

Lesson 8 THE CALL OF ABRAHAM – PROMISES GIVEN BY GOD

READING: GENESIS 11:27-32; 12; ACTS 7:1-4

AIM: To show the part Abraham played in the development of the Kingdom of God

1. BACKGROUND

The families of the sons of Noah who began to repopulate the earth, journeyed east and settled in the plain of Shinar (Gen. 11:1), in the region of Babylon. There they built the city of Babel and a tower to make a name or memorial for themselves. It was to be a central rallying point lest they be scattered. In this way they defied God by exalting themselves, notwithstanding the terrible lessons of the Flood.

God punished their disobedience by confusing their speech and compelling men to move away from Babel. No longer were they bound together by speaking the same language. They became separated into nations and Kingdoms. However, God subsequently put into operation a plan to ultimately bless all nations and call them back to unity again, through the man He was to choose.

With this plan in mind we come now to consider the SECOND of the three great covenants of the Bible – the first was made in Eden (Gen. 3:15) and the third was made to David (II Sam 7). This lesson outlines far reaching promises that God made to a man of His choosing, Abram. So great was Abram's faith in God, that after severe testing, his name was changed to Abraham meaning "father of many nations". To avoid confusion the name Abraham will be used throughout the lesson.

2. THE CALL OF ABRAHAM – Gen 11:7-32; 12:1; Acts 7:1-4

The call of God went out to an individual – Abraham, who followed in the lineage of Noah and Shem (Gen. 11:10).

Abraham lived with his father Terah in Mesopotamia in the city of Ur of the Chaldees, near the estuary of the River Euphrates. Ur was an important city with a high form of culture, government and literature, but idolatry was practiced by the inhabitants. Abraham received the following call from God:

“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 show thee”(Gen 12:1).

Abraham obeyed God and left the comfortable but idolatrous city life to become a wanderer, living in tents. He was called to be separate from the idol worship of Ur and his forefathers (Josh.24:2-3). He obeyed God “not knowing whither he went”. This was a great test of Abraham's faith.

With Terah, his father, Nahor his brother, Lot his nephew and Sarah his wife, Abraham left Ur and travelling in a north-westerly direction along the course of the Euphrates, came to Haran. Here the family stopped for some time until Abraham at 75 years of age, accompanied by his wife and Lot, journeyed south and entered the land of Canaan.

3. THE PROMISES – Gen 12:1-3

As part of his call Abraham was given important and far-reaching promises in the form of a covenant. The initial promises to Abraham are contained in Gen. 12:1-3,

- 1) **Abraham would become a great nation;**
- 2) **Abraham's name would be great and he would become a blessing;**
- 3) **God would bless those who blessed Abraham and curse those who cursed him;**
- 4) **In Abraham all families of the earth would be blessed.**

Thus was Abraham called out of Ur to an illustrious future, and a new relationship with the Creator. Subsequently, these promises were confirmed as a covenant (Lesson 9) and later again God swore with an oath that He would surely fulfill all His words (Lesson 10). **In these covenants Paul tells us the gospel was preached to Abraham (Gal. 3:8)**

Abraham was indeed blessed in being chosen to receive these promises, but this was not without responsibility on his part. He pleased God by his belief, a belief continually demonstrated even when fulfillment of the promises seemed impossible. In fact, he was not to receive the promises fully in his lifetime (Gen 17:8; Acts 7; Heb. 11:9-10, 39) yet he lived a life of faith, not doubting that God would in His time, fulfill all.

Abraham's faith was demonstrated in his constant obedience to the command of God (read Rom. 4:16-22 and James 2:22) most notably shown in firstly leaving his native Mesopotamia, and later in being prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac.

4. THE FULFILLMENT OF THWE PROMISES

The promises have been partially fulfilled in that:

- A great nation (Israel) did descend from Abraham, and did at times possess the land of promise.
- History has shown repeatedly that nations blessing Israel are blessed, and nations oppressing Israel are cursed.
- God raised up Christ in Abraham's line, so that the promises can be granted to the faithful in his Kingdom (Gen. 13:15; Rom. 15:8; Gal. 3:16-29).

However, Abraham looked beyond his lifetime for the complete answer.

“By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb 11:9-10). It will only be in the Kingdom on earth that the covenant will be entirely realized:

- Abraham's people, the Jews, will become a really great nation (Zech 8:22-23).
- His name will be universally acknowledged (Luke 13:28)
- He will have become a blessing unto all who own him as their spiritual father (Gal. 3:9; 4:27-29; Acts 3:25-26).
- The blessing and cursing of God upon those who accept or reject him will then be in evidence (Isa. 60:12).
- All nations will be blessed (Psa. 72:17; Isa. 61:11; Acts 15:17).

When Christ returns and raises Abraham and other faithful ones from the dead, he will establish God's Kingdom in the earth, and he and his brethren will reign over the peoples of the world in righteousness. Then all nations

will be blessed in Abraham, because in inheriting the promises, Abraham and his seed – Christ – will give them peace and prosperity (Isa. 61:11).

5. ABRAHAM'S PILGRIMAGE -- Gen 12:4-20

To please God Abraham left behind his country, his kindred (the people of Ur) and his father's house (his close relatives). Having entered the promised land, Abraham travelled through it to **Shechem** (Gen 12:6) where God renewed His promise, then to **Bethel**, and on towards **Beer-sheba**.

Famine then drove Abraham into **Egypt** (Gen 12:9-20). In time, he returned to Canaan where, at the invitation of God, he looked, "north, south, east and west" over the land, and was promised all he saw as an everlasting possession. He did not, however, receive this in his lifetime.

6. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The call of Abraham is a demonstration of God's mercy in calling out men and women from an undeserving world. The life of Abraham is a lesson in belief and obedience to all who hear and embrace God's promises. Indeed, we must become closely identified with him (as his "seed") if we are to inherit eternal life. The Jews in Jesus' day were not wrong in wishing to name Abraham as their father (John 8:39) but they lacked the manner of life to match the claim.

Any member of any race or nation may become Abraham's seed and heir to the promises, by being baptized into Christ (Gal 3:26-29). This is a great blessing and is available to any who will take advantage of it and follow Abraham's example. Abraham left his old way OF LIFE AND FORMER ASSOCIATIONS (SEE Rom. 6:6). He faithfully obeyed God's command. If we wish to become one of Abraham's seed we, too, must enter into a covenant with God and obey His commands.

REFERENCE LIBRARY

"The Visible Hand of God", chapter 7.
 "The Ways of Providence", chapter 3.
 "Elpis Israel", part 1, chapter 7 and part 2. Chapter 1.
 "The Letter to the Galatians", chapter 3.
 "Where it Happened", chapter 3
 "God's Way", chapter 3.
 "Abraham", chapters 1 to 4.
 "Ur of the Chaldees".

QUESTIONS

1. Who is the special seed spoken of in Abraham's promises?
2. How can we become part of Abraham's seed?"?
3. Relate God's promises to Abraham to Gen. 3:15.
4. Discuss the effect that God's call had on Abraham's life. Why did God reward him?
5. To what extent have the promises to Abraham been fulfilled and in what way will they be completely realized?