

This lesson brings us to a very important milestone in our journey through the Scriptures. Abram, a man chosen by God because of his faith, becomes a key figure in the scriptures. The lesson with Abram becomes his incredible faith in God that is unquestionable. We will also learn about his son Isaac and grandson Jacob and find that God makes and repeats His promises to all three. We are reminded once more of the importance of that key word "seed" and its relation to a particular people and land. It is important, as we move through our lessons, to keep aware that ultimately Jesus is the central personality in every development of God's plan, whether in promise, prophecy or type.

It is important in this section to ensure that you read the scriptures to get the full story and to fill in the details about which we will briefly review.

ABRAM

Genesis 11:27

This verse introduces us to Abram, a Chaldean, living in the city of Ur. Also his father and brother are mentioned as well as Lot his nephew.

Genesis 12:1-4

As we move into this chapter we note how Abram is called by God to leave a settled way of life in a prosperous city and journey to a place spoken of by God. He immediately begins to follow the word of God. We note that he was 70 years old when he embarked on this venture. His obedience becomes a powerful example of His outstanding faith in God, a characteristic which identified him as "the father of the faithful." A Bible Atlas will help to trace Abram's journey from Ur to Haran and on to the promised land of Canaan. (by this time he was 75 years old) It is important to note the steps in this journey as the promises are developed at each stage: first he is called to leave his country, then his kin, then his father's house. As he leaves Ur, he goes to Haran and leaves his kinfolk there, taking only Lot his nephew. Once he separates from Lot later, the promises are confirmed to him as we shall see.

As a result of his un-wavering faith in God, we note the promises made to Abram:|

- v2 - Abram will be made a great nation
- God will bless him
- God would make his name great: later his name will be changed to Abraham (father of nations)
- He would be a blessing: Lot was blessed while with Abram, Melchizedek etc.
- v3 – God would bless those who blessed Abram and curse those who did not.
- IN THEE SHALL ALL FAMILIES OF THE EARTH BE BLESSED.

The Jews and the Arabs of today have their beginnings in Abraham. Abraham's name is mentioned repeatedly through the Bible and is acknowledged by both Jews and Arabs as their father. The nations who have thought to do harm to the descendants of Abraham have been cursed, IE the second world war.

This last promise, "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" is a reference to the anointed one who would come and deliver all from their sins. This of course is a reference to the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The blessing is the removing sin and providing deliverance that God's people will achieve through the blood poured out in sacrifice through the obedient death of Jesus.

This is confirmed in Galatians 3:8 which indicate this is the “gospel which was preached unto Abraham”. Also, Acts 3:19 – 26 Refers to the fact “your sins may be blotted out”... v26 to you first (Jews) God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning every one of you from his iniquities.

Genesis 13:1-8 This passage relates a dispute between the servants of Lot and Abram and how it was settled in order to avoid strife, Abram suggested that Lot should separate from him and gave him first choice of where he wanted to go. Lot chose the fertile area around the city of Sodom in the Jordan Valley. This was to prove fatal for Lot’s family.

v. 14-17 After Abram separated from Lot, the land upon which Abram stood, is confirmed by God as an inheritance to him and to his descendants (seed) forever. These verses are very significant. For the first time the land of God’s original promise to Abram is identified, and the actual physical territory defined. The seed was to be very numerous, IE as the dust of the earth. Also the promise is marked: “thy seed”, singular, as emphasized by Paul in his Letter to the Galatians 3:16. This is confirmed as a reference to the future “Messiah” (Jesus) in fulfillment of God’s promises, first to Adam, now to Abram. This is the same plan from the beginning which does not change and can be seen in scripture from Genesis to Revelation. This “seed” is to destroy the carnal thinking of the serpent. Now, through Abram, through the ‘seed’: “All nations of the earth would be blessed”.

Genesis 14 Take a moment to read this chapter. Of particular interest is that Melchizedek’s name becomes increasingly significant in the Bible and more particularly in the New Testament references. This meeting with Abram has special meaning which we shall discuss in a later lesson. For the present understand that "Melchi" means King and "Zedek" righteousness. Melchizedek was also noted as King of Salem (Salem means peace and is the ancient name for the city of Jerusalem). So the two references to the name in this chapter are that Melchizedek’s name means King of Righteousness and as King of Salem, is noted as King of Peace.

Genesis 15:3-6 Abram wondered about the promise of an heir since he didn’t have a son as yet. He was about 85 years old. However God confirms that He would give Abram a son who would be his heir, and reiterates His promise of innumerable descendants. (v5)

Genesis 15:8-18 Abram had asked how he would know that he would have a son (v8). What follows is God’s confirmation of his covenant (promise) by having Abram lay out the pieces of the offered animals on the ground. Then, the LORD “passed between the pieces” of the sacrifice that Abram had laid out. (v17) This “cutting a covenant” was the assurance that Abram was looking for. The principle behind this event is that Man and God are separated due to man’s sin. God requires intercession by way of sacrifice before sinful man can be brought into covenant relationship. There must be an offering which becomes the means by which the two can be joined together. The discussion of how Jesus is the “means” by which this can be done will be undertaken in a later lesson.

Genesis 16 Desperate to have a child, Sarai thought she could have her maid Hagar be a substitute. Ishmael was born to Hagar. (v15) However, he was not to be the “son of promise”.

Genesis 17:4-11 Abram and Sarai both are given changes in name. Abram was going to be "a father of many nations", and for this reason, his name was changed from Abram (exalted father) to Abraham (father of a great multitude). He was to circumcise all the males of his family to invoke the promise.

The rite of circumcision was required by God to indicate their acceptance. Circumcision was “cutting off the flesh” and the act was an acknowledgement that he and his family had declared a separation from sin and a separation to God. (This same principle is to be found in Baptism in the new testament.)

(V15) Sarai’s name was changed to Sarah(meaning princess), she shall be a mother of nations (v16). With regards to Ishmael (v20) he still has a special place with God, but (v21) God will establish is covenant with Isaac who was to be born the following year.

Genesis 18,19, 20 Please take the time to read these chapters to help with the details of what is taking place. Sarah was to give birth to a son within a year despite being 90 years old. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is decided because of their wickedness and this is discussed by the angels of the LORD with Abraham. These same angels provided warning to Lot and his family so they could escape. Note that the angels bear the name of the LORD and speak with the full authority of their God. Despite being warned, Lot’s wife looked back on all she was losing and was turned into a pillar of salt. Only Lot and his two daughters escaped the destruction.

Genesis 21 The birth of Isaac, the son of Abraham and Sarah, the son of promise is recorded. Abraham in confirming the promise has his circumcised the 8th day as God had commanded him. Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born.

Genesis 22:1-18 The LORD will tempt Abraham. It might be well to mention that "tempt" here means "tested." We must note the ‘type’ found in this episode. Abraham is asked to offer his “only son Isaac”. Isaac was the son of promise that God himself helped to bring about. To ask Abraham now to offer him was the ultimate test to see if Abraham believed and trusted in the LORD. (The sacrifice of Isaac was to take place in the same range of hills on which Christ died.) Isaac even carried the wood for his sacrifice: a foreshadowing of the Son of God, Christ carrying His cross.

Abraham accepted that in his seed all mankind would be blessed, and understood the full significance of the sacrificial lamb. With complete faith in God, and looking ahead to the promised “seed” (Christ), Abraham answers Isaac, "God will provide himself a lamb.”

v:9 Isaac submits to Abraham as Christ submitted to his Father's will.

v:10-18 Show that Abraham would have completed the act if God had not intervened. God, upon this demonstration of Abraham's faith, accepted Abraham's action as the equivalent to the actual sacrifice of his son, and once again renews His promise. The type is completed in the New Testament: John 3:16 “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son....”

Genesis 23 This chapter gives the account of Sarah's death and the details of the purchase by Abraham of a place of burial. It might be interesting to mention that Abraham insisted on paying for a piece of ground in the land which God had promised to give him.

Genesis 24 This chapter emphasizes the importance, in Abraham's eyes, of choosing a wife from his own people. There are conditions in his specific instructions for finding a suitable wife for Isaac. Abraham commissions his servant to go to his relatives and find a wife to complement Isaac’s faith in God. Rebekah is the one who faithfully follows the servant and become wife to Isaac.

Genesis 25 Here is the record of the death of Abraham. This is an important declaration.

Abraham was told in Genesis 15:15 that he would die, then, he would be buried. We see that he was buried in the cave of Machpelah, the only land that he really possessed in his lifetime.

This was in the country that God had promised to give him for an everlasting possession. Abraham understood the resurrection. His faith was convinced without doubt that God would fulfill his promises. Such was the measure of his commitment.

This is the reason Abraham could offer his son as God had asked. This is the reason he bought the piece of ground and how he could wait for God to fulfill his promise. We too await the fulfillment of God's promises, and death will not stop that from happening if we trust in God.

ISAAC

Genesis 25:20 All the sons of Abraham, including Isaac, the son of promise, are presented here at Abraham's death and give us a measure of the fulfillment of the promise God made to him. It also implies that the other children of Abraham had no issues with the unique position of Isaac in the purpose of God.

As with Sarah, Rebekah too had difficulty with conception. By prayer Isaac was able to entreat the LORD on her behalf and (v21) her womb was open to conception and she was able to give birth to twins (v24). Just as in the case of Eve's sons, Cain and Abel, the individual and different characteristics of Esau and Jacob were quickly apparent. Esau showed a disregard for God's way, despising both his own birthright as the firstborn as well as his responsibility to follow the ways of God.

Jacob demonstrated a willingness to conform with God's will in every way. The birthright, which Esau despised, Jacob embraced. This included the promises God had made to Abraham and Isaac. He saw the opportunity in these promises and took hold of them. This is seen in verses 29-34

Genesis 26:23,24 We have a striking confirmation of the promises made to Abraham now specifically including Isaac in the blessing and promise. For Esau, the choice of Hittite wives by is recorded in v.34 which is a matter of concern for Isaac and Rebekah and is an example of the instability of Esau's character and his disregard of God's will. Here again we have history repeating itself, "the sons of God saw that the daughters of men that they were fair and they took them wives of all which they chose." (Genesis 6:2)

JACOB

Genesis 27 The character differences between Jacob and Esau are highlighted in this chapter. Jacob desired the responsibility of the birthright that was given to Esau by birth. However, Esau had no regard for the responsibilities that went along with it. These would have included a double portion of the inheritance, but more important the responsibility to provide the spiritual instruction and guidance to the family. That which had been promised to Abraham, then Isaac Jacob wants for himself as well. We read in this chapter the trickery that Jacob uses to gain the blessing of Isaac. Isaac knew his son Esau had no interest in Godly things. He felt bound by the right of the firstborn to bestow the blessing on Esau. Jacob however, "supplanted" or deceived Isaac into thinking he was Esau and by doing so the blessing was given to him. By taking the birthright and now through tricking Isaac into giving him the blessing, Jacob demonstrates his faith and belief in God. This is confirmed later when Jacob too is included in the promise conferred on his father and grandfather.

Genesis 28 The deceptions by Jacob result with anger (27:41) in Esau who (like Cain) plans to kill him. So, his mother helps plan his escape by convincing Isaac to send him to her fathers' house in Padan-Aram.

We are given an outline of Jacob's journey to Padan-Aram to the house of Bethuel where he went to find a wife among his mothers relatives in the family of Laban. In verses 11-13 as he was on the way, he had a dream/vision from God and the word of God v13-15 confirms the same promises to him as were given to Abraham and Isaac. The wording is almost identical. V15 goes on to say that God would be with him in all his journey till he returns back to this land that had been promised.

Genesis Chapters 29 to 37 These chapters are worth a read in order to appreciate how the LORD continues with Jacob as he had promised. Whatever Jacob did, he was blessed. However, Laban was a cunning and deceptive man who tried to best Jacob continually. A brief overview will help here:

Jacob meets Rachel and falls in love. He agrees to serve 7 years for free with Laban for her hand in marriage. However, when the time comes, Laban substitutes her sister Leah. Laban convinces Jacob to continue working for him and agrees to give him Rachel as well for another 7 years service. After he completes that agreement, Jacob agrees to serve for wages in that he would keep all the speckled and spotted animals. The blessing of God cause Jacob to prosper and soon had more wealth than Laban. His sons began to murmur so Jacob planned to escape back to his fathers' land.

As he re-enters the land his brother Esau comes out to meet him. With the time that had passed and from Esau's own prosperity, Esau's anger was no more so Jacob was free to enter the land.

While in Padan Aram and early in his return to the land, Jacob was blessed with 12 sons. As he was about to re-enter the land, he was confronted by an angel of the LORD and wrestled a whole night trying to find out his name. Eventually, the struggle ended and Jacob even though he thought he was alone in his journeys, was reminded that the LORD had always remained with him. It is at this point that his name is changed from Jacob, (meaning 'supplanter') to Israel, (meaning 'God prevails') Jacob's name is now Israel and he has 12 sons who will soon be known as the 12 tribes of Israel.

JOSEPH

Genesis 37-40 Of all the sons of Jacob, it seems that Joseph was the one most inclined to acceptance of the LORD. Joseph relates some visions that he has which is not accepted by his brethren. Joseph is particularly favored by Jacob and this creates dissent among the remaining brethren. So bitter is their anger, that they had planned to kill him, but eventually sell Joseph to a band of travelers who are heading down to Egypt. In Egypt, through the blessing and divine purpose of God, Joseph rises to the level of second only to Pharaoh in order to preserve the descendants of Jacob.

These chapters are important for they mark a significant step in the development of the Hebrew race. From the seventy souls that went down into Egypt through the work of Joseph, there grew a people so numerous that the Egyptians considered them a threat to their kingdom. The dramatic events related in the story of Joseph make one of the most compelling sections of the entire Bible. We place particular emphasis on the 8th verse of the 49th chapter, which pick up the Central Theme through Jacob in his dying words confirming the selection of the tribe of Judah as that which the ruler of God's future Kingdom would come.

LESSON #5

ABRAHAM TO MOSES

Genesis 50:24 is also very important because it stresses the significance of the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses would later appeal to the enslaved nation of Israel in Egypt on the authority of these promises, "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob hath sent me."

Genesis 50:25 Even this seemingly insignificant point takes on great importance by demonstrating the faith of Joseph who gives instruction concerning his bones after he dies. He did not want to be buried in Egypt, but understood that when God promised Abraham in Genesis 15:14 that after a period of slavery in Egypt, the children of Israel would come back to their own land that God had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. At his death Joseph's sarcophagus lies in state in Egypt. Who, centuries later would remember Joseph's command regarding his bones when the nation in dire distress prepares to move out of Egypt? Further, who would commit to carry a coffin when a nation is in flight through a miraculously divided sea? What importance would be placed upon the bones of a dead leader in 40 bitter years of wandering in the wilderness? Who in a succeeding generation would bring this burden to the land of promise? In spite of all these questions the obligation was assumed and fulfilled, and Joseph's bones are finally buried in Shechem. Was it coincidence when the lots were finally cast for portions in the land that Shechem fell to the tribe of Ephraim?

This was not coincidence, this was design.