



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

Old Testament Survey

Lesson 4 – Abraham, the Man Who Believed God (Genesis 12-23)

Abraham

The Bible is full of references to Abraham, the man whom God called to be the ancestor of His chosen people, the people who carried God's promise of the Savior. The apostle Paul in his New Testament letters speaks of Abraham as a model believer, as the father of believers:

“Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness” (Romans 4:3).

Abraham **“did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform”** (Romans 4:20-21).

Yet Abraham was not without sin. See for example Genesis 12:10-20 and Genesis 20.

Read Genesis chapters 12-23 along with the notes below. If you have any questions, please ask them.

Genesis 12 – God's Call to Abram and His Great Promise

God calls Abram from Haran (and originally from Ur) and promises him great blessing (vv. 1-3).

“Get out of your country...to a land that I will show you” (v. __)

“I will make you a great nation” (v. __)

“In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (v. __ This is a promise of JESUS.

Abram and Lot leave Haran and go to Canaan (vv. 4-9).

Notice: Abram is 75 years old at this time.

Abram goes to Egypt and lies about his wife Sarai (vv. 10-20).

Genesis 13 – Abram's Unselfishness towards His Nephew Lot

Abram generously separates from his nephew Lot (vv. 1-13).

God renews His promise to Abram (vv. 14-18).

“I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth” (v. __)

Genesis 14 – Abram's War against Four Kings

Four kings make war against five kings, and Lot is taken captive (vv. 1-12).

Abram and his servants defeat the four kings (vv. 13-16).

The mysterious Melchizedek, God's priest, blesses Abram (vv. 17-24).

Notice: Melchizedek is a picture of Christ (Psalm 110; Hebrews 5-7).

Genesis 15 – God Renews the Promise through an Unusual Ceremony

God renews His Promise to Abram, and Abram believes God (vv. 1-6).

“Count the stars... So shall your descendants be” (v. __)

“And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness” (v. __)

God passes between the halves of dead animals as a sign of His Promise (vv. 7-21).

Note: Most covenants of those days were two-sided and both parties walked between the animals; but God's covenant with Abram was a one-sided covenant of grace.

God also prophesies the 400 years' slavery of Abram's children in Egypt (vv. 13-16).

Genesis 16 – *Abram's Son Ishmael through Hagar, Sarai's Maid*

Notice: Abram is now 86 years old.

Genesis 17 – *God Renews His Promise Again*

Notice: Abram is now 99 years old.

God changes the names of Abram and Sarai to Abraham and Sarah (vv. 1-8, vv. 15-16).

God establishes the rite of circumcision as a sign of His Promise (vv. 9-14, vv. 23-27).

God promises the birth of Isaac (which means "he laughs") (vv. 17-22).

Genesis 18 – *The Visit of the LORD (JESUS, Angel of God) and Two Angels with Abraham*

Three men (!) visit Abraham and promise the birth of a son (vv. 1-15).

"Is anything too hard for the LORD?" (v. ___)

Abraham pleads with the LORD Himself to spare Sodom and Gomorrah (vv. 16-33).

Genesis 19 – *The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah*

God's angels rescue Lot and his two daughters (vv. 1-22).

God destroys Sodom and Gomorrah with brimstone and fire (vv. 23-29).

Notice: The southern part of the Dead Sea now covers the sites of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Lot's daughters are the ancestors of the Moabites and the Ammonites (vv. 30-38).

Genesis 20 – *Abraham's Second Lie about Sarah*

His first lie is recorded in Genesis 12.

Genesis 21 – *The Birth of Isaac*

Notice: Abraham is now 100 years old.

Sarah, at the age of 90, brings forth her first son Isaac (vv. 1-8).

Abraham sends Hagar and Ishmael away, and they prosper (vv. 9-21).

The descendants of Ishmael are the Arabs; the Jews are descendants of Isaac.

Paul uses this account as an allegory in Galatians 4:21-31.

Abraham makes an agreement with Abimelech (vv. 22-34).

Genesis 22 – *The Greatest Proof of Abraham's Faith*

God asks Abraham to sacrifice his son as proof of his faith (vv. 1-10).

Notice: While the Bible never points to it as such, this sacrifice of Isaac seems to be a picture of God's sacrifice of Christ.

Notice: Abraham believed that if he sacrificed his only son, God would raise him from the dead because it was through Isaac that God's promised blessing (the Savior) was to come (see Hebrews 11:17-19). And so, Abraham told his men: **"Stay here with the donkey... and we will come back to you"** (v. ___)

God sees Abraham's faith and renews His Promise (vv. 11-19).

"I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore" (v. ____)

"In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (v. ____)

News of Abraham's relatives in Haran (vv. 20-24)

Genesis 23 – *Sarah's Death and Abraham's Cemetery Purchase*

Notice: Abraham's purchase of the Cave of Machpelah shows his faith in God's promise that the land would be his.

Information on World Kingdoms During the Age of the Patriarchs and Following

The land God promised to Abraham and his seed was right between the two oldest known civilizations: Egypt and Mesopotamia. The earliest recorded history from sources outside the Bible comes from these two regions. These areas are where writing developed. The following dates are most probably not accurate, but these are the dates historians give for these two ancient kingdoms:

Egypt:

Early Period (3200-2800 BC) – Dynasties I and II – capital in Thebes, royal tombs, high level of civilization

Old Kingdom (2800-2250 BC) – Dynasties IV-VI – the time of the great pyramids, Sphinx, religious texts

Decline and Recovery (2250-2000 BC) – Dynasties VII-XI – centralized power at Thebes

Middle Kingdom (2000-1780 BC) – Dynasty XII – powerful central government, capitals at Memphis and the Fayyum (Joseph in Egypt)

Decline and Occupation (1780-1546 BC) – Dynasties XIII-XVII – Hyksos invaders, horse and chariot (Israelites in Egypt)

New Kingdom (1546-1085 BC) – Dynasties XVIII-XX – (the Exodus from Egypt)

Mesopotamia:

Sumerian culture (2800-2400 BC) – cuneiform literature, royal tombs, first dynasty of Ur

Akkadian Supremacy (2360-2160 BC) – Sargon the Great

Third dynasty of Ur (2070-1950 BC)

First Babylonian Dynasty (1800-1500 BC) – Shamsiudad I, Hammurabi of Nineveh (1700 BC)

Old Hittite Empire (1600-1500 BC)

Mitanni Kingdom (1500-1370 BC)

New Hittite Empire (1375-1200 BC)

Rise of Assyria (1350-1200 BC)

Note: Diggings at Ur indicate that around 2000 BC Ur was a large city. Its temple tower was dedicated to the moon god who was called "the beautiful Lord who shines in heaven". We can therefore understand why God wanted Abraham to leave this idolatrous city of his fathers.

Approximate Dates of the Patriarchs:

Salah (2482-2049 BC) died at the age of 433

Eber (2452-1988 BC) died at the age of 462, four years after Abraham's death

Peleg (2418-2179 BC) died at the age of 239; the earth was divided (Babel?)

Reu (2388-2149 BC) died at the age of 239

Serug (2356-2126 BC) died at the age of 230.

Nahor (2326-2178 BC) died at the age of 148

Terah (2297-2092 BC) died at the age of 205

Abraham (2167-1992 BC) died at the age of 175

Isaac (2067-1887 BC) died at the age of 180

Jacob (2007-1860 BC) died at the age of 147

Joseph (1916-1806 BC) died at the age of 110

Questions

1. Why is Abraham a model believer and called the father of believers?
2. How are all families of the earth blessed through Abraham and his family?
3. What did Abram do for Melchizedek? What did Melchizedek do for Abram?
4. Who walked between the dead animals in Genesis 15? Why is this important?
5. Why can we be sure that one of the men who visited Abraham was the Lord?
6. What was the sin of the residents of Sodom and Gomorrah?
7. List the similarities between the sacrifices of Isaac and Christ.
8. What is the big difference between the sacrifices of Isaac and Christ?
9. Why is it important that the land God chose for His people (Canaan) lies between the two most prominent ancient civilizations: Babylon and Egypt?