

The Life and Times of Abraham

Hebrews 11:8-19

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Abraham is one of the most important men in the Bible. He is mentioned in 16 books of the O.T. and 11 in the N.T.

Three world religions venerate him: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

God choose Abraham of the family of Shem to begin the Hebrew nation.

He is known for his great faith and is called the friend of God (James 2:23; Isa 41:8)

Gen. 11: 27-32. He is introduced as **Abram** – “exalted father”

1. Later his name was changed to **Abraham** – “father of a multitude”
2. **Lot** is also introduced as the son of **Haran** who died before his father Terah in Ur.
3. The family began the journey to **Canaan**, but settled down in **Haran** where **Terah** died (Acts 7:4).

These are called ‘the wasted years’

Facts about Abraham

His seed: Jesus Christ is “*the Son of David, the Son of Abraham*” (Matt. 1:1; Gal.3:16).

His hope: “*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day...*” (John 9:56).

His justification: He “*...believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness*” (Rom.4:1-3).

His blessing: “*So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham*” (Gal.3:9).

His faith and works: “*By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called...*” (Heb.11:8). “*Do you see that faith was working together with his works...*” (James 2:22).

The Call of Abram

The ‘*God of glory*’ called him when he lived in Ur – This changed his life (Acts 7:2).

Gen. 12:1 – God’s call and nature’s ties. He was delayed in Haran till his father died (Acts 7:4).

Gen. 12:2 - God’s promises with His call –

1. A land to be **shown** him – Canaan.
2. A great nation to **come** from him – Israel.
3. A great name – he is well known.
4. A blessing – to all nations.

The blessing and the curse Gen. 12:3.

Those who blessed him (and Israel) would be blessed; those who cursed him would be cursed – often fulfilled in their history.

In him all families of the earth would be blessed (Gal. 3:9, 16) – this points to Christ, born of the seed of Abraham (Gen.12:7; Matt. 1:1).

Abram’s Faith and Obedience

“*By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called...*” (Heb. 11:8).

Gen. 12:4-5. In obedience he ‘*departed*’. “*So they came to the land of Canaan*”.

He was aged 75 ... and Lot went with him.

A true faith will be marked by obedience

Keeping Focused on God

Gen.12:6. The Canaanites were the present possessors of the Promised Land. Faith sees God beyond all circumstances.

Gen.12:7-9. God sets Abram’s eyes on Himself – faith not fear!

Two things marked Abram as a pilgrim:

1. A tent – a sojourner in this world.
 2. An Altar – a worshipper of the true God.
- “*He waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God*” (Heb.11:10)

The Testing of Faith

Gen.12:10. Famines brought times of testing. God had called him to this land, and would provide – read the book of Ruth. A true faith will be tested! (James 1:2-3; 1 Peter 1:7).

Gen.12:11-20. Under testing, he moved to Egypt – a type of this world - 1 John 2:15-17.

What he lost:

1. His pilgrim character - tent
2. His communion - altar
3. His good conscience - he lied about Sarai

He was rebuked by Pharaoh

The Life and times of Abraham

Genesis Chapter 13

The Restoration of Abram

Gen. 13:1-5. He returned to the land richer materially, but poorer spiritually –

Departure from God comes at a price:

- a. He gained Hagar (Gen.16:1)
- b. He lost Lot (Gen.13:11)

Restoration involves returning to the point of departure - He again had his tent and altar.

Strife leads to Choices

Gen. 13:6-9. Strife among the herdsmen.

It is sad when divisions occur among brethren - worse when it becomes public knowledge.

Abram was conscious of this, *“for we are brethren”!* He gave Lot first choice of the land.

This shows the **grace** of Abram, and the **greed** of Lot! The older man should have had first choice.

Note Abram’s love for those he could no longer walk with.

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Lot’s choices led down

Gen.13:10-13. We must accept responsibility for our choices! But Abram took Lot to Egypt!

- a. He chose the Jordan plain – away from God’s promises.
- b. He pitched his tent towards Sodom – an evil city.
- c. He dwelt in Sodom – lost his daughters to their moral standards (Gen.19:14; 30-38).
- d. He became a leader in Sodom (Gen. 19:1).

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God’s comment:

“But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord”. Sodom was judged (Gen.18:20-33; Ch. 19).

Lot had no tent or altar in Sodom

He was unable to walk with God once Abram departed from him.

Lot lost his testimony, his wife became a pillar of salt, and his family to the morals of Sodom.

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Abram’s choices led up

Gen.13:14-18. God set Abram’s vision on the broad expanses of the land and His promises.

He lost nothing by the strife and separation!

He still had his tent and altar.

He could now enjoy God’s promises and the inheritance.

So should we!! (2 Peter 1:3-4; 1 Peter 1:3-5)

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Our choices are eternally important:

Moses – chose *“to suffer affliction with the people of God”* (Heb.11:15).

Joshua – *“Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”* (Joshua 24:14-16).

Mary – *“Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her”* (Luke 10:42).

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The Life and times of Abraham

Genesis Chapter 14

Gen.14:1-11. War breaks out and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah are defeated.

Gen.14:12. Lot in the valley was taken captive; Abram dwelt far above these conflicts.

Gen.14:13-17. The man of faith was also the man of love and compassion – he delivered his ‘brother’.

Gen.14:18. The king of Sodom went to meet Abram after his amazing victory.

This presented a greater danger than the battle.

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Melchizedek and Abram

Gen.14:18-20. God Most High (El Elyon) had a priest-king in Salem (peace).

- a. This is the first mention of Jeru-salem (possession of peace). b. He presented the memorials of sacrifice. c. He blessed Abram in the name of El (God mighty, strong) Elyon (highest), possessor of heaven and earth, who gave Abram the victory.
- d. Abram gave him a tithe (1/10) of all.

This strengthened Abram faith

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Facts about Melchizedek

God’s priest-king in Salem - greater than Abram.

a. Psalm 110:1-7 - The Messiah would be *“a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek”*.

b. Heb.7:1-4 - He was king of **righteousness** and king of **peace**. He was greater than Abram by genealogy (without recorded beginning or end of days), he blessed Abram, who gave him tithes of all.

c. Heb.7:24-26 with Heb.4:14-16 - He pre-figures Christ, who has an eternal priesthood and saves and ever lives to make intercession for His people.

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The effect of Melchizedek’s ministry

Gen.14:21-24. Abram’s choices:

a. He chose to trust God and refused the king’s offer. He had El Elyon *“possessor of heaven and earth”* and needed no more!

b. He would take none of the goods of Sodom.

Satan’s offer: *“Give me the persons (souls) and take the goods for yourself”*. Christ rejected this offer (Luke 4:5-8).

Many sell their souls for material possessions

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The Life and times of Abraham

Genesis Chapter 15

Gen. 15:1. Abram had honoured God, now He honours him! (1 Sam.2:30). No need for fear, for God would protect and exceedingly greatly reward him.

v. 2-5. This promise made Abram bold to request a son and led to God’s great promise of a son and heir to fulfill His promises.

v. 6. Here is revealed the faith of Abram! *“And he believed in the Lord and He accounted to him for righteousness”*.

We also inherit the promise of righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ (Rom.4:22-25).

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Abram questions the Lord:

Gen.15:8. How would he inherit this land?

v.8-11. The sacrificial covenant guaranteed it in God’s time. The sacrifice of Christ guarantees the New Covenant.

v.12-16. God gives an overview of Israel’s history in Egypt and of the Canaanites.

God moves slowly in judgement, but swiftly in mercy.

v.17-21. But Abram’s descendents would know the **furnace (oven) of affliction**, yet have the **lamp of prophetic hope**.

The Church will also have tribulation, but has the hope of Christ’s return

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The Life and times of Abraham

Genesis Chapter 16

Gen.16:1-4. Waiting ‘on God’ and waiting ‘for God’.

Abram was tested by the famine, by his desire for a son, and by the offering of that son!

Abram heeded the voice of Sarai! The advice of a wife can be a great blessing, but can also bring problems.

If God had restrained her from bearing, why not trust Him for the fulfilment of His promise? Gen.15:5-6).

Abram took Hagar – a second wife, but of a lower status! After dwelling 10 years in the Land!

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Polygamy causes problems

From the beginning God planned one woman for one man (Gen.2:21-25; 4:19; Eph. 5:22-33).

Gen.16:5-6. Sarah regretted her advice. Hagar despised her because she was barren.

v. 6-16. Hagar fled, but was cared for by the Lord and sent back to Sarai.

God made promises to Hagar, named her child ‘Ishmael’.

The Lord overrules even in our mistakes.

Abram was 76 when he left for Canaan, 85 when Ishmael was born.

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The Life and times of Abraham

Genesis Chapter 17

Gen.17:1. Abram called to walk blameless before the Lord - **in maturity** (Eph.4:17-24).

Gen.17:2-5. Maturity involves a name change :

a. From ‘Abram’ – ‘exalted father’; his self-centred name -

b. To ‘Abraham’ – ‘father of a multitude’; expanded to include and bless others – God centred.

Are we ‘Christ centred’, growing in grace?

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The unconditional and everlasting covenant

Details of the covenant:

Gen.17:2. God would multiply him exceedingly.

v.3-6. A father of many nations. Made exceedingly fruitful, nations and kings from him.

v.7. Covenant established forever to him and his descendants.

v.8. He and his descendants given the land of Canaan forever. He would be their God.

v.9. They are instructed to keep His covenant.

But no conditions were attached as with Moses.

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The sign of the covenant with Abraham

Gen.17:9-14. All their males, including children at 8 days, and servants, to be circumcised.

a. Jews and Arabs practice this to this day.

b. It was renewed under the Law of Moses (Joshua 5:2)

c. It does not apply under the New Covenant (Acts 15:1-29).

It typifies applying God’s word in self-judgement (Rom. 2:25-29; Col.2:11-14; Jer.4:4)

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Sarah and a son

Gen.17:15. Her name is also changed:

From Sarai – ‘My Princess’, nobility, possibly a head or dominative person. To ‘Princess’, a noble lady. She is maturing.

Gen.17:16-22. God would give her a son – ‘Isaac’ (laughter). His covenant would be with him. Ishmael would also be a great nation.

Gen.17:23-27. Abraham circumcised all males in his household.

**The Life and times of Abraham
Genesis Chapter 18**

The Lord appeared to Abraham, a ‘theophany’.

v.1-8. He told Sarah to make them a meal.

v.9-15. Sarah would have a son. Sarah laughed in unbelief and then denied. Later she laughed for joy (21:6). Nothing is too hard for the Lord.

v.16-21. The Lord then revealed that He was looking at the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah (Deut.29:29)..

v. 22-33. Abraham the intercessor.

But there were not even ten righteous people in Sodom and Gomorrah.

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**The Life and times of Abraham
Genesis Chapter 20**

20:1-2. In this chapter Abraham again said of Sarah, “*She is my sister*”. This was a half-truth!

20:3-18. But the Lord protected Sarah.

Abimelech rebuked Abraham for his deception.

(21:32). Abraham prayed for the healing of the Philistines.

We also often repeat our mistakes and sins. God is patiently working on these areas.

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**The Life and times of Abraham
Genesis Chapter 21**

“And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had spoken”

Gen.21:1-8. Isaac was born to Sarah, Abraham was 100!

The promise of God (Gen. 15:4) was fulfilled after many years. Sarah laughed for joy!

He can be trusted.

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The Testings of Abraham

Abraham was born about 2000 BC.

1. He was 75 when called - Gen. 12:4
2. He was 86 when Ishmael was born – Gen. 16:16
3. He was 99 when Isaac was named – Gen. 17:1;15-19;24
4. He was 100 when Isaac was born – Gen. 21:1
5. He was “old” when he sought a bride for Isaac – Gen. 24:1
6. He was 160 when Jacob was born – Gen. 25:19-26; He enjoyed 16 years with his grandson! Heb. 11:9
7. He was 175 when he died – Gen. 25:7-8

The son of the bondwoman

Gen. 21:9-11. Ishmael, the son of the bondwoman was cast out (Gal. 4:21-31).

1. Ishmael is a type of the Law. The flesh.
 2. Isaac is the son of promise, or grace. The Spirit.
- They are typical of the two covenants

The Arabs (descended from Ishmael) are the bitter enemy of Israel to this day

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Hagar and Abimelech

Gen.21:12-21. Here we see God’s care of Hagar and Ishmael.

All Abraham’s ‘seed’ would be blessed v. 13!

v. 22-34. Abraham tried to keep good relationships with his neighbours!

‘Beersheba’, meaning ‘the well of the oath’, is first mentioned; these people were ‘Philistines’ - the third mention in Scripture.

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**The Life and times of Abraham
Genesis Chapter 22**

Gen.22:1-8. This was the **supreme test** of Abraham’s faith - the offering of Isaac.

1. The command to offer his only son ‘*whom you love*’. The Lord was looking on to the offering of His own Son – the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. In obedience, he went - to ‘*worship*’. He believed in resurrection (Heb. 11:17-18).
3. He believed that God would provide a lamb, so they went, “*both of them together*”. Isaac was obedient.

The Father and the Son went ‘together’ to Calvary. Christ was obedient unto death (Phil. 2:8)

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Gen. 22:9-14. The altar and Isaac were prepared for the sacrifice – the knife was raised.

The Angel of the Lord called – he had not withheld his only son ‘*from Me*’. His fear of God triumphed over his love for his son!

The only fear we should have is the fear of displeasing Him!

God had provided a ram. Christ is “*the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*”.

There was no substitute for Christ, He was offered in our place on the cross.

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Gen.22:14-19.

God’s prevision means our provision!

Jehovah-Jirah – ‘the Lord will provide’.

God’s oath “*By Myself I have sworn*” secured the promises to Abraham.

That ‘seed’ is Christ (v.18), who was born to Mary in Bethlehem, descended from Abraham, and He went on to the cross to be our Saviour.

Gen.22:20-24. Abraham is told of his brother Nahor’s family back in Haran.

This later led to a bride for Isaac.

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**The Life and times of Abraham
Genesis Chapters 23**

Gives details of the death of Sarah and her burial.

In this we see the good testimony Abraham had among the sons of Heth.

We also see the grace of Abraham. He would pay for the burial cave.

His only possession in Canaan – a burial place!

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**The Life and times of Abraham
Genesis Chapters 24:1-9**

His supreme faith - A bride for Isaac.

He sent his oldest servant (steward) to obtain a bride for Isaac - from among his own people.

She must not be a godless Canaanite.

He answered his servant’s objections -

(v.7). He believed that the Lord would provide. Life’s experiences had taught him this!

In this we see the faith & maturity of Abraham

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Are we faithful servants? Luke 12:42

Paul was – 1 Cor. 4:1-2

Joseph was – Gen. 39:1-6

So was Moses – Heb. 3:1-2

The Lord Jesus said, “Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season?” Luke 12:42

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‘I being in the way, the Lord led me’ KJV Gen. 24:27

In the way of faith and obedience, the Lord’s leading is made known.

Gen.24:10-16. The simple prayer of the servant is answered before he finished asking! **Rebekah** came to the well for water.

Gen.24:17-27. Again in answer to his prayer, she gave him a drink and watered the camels. In return he gave her gifts of gold.

This led the servant to worship – answered prayer brings great joy! God is faithful!

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Beautiful pictures of future events!

1. Abraham reminds us of God the Father seeking a bride for His Son (2 Cor.11:1-2).
2. The un-named servant reminds us of the Holy Spirit preparing the way (Luke 1:35).
3. Isaac reminds us of the Son of the Father (John 8:29).
4. Rebekah reminds us of the Church (Eph.5:22-33).

The Father has worked in time and eternity to prepare the way of salvation through His Son!

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Events in Laban’s house

When her brother Laban and mother Milcah saw the gold gifts, the servant was received into house.

He introduced himself as Abraham’s servant, who had given all his possessions to his son Isaac (v.36).

He told the reason for his journey and how the Lord led him (v.48).

He requested an immediate answer – they consented, Rebekah could go, so he gave them gifts.

Christ is the Father’s love gift to this world, the Holy Spirit gives gifts to His people!

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‘Will you go with this man?’ Genesis 24:57-67

And she said, **“I will go”** (v.58). She had heard of Isaac, seen the gifts, but not met him!

In a similar way we have heard of the greatness of Christ, are aware of His riches.

But will we follow him? (1 Peter 1:8).

Rebekah journeyed with the servant, met Isaac and became his wife.

Soon we will meet our heavenly Isaac and be forever with Him.

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The last days of Abraham Genesis 25:1-11

Abraham married Keturah and had more children.

He gave all that he had to Isaac.

He gave gifts to his sons and sent them away while still alive. He died aged 175, and *“was gathered to his fathers”*.

This is a gathering of kindred spirits

“I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Mat. 22:32)