genesis 15:18 **God Establishes a Covenant.** God for the first time calls His relationship with Abraham a **covenant**. He compares Abraham's offspring to the stars of the heaven. Abraham's seed will suffer as strangers in a land for 400 years, and the borders of the Euphrates and the River of Egypt are established for their homeland. Abraham's age is unspecified, but under 86 years.

4. Genesis 17:1-14 **God Requires Circumcision.** God changes Abraham's name, confirms that he will be the father of many nations and kings, and establishes an everlasting relationship with his seed which guarantees them the land forever. Abraham at 99 is promised a son within a year.

5. Genesis 18:1-33 **God Counsels with Abraham about Sodom.** God tells Abraham about His judgement on Sodom because He knows Abraham will command his household and children after him. God again promises that Abraham will become a great nation and all nations will be blessed through him. Sarah laughs when she hears the promise of a son within the natural time of life. Abraham is still 99.

6. Genesis 22:17-18 **God Blesses Abraham for his Obedience.** Abraham is willing to offer Isaac. God renews the blessings on Abraham. Abraham is thought to be about 137 years old.

7. Genesis 25:7-8, Luke 16:22 **Abraham goes to Paradise, later identified as Abraham's Bosom.** Abraham dies and is gathered to his people. Abraham was 175 when he died. We are assured of Abraham's eternal state from Hebrews 11 and other New Testament references. We are informed he lives in a state of conscious bliss and before Christ delivered Sheol's captives to Heaven, Abraham communicated with both the righteous and the wicked across the fixed great gulf in their state of torments.

## LESSON 1

# ABRAHAM IS CALLED OF GOD

## The Radical Choices of Faith

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**Lesson Objective:** To contemplate what it cost Abraham to obey God's call and to evaluate if we are making the radical choices of self-abandonment that it takes to be obedient to God.

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### **Lesson Challenges:**

We all have our comfort zones. How we were raised has a lot to do with what we feel comfortable with. When we step outside those familiar spheres we will struggle. Abraham was raised in an environment of polytheism, or where many gods were worshiped. One day the true God interrupted his world, and called him to step out of his comfort zone in a radical way. God asked him to become a nomad in a strange world. Through his obedience Abraham changed the history of the world and has become the spiritual father of the faithful in many generations.

This course is no doubt being studied by persons with many backgrounds. For those raised in ungodly settings, you can easily identify with the tremendous courage and faith it took for Abraham to leave his background behind. For those from godly settings, will your commitment to God cost you any less? Can you come to God with any less commitment?

Abraham's call took him from the cities of Mesopotamia to the wilderness of Canaan. It took him from the rivers of the Fertile Crescent to the desert, the Negev, a land of barren desolation. According to archaeologists, it took him from civilization, law and order, to the primitive rule of the barbarian. But from our vantage point of living centuries later, we can see in obedience to this call from God, Abraham went from obscurity to a place of eternal prominence.

In a natural sense we understand the principle of sight. We have two kinds of sight, focus and peripheral vision. Focus is what we are really looking at, peripheral vision is what we see out to the side. Abraham made the wise choices he did when he had God as his focus in life. He saw the rest of life as peripheral vision, it was there but it wasn't the main thing in his life. Too many times we fail to count for God because we have Him off to the side of where we are looking. Our main focus is on our plans and our life.

In this lesson we wish to study the beginning of Abraham's sojourn of faith, and ask ourselves, *What does God want from my life? How might He be asking me to be an Abraham in my generation?*

### Genesis 11:24-32

1. What relation were each of the following to Abraham?

*Nahor the elder:*

*Nahor the younger:*

*Terah:*

*Lot:*

*Sarai:*

2. Using the map on page 3, give an approximate distance for Abraham's journeys from Ur through Haran to Canaan.

3. What was the place that Terah had in mind to go to when he left Ur?

Did he ever get there?

24 And Nahor lived nine and twenty years, and begat Terah:

25 And Nahor lived after he begat Terah an hundred and nineteen years, and begat sons and daughters.

26 And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

27 Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot.

28 And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees.

29 And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah.

30 But Sarai was barren; she had no child.

31 And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.

32 And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran.

#### CHRONOLOGY NOTE OF TERAH'S FAMILY

##### **Terah:**

In Genesis 11:27 we learn that Terah was 70 years old when he began to have sons. In Genesis 11:32, we learn that he was 205 when he died. That means his oldest son was 135 when Terah died.

##### **Abraham:**

In Acts 7:4 we learn that Abraham stayed in Haran until his father died. In Genesis 12:4 Abraham was only 75 years old. This means Abraham was not the oldest brother, and that there was a 60 year spread between Abraham and his oldest brother. With this age spread, it is possible that Lot was older than Abraham his uncle.

##### **Sarah:**

According to Genesis 17:17, Sarah as Abraham's half sister was 10 years younger than he was. This would have put a 70 year spread between her and her oldest sibling.

## ABRAHAM'S CALL FROM GOD

God has always had a way of calling men. In the days before the Holy Scriptures were penned and before the Church was formed, God sometimes used an audible voice to speak with mankind. In the New Testament, God spake unto us through His Son (Hebrews 1:2). Jesus told the apostles they would receive all truth (John 16:13). They wrote what He gave so we know in the Bible we have all we need for life and godliness (2Peter 1:3). Today we do not expect to hear an audible voice like Abraham did. Yet God still calls us in a very real way. God quickens His Word and speaks to us as we live in the light we have (John 7:17).

God's call to Abraham was basically that he would be willing to sign a blank check. God would show Abraham where to go. He would ask what he wanted from Abraham whenever He wanted it. Abraham was just supposed to sign at the bottom line. The intriguing point was, God was going to give all the collateral of Abraham's sacrifice (and more besides) back to him in the end.

### Genesis 12:1-9

1 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

4. Where did God call Abraham to go when he left his father's house?

5. What were some of the things Abraham needed to give up in order to answer God's call?

6. What were some of the rewards that God promised if Abraham answered his call?

7. (11:30) How did Abraham and Sarah's condition add a unique aspect to God's promise?



Apparently Abraham had made character choices along the way that inspired others to follow him. When he took the step to leave civilization, a group went with him. The Scripture makes it clear that Abraham followed the direction God gave him in specific detail. This always requires a great deal of faith and humility; faith to trust that God can work out the details we do not have control over, and humility to do what God says even when it doesn't seem to make sense.

8. How old was Abraham when he began the journey to Canaan?

9. What impresses you about Abraham's response in verse 4?

10. What evidence do we have that Abraham was making this a permanent change?

11. What evidence do we have that Abraham maintained an ongoing relationship with God?

### **Genesis 12:4-9**

4 So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

6 And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.

7 And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.

8 And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.

9 And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south.



## INSIGHTS INTO ABRAHAM'S SPIRITUAL BACKGROUND

As Joshua neared the end of his life, he perceived the snare the gods of the Canaanites were for Israel. He called all Israel together for the specific purpose of highlighting Abraham's choices to serve the one and true God. Somehow we all can see how admirable it is for others to make right choices even when we are tempted to follow gods of our generation.

What Joshua did in his day, this account is to do in ours - call a people who face very real temptations to look at the choices they have to make in light of the historical perspective. With a history of God's people in our hearts we will have the fortitude to be men of faith when those around us are giving in to sensual temptations.

### **Joshua 24:1-3, 15**

1 And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God.

2 And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods.

3 And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac.

15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

12. What was significant about the area where Joshua called the tribes as he gave them the challenge of serving Abraham's God rather than the gods of the land?

13. What are some facts about Abraham's background that would have made obedience to God especially difficult?

14. In thinking of Abraham's fathers, with how many generations did Abraham live contemporary? (See page 18)



## THE NEW TESTAMENT'S COMMENTS

Stephen had a significant undertaking before him. He wanted to persuade the Jewish leaders of their need to hear the voice of God through the Messiah Jesus Christ. So what did he do? Even as Joshua, he went back to their revered father Abraham. They knew Abraham had heard the voice of God and that he had responded in faith. These leaders knew in their hearts that God was speaking to them to break out of the mind set of their peers. They perceived why Stephen went back to Abraham to preach Christ.

### Acts 7:1-5

1 Then said the high priest, Are these things so?

2 And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,

3 And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee.

4 Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed

15. What additional details regarding God's call to Abraham do we learn from Stephen's message?

him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.  
5 And he gave him none inheritance in it, no,  
not so much as to set his foot on: yet he  
promised that he would give it to him for a  
possession, and to his seed after him, when as  
yet he had no child.



The writer to the Hebrews helps to define true faith by connecting the faith of the Old Testament heroes and how they actually lived. If our Sunday faith does not rule our everyday choices, or if our “public” faith does not direct our private temptations, our faith is dead. Faith is hearing God speak to us in the quiet recesses of the heart, and responding with love and obedience to Him, whether seen or unseen by others.

16. What motive or goal inspired Abraham to make this radical choice of leaving home and journeying on to an unknown country?

**Hebrews 11:8-10**

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

## CONCLUSION

God still calls the seeking soul out from this generation. One way you know His voice is when you choose the high road of never violating your conscience in any area where you know what His will is. Also, never go against the written Word. Never go against the counsel of your spiritual authorities. When you have established that baseline of unconditional obedience to God, then He will be able to work in and through your life in ways beyond your human comprehension.

## QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. How do a father's choices often become the basis of a life of faith or unbelief for his sons? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. How do you think that Abraham was able to convince his wife Sarah and nephew Lot that he was doing a sensible thing and that he was not going off the deep end with these unusual choices in his life? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. How is a person to know whether an urge or impulse he has is from God or is from a fanatical mind set? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. What are some sacrifices that all the children of God will need to make in this generation? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What are some things God has asked of individuals that you know that were over and beyond what He asked of the group of which they were a part? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. How can an untried and unproven Christian be certain that he will be successful when God asks large sacrifices from him? \_\_\_\_\_

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7. What is going to be your response when God asks greater sacrifices from you than He seems to ask from other Christians? \_\_\_\_\_

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## LESSON 2

# INCIDENTS WHILE IN SOJOURN

### A New Found Faith Is Tested

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**Lesson Objective:** To observe that challenges great and small come, especially when one is dedicated to serving God's highest call for his life.

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#### **Lesson Challenges:**

Abraham has made the big choice to step out for God and move to a new land. Unexpectedly, unforeseen challenges seem to come out of nowhere. Wouldn't being in the center of God's will mean that Abraham will be spared from difficult experiences?

The disciples learned a similar lesson in the account in Luke 8:22-25. Just because Christ had said "Let us go over unto the other side" didn't mean there would be a storm-free journey. By following Christ's command, the disciples encountered a most frightening storm. Obviously they were in God's will and very much out of their comfort zone.

Abraham moved out with God, but that didn't mean he would never have famine to create hunger among his flocks. Many times being in the will of God brings even greater tests than if we had stayed in our comfort zone of self-will.

Then there is the problem of common sense. If we can figure out a solution to the problem, do we really need to pray and wait on God? If the situation seems obvious, do we need some special word from God? Sometimes waiting on God only seems to bring more problems so we use common sense solutions only find out how severe our solutions can become. If we have run ahead of God, can we then pray and God will come to our rescue?

We have no record that Abraham built altars in the times while he was in Egypt. Apparently these excursions were evidence of a wavering faith. These Egypt experiences seemed to bring more tests that turned Abraham back to his place of security in God's will.

In these detours we can find identification with Abraham. We too know how easy it is for us to be tempted to worldly solutions to our emotional struggles, our financial needs and our social desires. We also know how far away God seems when we take these detours.

As we study the choices Abraham made in this lesson, we should be pondering, "*What is God saying to me in the tests He is sending into my life right now?*" and "*Is there any evidence that my good common sense is only making me more problems? Should I be quieting my restlessness and simply wait on Him?*"

## THE TEST OF FAMINE

Canaan is often referred to as the land flowing with milk and honey. Being a shepherd, Abraham tended to seek out the empty wilderness grazing lands. So he traveled to the South. And in the Negev, Abraham encountered famine.

All economies will experience times of famine, economic downturn. Man may try to manipulate the economy, but there simply are factors beyond his control. If we would find spiritual stability, we must learn to look beyond both prosperity and economic hardship. Prosperity in itself will make us proud. Famine often causes us to worry. Can we grow beyond these expressions of unbelief?

Usually famine is better for us in the long run than prosperity. But in the immediate pressures, it is not a matter to face lightheartedly. When a man is under pressure, often he will do things he did not imagine he would do when it seemed like he could control his economic situation.

We do well to learn from Abraham's weakness, not condemning him nor excusing him. While a person might think he has life under his control, extreme pressures may bring an unexpected response.

### Genesis 12:10-20

1. What was the basis for Abraham's decision to go down to Egypt?

10 And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.

2. What problem did Abraham encounter in Egypt that it seems he had not expected?

11 And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon:

3. What practice of ancient times and in Islamic countries today made the taking of women and conflict between men so much of a problem?

12 Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive.

13 Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.

4. Since Abraham's statement that Sarah was his sister was true, what then was wrong with his saying it?

14 And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair.

15 The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.

16 And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels.

17 And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife.

18 And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife?  
 19 Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way.  
 20 And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.

5. How did God preserve Abraham in spite of the foolish decision to disown Sarah as his wife?

6. What did Abraham's deceitfulness do to his relationship with Pharaoh?



### ABRAHAM'S ALTAR EXPERIENCES

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|--|--------|
| 1. Shechem, upon entering Canaan . . . . .           | 12:6-7 |
| 2. Bethel . . . . .                                  | 12:8   |
| 3. Shechem, after returning from Egypt . . . . .     | 13:4   |
| 4. Hebron . . . . .                                  | 13:18  |
| 5. Beersheba . . . . .                               | 21:33  |
| 6. Mt. Moriah, with Isaac as the sacrifice . . . . . | 22:9   |

### MATERIAL WEALTH TESTS RELATIONSHIPS

From a simplistic way of looking at life it is easy to feel most problems come from not having enough resources to go around. Actually the opposite is often the case. Financial assets may bring a sense of success, a feeling of not needing others. When men feel successful, they are tempted to expect success as a way of life. They may not be easily dissuaded from seeking self exaltation.

One can see from this account that riches do not have to corrupt one's character. Wealth was not Abraham's goal but rather a byproduct of faithfulness. Lot was motivated by a different goal.

Abraham and Lot should have been able to settle their differences without Lot eventually losing his way. But this story is recorded for a reason. We do well to see our human tendency in the choices Lot made and the consequences he reaped.

#### Genesis 13:1-9

1 And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south.  
 2 And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.

7. What was significant about Abraham's choice to return to the altar he had built between Bethel and Hai?

8. What was the problem that caused the quarrel between Abraham and Lot's servants?

9. Why did Abraham feel it important to preserve a strife free relationship between himself and Lot?

10. How does Abraham's attitude about the strife strike you?

3 And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai;  
4 Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

5 And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents.

6 And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together.

7 And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.

8 And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.

9 Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.



### ABRAHAM IS LEFT WITH "LEFT-OVERS"

It is significant that the land of Canaan never seems to be large enough. When it was being settled with the first pioneers, or when it now holds almost ten million (2008) inhabitants, there still never seems to be enough! Don't you think this has more to do with the thinking than the actuality?

It is easy to believe if there are too many people around there will never be enough for all to have what they need. This simply is a delusion! Poverty is created by greed, by man's sin, but not because there is not enough wealth to go around. People create wealth. When Adam was here before Eve, he had all the world at his disposal, but had to do everything for himself. He was able to acquire and enjoy only a very small part of it. After Eve came, and then millions more descendants, now we enjoy a much greater quality of life. We are all wealthier when there are more.

The same concept applies to quality of life. Natural man feels he has to have the best access to wealth to be truly happy. This simply is not true. True happiness is in what we share with others. When we have little, but we can enjoy it with others, then we are truly wealthy.

### Genesis 13:10-18

10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.

11 Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.

12 Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.

13 But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.

14 And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

15 For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. ]

16 And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.

17 Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.

18 Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD.

11. What was the basis upon which Lot made his choice?

12. What should have been a warning to Lot and kept him from choosing the land close to Sodom?

13. We know that Lot's choice ended badly. Do you feel Abraham was at all to blame for how Lot's choice finally ended up?

14. What can we take out of the timing of when God came to Abraham to renew his promises of possession of the land?

15. What two facts about Abraham's life must have made the promises of God difficult to believe?

## CONCLUSION

It is so good to know we serve a loving and sovereign God. It only seems natural that if we serve Him, then He would make our lives easier. It simply doesn't work that way. If we serve Him the way we ought, then He sets about to "grow" us. To grow us, He must have us face tests that we never imagined. God bless you as you learn to sweetly resign yourself to the God who grows those who are His.

# QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. Why should we be careful in our analyzing and judging Old Testament characters when they don't live up to our expectations? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Why would God allow a man who is in the center of His will to come into difficult and testing circumstances? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Why does God often allow the things we treasure most, (in Abraham's case a beautiful wife and then the riches of many flocks and herds) to be the source of temptation? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. How might Lot's choice to dwell near Sodom in spite of its wickedness serve as a warning to us today? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. How can we tell the difference when God is refining us while we are in His will and when He is using circumstances to tell us we are on the wrong track altogether? \_\_\_\_\_

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## LESSON 3

# ABRAHAM RESCUES LOT

## An Insight Into Abraham's Expanding Influence

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**Lesson Objective:** To receive insights into the growing influence one has in his family and in the community when he simply works at being faithful in that which seems to be unimportant.

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### **Lesson Challenges:**

It is doubtful that Abraham ever dreamed of being a successful general on the battlefield. It is doubtful that he saw himself coming to the rescue of fugitives and hostages. Such ideas would have seemed too farfetched. Rather he saw the little duties that awaited him day by day. He worked with his servants, he managed the flocks that grazed the plains. As he fulfilled these faithfully, his influence expanded in an uncommon manner.

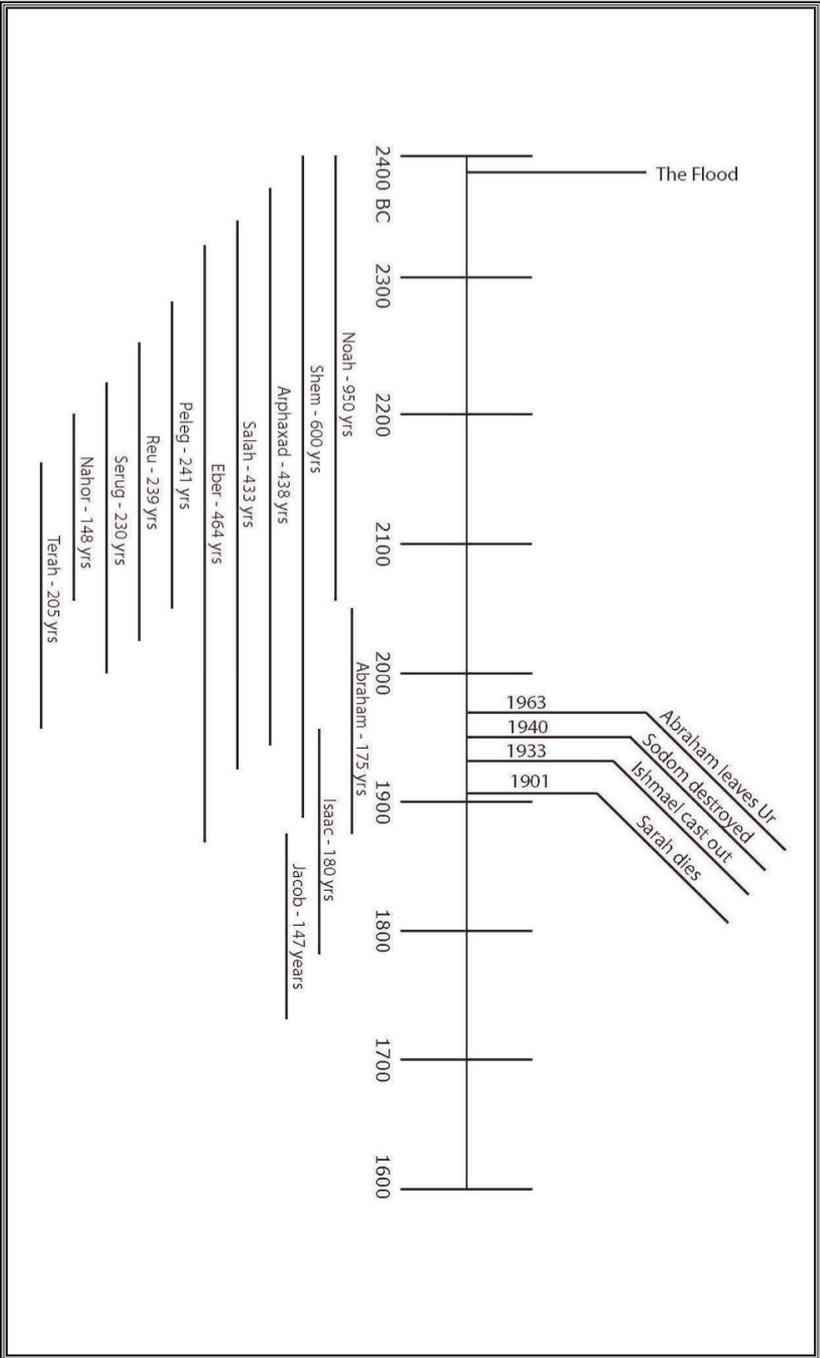
Growing herds needed an expanding workforce. As workers (either hired or slaves we don't know) were treated respectfully, they chose to stay and raise their families under Abraham's economic umbrella. These little ones grew up and their loyalties were also turned toward Abraham. They needed him and were ready to make sacrifices for him too.

The day came when all these social deposits on Abraham's part produced a wealth that went far beyond the wealth of combined city states. When the day came that Abraham needed to rescue Lot, he was able to succeed where kings failed.

This success did not go to Abraham's head. When he met Melchizedek, the king of Salem, he humbly gave him tithes. This gave rise to a "blessing" experience for Abraham.

This faithfulness and seemingly chance meeting becomes the basis for profound doctrinal platform. In our New Testament dispensation, we understand this was the meeting of two separate lineages of priests. Abraham's recognition of Melchizedek's superiority gives us the understanding that Christ's order of priesthood is superior to that of Levi's descendants.

It takes a lot of living to produce an influential life. Many have learned to their shame that efforts to be influential without having a framework of faithfulness to base it on will only fall flat. As we study this lesson we should ask ourselves, "*Am I making the little choices today that will give me stability, victory and godly influence in the future? Am I willing to faithfully conduct myself in a way that God can bless, or do I foolishly choose shortcuts of selfishness that will bring disappointments in the end?*"



## LOT'S SECURITIES ARE SHATTERED

Lot made his choice on the basis of what would provide a financial future for him. It appears there were elements of success in his choice. But for those who choose the fast road to wealth God has ways of warning how temporary riches can be. Maybe He will take a wealthy man and suddenly deprive him of all his wealth, or maybe He will take this man and have him suffer physically so that he cannot enjoy his riches.

God sent Lot some wake up calls. This sudden capture should have helped him see the quicksand foundation he was choosing for his life.

### Genesis 14:1-3, 8-16

1 And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations;

2 That these made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela, which is Zoar.

3 All these were joined together in the vale of Siddim, which is the salt sea.

8 And there went out the king of Sodom, and the king of Gomorrah, and the king of Admah, and the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (the same is Zoar;) and they joined battle with them in the vale of Siddim;

9 With Chedorlaomer the king of Elam, and with Tidal king of nations, and Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar; four kings with five.

10 And the vale of Siddim was full of slimepits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountain.

11 And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way.

12 And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.

14 And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan.

1. What is the present day location of the vale of Siddim? (V3)

2. How many kings with their armies were fighting each other?

3. What geographical features seemed to contribute to the defeat of the armies of Sodom and Gomorrah?

4. What changes had Lot made since our earlier study that are brought to light by the capture of Sodom?

5. How many soldiers did Abraham have to serve in his army?

6. Where did these soldiers come from?

7. Why do you suppose that Abraham was successful in this conquest when the alliance of kings had failed?

15 And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus.

16 And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.



### ABRAHAM'S CONFIRMATION OF GOD'S BLESSING

Just as God sent Lot warnings, He also sent subtle signs of confirmation to Abraham. What a blessing it must have been to Abraham to have Melchizedek come to bless him. No, this was not the fulfillment of God's total promise to Abraham, he still needed to have faith the rest would be coming sometime down the road; but it was a sign.

God gives those signs just when we really need them. He will confirm in mysterious ways when our paths are pleasing to Him. We will sense the witness of the Spirit and may regain the courage to continue on.

#### **Genesis 14:17-24**

8. What two responsibilities did Melchizedek fill?

17 And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale.

18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.

9a. What gifts did Melchizedek give to Abraham?

19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:

9b. What did Abraham give Melchizedek?

20 And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.

21 And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.

22 And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth,

23 That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any

thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich:

24 Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.

10. What was the reason Abraham refused the King of Sodom's proposal that he keep the possessions he had retrieved?



## TWO LINES OF PRIESTHOOD

Isn't it interesting how Abraham's experience with Melchizedek served a much larger dimension than just for a blessing to Abraham. This seemingly insignificant event becomes the spring board to understand how Jesus can be our Eternal High Priest. He was of the line of Judah, which had no priests. He did not come from Levi. But Levi's father paid homage to a greater priest. Jesus is of the line of this greater priest. Thus, the type is not broken in Christ.

Abraham received a confirmation of expanding fruitfulness through faithfulness. Through Melchizedek, Jesus Christ also receives confirmation, a prophetic type that affirms His Messiahship.

### Hebrews 7:1-17

1 For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;

3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.

4 Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

5 And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham:

6 But he whose descent is not counted from

11. What are some unique features about Melchisedec that separate him from ordinary people?

12. What disqualifies Christ from being a priest after the order of Aaron?

13. How does Christ not being a priest after Aaron's lineage bring an advantage to the New Testament disciple? (V12)

14. How do we know the priesthood of Melchisedec is superior to the priesthood of Aaron that sprang from Abraham's lineage

them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.

7 And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.

8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.

9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham.

10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.

11 If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

12 For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

13 For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.

14 For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

15 And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest,

16 Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

17 For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec

## CONCLUSION

This lesson is a tremendous encouragement when we grow weary in faithfulness. It seems in this life that those who pursue the well watered plains make out better than those who seek to deny self and walk with their Savior. This lesson makes so very clear how wide the circle of influence grows both in time and in eternity when we are faithful to the Lord in our choices.

## QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. What is the best way to become a hero of faith? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What warning should Lot have taken from being captured along with the rest of the people of Sodom? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Why do you think Abraham bothered to become involved with the affairs of the capture of Sodom? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. What principle can we learn from Abraham's refusal to take financial gain from his capture of the alliance of kings? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Why is it important to understand Melchisedec's role and relationship to Abraham? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. Melchisedec filled both roles of king and priest. Who else in the Scriptures fills both these roles that were almost always kept separate? \_\_\_\_\_

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7. Some have proposed that Melchisedec was actually Noah's son Shem who would have still been living at the time. What do you think? Do the qualifications in Hebrews fit someone like Shem? Give reasons for your answer. (Note: Study the time line on page 18) \_\_\_\_\_

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### ABRAHAM'S AGE AT VARIOUS EVENTS

75 years old when leaving Haran .....	(12:4)
85 when taking Hagar .....	(16:3)
86 when Ishmael was born .....	(16:16)
99 when circumcised .....	(17:24)
100 when Isaac was born .....	(21:5)
137 when Sarah died .....	(17:17 & 23:1)
175 when he died .....	(25:7)

## LESSON 4

# ABRAM BELIEVES GOD

## God Establishes Covenant With Abraham

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**Lesson Objective:** To ponder the remarkable exchange that occurs when man wholly believes God's promises and trusts completely in His Word.

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### Lesson Challenges:

Abraham and Sarah were going from older to elderly. In fact, Abraham was somewhere between seventy-five and eighty-five years old. They had served God faithfully for many years, but there was no obvious sign that the promises God had made would ever come to pass. It is true some of the promises were very long term and could not come to pass in a lifetime. However, the one about becoming a nation would obviously need to result in some offspring very soon.

Surely the contradiction of God's long term promise and the everyday facts stared Abraham in the face day by day. We are not told of his doubts. Did He wonder if the voice that made the promises was really God's voice? Did he struggle if God was somehow unable to bring His word to pass?

In the passage under consideration in this lesson God shows up again. What will He do this time? Will He begin to visibly fulfill His promise? No, instead of sending a son, He takes Abraham on a night walk. As the stars are splayed across the sky in an innumerable display, God compares their number with Abraham's descendants. Really God, when you have already made promises that you have not kept, will you now make more? In this new revelation, Abraham would not only have a few offspring, his impact on the human family would be unmeasurable.

As we study this lesson, we should ask ourselves, *"How do I respond when it seems like God isn't keeping His promises? Do I doubt His character or question His Word? Or do I choose a faith like Abraham that keeps on trusting even when there doesn't seem to be outward support?"*

## GOD APPEARS TO ABRAHAM

### Genesis 15:1-6

1. How do we know Abraham was struggling with the fact that God's promises to him seemed to not be coming to pass?

2. Who did Abraham think could possibly be his heir?

3. What did God do to alleviate Abraham's concerns that promises were not being fulfilled?

4. What was Abraham's response to God's promise that his offspring would be as the stars of

1 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

2 And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?

3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.

4 And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.

5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.



## GOD ESTABLISHES COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

The cultural implications of the following account include symbolism that we will probably never fully understand as those from the West. A covenant was an agreement made between two parties. It would begin by making a blood sacrifice, then dividing the parts and walking the path between the parts. As the person would walk, he would vow that which he would fulfill for the other person.

First Abraham witnessed a smoking furnace pass between the pieces. This seems to symbolize the law, the Old Testament covenant. God worked with Abraham's physical children during this era. Then Abraham witnessed a burning lamp next. This would represent the New Testament covenant. God works with Abraham's spiritual children in this era.

## Genesis 15:7-21

7 And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.

8 And he said, Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?

9 And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.

10 And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not.

11 And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

12 And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.

13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.

15 And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.

16 But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

17 And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.

18 In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

19 The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites,

20 And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims,

21 And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

5. There is no evidence that God was impatient with Abraham's questions. Why do you suppose He had such patience?

6. The word "covenant" used in verse 18 comes from a word meaning "a cutting, or a dividing between". What was the cutting and dividing between in this setting?

7. The word covenant means an alliance or a contract between two parties. What was Abraham's commitment to God? What did God promise Abraham?

8. God promised Abraham that his descendants would serve in a foreign land under affliction for 400 years. When was this fulfilled?

9. Why did God not give the land of Canaan to the children of Abraham right away?

10. What borders were established in the land promised to Abraham's seed?

11. What word in verse 13 becomes of major importance because it is in the singular tense? (See Galatians 3:16)

## HE STAGGERED NOT AT THE PROMISE OF GOD

One of the key ingredients of salvation on man's part as revealed in the New Testament is faith. Abraham's faith at this juncture was recorded to have been imputed for righteousness. God made a promise that had no sign of being fulfilled from a natural perspective. In fact, from a natural perspective it looked as if it was impossible. But Abraham chose to believe God's promise with all his heart.

When God sees man place complete confidence in His promises, He counts or reckons, or imputes that as righteousness. It is obvious when a man places complete trust in what God says, he will order his life as God directs. Abraham did so. Any disobedience or transgression is clear evidence that a life is not being directed by faith alone.

### **Romans 4:17-22**

12. The New Testament clarifies the strength of Abraham's faith. What terms are used to portray how strong Abraham's faith was?

13. How is God able to call things that be not as though they were?

14. What was it about Abraham that caused God to impute righteousness to his account?

17 (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

18 Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.

19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb:

20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

## CONCLUSION

As Christians, we really have very little proof that what God has promised will actually come to pass. Almost all we have to place our confidence in are some promises written by men thousands of years ago. We cannot point to proof that these things are literally coming to pass. It appears in this dispensation God chooses to display His Grace and asks for man to believe.

When we really believe with all our heart then three things become much more simple. The first is right doctrine. We will believe what the Bible teaches. The next is trust. We do not need to control life, we see God in control. The last is obedience. What God says, we rally to do.

## QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. What is the normal response when it seems as if things God has promised will never come to pass? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What are some ways the blessing for all nations through Abraham's seed has already been fulfilled? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What are some blessings through Abraham's seed that we still anticipate? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. What does the concept of having a covenant with God mean to the Christian today? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Why would God make a promise that He only intended to begin to fulfill over 400 years later? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. Why do so many of God's promises have such a time delay factor built into them? \_\_\_\_\_

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7. When did the Israelite nation achieve the borders that God promised to Abraham? \_\_\_\_\_

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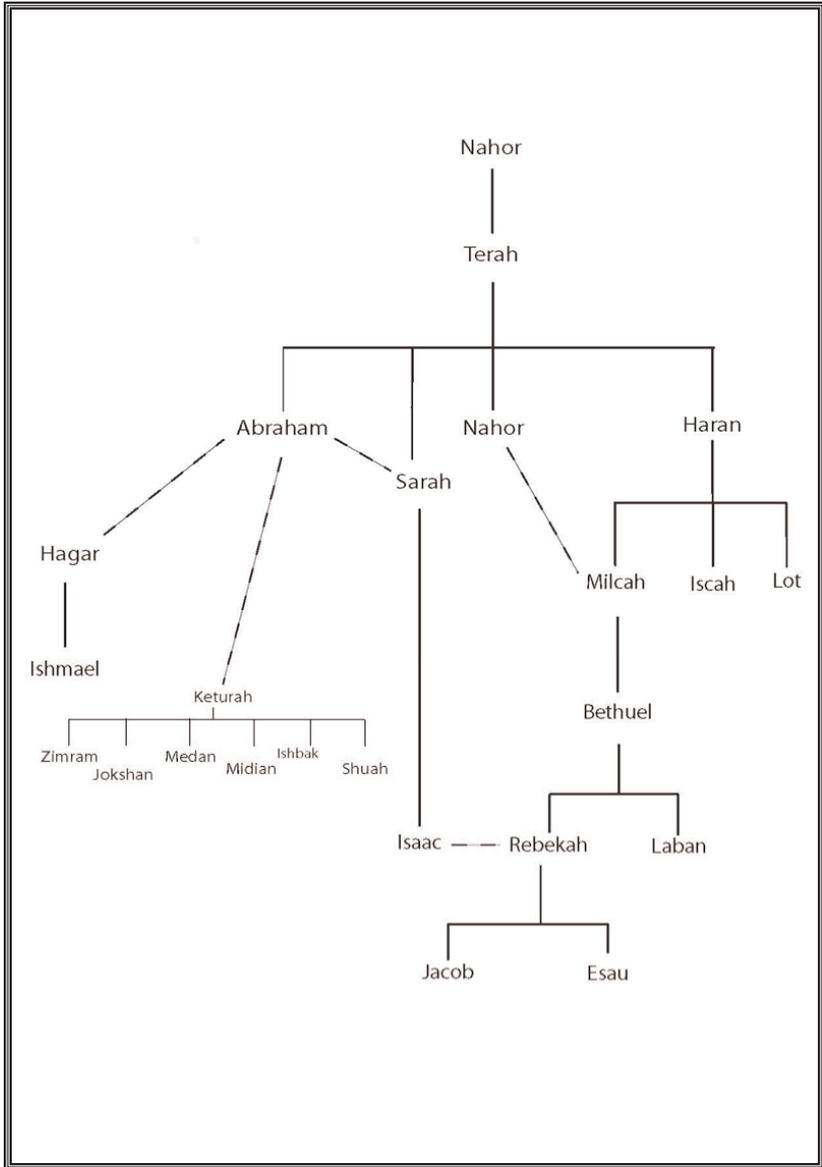
8. How does this promise of land to Abraham contribute to the tensions that presently exist in the Middle East? \_\_\_\_\_

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# ABRAHAM'S FAMILY TREE



## LESSON 5

# ISHMAEL IS BORN AND A NEW COVENANT IS MADE

## Abraham's Efforts To Help God Keep His Promise Only Bring Frustration

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**Lesson Objective:** To see how moving ahead of God's timing can bring heartache. Also to observe that in spite of the impulsive failures of His children, God is ever looking to establish a deeper relationship with them.

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### Lesson Challenges:

God's timing is perfect, we say, but He does seem to move so slowly with many things that are of great importance. Why do specific promises go years without being answered? Why do other's evil goals seem so easily fulfilled? God could have sent children to Abraham and Sarah immediately after they moved to Canaan, He could have sent them a large family of children. There is a reason for the way God delayed in fulfilling His promise, a lesson that is written down for us today.

If God would have moved more quickly in sending Isaac, one can reason that Abraham would not have fathered Ishmael. Then the problem with sibling rivalry and present day Arab/Israeli conflict would not have been an issue. The blame is not God's; His timing was right on track. Where Sarah ever got the idea and why Abraham ever listened on her lies squarely at the feet of human pride. It is in our nature to believe God may need help to get good things done. We wrestle with this control issue. A little humility would go a long way to save us from heartaches.

We need to ponder this lesson deeply. Abraham and Sarah were no longer young people. The test they failed is one that young people often struggle with. Impulse buying and steep credit debt, dating without parental blessing, indulging in carnal courtship, job hopping are but symptoms of a deeper problem. And young people are not the only ones tempted. Sometimes money is borrowed when it would have been better to wait on the Lord. Sometimes parents push their children out to be with the youth or stir up their interest in the opposite sex before they are ready. Waiting on the Lord is the answer to many problems.

One of the lessons in this passage is the comfort that even men who are said to have "staggered not at the promise of God" may express very human tendencies. We need to remember this, not to justify our carnality, but to help us not to judge ourselves or others in their humanity too harshly.

As we study this lesson we should be asking ourselves, "*Are there areas where I am running ahead of God's will? Am I just making more problems for myself that will come to haunt me later by insisting that I can have my way now?*"

## SARAH'S SUGGESTION AND ABRAHAM'S RESPONSE

### Genesis 16:1-6

1. Who did Sarah believe was choosing to make her barren up to this point?

2. Why did Sarah suggest that Abraham take Hagar as his wife to bear a son?

3. How old was Abraham at this time?

4. How did Hagar's attitude change as soon as she had Abraham as husband and knew she was expecting a child?

5. How did Sarah respond to this new tension in her relationship with Hagar? Do you think she was being fair?

6. Give some areas where it seems like Abraham was weak in his leadership in the home.

7. How did Hagar respond to the injustice she suffered at the hand of Sarah?

1 Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar.

2 And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

3 And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.

4 And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.

5 And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee.

6 But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.

## HAGAR'S PLIGHT AND THE GOD WHO SEES

One person's impulsive acts often make it harder for others to wait on God. Sarah influenced Abraham. When their plan worked its natural course in Hagar's heart, they had a problem that should have been anticipated, but of course men often do not think through all the repercussions of their actions. God had a work to do in Hagar's heart too. She should have been more humble. She should have accepted Sarah's emotional outbursts. She should have meekly accepted her lot, and nurtured her baby. But human nature is strong, even in a slave girl's heart.

God wants a relationship with each one of his created beings. When Hagar ran away, God reached out to her too. This is a comfort to us, for it is easy for us to see ourselves in Hagar.

### Genesis 16:7-16

7 And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur.

8 And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence comest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai.

9 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.

10 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.

11 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction.

12 And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.

13 And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?

14 Wherefore the well was called Beerlahairoi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

15 And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael.

16 And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.

8. What direction did the angel have for Hagar?

9. What promises did the angel make about Hagar's offspring?

10. Who are Hagar's descendants today and how do they fulfill this prophecy?

11. What was to be the personality of Hagar's son? What would be the place where he would live?

12. What new found challenge did Hagar take away from this encounter with God's angel?

13. How old was Abraham when Ishmael was born?

## GOD REESTABLISHES COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

For thirteen years Abraham watches Ishmael grow. He knows Ishmael is not the son of promise, but nothing seems to change to make God's promises come true.

Then the pattern is repeated. God appears again to dialogue with Abraham. This is now the fourth time. Will he finally act? Again God makes what could seem to be a grandiose promise. In essence God said, "Abraham, you will be the father of a many nations. In fact, I'm giving you a name that will make this known to every one. No longer will you be called "Exalted Father", now you will be "Father of a Multitude."

"Abraham, there is something else. I want you to have a very personal and very private symbolic procedure done on you and your male household. This operation has deep meaning in being willing to cut off the flesh and be totally separated unto me." Abraham promptly obeyed, humbly accepting the humiliation of this procedure.

14. Read Genesis 12:1-3. How much time has now elapsed since God first made covenant with Abraham?

15. Use a concordance to find what the name Abraham means. What does Sarah signify?

16. What did God ask from Abraham and his descendants as their part of the covenant?

### Genesis 17:1-27

1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.

3 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,

4 As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.

5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

9 And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.

10 This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.

11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant

betwixt me and you.

12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.

13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

14 And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

15 And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be.

16 And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.

17 Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?

18 And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!

19 And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.

21 But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

22 And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.

23 And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him.

24 And Abraham was ninety years old and nine,

17. What two responses did Abraham make that reveal that Sarah having her own son was becoming a strange thought

18. What evidence do we have that Abraham was sincere in keeping his part of the covenant?

when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

25 And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

26 In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son.

27 And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him.

## CONCLUSION

In our day of advancing technology and increased materialism, the temptation to help God by controlling our lives is even more of a problem than before. Want a good life? Want to avoid financial loss? Want a secure retirement for your older age? The wisdom from beneath that is earthly, sensual and devilish offers an answer. Will we learn from Abraham and leave to God what He has placed a claim on? Or will we go on in unbelief and face God's discipline? Isn't it thought provoking that the more things seem to change, the more they really are the same!

## QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. Why is it that our ideas about how to help God keep His promises hardly ever work out well even when our motives may be sincere? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What is odd about Sarah's blame on Abraham's action with Hagar? Are there any lessons for us in this? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Why did God instruct Hagar to go back and submit to the hand of Sarah? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Beyond the promise that Isaac would inherit the land of Canaan, what was embodied in the fact that he would be the promised son? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What does the severity of punishment for the un-circumcised indicate about the importance of the covenant? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. What does the fact that the promise to Abraham (that he would be heir to the world) was made with no hint of circumcision tell us? (Hint, see Romans 4:9-13) \_\_\_\_\_

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## LESSON 6

# ABRAHAM INTERCEDES

God Has Mercy On Lot For The  
Sake Of Abraham His Friend

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**Lesson Objective:** To understand not only the importance of intercessory prayer but also the effects of one's personal relationship with God in the day of vengeance.

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### Lesson Challenges:

We care deeply for the soul of a loved one but he continues to choose the broad way that leads to death. We pray in our prayer closet begging God to save him, or at least have mercy upon him. Then we pray together in prayer meetings for his salvation, but nothing seems to change. What shall we do? Can prayer change a person against his will? Can we claim someone will be saved in the end because we have prayed for him?

There are two great forces at work in this world throughout history. One is the sovereignty of God. The other is that man has choice of free will. One does not negate the other, but both work in each other. What a wonderful tribute to the greatness of God; He accomplishes His purposes and fulfills prophecy, but man has freedom to choose.

We will observe in this lesson that prayer does cause the hand of God to be tempered by mercy. Lot was delivered from Sodom. John records a key thought for Jesus' disciples, "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." (1Jo 3:22) But intercessory prayer cannot prevent a person from the reaping of choices he makes for himself. Though this lesson text does not move with Lot to his final shame, what he reaped is what he chose for himself. He did not reap what Abraham would have desired for him.

As we study this lesson we should challenge ourselves, "*Do I care enough for my loved ones who are losing the way? Am I making use of the avenue of intercessory prayer?* But we also should be asking, "*Am I determined to keep my confidence in God even though a loved one makes a wrong choice?*"

## ABRAHAM MEETS THE PRE-INCARNATE CHRIST AND INTERCEDES FOR LOT

On different occasions in the Old Testament, a supernatural figure would come and appear to men, especially holy men. We know that not all these beings were angels. Angels characteristically do not accept the worship of men nor do they accept the title of Lord. The visitors at Abraham's tent that afternoon would have been two angels and Jesus in His pre-incarnate form. (A appearance of Christ like this before His incarnation is known as a theophany.)

The writer to the Hebrews (Hebrews 13:2) reminds us to be hospitable to strangers because strange as it may seem, we too might entertain angels unawares.

In this interview, God now for the fifth time, promises Abraham and Sarah a son.

### Genesis 18:1-15

1. Describe Abraham's hospitality for these unknown visitors.

1 And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day;

2 And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground,

3 And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant:

2. How many times had Abraham heard God promise a child and it still had not come to pass?

4 Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree:

5 And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said.

6 And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth.

3. What was different about the promise this time?

7 And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetcht a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it.

8 And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.

9 And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent.

10 And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him.

11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.

12 Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?

13 And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?

14 Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.

15 Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh.

4. What was Sarah's response? How did her response differ from Abraham's in Gen 17:17?



## THE LORD FEELS COMPELLED TO CONFIDE IN ABRAHAM

As the title of this study highlights, Abraham is known as “the friend of God”. Jesus too reached a level of relationship with His disciples when He informed them He would be treating them as friends (John 15:15). In both of these illustrations we observe that in friendship God opens His plans which are hidden to other men to those with whom He has a special relationship.

Interestingly enough, one of the main reasons God gives for this kind of relationship with Abraham is because of his child-training techniques. God knew what he invested in Abraham would not remain solely in that generation. Abraham would instill respect and obedience to God in the rising generations. One of the family traits would be a strong discipline, first of external control, and then from within. We do well to reflect on this principle as child training responsibilities come our way.

### Genesis 18:16-22

16 And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way.

17 And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do;

18 Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

19 For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice

5. Why did the LORD feel compelled to tell Abraham about the judgement he was planning for Sodom?

6. What was it about Abraham that had caused God to determine that he would be a great and mighty nation and that all nations would be blessed through him?

7. Why was God planning to destroy Sodom?

and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

20 And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous;

8. What was the purpose of the angels' visit to Sodom?

21 I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.

22 And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.

"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers:  
for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."  
Heb 13:2

### ABRAHAM INTERCEDES FOR LOT AND ALL OF SODOM

Even before the fall, when God made man in His own image, man apparently had a sense of justice. When God shared with Abraham that he was planning to destroy the entire city, Abraham immediately thought of the innocent who would be destroyed with the wicked. He used the premise of God's justice and mercy to make his plea.

9. What did Abraham use as his basis of appeal for mercy for Sodom

#### **Genesis 18:23-33**

23 And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?

24 Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?

25 That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

26 And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

27 And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the

Lord, which am but dust and ashes:  
28 Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it.  
29 And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake.  
30 And he said unto him, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there.  
31 And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake.  
32 And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake.  
33 And the LORD went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place.

10. How do we know that Abraham really felt bold to be asking for Sodom to be spared?

11. How small a number of righteous did Abraham finally leave off pleading for? How many righteous actually were in Sodom?



## SODOM IS DESTROYED, LOT IS SPARED

It is unlikely we can comprehend the destruction of the cities of the plain. Man has a natural fear of raging fires, and that is exactly what God unleashed that morning. It is reasonable to believe that the Sodomites went directly from fire that rained from heaven to the torments of Sheol. The celestially fueled fires produced a smoke that went up like the smoke of a furnace seen by Abraham miles away.

The Scripture is careful to record that in spite of this vehement destruction, God remembered Abraham. God wants us as New Testament disciples to know that. It needs to influence our thinking as we relate to loved ones who deserve God's judgement.

### **Genesis 19:23-29**

12. Did God answer Abraham's prayer by giving him what he was asking for? Explain.

23 The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar.

24 Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven;

25 And he overthrew those cities, and all the

13. Why did God take Lot and his daughters out of Sodom alive?

14. a. What happened when Lot's wife looked toward Sodom?

b. What happened when Abraham looked toward Sodom?

c. Why do you think God made a difference?

plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

26 But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

27 And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD:

28 And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.

29 And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt.

**Deuteronomy 29:23**

And that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath:

## CONCLUSION

Yes, there are two great forces that intertwine to create the unfolding history of mankind, God's sovereignty and man's free will. Intermingled with these two great factors are the intercessory prayers of the faithful. Righteousness, doing the will of God from the heart, creates a relationship from which mortal man can reach right into the throne room of God and influence His sovereign hand. The converse is true, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:" (Ps 66:18). Let us make consistent choices that qualify us as the righteous of our day, not only for our own sake but also for the sake of those we love.

# QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. In James 2:23, Abraham is called the friend of God. What evidence do we have that God looked at Abraham as a friend? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. How does John 14:23 explain that we may come into a special communing relationship with God? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. How have all the nations of the world become blessed through Abraham? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Some parents feel that it is selfish for them to impose their will upon their child and make them behave in an upright and proper manner. What verse(s) would you give to help them see the importance of proper child discipline and instruction? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What are some benefits children reap when they have parents who impose discipline upon them, train them to hearken and teach them at a young age not to follow their own carnal will? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. How do you think Abraham felt and what do you think he thought about when he saw the immense burnings of the plains of Sodom? \_\_\_\_\_

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## LESSON 7

# ISAAC IS BORN!

## Abraham Receives Rewards For His Faithfulness

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**Lesson Objective:** To see some of the rewards of having faith that produces faithfulness.

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### Lesson Challenges:

God had promised time and again, in one way or another, that Abraham and Sarah would have a son of their own. This son was to be the son of promise in that the promises of God to Abraham would be fulfilled through him. God would bless the world with the Messiah through his loins. God would eventually also found the Gentile church through this lineage.

Finally the day arrived. Born to a mother who had passed the time of her fertility and to a hundred year old father, Isaac becomes a representation of a God who keeps His promises.

The arrival of the promised child brought along with it a tension. Two women, two children, one father who needed to relate to both. The Hebrew word for “cast out” is also translated “put away” or “divorce”. God reiterated that it is not His intention that the two dwell together in the same household.

In this way we receive the lesson that the Old and New Covenants cannot both be adhered to. Likewise, no man can nurture and care for his old nature and the new man that is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him.

As we study this lesson, it is important to ask, *“Is there any way in which I am not believing and trusting in God the way I should? I can see the effects of faith versus unbelief in others, do I apply these same principles to all of my life?”*



## ISAAC IS BORN

One of the areas where the sovereignty of God intertwines with the will of man is in the conception of children. We live in a day when man has told himself God is not involved in the giving of life. The following verses, along with many other Old Testament passages reveals God is the One who opens and closes the womb; it is God who superintends in the formation of each person.

Rejoice with Abraham and Sarah as they finally receive the son of promise.

1. Give two miracles that showed Abraham and Sarah that Isaac's birth was the hand of God.

2. What two acts of obedience did Abraham do in connection with the birth of Isaac that reveal his covenant relation with God?

3. How did Sarah relate to the fact that laughter was Isaac's name

### **Genesis 21:1-8**

1 And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken.

2 For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.

3 And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac.

4 And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him.

5 And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him.

6 And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me.

7 And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born him a son in his old age.

8 And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned.



### **DIRECTION ON A DIFFICULT ISSUE**

We probably do not realize how much our affections influence the way we see threats. Abraham had a tender spot in his heart for Ishmael and Hagar that Sarah did not have. In our human judgement, we can evaluate that. In our sympathies, we likely would side with Abraham. God saw a deeper issue and sided with Sarah. He knew the nature of Ishmael, and that Isaac and Ishmael could never live peaceably together.

In this passage we see another reward of a faithful life. Abraham could go to God with a matter that tore at his emotions. He could cast his burden on the Lord, and receive clear direction how to fit into God's plan. This is a reward given only to those who have faithfully served the Lord.

### **Genesis 21:9-13**

9 And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking.

10 Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.

11 And the thing was very grievous in

4. How did Abraham feel about sending Ishmael away? Why?

Abraham's sight because of his son.

12 And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

13 And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.

5. Why did God see separating Isaac and Ishmael as the best thing to do?



## CONCERNS BEYOND OUR CONTROL

Again we witness the prompt response of Abraham to God's commands. Even though Abraham had deep sympathies for Hagar and Ishmael, when God said they must go, Abraham sent them away.

This action placed ones who Abraham loved beyond his ability to help them. This was no doubt a heavy burden on Abraham. He knew the desert could kill. He also knew he needed to let loose and let God take over. Ability to trust in matters we care deeply about but cannot control is another reward for the faithful.

Since we know Ishmael was thirteen when Isaac was born, we have an understanding that he was now somewhere between fifteen and seventeen at the time this story transpires. We receive a small insight into Hagar's physical stamina, since she seems to still have been much stronger than her teenaged son.

God came to the rescue. He had a place for Ishmael and his family and so survive they would. As end time prophecy unfolds, we likely will understand more of these Sovereign purposes.

### **Genesis 21:14-21**

14 And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.

15 And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs.

16 And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept.

17 And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is.

6. What was the approximate age of the lad Ishmael when he was cast under the shrub to die?

7. How do we know Hagar was greatly distressed by the conditions in which she found herself?

8. How could Hagar have known her son was not going to die, but live? (See Gen 16:10)

18 Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation.

19 And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink.

20 And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer.

21 And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.



## NEIGHBORLY RELATIONSHIPS

One common element in all good relationships is trust. When individuals mistrust each other, they will not invest good will into each other, but continually work to protect themselves from being taken advantage of. They suppose if they expose any weakness, their neighbor will take advantage of them. Much energy is consumed in defending one's turf.

When there is trust in the relationship a whole different atmosphere exists. People can relax, can throw their energies into creating a higher level of living, socially and materially.

Abraham's trustworthiness had its roots in one source, his relationship with God. In being accountable to God for his actions, Abraham did not use other people to his advantage. Because of character deficiencies on the part of the Philistines, Abraham could not have deepest bonds, but he had done his part.

### Genesis 21:22-34

9. What did Abimelech observe about Abraham's life?

22 And it came to pass at that time, that Abimelech and Phicol the chief captain of his host spake unto Abraham, saying, God is with thee in all that thou doest:

23 Now therefore swear unto me here by God that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son: but according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned.

24 And Abraham said, I will swear.

25 And Abraham reproved Abimelech because of a well of water, which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away.

26 And Abimelech said, I wot not who hath done this thing: neither didst thou tell me, neither yet heard I of it, but to day.

10. How did Abraham approach Abimelech when his servants violently took away the well he had dug?

27 And Abraham took sheep and oxen, and gave them unto Abimelech; and both of them made a covenant.

28 And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves.

29 And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What mean these seven ewe lambs which thou hast set by themselves?

30 And he said, For these seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand, that they may be a witness unto me, that I have digged this well.

31 Wherefore he called that place Beersheba; because there they sware both of them.

32 Thus they made a covenant at Beersheba: then Abimelech rose up, and Phichol the chief captain of his host, and they returned into the land of the Philistines.

33 And Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the LORD, the everlasting God.

34 And Abraham sojourned in the Philistines' land many days.

11. What did Abimelech and Abraham each want from the other?

12. What did Abraham do to break the stalemate of tension that existed between them?

13. What was the underlying reason why Abraham could reach out in respect to neighbors, even those who might take advantage of him?

## CONCLUSION

Faith produces faithfulness. Faithfulness produces the deepest rewards one will ever find in a fallen world. While the specific rewards Abraham experienced may not be the same as what we may experience today, nevertheless, the principle remains. Build your life in faithfulness, and let God work rewards that honor His Kingdom.

# QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. How did it come to pass that Sarah conceived a child when she was ninety years old? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. How long do you think it took until the contention began to spring up between Abraham's two sons? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. In this lesson we have two different ways of getting along. How does how God told Abraham to relate to Ishmael and how Abraham and Abimelech related to each other differ? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. How do we know there will always be contention between those who trust in Christ for salvation and those who seek salvation through keeping the Old Testament law? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What principles for being a good neighbor can you find in Abraham's relationship with Abimelech? \_\_\_\_\_

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## LESSON 8

# GOD TESTS ABRAHAM

## Abraham Offers Isaac On Mount Moriah

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**Lesson Objective:** To discover the joy of unreserved, whole-hearted obedience to God. God sometimes asks us to give up what means most to us. The joy is, when we obey in giving up what is dear, He becomes more precious to us, and we know our own Christian life has been strengthened.

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### **Lesson Challenges:**

Even though we know God is the giver of every good thing we enjoy in life, we face a difficult choice with our affections. We must decide which we will love more, the gift He gives us or Him the Giver. We know in our head or thinking that He is our Creator, the sole reason for our existence. As New Testament disciples we also know He gave up His Son for our salvation so we could enjoy the bliss of Heaven with Him. We know He wants our love and loyalty and has every right to ask for it.

But it is still difficult in our hearts not to fasten more of our affection on the people or the things He places in our lives than on Him. Even when we know how foolish it is to love anyone more than our loving Heavenly Father, we still face that temptation.

God knew that Abraham loved Him. He knew that he loved Him more than he loved Isaac. But God wants all the world to see this object lesson of love. He had this story recorded and has it shared with us at least in part because He desires that we see the greater blessings that are received when we give up what is dear to us. God desires that we see He has absolute control over every thing we find precious.

Abraham reaped more than a son restored to life. He also found a ram that was provided for God's required sacrifice. He found in bold hope that "God will provide Himself a lamb..." some day in the future. That promise is the promise upon which our hope of salvation stands!

As we study this lesson we should be asking ourselves, "How will I respond when God touches what I love most on earth, Will I love Him more than all or will I rebel and turn bitter? Also, "Do I have faith to believe that God won't take anything away without eternally giving something more enduring in its place?"

## GOD REQUIRES ABRAHAM TO SACRIFICE HIS SON

When God brought the request to Abraham to give up his son in sacrifice, he confronted him on two levels. The first was the matter of affection. In fact, God identifies Isaac with that identity, “Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest”. All of Abraham’s heart would have rebelled against such a request.

The other level was justice. It was wrong to offer one’s offspring in child sacrifice. The pagans did that. Isaac had not sinned some specific sin more than others. God, why would you make a request like this!

But Abraham had learned to listen to God’s voice. Even though it had cost him so much and in terms of immediate gratification had brought him so little, Abraham knew he would not disobey.

There is quiet strength in this kind of resolution. It is strengthening to accept that God will make what seems to be unreasonable requests, but when He does, even when they go against both my head and my heart, I will respond.

Isaac and Abraham’s relationship is another marvel. In these passages, twice it states “they went both of them together.” We do not know Isaac’s age; we do know he was old enough to understand what was about to transpire. Traditional sources place him at about seventeen. Certainly if he would have found it in his heart to rebel, he could have resisted or fled. God’s statement that Abraham would command his children after him is obviously highlighted here.



### Genesis 22:1-10

1. James 1:13 tells us that God doesn’t tempt any one and verse one states that God tempted Abraham. How do we understand this difference?

2. What two things did God identify about Isaac when He wanted Abraham to know which son he was to sacrifice?

3. Where was Abraham to offer up his son? What is significant about this place?

1 And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.

2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

3 And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt

offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

8 And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

9 And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

4. What are some signs that Abraham was submissive to God's order even if it wasn't to his liking?

5. What hint do we have that Abraham fully expected to offer up Isaac and have God bring him back to life again?

6. Give proof that Isaac and Abraham had a close relationship, and that Isaac was taught to be submissive to his father's commands.

7. How did Abraham's statement, "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering..." become a prophetic statement?



## GOD PROVIDES A SACRIFICE

Abraham went through all the steps of giving up his son. From the New Testament we learn he expected to go through with this sacrifice and then God would raise Isaac to life again (See Heb 11:17-19). Abraham wrestled with two seemingly contradictions from God. He had heard, "Your son Isaac is the son of promise." and now "Sacrifice your son Isaac". Combining these two, Abraham experienced the joy of the resurrection.

These steps parallel ones the Holy Father would take at redemption. His Son of Promise would be offered on Mount Moriah. He would be slain, a human sacrifice, contradicting all reason and justice. God too would know the joy of the resurrection. Death and Hell could not keep back the power of the Holy One.

### Genesis 22:11-19

11 And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

12 And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

8. Is there any reason to believe Abraham would not have carried through with the commandment to sacrifice his son?

9. What does this object lesson of Abraham's test teach us about obedience to God?

10. What did God do for Abraham in response to Abraham's great act of obedience?

13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

14 And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

15 And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,

16 And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:

17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

19 So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.



## ABRAHAM'S BROTHER'S FAMILY

By now Abraham was quite old. He had made great sacrifices and God had promised him an extended family, a family to bless the whole world with. Then Abraham received the news from his home he had left at God's command. His brother had sons too. In fact, he had eight sons from his wife and four more from a concubine. Twelve sons! Nahor had never stepped out in faith at God's commands! We do not know if this caused Abraham any struggle or not. God's promise still stood. Isaac would leave a posterity far greater than that of his twelve cousins.

11. How many children did Abraham's brother Nahor have by this time?

12. How could Abraham have felt about the differences in their family sizes?

### Genesis 22:20-24

20 And it came to pass after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, Behold, Milcah, she hath also born children unto thy brother Nahor;

21 Huz his firstborn, and Buz his brother, and Kemuel the father of Aram,

22 And Chesed, and Hazo, and Pildash, and Jidlaph, and Bethuel.

23 And Bethuel begat Rebekah: these eight Milcah did bear to Nahor, Abraham's brother.

24 And his concubine, whose name was Reumah, she bare also Tebah, and Gaham, and Thahash, and Maachah.

## THE NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY

Abraham kept choosing to see the big picture... how things looked from an eternal perspective. God had asked things from him and he had chosen to do everything God wanted, even when it made him different from others. The New Testament highlights two things about Abraham, his faith and his works. The faith he had produced obedient works.

### Hebrews 11:17-19

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

### James 2:21-24

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

13. To what virtue does the New Testament ascribe Abraham's obedience?

14. What did the obedience of Abraham do to the statement of God that He saw Abraham's faith and counted it to him for righteousness? (23)

15. What special title is given Abraham that the Bible gives no other person?

## CONCLUSION

Abraham's life's presented to us as Jesus' disciples as a pattern for us to follow. We are to read these accounts and enter into the reality of his choices and do the same in our lives. Here we see living faith. It was more than mental assent. Here we see obedient works. Abraham was not working his own way into God's favor in his own style. He was carefully doing what God directed. This is exactly what God is looking for in us today.

# QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. How does this test of Abraham and Isaac provide us more certain proof that Jesus is God's sacrifice for man? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What would have been some very good reasons why Abraham should not have offered his son as a human sacrifice? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Why is it unfair to view God as One who likes to make people give up what is precious to them in life when we see how often He asks people to give up that which they value most? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. How can a person condition himself to be ready to pass this kind of test whenever God may ask it of him? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Do you think it may be possible to earn the title, "friend of God" in our generation today? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. What should a person do if he senses some possession or special friend is coming in the way of his relationship with God? \_\_\_\_\_

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## LESSON 9

# ABRAHAM BURIES SARAH

Finds A Wife For Isacc  
And Is Finally Gathered To His People

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**Lesson Objective:** To witness how faith in God sweetens trials in the changing scenes of life and influences the inner circle of one's associates to spread to future generations.

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### Lesson Challenges:

Abraham and Sarah have gone through many difficult times, and while they didn't always agree, they always had each other. This is the way marriages in God's order are to be, love and respect flowing from heart to heart in a commitment to each other and to God's plan that mellows with age. Realistically, married love is not all romance. Rather it is deepening trust and acceptance that provides anchor and meaning in life.

Suddenly things change. When death comes knocking life never again goes back to the way it was before. It always creates a new normal.

God has decreed that all men pass through the same basic stages of life. Childhood and youth come first, then middle age, and finally the senior years. First we are given waxing strength and vigor for bearing the burden in the heat of the day. Then we wane into weakness and death. Abraham may have shown unusual faith, but he was given no exemption.

Old age is reaping time. What will Abraham reap? Will his life of faith make a difference? Will he be granted the privilege to see the vision for which he paid dearly be carried forward by the next generation? Or will his vision die with him?

As we study this lesson, we should endeavor to see something of the larger picture of life. Do I have trust in God that can carry me through the changing scenes of life? Will I have dignity when the exterior aspects of life are stripped away from me? Will I be able to say I have lived a fulfilling life? Will my children by blood or by influence be faithful to God?



### SARAH AN EXAMPLE OF INWARD ADORNMENT

The Bible does not gloss over character deficiencies. In Genesis we learn of some of Sarah's mistakes; the bad advice and the scoldings she gave her husband. In the New Testament we see her held up as an example of a meek and quiet spirit. Apparently Sarah learned much in confronting her lower nature. As she witnessed and shared in Abraham's walk of faith, she grew into a woman of great trust and

faith. Taking our place in headship is directly related to our faith in God.

The New Testament asks Christian women to refrain from wearing outward ornaments. This is to be an expression of a deep inward ornamentation. Thank God for sisters who live by this principle and are the faithful Sarah's today.

**1Peter 3:3-7**

1. Why should a Christian sister not wear ornamental extras?

3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;

2. What is the New Testament sister to wear instead?

4 But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

3. What qualities enable a sister to be a "daughter of Sarah?"

5 For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:

4. How did Abraham give honor to Sarah?

6 Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.



## SARAH DIES AND IS BURIED

God has us here in life for a test. When the test is over, and only He knows when, then He will take us home.

Nature is cruel to give old age and death to a wonderful saint. But we understand the cruelty is there because of sin. No living person is immune. The aging process witnesses to the victim and the onlookers alike. It is part of the test of life.

Death is another test for the living left behind. In this passage we will witness a person who is heir to the whole country needing to bargain for a small plot of land to bury his wife. Think about the paradox. We need to remember this paradox the next time we feel God hasn't kept all his promises to us. God did and will keep His promises to Abraham, but He works from a larger perspective. Our narrow view of life may never be assumed to be the whole picture.

### Genesis 23:1-10, 17-20

1 And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: these were the years of the life of Sarah.

2 And Sarah died in Kirjatharba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.

3 And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying,

4 I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a buryingplace with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.

5 And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him,

6 Hear us, my lord: thou art a mighty prince among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead.

7 And Abraham stood up, and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth.

8 And he communed with them, saying, If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight; hear me, and intreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar,

9 That he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of his field; for as much money as it is worth he shall give it me for a possession of a buryingplace amongst you.

17 And the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field, and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the borders round about, were made sure

18 Unto Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city.

19 And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre: the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan.

20 And the field, and the cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a buryingplace by the sons of Heth.

5. How old were Abraham and Isaac when Sarah passed away?

6. What is especially strange about the idea of Abraham buying land?

7. What does the conversation between Abraham and Ephron indicate about Abraham's relationship with his Canaanite neighbors?

## A WIFE IS FOUND FOR ISAAC

The vision for Abraham's posterity is now hanging in a balance. Abraham will soon die. If Isaac marries one of the Canaanite women, the vision will be lost. If he goes back to Abraham's people, the promised people in the promised land will never come to reality. But how can a wife be found that is willing to be and fill the place God has for the family?

The story of how Isaac received his wife is unique. We have no other account of someone else choosing the wife for a person, except for in the case of Adam. Sometimes we are told in Bible times people accepted wives chosen for them. The actual case studies of the Old Testament reveal men choosing their own wives.

There is good reason to believe this account reads with Abraham's servant as a proxy for Isaac solely for the typology God designed to reveal what He has purposed for His Son and His Bride.

Abraham's faith remains in focus. It is the quiet undergirding behind a new generation moving forward to fit into God's plans.

8. What do you think it took for a master and servant to have the kind of relationship that existed between Abraham and his servant?

9. What class of women did Abraham not want as a wife for Isaac? Why?

10. What would the prospective bride need to be willing to do before she could be Isaac's wife? Why did Abraham insist on this?

### **Genesis 24:1-9**

1 And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things.

2 And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh:

3 And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell:

4 But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.

5 And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?

6 And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again.

7 The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence.

8 And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again.

9 And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and sware to him concerning that matter.

## I BEING IN THE WAY, THE LORD LED ME

One of the principles of faith is that it is contagious. When a man lives in humility before God, praying and following the commandments of his Lord, others will see and imitate this lifestyle. Abraham's faith was now being lived in his servant. To this servant, God was a Supreme Being who could overrule in events and reveal His will in little details. This makes life an exciting venture and a secure journey all at the same time.

### **Genesis 24:10-27**

10 And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor.

11 And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water.

12 And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham.

13. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water:

14 And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.

15 And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder.

16 And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up.

17 And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher.

18 And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hastened, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink.

19 And when she had done giving him drink,

11. What do we see in Abraham's servant's life that shows he had adopted the living faith of his master?

12. What relation was Rebekah to Isaac?

13. What made Abraham's servant think Rebekah was the one God was providing to be Isaac's wife?

What made him certain?

14. What personal qualities do you observe about Rebekah that you feel would make her a good companion for Isaac?

she said, I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking.

20 And she hastened, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels.

21 And the man wondering at her held his peace, to wit whether the LORD had made his journey prosperous or not.

22 And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold;

23 And said, Whose daughter art thou? tell me, I pray thee: is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in?

24 And she said unto him, I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, which she bare unto Nahor.

25 She said moreover unto him, We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in.

26 And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the LORD.

27 And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren.



## AND ISAAC WAS COMFORTED

The journey of faith has its tests. There is a high price to pay to follow God. However, it does have its rewards too. All the while Isaac was patiently waiting and praying, God was working out His perfect will. Divine will may be thwarted by man's impatience, but it will never fail to serve the man who waits for it. God will never miss the next move if we are patient with Him.

15. Let your mind picture all the emotions Rebekah would have experienced in going with Abraham's servant?

### **Genesis 24:61-60**

61 And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

62 And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahairoi; for he dwelt in the south country.

63 And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and

saw, and, behold, the camels were coming.  
64 And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel.  
65 For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a vail, and covered herself.  
66 And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done.  
67 And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

16. What was Isaac doing when he first saw Rebekah's camels coming?



## ABRAHAM'S SENIOR YEARS AND DEATH

There are questions we might have about Abraham's second marriage and the resulting family. We know from this family that Abraham's strength was phenomenal years after Sarah was taken home.

The main fact that persists is that only Isaac was the son of promise. All the blessings God had for the world through Abraham were to come through him.

### Genesis 25:1-10

1 Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah.  
2 And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah.  
3 And Jokshan begat Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, and Letushim, and Leummim.  
4 And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Epher, and Hanoch, and Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah.  
5 And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac.  
6 But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country.  
7 And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years.  
8 Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people.

17. What was Abraham's second wife's name?

18. How many more sons did Abraham have?

19. What did Abraham do with these sons to make sure they did not compete with Isaac for the land promised him?

20. How old was Abraham when he died?

21. What name is given to the place where Old Testament saints went after they died that reveals the greatness of Abraham? (See Luke 16:19-31)

9 And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre;  
10 The field which Abraham purchased of the sons of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife.

## CONCLUSION

Change is inevitable. Most days pass by just like the one before, except that they are not quite like the day before. Subtle differences pile up. They are piling up in your own life.

Then all of a sudden there is change. Abraham and Sarah are “sleeping with their fathers” now. It is our turn to make choices. It must have warmed Abraham’s heart to sense his servant and then his son shared his vision. When Abraham passed on, the true faith of his servant and son shone persistently on.

## QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. What do you think were some of the most important things in Abraham and Sarah's life as they came to their sunset years? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Why do you think God had it that Abraham didn't own any property until he finally purchased a field for a cemetery, when He had promised him the entire land? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. This lesson is full of types. Following the suggestion given for Abraham, give a New Testament type for each of the following persons:

Abraham: God the Father

Sarah: \_\_\_\_\_

Isaac: \_\_\_\_\_

Abraham's servant: \_\_\_\_\_

Rebekah: \_\_\_\_\_

The timing of Sarah's death and the marriage of Isaac? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Since Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born, and Isaac was 60 when Jacob and Esau were born (Gen 25:26), and Abraham died at the age of 175 years, how old was Jacob when his grandfather Abraham died? \_\_\_\_\_

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## LESSON 10

# ABRAHAM AN ILLUSTRATION OF NEW TESTAMENT SALVATION

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**Lesson Objective:** To see how Abraham becomes a type of salvation under the New Covenant. First, through faith apart from the works of the Mosaic Law. Secondly, through obedience to God commanded works and not by faith only.

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**Lesson Challenges:**

There is so much beauty in balance. Good ideas taken too far can become dangerous. New Testament writers contended valiantly to portray the balance of salvation by faith in Christ without going back to Old Testament law works, and at the same time to highlight New Testament obedience works as essential for salvation.

Abraham is used as an illustration on both points. He was justified by his faith without keeping any of the works of the law which only came 450 years later. He also was justified by his works of offering Isaac and not by a nominal faith only.

This contention is very much alive today. Some churches steer away from Romans and Galatians because they fear these texts emphasize a “faith only” salvation. They don’t know how to answer those who declare that any effort to maintain New Testament obedience only frustrates the grace of God. The mistake is made when one does not look at the context. Paul plainly declares in Romans 3 that he is going to show how one may be justified apart from keeping the works of the law. Paul is not ruling out New Testament obedience works, he is protecting his law-oriented audience from going back to their roots.

Others steer away from James, fearing that his emphasis on works as being necessary to salvation will minimize the grace of God or the place of faith. But James is not preaching a different gospel than Paul. We can never do good enough works to earn our salvation.

God has fulfilled all the provisional aspects of salvation. He has freely given His Son as our sacrifice. None of us could have brought or bought a sacrifice good enough. This is the major part of salvation; He deserves all the glory.

However great God’s provision, the conditional aspects of salvation are plainly up to us. Believing in but not obeying Christ will do no more for us than it does for the devils. There are conditions we must meet to qualify for God’s mercy.

As we study this lesson, let us ask ourselves, *“Am I sincerely trusting in Christ’s provision for my salvation, or do I think my adherence to church standards somehow makes me fit for salvation? Am I obedient to all the New Testament commands? What would I do if someone helped me see something I have normally overlooked, would I be willing to obey?”*

## ABRAHAM ILLUSTRATES SALVATION BY FAITH APART FROM WORKS OF THE LAW

Jews and Gentiles alike had been conditioned by the law to see the Holiness of God and their own inability to measure up to God's standard. Sadly, human nature being the way it is, man ended up using the law to prove he was better than other people, or that he was worthy of God's acceptance.

All that is to change in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Man no longer needs to bring a provision. As the believer recognizes that Christ died for his atonement, a great humiliation passes over him. Only by the grace of God are we saved, there is no merit in us that could qualify for God's goodness.

Paul uses the fact that Abraham was justified by faith before the law came to prove we too may be justified apart from keeping the deeds of the law. This is an important deliverance that Sabbath worshipers and those who try to keep the Old Testament still need to receive.

1. What two sources did Paul draw from to find teaching for justification apart from the works of the law?

2. What action of Abraham did God count for righteousness?

3. How does this justification cause us to see one may be justified without keeping the Old Testament law?

4. When was Abraham justified, before he was circumcised or afterward?

5. From v12, what phrase gives us the truth that Abraham's faith was very active even when he had not yet been circumcised?

### **Romans 3:21**

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

### **Romans 4:1-5, 8-16**

1 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.

3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

9 Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.

10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they

be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

12 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

14 For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:

15 Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

16 Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

6. Do we have any evidence of a time in Abraham's life when his salvation was based on a do nothing-but-believe-only faith?

7. Who is in line to receive the promise to inherit the world, those who stand in the line of the law, or those who are heirs through faith?



## WHO AGAINST HOPE BELIEVED IN HOPE

The Scripture is clear God takes great delight in those who embrace His promises even when there is no earthly reason to do so. There are times when God calls things which have not yet come to pass as actually already existing. In these times, He watches the response of mortals. When they, against all physical sense, choose to believe in hope because God said so, then He rewards them.

Today God is still looking for a people who will choose to believe Him and the values He presents in His word, even though they live in a generation that has decided its own morality. When people choose to be obedient to the New Testament and trust in the promises of the future, God regards them with his favor.

### **Romans 4:17-25**

17 (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

18 Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.

8. What evidence do we have that Abraham's faith was strong in spite of all the years and the fleshly obstacles?

9. What do we need to believe if we wish to have righteousness imputed to us?

19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb:

20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;

24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.



## NO MAN IS JUSTIFIED BY THE LAW

In Paul's day some people advocated that the believer becomes saved by faith but that he stayed saved by keeping the works of the law. Paul took issue with this. In our day it is a common belief that we get saved by faith but we stay saved by obedience.

Paul's corrective writing should forever clear this up. We stay saved the same way we become saved. Neither part, commencement nor continuation are dependent upon keeping the deeds of the law. But both commencement and continuation are dependent upon us having a living faith which of course includes abandonment of our own will and a commitment to serve our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the walk of faith.

10. Which verse in this text clarifies that the conflict is between faith and Old Testament law works, not between faith and New Testament obedience?

### **Galatians 3:1-18**

1 O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

2 This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

4 Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.

5 He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

15 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.

16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

17 And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

18 For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

11. What Scripture do we have that we don't become saved one way and stay saved a different way, but that becoming saved and staying saved are through an active, working, synergistic faith?

12. How does being under the law place its subjects under a curse, but being under faith places us under a blessing?

13. How do we become the spiritual children of Abraham?

14. May those who are the children of Abraham only in the flesh but not by faith in Jesus also be the heirs of Abraham? Give reasons for your answer.

## CAST OUT THE BOND WOMAN AND HER SON

The appeal to go back to being under the law as a means to righteousness should not be underestimated. The law was designed to show us the holiness of God and our own sinfulness. With man's fallen nature, he is able to take tangible expressions and somehow deceive himself into thinking he is better than his brother who is unable to keep it so perfectly. Also he is tempted to think he can make up for deficiencies by keeping other commands or self imposed applications more than what is required of him.

In this form, law-keeping becomes dangerous. In fact, it frustrates the grace of God. God wants us to sense our unworthiness of His mercy and provision of righteousness, not feeling in any way that we can merit his favor.

In this passage, Paul explains that even as Abraham needed to drive out Hagar, so we need to place a clear delineation between ourselves and the Mosaic law. Those who would take us back into Sabbath worship, or the observance of clean and unclean meats, miss the burden of Christ's fulfillment of God's righteousness.

15. Give some parallels between Isaac and the New Testament Church?

16. Who is it that is to be cast out and not allowed to be an heir with the freewoman?

### **Galatians 4:21-31**

21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?

22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.

24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

27 For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.

28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

## ABRAHAM, AN ILLUSTRATION OF SALVATION THROUGH OBEDIENT WORKS

James greatly clears the matter of faith and works by explaining there is such a thing as faith that believes Jesus is Savior and Lord, but is still dead and avails nothing of salvation. A living faith will be marked by a careful obedience to the commandments of Christ. It will be marked by a devout and holy life. There is no justifiable reason for believers in Christ to practice iniquity.

### James 2:17-26

17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?

26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

17. What kind of faith does not have obedience accompanying it?

18. What created beings are there that have faith but it does not save them?

19. How did Abraham's willingness to offer Isaac on the altar fulfill the Scripture that Abraham believed God and it was imputed to him for righteousness?

## CONCLUSION

The Apostle Jude warned in the last days men would turn the grace of God into license to sin. We see this evidenced in the prevailing free grace doctrine of our day. This produces a people who claim salvation even while living in divorce and remarriage, uncleanness or other direct disobedience to the Bible. Let us keep our doctrine clear and our lives clean before God. This will bring honor to His Kingdom and salvation to our souls.

We need to ponder New Testament balance as we study this lesson. It is the inclination of our flesh to think we should not be too hard on our old nature and give it some room. On the other hand, it is tempting to think the Law can serve to some benefit if we do not remove it too far from our New Testament salvation experience. As we have discovered from the New Testament commentary, we need to reject the line of thinking that gives room for Hagar and Ishmael, and cast out both the bond woman (Law) and her son (lawlessness) and live by faith.

# QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. Upon what basis can God justify a person before he has yet had an opportunity to live a faithful Christian life? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Why is important to see that salvation is through living faith and not by keeping the Old Testament law? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What are some things about keeping the law that might cause us to feel more secure under that program? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Why is it better to abandon all the works of the law including worshiping on the Sabbath, refraining from eating unclean meats and keeping the feast days, than to try to keep these rituals? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What is the snare in insisting that God's method of justifying the sinner is through faith only? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. What responsibility do we have to those who trust in their salvation by keeping the law? \_\_\_\_\_

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7. What responsibility do we have to those who trust in their salvation through faith only and neglect New Testament commandments and do things forbidden to the Christian? \_\_\_\_\_

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