

The Beginning of Faith

Genesis 12:1-7

1/27/08

Intro

We now come to Genesis 12 where we meet Abraham who is called the father of our faith. Here is this section where we first meet him and see the beginning of faith. I say the beginning of faith because what we actually see in Abraham is a man who grows in faith.

We can be encouraged by his example, because we can relate to the fact that we want to believe, but are still growing in our faith. We are often like the man who brought his demon-possessed son to Jesus and said, "If you can help him, please have pity on us." "***If*** you can?" Jesus said, "all things are possible to him who believes." The man then responded, "I do believe, help my unbelief."

When we first meet Abraham he is actually called Abram which means *exalted father*. The problem at this point is that Abram is not a father at all. Sarai (means princess), his wife, is barren and in that culture, being barren meant that they were thought to be cursed of God.

Abram is living in the city of Ur, a large city near the mouth of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. It is one of the earliest known civilizations in the world with great wealth and architectural development. There they worshiped the moon god, Nanna. No doubt Abram's family was idol worshippers of that moon god when Abram was called of God.

I. God Calls Us Out of the World

- There is much to learn from the story of Abraham, beginning with God calling him to come out of Ur and to go to a land that God would give him.

A. God reaches out to us

- It's important to see in this story that God comes to Abram and calls him to come out of Ur and come to a land that God would show him.

Acts 7:1-5 Stephen tells us of Abraham.

- God takes the initiative.

I John 4:19, We love Him because He first loved us. NKJV

- If God didn't reach out to us we would still be in our sins and would be without God and without hope in this world.

Ephesians 2:12-13, remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

- There are several places in scripture where we see that God reaches out to us....
- In Revelation 3:20 Jesus said to the church in Laodicea, *"I stand at the door and knock and if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him and him with Me."*
- God has many ways of knocking in the door of your life.

Illus – Raul Ries was a street fighter, filled with anger and contempt for everything and everyone. He finally came to the place where he was sitting in his living room waiting to destroy his family when he turned the channel on his TV and heard Chuck Smith give the good news of Jesus Christ.

B. Don't stop in Haran

- God called Abram while he was living in Ur of the Chaldeans to leave it all behind; his country and his relatives, and come to the land of Canaanites.
- It's a picture of the world for us, and we are called to leave everything in the world behind us.
- This is a spiritual application; we have to be careful not to make the mistake of overstepping the bounds of interpretation. God gave literal promises to Abram that are spiritual principles for us.
- Leaving the city of Ur and going to the land of promise is for us leaving behind the things of the world and living in the place of blessing that He has called us to in Christ Jesus.
- In that culture, when you left a city, you truly left it behind. They did not have any methods of communication like we have today.

Illus – Jacob and I can talk to each other over the Internet with our video phone connection. Being in Africa is no longer very far away.

- But that's the point, it's too easy to stay connected with the people of the world and get drawn back into the old things again.

II Corinthians 6:17, Therefore, “Come out from their midst and be separate,” says the Lord.

II Corinthians 5:17, Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

App – Here’s a radical idea; instead of being pulled back into the world, wouldn’t it be better to invite the people from the world to church and to meet your Christian friends?

- Haran is a picture of those who make the decision to come out of Ur, but stop short of the land of promise.
- But we have to see that there’s no blessing for Abraham in Haran.

App – This is part of growing in faith, doing what God wants us to do. Abram is not quite there because ...
1) He doesn’t leave his relatives, 2) he stops in Haran.

In fact, he’s 75 years old before he truly leaves Haran and heads for the land of promise.

II. God Blesses Faithfulness

- The promises of God were not found in Haran, Abram needed to say “yes” to God and trust God completely and go to the land of Canaan before he would see the promises of God fulfilled in his life.

A. God's promises are found in Jesus

- For Abram, he would only find the promises of God by fully trusting God and leaving Haran.
- One of those promises was that all the families of the earth would be blessed through him.
- He was 75 years old and had no son, so this was a promise which would require great faith.
- But this is literally fulfilled in that Christ Jesus was a son of Abraham and in Him the fullness of God dwells.

Ephesians 1:3-12 Every spiritual blessing is in Christ

Romans 11:33, Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

- Men are earnestly searching for something that will satisfy them on the inside and change them on the outside!
- These are the promises that are found in Christ; only in Him can we find the life that satisfies the soul and changes us on the outside as well.

B. In Christ is a more excellent way

- God promised to make Abram a great nation. He promises to increase our spiritual capacity.
- The promise to Abram was fulfilled literally in the nation of Israel, in us God promises life lived abundantly in Christ.

John 10:10, The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

- God promised to make his name great. This is seen powerfully today as Judaism, Islam and Christianity all honor the name of Abraham.
- But for us this is fulfilled spiritually. We know that a good name is very desirable...

Proverbs 22:1, A good name is to be more desired than great wealth, favor is better than silver and gold.

- A person who loves God, who cares about others, serves and loves those around him, he will have a good name.

App – We know that God’s ways are not our ways...

Isaiah 55:8-9, “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

- God’s ways are more excellent and when we live our life His way, our life is more excellent because of it..

I Corinthians 12:31, I show you a still more excellent way.

Illus – When Jordi and I were first married, we decided to go crabbing. We caught several and decided to stop at her parents to cook them. The only problem was that I didn’t know what I was doing... what a

difference it made when I found out the right way to do it!!

- God's Word show us the way in which we should live. Without it, life is much more difficult and greatly lacking in peace.

C. Be a blessing

- Not only would Abram receive all these blessing from God when he trusted God completely, he in turn would be a blessing.
- This is actually something God is telling him to do, and then God promises to add powerfully to it.
- This is literally fulfilled in Christ in that through Jesus, every nation on the earth is blessed with the promise of eternal life.

App – there is an important spiritual principle here in that we have been so blessed in Christ, that in turn we have the privilege of blessing others.

- There is a wonderful joy in making a difference in someone else's life.

II Corinthians 2:14, But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.

- May our lives bring the smell of Christ to those around us.