

Genesis 11:26 – 25:11

journey of faith

THE STORY OF ABRAHAM

Pastor Jacob Bundy

Horizon Baptist Church

8/18/2021-5/22/2022

OUTLINE OF THE STORY OF ABRAHAM

- 1.) The Story of Terah (11:26-32)
 - A.) The Fatherhood of Terah (11:26-27)
 - B.) The Children of Terah (11:28-30)
 - C.) The Journey of Terah (11:31)
 - D.) The Death of Terah (11:32)
- 2.) The Calling of Abram
 - A.) The Command (12:1)
 - B.) The Promises (12:2-3)
 - C.) The Obedience (12:4-6)
 - D.) The Confirmation (12:7-9)
- 3.) Abram's Misadventure in Egypt (12:10-20)
 - A.) The Setting (12:10)
 - B.) The Danger (12:11-12)
 - C.) The Deception (12:13)
 - D.) The Crisis (12:14-16)
 - E.) The Deliverance (12:17-20)
- 4.) Abram Separates from Lot (13:1-18)
 - A.) The Return to the Promised Land (13:1-5)
 - B.) The Conflict over the Promised Land (13:6-7)
 - C.) The Resolution in the Promised Land (13:8-13)
 - D.) The Reaffirmation of the Promised Land (13:14-18)
- 5.) Abram Rescues Lot (14:1-24)
 - A.) The Political Situation in the Land (14:1-4)
 - B.) The Conquest of the Land by Invaders (14:5-11)
 - C.) The Capture of Lot by the Invaders (14:12-13)
 - D.) The Pursuit of the Invaders by Abram (14:14-16)
 - E.) The Return of Abram to the Land (14:17-24)
 - (1) Abram's Encounter with the King Priest Melchizedek (14:17-20)
 - a.) He brought Abram bread and wine (14:17-18)
 - b.) He blessed Abram and his God (14:19-20)
 - c.) Abram gave the King of Salem a tithe (14:20)
 - (2) Abram's Encounter with the King of Sodom (14:21-24)
 - a.) He offered Abram wealth in exchange for the people (14:21)
 - b.) Abram refused the King of Sodom's offer (14:22-24)
- 6.) The Confirmation of the Promises to Abram (15:1-21)
 - A.) Through His Word (15:1-8)
 - (1) God's Declaration of Protection and Provision (15:1)
 - (2) Abram's Expression of Doubt and Discouragement (15:2-3)
 - (3) God's Reassurance of an Heir and a Seed (15:4-5)
 - (4) Abram's Faith in God's Word (15:6)
 - (5) God's Reckoning of Righteousness to Abram (15:6)
 - (6) God's Declaration of Power and Purpose (15:7)
 - (7) Abram's Request for Confirmation (15:8)

- B.) Through His Covenant (15:9-21)
 - (1) The Preparations for the Covenant Ceremony (15:9-11)
 - (2) The Dream before the Covenant Ceremony (15:12-16)
 - (3) The Execution of the Covenant Ceremony (15:17-21)
- 7.) The Circumvention of the Promise through Hagar & Ishmael (16:1-16)
 - A.) The Setting (16:1)
 - B.) Abram & Sarai's Faithless Scheme (16:2-6)
 - C.) God's Sustaining Encounter with Hagar (16:7-16)
 - (1) His Presence (16:7-8)
 - (2) His Counsel (16:9)
 - (3) His Promise (16:10-12)
 - (4) Her Response (16:13-16)
- 8.) The Reaffirmation of the Promises to Abraham and Sarah (17:1-27)
 - A.) The Reappearance of Almighty God (17:1-3a)
 - B.) The Reminders of the Covenant (17:3b-22)
 - (1) A New Name for Abram (17:3b-5)
 - (2) A Restatement of God's Promises (17:6-8)
 - (3) A Perpetual Sign of Circumcision (17:9-14)
 - (4) A New Name for Sarai (17:15-22)
 - a.) The reaction of Abraham (17:17-18)
 - b.) The response of God (17:19-22)
 - C.) The Institution of the Covenant Sign (17:23-27)
- 9.) Abraham & Sarah's Special Visitors (18:1-15)
 - A.) The Hospitality of Abraham (18:1-5)
 - B.) The Fellowship of the Meal (18:6-8)
 - C.) The Purpose of the Visit (18:9-15)
- 10.) Abraham's Pleading for Sodom (18:16-33)
 - A.) God's Contemplation (18:16-19)
 - (1) Reason 1 – Abraham would be the means of blessing for the nations of the world (18:18)
 - (2) Reason 2 – Abraham would be a teacher of righteousness and justice (18:19)
 - B.) God's Declaration (18:20-22)
 - C.) Abraham's Negotiation (18:23-33)
- 11.) Lot & Sodom's Special Visitors (19:1-38)
 - A.) The Hospitality of Lot (19:1-3)
 - B.) The Wickedness of Sodom (19:4-5)
 - C.) The Hypocrisy of Lot (19:6-9)
 - D.) The Intervention of the Angels (19:10-11)
 - E.) The Mockery of Lot (19:12-14)
 - F.) The Passiveness of Lot (19:15-16)
 - G.) The Pleading of Lot (19:17-23)
 - H.) The Destruction of the Plain (19:24-29)
 - I.) The Humiliation of Lot (19:30-38)
- 12.) Abraham's Misadventure in Gerar (20:1-18)
 - A.) The Deceitfulness of Abraham (20:1-2)
 - B.) The Confrontation of Abimelech (20:3-7)

- C.) The Confrontation of Abraham (20:8-13)
- D.) The Restoration of Sarah (20:14-18)
- 13.) The Birth of Isaac & Sending Away of Ishmael (21:1-21)
 - A.) The Fulfillment of the Promise Regarding Isaac (21:1-7)
 - (1) God kept His Word (21:1-2)
 - (2) Abraham obeyed God's Word (21:3-5)
 - (3) Sarah rejoiced at God's Word (21:6-7)
 - B.) The Threat to the Promise from Ishmael (21:8-13)
 - (1) The Recognition of the Threat (21:8-9)
 - (2) The Removal of the Threat (21:10-13)
 - C.) The Fulfillment of the Promise Regarding Ishmael (21:14-21)
 - (1) The Crisis of Hagar & Ishmael in the Wilderness (21:14-16)
 - (2) The Resolution of God's Provision (21:17-21)
- 14.) The Covenant at Beersheba (21:22-34)
 - A.) The Desire for Peace (21:22-24)
 - B.) The Discussion of a Conflict (21:25-26)
 - C.) The Resolution of a Conflict (21:27-31)
 - D.) The Attainment of Peace (21:32-34)
- 15.) The Sacrifice of Isaac (22:1-19)
 - A.) The Command from God (22:1-2)
 - B.) The Journey to Mount Moriah (22:3-4)
 - C.) The Journey up Mount Moriah (22:5-8)
 - D.) The Sacrifice of Isaac (22:9-12)
 - E.) The Provision of God (22:13-14)
 - F.) The Blessing of God (22:15-19)
- 16.) The Transition from Abraham and Sarah to Isaac and Rebekah (22:20-25:11)
 - A.) Nahor's Family Tree (22:20-24)
 - B.) The Death of Sarah (23:1-2)
 - C.) The Purchase of a Tomb (23:3-18)
 - D.) The Burial of Sarah (23:19-20)
 - E.) The Wife for Isaac (24:1-67)
 - (1) The Commissioning of the Servant (24:1-10)
 - (2) The Prayer before God (24:11-14)
 - (3) The Encounter with Rebekah (24:15-27)
 - a.) Her character (24:15-20)
 - b.) Her family (24:21-25)
 - c.) His worship (24:26-27)
 - (4) The Encounter with the Family (24:28-57)
 - a.) The hospitality of the family (24:28-32)
 - b.) The request to the family (24:33-49)
 - c.) The response of the family (24:50-57)
 - d.) The readiness of Rebekah (24:58)
 - (5) The Return with Rebekah (24:59-61)
 - (6) The Encounter with Isaac (24:62-67)
 - a.) His meditation (24:62-63)
 - b.) Their meeting (24:64-66)

c.) Their marriage (24:67)

F.) The End of Abraham's Journey (25:1-11)

(1) Abraham's New Wife (25:1)

(2) Abraham's New Children (25:2-4)

(3) Abraham's Final Arrangements (25:5-6)

(4) Abraham's Death (25:7-8)

(5) Abraham's Burial (25:9-11)

TABLE OF SERMONS

Misc. NT Passages - Introduction to the Life of Abraham

Genesis 11:26-12:6 – The Calling of Abram

Genesis 12:7-20 – The Misadventure of Abram in Egypt

Genesis 13:1-18 – Abram Separates from Lot

Genesis 14:1-16 – Abram Rescues Lot

Genesis 14:17-24 – Abram Returns to the Land

Genesis 15:1-8 – The Confirmation of the Promises to Abram

Genesis 15:9-21 - God's Covenant with Abram

Genesis 16:1-16 – The Circumvention of the Promise through Hagar & Ishmael

Genesis 17:1-14 – The Reaffirmation of the Promises Pt 1

Genesis 17:15-27 – The Reaffirmation of the Promises Pt 2

Genesis 18:1-15 – Abraham and Sarah's Special Visitors

Genesis 18:16-33 – Abraham's Pleading for Sodom

Genesis 19:1-16 – Lot and Sodom's Special Visitors

Genesis 19:17-38 – The Destruction of Sodom

Genesis 20:1-18 – Abraham's Misadventure in Gerar

Genesis 21:1-21 – The Fulfillment of the Promise

Genesis 21:22-34 – The Covenant at Beersheba

Genesis 22:1-8 – The Sacrifice of Isaac Pt 1

Genesis 22:9-19 – The Sacrifice of Isaac Pt 2

Genesis 22:20-23:20 – The Death of Sarah

Genesis 24:1-20 – The Wife for Isaac Pt 1

Genesis 24:21-49 – The Wife for Isaac Pt 2

Genesis 24:50-67 – The Wife for Isaac Pt 3

Genesis 25:1-11 – The End of Abraham's Journey

Introduction

Introduction

I had fully planned to start in Genesis 12:1-9 talking about Abraham's calling. Then I realized I really needed to backtrack and start with Genesis 11:26 because verses 26-32 talk about Abraham's family and his background. So I was planning to preach Genesis 11:26-32. But then I wanted to give an overview on his life in general and walk through all of the New Testament passages that talk about him, because it shows how important he was to the church, and how important he is to us today.

I say all of that to say, we will not be getting to Genesis 11 or 12 tonight. We'll start there next week. Tonight, I'm going to give you a general overview of the life of Abraham, and we're going to take a quick look at the major New Testament passages that refer back to the life of Abraham.

Life Overview

Genesis 11-25 records a historical account of the life of Abraham, and his life story really revolves around several different key themes.

1. Abraham's Calling by God (and the monotheistic faith that corresponds to it)
2. Abraham's Journeying in the Promised Land
3. Abraham's Covenant with God (and the promises that corresponds to it)
4. Abraham's Son Isaac
 - a. His birth
 - b. His sacrifice
 - c. His wife

Divisions

Genesis 11:26-32 – Abram's Family

Genesis 12:1-9 - God Calls Abram

Genesis 12:10-20 - Abram Sidetracked in Egypt

Genesis 13:1-18 - Abram & Lot Separate

Genesis 14:1-16 - Abram Rescues Lot

Genesis 14:17-24 - Abram & Melchizedek

Genesis 15:1-8 - The Abrahamic Covenant Pt 1

Genesis 15:9-21 - The Abrahamic Covenant Pt 2

Genesis 16:1-16 - Hagar & Ishmael

Genesis 17:1-14 - Circumcision is the Sign of the Covenant
Genesis 17:15-27 - Isaac is the Child of Promise
Genesis 18:1-15 - Abraham & Sarah's Encounter with the Three Visitors
Genesis 18:16-33 - Abraham Begs for Sodom
Genesis 19:1-16 - God Destroys Sodom & Gomorrah Pt 1
Genesis 19:17-37 - God Destroys Sodom & Gomorrah Pt 2
Genesis 20:1-18 - Abraham & Abimelech
Genesis 21:1-21 - Isaac is Born & Ishmael is Sent Away
Genesis 21:22-34 - Abraham's Agreement with Abimelech
Genesis 22:1-8 - Abraham & the Sacrifice of Isaac Pt 1
Genesis 22:9-19 - Abraham & the Sacrifice of Isaac Pt 2
Genesis 22:20-23:20 - The Death of Sarah
Genesis 24:1-20 - A Wife for Isaac Pt 1
Genesis 24:21-48 - A Wife for Isaac Pt 2
Genesis 24:49-67 - A Wife for Isaac Pt 3
Genesis 25:1-11 - The Death of Abraham

New Testament References

Furthermore, although Abraham's life only occupies fifteen chapters of the Old Testament (Gen. 11-25), the most important figures in the New Testament (Jesus included) all refer to the life of Abraham to support major doctrinal teachings.

- There are thirteen major references in the New Testament made by five major figures back to Abraham, and as part of our introduction we're going to take a brief look at each of them.

JESUS

Matthew 8:11 - And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

- Jesus says that people from all over the world will partake in the kingdom of God with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He's talking about a past figure in a future sense.
- Jesus believes that Abraham will be an important, living participant in the kingdom of God one day.

Matthew 22:29-32 - 29 Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. 31 But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, 32 I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

- The Sadducees, who didn't believe in a future resurrection, asked Jesus a difficult question about the doctrine of the resurrection.
 - o Woman's husband passes and she gets remarried. This happens seven times. In the resurrection whose wife will she be?
- Jesus says that there is no marriage in the resurrection. Our relationships are different.
- In defending the concept of the resurrection, Jesus pointed out that Old Testament tells us that Jehovah is (present tense) the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, not that He was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- If Jehovah "is" the God of Abraham, that means that Abraham must be alive awaiting his resurrection.

Luke 16:19-31 - 19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: 20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, 21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; 23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. 25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. 26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. 27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: 28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. 29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. 30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. 31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

- The story goes on. The rich man wants to go back and tell his family about hell so they won't end up in the same place as him, but he can't go back.
- Jesus called the temporary resting place of Old Testament saints (prior to His death, burial and resurrection) Abraham's bosom. That's where Abraham and the other

Old Testament saints dwelled before Christ died on the cross for their sins and led captivity captive.

- For believers now, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

John 8:31-58 - 31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; 32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. 33 They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? 34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. 35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. 36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. 37 I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. 38 I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. 39 They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. 40 But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. 41 Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. 42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. 43 Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. 44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. 45 And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. 46 Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? 47 He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. 48 Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? 49 Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me. 50 And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth. 51 Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death. 52 Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. 53 Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself? 54 Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: 55 Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. 56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. 57 Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? 58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

- Jesus told the Jews that if they were Abraham's children, they would act like He did. He said that Abraham rejoiced to see the day that He, the Messiah, would come. Jesus claimed that before Abraham was ever even born, He existed.

Summary

- Abraham is alive.
- Abraham will be in the kingdom of God.
- Abraham's true children receive Jesus.
- Abraham looked forward to the coming of the Messiah.
- Jesus existed well before Abraham was ever born.

PETER

Acts 3:25-26 - 25 Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham (*quoting Gen. 22:18*), And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. 26 Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

- Peter reminded the Jews how that God promised that through Abraham's seed, all peoples of the earth would be blessed. Peter claimed that Jesus was the fulfillment of that promise.

PAUL

Romans 4:1-5 - What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? 2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. 3 For what saith the scripture? (*Quoting Genesis 15:6*) Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. 4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. 5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

- Paul quoted Genesis 15:6 where it says that Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. He used this as a support passage for the doctrine that we are saved not by works, but by faith.

Romans 9:7-16 - 7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. 8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. 9 For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. 10 And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; 11 (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) 12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. 13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. 14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. 15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

- Paul references how that God chose the promises made to Abraham to be passed down through his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob, rather than through his son

Ishmael and his grandson Esau. If God was righteous in those decisions, than how can we question his decision to choose to save whom He wishes?

- Here's where people get messed up in Romans 9. They assume this means that God has chosen to save certain individual people and not chosen to save other individual people.
- That's not true. You know who God has chosen to save? He's chosen to save anyone from any background that makes the decision to put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior.
- God has chosen to save people of faith. It's up to you to decide whether or not you will be a person of faith.
- Illustration – There is a boat headed for eternal life. His name is Jesus. God has chosen the boat headed for eternal life. You choose whether or not you get on the boat.

Galatians 3:6-18 - 6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. 7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. 8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying (*quoting Gen. 22:18, the same passage Peter quoted*), In thee shall all nations be blessed. 9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. 10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. 11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. 12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. 13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: 14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. 15 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. 16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. 17 And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. 18 For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

- Just like Abraham was justified by faith, we too are justified by faith in Jesus. If we put our faith in Jesus, then we are the spiritual children of Abraham. It's through faith in Jesus that God's promise is fulfilled that all peoples of the earth would be blessed through him.

Galatians 4:22-31 - 22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. 23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. 24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. 25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is

in bondage with her children. 26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. 27 For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. 28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. 29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. 30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. 31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

- Abraham's two sons (Isaac and Ishmael) are symbols of two covenants (the Mosaic which brought bondage through works) and the Abrahamic which brought freedom through faith).

Summary

- Just as Abraham was saved by faith, we too are saved by faith and through faith become the spiritual children of Abraham.
- If God was righteous in choosing Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to make His promises to, then how can anyone fault him for choosing to save those of any background who come to Him through faith in Jesus?
- Abraham's two sons are symbols of two covenants: one of which brought slavery through works and the other which brought freedom through faith.

AUTHOR OF HEBREWS

Hebrews 6:11-18 - 11 And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: 12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. 13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, 14 Saying (quoting Genesis 22:17), Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. 15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. 16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. 17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: 18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

- Just like God's promises to Abraham were unbreakable and trustworthy, so too are His promises to us.

Hebrews 7:1-9 - For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; 2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; 3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. 4 Now consider how great this man was, unto

whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. 5 And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: 6 But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. 7 And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. 8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. 9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham.

- In defending the superiority of Jesus' priestly order (the order of Melchizedek) to the Levitical priesthood, the author of Hebrews develops from the account of Abraham's paying tithes to the priest Melchizedek that Jesus > Melchizedek > Abraham > Levi and the Levitical priesthood.

Hebrews 11:8-19 - 8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. 9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: 10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. 11 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. 13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. 15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. 16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. 17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: 19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

- Abraham journeyed to Canaan in faith. He miraculously had a son through faith. He was willing to sacrifice his son in faith. The author uses his example as a lesson to us that we too should live by faith and that without faith it is impossible to please God.

Summary

- Just like God's promises to Abraham were sure, God's promises to us are sure.
- If Jesus is greater than Melchizedek who was greater than Abraham and his descendants the Levites, then Jesus' priesthood is greater than the Levitical priesthood.

- Just as Abraham lived by faith, so too we should live by faith.

JAMES

James 2:14-24 - 14 What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? 17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. 18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. 19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. 20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? 23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. 24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

- Faith without works is dead. Works is the evidence of our faith. James uses Abraham as an example. Abraham was justified by faith in Genesis 15, but that faith was demonstrated and vindicated in Genesis 22 through his willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac.

Jesus, Peter, Paul, the author of Hebrews and James all refer back to the life of Abraham to support their teaching and doctrine. Outside of Jesus, Abraham is arguably the most important figure in the Bible.

Further, in preparation for this series, I read a book on the life of Abraham written from a secular, non Christian perspective to gain some additional insight on how the world looks at Abraham.

What's interesting is that the same way that Christianity and the New Testament appeal to the life of Abraham in support of their teachings, Judaism and Islam do the same. All three major world religions point back to Abraham for justification for what they believe.

- Judaism obviously points back to Abraham as the father of Israel, which He is. They look to him as the original one to which the promises regarding Israel were made. Further in the Old Testament, Abraham is consistently mentioned.
 - o God is called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
 - o The covenant that God made with Abraham is constantly referred back to.
 - o God is called the redeemer of Abraham.
- Islam also points back to Abraham. In the Quran, surahs 2, 11, 16, 19, and 37 all refer to Abraham. Muslims point back to Abraham as a model of monotheism and righteous living. They'll say, "Just as Abraham worshipped one God, so too we should only worship one God, and not by polytheists like the Christians are by worshipping Jesus."

- In addition to what is said about Abraham in the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Quran, there are all kinds of old traditions and stories about him that have existed over the past several thousands years.

So Abraham is at the center of the three major world religions. He is an incredibly important religious figure. His act of abandoning the polytheism of his family and of much of the world at that time for monotheism (following the one true God) literally changed the world. (Feiler, 2002)

All of this goes to set the stage for this journey we're going to embark on through the life of Abraham. Next week we're going to begin in Genesis 11 and we're going to study the biblical account of one of the most important figures in the history of the world: Abraham.

Genesis 11:26-12:6

Review

Abraham is a really important biblical figure. Jesus, Peter, Paul, the author of Hebrews, and James all refer back to his life in their New Testament writings. His life is detailed in Genesis 11-25. That's where we're going to begin tonight.

Background

Genesis 11:26-32 –

1.) The Story of Terah

This is sort of the prequel to the story of Abram.

A.) The Fatherhood of Terah

26 And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

- Although Abram is listed first because of his importance, I do not believe he was the firstborn. Terah was 70 when he became a father, and 205 when he died (11:32 – and the days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died), at which point in time Abram was 75 (12:4 – and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran). That means that although Terah would have been 70 when he became a father, he would not have had Abram until he was 130. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 3044)
 - o From this, we can deduce that Abram was likely not the oldest. Rather, he's listed first because of his significance. (see Shem, Ham and Japheth as well as Moses and Aaron)
- Further, Nahor must have been younger than Haran, since he married Haran's daughter Milcah (11:29). It's likely that Abram was younger Nahor considering that his soon Isaac would marry Nahor's granddaughter Rebekah. Thus, as was the case with Isaac and Jacob, it's likely that Abram was the youngest in his family. (Spence & Exell, 1883)

Genesis 22:20-24 - And it came to pass after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, Behold, Milcah, she hath also born children unto thy brother Nahor; Huz his firstborn, and Buz his brother, and Kemuel the father of Aram, And Chesed, and Hazo, and Pildash, and Jidlaph, and Bethuel. And Bethuel begat Rebekah: these eight Milcah did bear to Nahor, Abraham's brother. And his concubine, whose name was Reumah, she bare also Tebah, and Gaham, and Thahash, and Maachah.

Genesis 29:4-5 - And Jacob said unto them, My brethren, whence be ye? And they said, Of Haran are we. And he said unto them, Know ye Laban the son of Nahor? And they said, We know him.

Genesis 12:4 - So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

27 Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot.

- Abram – exalted father
 - o Abraham – father of a multitude (God changes Abram’s name in chapter 17 when He gives Him circumcision as an outward sign of the covenant; He changes it to confirm His promise to Abraham)
- Nahor – snorting
- Haran – mountaineer
- Lot – covering (Spence & Exell, 1883)

B.) The Children of Terah

28 And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees.

- Terah and his family leaved near the end of the Early Bronze Age (2000 BC) in a vibrant, cultured city known as Ur of the Chaldees. The land of the Chaldeans (aka Mesopotamia) is in modern day Iraq. This area is called the cradle of civilization because its where civilization really began. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 2)
- People in ancient Mesopotamia worshipped many gods, the chief of which was the moon god, Sin, whom they called “the lord of heaven” and “the divine creator.” (Swindoll, 2014, p. 3)
 - o Joshua 24:2 - 2 And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods.
 - Abram’s family (his father Terah specifically mentioned) were caught up in this pagan polytheism when they lived in this area of Ur.
 - o Genesis 31:53 - The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob sware by the fear of his father Isaac.
 - Abram and Nahor as well as their father (Terah) worshipped the true God.
 - It’s possible that although Terah was primarily a polytheist, the family retained knowledge of the true God. When the one true God spoke directly to Abraham, the family together followed the true God and migrated back to Haran. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 3116)
- While living in Ur, Abram’s brother Haran died, and Haran’s son Lot may have been committed into the charge of his uncle Abram. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 3127)

Genesis 15:7 - And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.

Nehemiah 9:7 - Thou art the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham;

29 And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah.

- Sarah was Abraham's half sister.
 - o Genesis 20:12 - And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife.
- Milcah's was Nahor's niece
 - o She was his brother Haran's daughter. She also had a sister named Iscah.

What is going on with these inter family marriages?

- These kind of marriages were a lot more common and were permitted during the very early years of creation prior to the giving of the Law around 1500 BC (cf. Leviticus 18:6-18). During the early years of creation (prior to the compounding effects of sin), it's quite possible that the human genetic code was relatively free of defects thus minimizing the risk of genetic abnormalities from such relationships. (Got Questions) That plus necessity is why you see this early on in creation up until about 3500 years ago.

Genesis 22:20 - And it came to pass after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, Behold, Milcah, she hath also born children unto thy brother Nahor;

Genesis 24:15 - And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder.

30 But Sarai was barren; she had no child.

- Abram and Sarai get married. Time begins to pass, and month after month after month go by without Sarai getting pregnant. The longer this goes on, the more apparent it becomes that Sarai was barren.
 - o It's likely this was in contrast to Milcah, who we know from Genesis 22 had many children. (cf. Gen. 22:20-24)

Genesis 15:2-3 - And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.

Genesis 18:11-12 - Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?

Genesis 21:1-2 - And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.

Genesis 25:21 - And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

Genesis 29:31 - And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren.

C.) The Journey of Terah

31 And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.

- As the patriarch of the family, Terah takes his son Abram and his family as well as his grandson Lot and his family with him to go into the land of Canaan, but they stopped at Haran and dwelt there (this area may have been named such in memory of Terah's late son).
 - o We're not told that Nahor and Milcah accompany them on this journey, but we do know that eventually they do make their way out to and settle in Haran (cf. Gen. 24:10). That's where Abraham's servant goes to find a wife for Isaac and runs into Rebekah, Milcah's granddaughter (cf. Gen. 24:15).
- Why did they begin this journey to Canaan? Chapter 12 is going to fill in the details on that.
- Why did they stop and dwell in Haran? We don't know. Perhaps after beginning the journey to Canaan, Abram's father Terah started to see a decline in health. Perhaps they stopped and waited in Haran in hopes that Terah's health would recover or in order to take care of him in his last days. (Barnes, 1834)

Genesis 12:1 - 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 shew thee:

Hebrews 11:8 - By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

Nehemiah 9:8 - Thou art the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham;

Genesis 10:19 - And the border of the Canaanites was from Sidon, as thou comest to Gerar, unto Gaza; as thou goest, unto Sodom, and Gomorrah, and Admah, and Zeboim, even unto Lasha.

Genesis 24:10 - And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor.

Genesis 27:43 - Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran;

D.) The Death of Terah

32 And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran.

- Thus concludes the life and story of Terah, and thus sets the scene for Abram to take center stage.

Sermon

Verses 11-27 form a parenthesis between 11:26 and 12:1.

26 And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

1.) The Calling of Abram

This answers this question: "Why did Terah and Abram and Sarai and Lot leave Ur to head towards Canaan?"

A.) The Command

1 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 shew thee:

Now the Lord had said unto Abram – this calling from God would have occurred back in Ur of the Chaldees prior to the family journeying to Haran on the way to Canaan

- God comes to Abram in Ur and tells him to leave and follow Him to a place that He would show Him.

Acts 7:2-6 - And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell. And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child. And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in

a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years.

He comes to Abram and commands him to do several things.

Get thee out of thy country – leave your land; leave Ur of Chaldea

and from thy kindred – and from your relatives; this is probably in reference to pagan extended family and may refer specifically to Nahor and Milcah as well

and from thy father's house – and leave your father's household

Joshua 24:2-3 - And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac.

unto a land that I will shew thee – we know from Genesis 11:31 that the land is Canaan, but upon their departure from Ur it seems that neither Abram nor Terah knew exactly where they were going. (Ellicott, 1905)

- Perhaps God was leading him one step at a time or in a general direction (similar to how He did in the wilderness with the Israelites)
 - o Hebrews 11:8 - By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.
- Nevertheless, the ultimate destination was Canaan, the Promised Land, and do you know why it's called the Promised Land? It's called that because God promised it to Abram. The specific dimensions are outlined in Genesis 15:18-21. This promise is confirmed to Israel and expounded upon in Deuteronomy 30:1-10 in the Palestinian Covenant. That land belongs to Israel, and although they have never fully possessed fully what God promised to them, they will one day. (Got Questions)

B.) The Promises

The Abrahamic covenant is outlined here, but we're going to see it confirmed and expounded upon all throughout the life of Abraham.

- Genesis 12:1-3 – Leave your home, go to this land I'll show you, and I will make of you a great nation, I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing to all peoples of the earth.
- Genesis 12:6-7 – God reiterates to Abram once he's in the land that He will give the land to his seed.
- Genesis 13:14-17 – after Lot separates from Abram, God promises Abram that all the land he can see, God will give to him and his seed forever. He said he will make his seed as the dust of the earth.

- Genesis 15:1-21 – God formalizes the covenant with Abram with a ceremony and gives him the exact dimensions of the land his seed will possess
- Genesis 17:1-14 – God changes Abram’s name to Abraham and gives him circumcision as the outward sign of the covenant
- Genesis 22:15-18 – God reiterates His promise to Abraham after seeing his willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac

2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing;

And I will make of thee a great nation – I will make your descendants increase into a great people

And I will bless thee – I will bless you physically and spiritually

and make thy name great – I will elevate you to a position of honor and recognition; people will know and respect your name

God tells Abram:

- 1st Command: Leave the land
 - o Blessings: great nation, blessing, great name
 - o I’m going to do these things for you so that you can fulfill a second directive: be a blessing. God promised Abram great personal blessings so that he could be a blessing to others in the land.
- 2nd Command: Be a blessing
 - o Blessings: friends will be blessed, foes will be cursed, all peoples will be blessed in you

and thou shalt be a blessing – you will be a blessing to other (Ross, 1997)

- In response to Abram being a blessing, God promises three additional blessings
 3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

And I will bless them that bless thee. - Those who treat you well and bless you will be treated well by me and blessed by me; I will bless your friends

and curse him that curseth thee: - the one who curses you will be cursed by me; I will cure your foes

- o You will be a mediator of blessing based on how on how people treat you.
 You will also be a source of blessing for all peoples of the earth.

And in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed – in his seed (Jesus) all the families of the earth will be blessed (Poole, 1990)

You know what this is right here? It's the gospel.

Galatians 3:8 - And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

Genesis 22:18 - And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

Acts 3:25 - Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

Romans 4:11 - And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

Galatians 3:16 (cf. Gen. 12:7) - Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

C.) The Obedience of Abram

4 So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him – the passage here says nothing explicitly about Abram having faith and yet we know he had faith in the Word of the Lord. How? Because he left. He obeyed.

In Acts 7:4 we're told that upon Abram's father's death, God removed Abram from Haran and brought him into Canaan. Some suggest that God may have reminded Abram of his initial call or God may have provided him with his next step to follow.

Regardless, remembering what God had called him to do and having cared for his father up to his death, Abram leaves Haran to go to the Promised Land.

And Lot went with him – his nephew accompanied him

And Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran – remember this is an important time indicator for when Abram was born and where he fell in the birth order. At 75 years of age, Abram leaves Haran for the Promised Land.

5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered.— Abram, the head of the family, takes Lot and Sarai. He takes all the wealth that they had accrued in Haran, which would have primarily consisted of cattle, with Abram and Lot being nomads. (Spence & Exell, 1883)

- The accrual of wealth also indicates that they had likely been in Haran for a while. Some commentators suggest a period of five years or so.

and the souls that they gotten in Haran – this likely refers to servants they had acquired to tend to the cattle (cf. Genesis 14:14) (Barnes, 1834) as well as proselytes he had led to faith in the one true God who wanted to join his growing clan. (Ross, 1997)

Genesis 14:14 - And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan.

Genesis 10:19 - And the border of the Canaanites was from Sidon, as thou comest to Gerar, unto Gaza; as thou goest, unto Sodom, and Gomorrah, and Admah, and Zeboim, even unto Lasha.

And they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came – they set out for the land of Canaan and in Canaan they arrived.

6 And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.

And Abram passed through the land unto the place Sichem – Abram does not immediately possess the land. He travels through it to the place of Shechem, or the place where the city of Shechem would one day stand. (Keil & Delitzsch, 1857-1878)

Unto the plain of Moreh – the Hebrew expression here can refer to a plain of Moreh (cf. Deut. 11:30; Judges 9:6) or a tree of Moreh (cf. Genesis 35:4; Joshua 24:26). Though in truth, it was a plain with trees. (Spence & Exell, 1883)

And the Canaanite was then in the land – Abram comes to the land that God promised to him, but there's a problem. There are people already there. The land promised to Abram was inhabited by others, and those who inhabited it were pagan. (Ross, 1997)

Genesis 33:18 - And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padanaram; and pitched his tent before the city.

Joshua 24:32 - And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph.

1 Kings 12:1 - And Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king.

John 4:5 - Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

Genesis 10:15-19 - 15 And Canaan begat Sidon his first born, and Heth, 16 And the Jebusite, and the Amorite, and the Girgasite, 17 And the Hivite, and the Arkite, and the Sinite, 18 And the Arvadite, and the Zemarite, and the Hamathite: and afterward were the families of the Canaanites spread abroad. 19 And the border of the Canaanites was from Sidon, as thou comest to Gerar, unto Gaza; as thou goest, unto Sodom, and Gomorrah, and Admah, and Zeboim, even unto Lasha.

Application

I don't know where you are at in your spiritual journey in life, but I do know a few things.

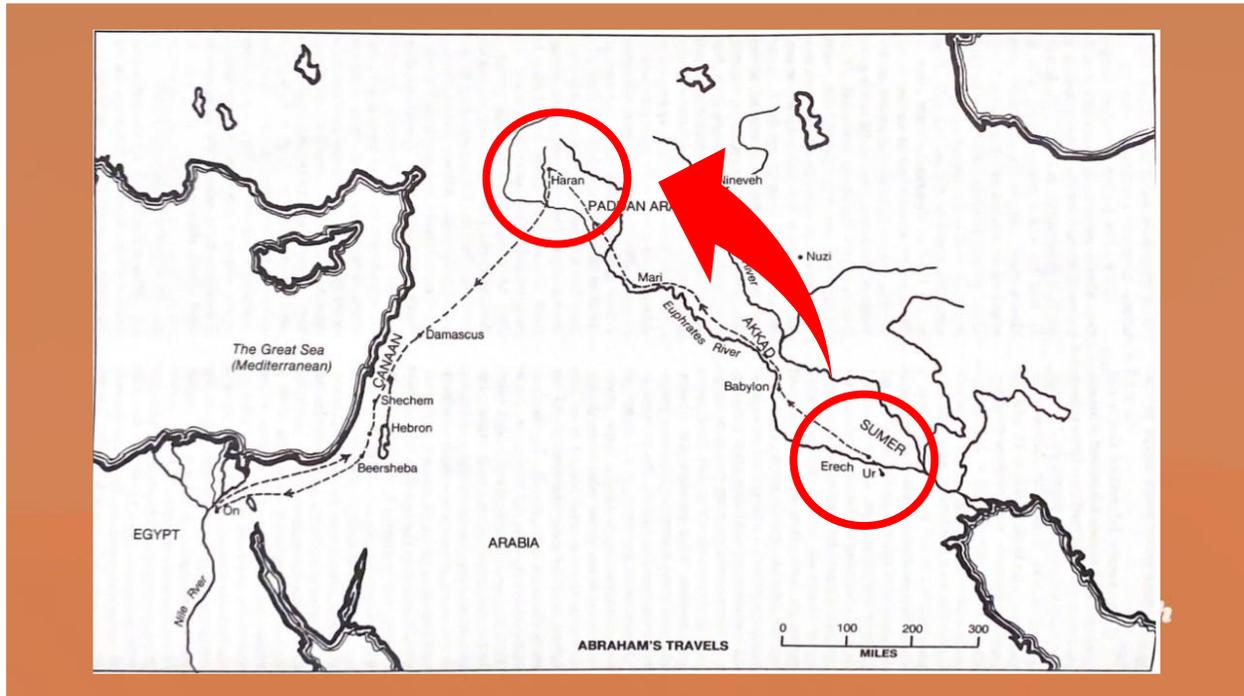
- I know that you haven't arrived. You will not have arrived until you've reached heavens gates and God calls you to be moving forward until that days comes. If you've stopped growing and taking steps of faith, you're not where God wants you to be.
- I know that God calls each of us to step outside of our comfort zone and follow him in faith. May we not get so caught in the comforts and complacency of Ur that we hesitate when God calls us to go to Canaan. And may we not get so caught up in the hustle and bustle of Ur that when God calls us to Canaan we don't ever hear Him.

Genesis 12:7-20

Review

Last week we looked at Abram's family and his calling.

His family lived in Ur of the Chaldees. While there, his brother Haran died.



Eventually, Abram, his wife, his nephew Lot, and his father Terah, move from Ur up to Haran on the way to Canaan. While in Haran, Abram's father dies (at the end of chapter 11), and Abram's story really begins in Genesis 12.

Genesis 12:1-3 provides us with the explanation for why Abram and his family had left to go to Haran. God had revealed Himself to Abram and called him to take a major step of faith. He gave Abram two commands with three promises attached to each command.

Command 1 – Leave Ur and go where I tell you

- Promise 1: Great Nation
- Promise 2: Personal Blessing
- Promise 3: Great Name

Command 2 – Be a blessing

- Promise 1: Blessing on friends
- Promise 2: Cursing on foes

- Promise 3: Blessing for all people (salvation through Jesus)

How does Abram respond to this call to faith from God? He obeys. He sets out for Canaan. He arrives in Canaan, and that's basically where we left off.

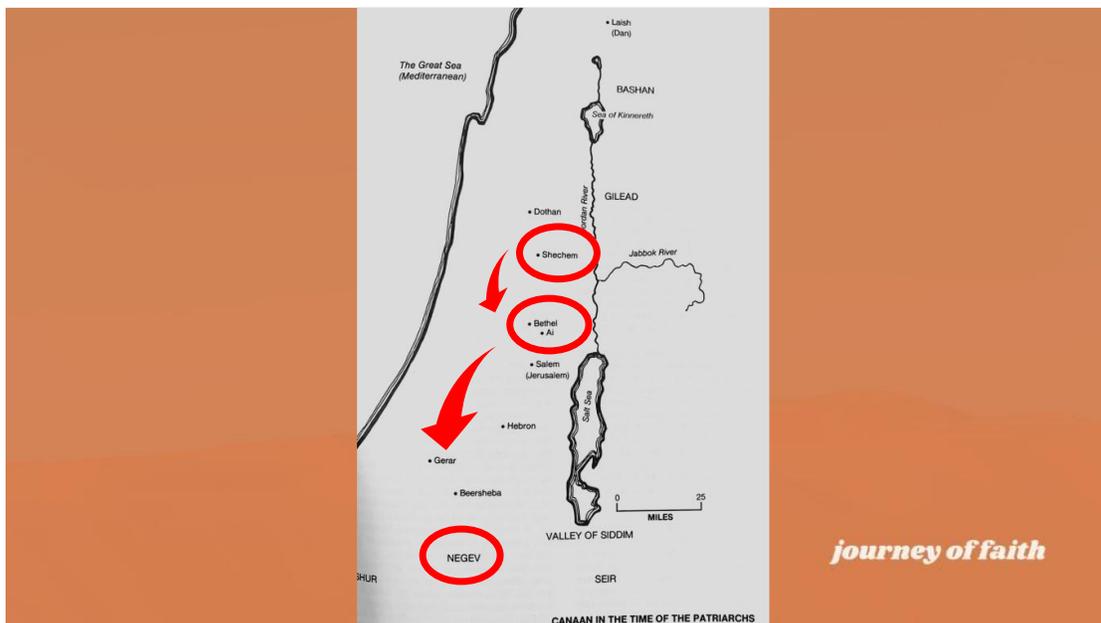
In God's calling of Abram we've seen the commands of God, the promises of God, the obedience of Abram, and now we see the confirmation from God.

Sermon

D.) The Confirmation to Abram

7 And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him.

And the Lord appeared unto Abram – in the plain of Moreh in Shechem



- Recall that Abram is in the land and there are also Canaanites in the land. This may have been discouraging to Abram.
 - o Illustration – Have you ever reached what you thought was the finish line and discovered that it wasn't actually the finish line?
 - Example 1 – a ride at Disney Land
 - Example 2 – a trial in life
 - Example 3 – two weeks to flatten the curve -> two years to flatten the curve
- What does God do? He confirms His promises to Abram despite the obstacles. "Abram, don't focus on the obstacles. Focus on me. Trust me."
- In verse 1, God had talked to Abram. Here He appears to Him as He will do so in 17:1; 18:1; 26:2, 24; 35:9. (Ross, 1997)

And said, Unto thy seed will I give this land – Here God promises Abram descendants, and He promises that He will give the land to his descendants. How did Abram respond to God’s reaffirming appearance to him? Worship.

And there builded he an altar to the Lord, who appeared unto him – Abram responded to God’s reaffirmation of His promise by building an altar and likely offering a sacrifice of thanksgiving and/or worship to God.

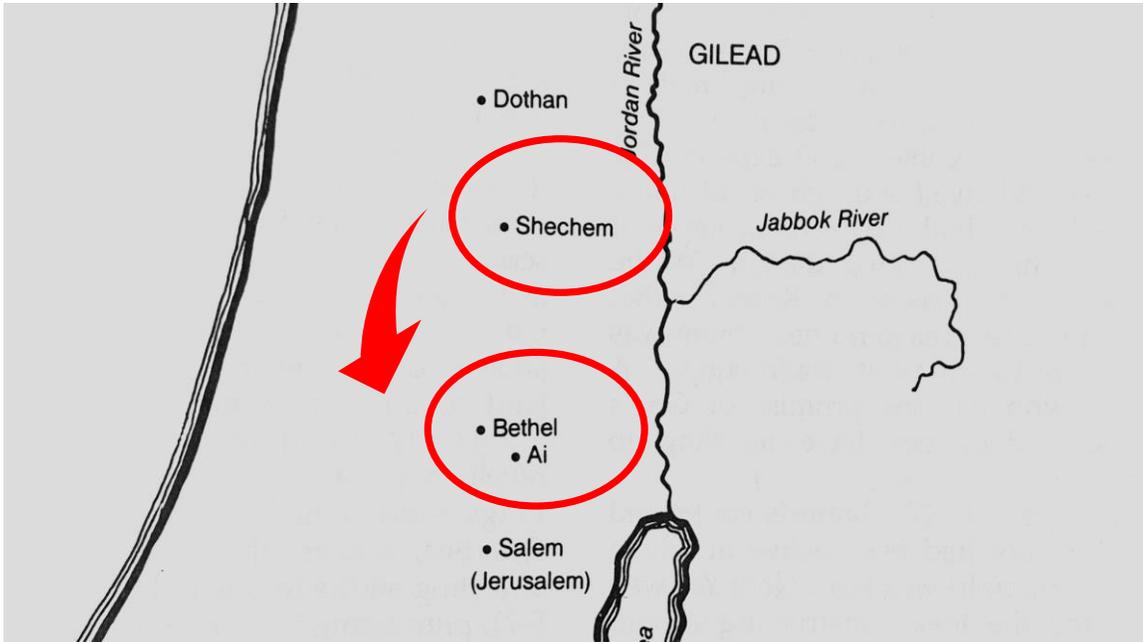
- Even after he continued on his journey, the altar that he build to God would remain...and it would be a reminder to the Canaanites that passed through that area that the God of Abram had come to Canaan. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 17)
 - o Application – God has us in different places for different periods of times in different seasons of our lives, and you’ll never know the impact your life might have on those you come into contact with along your journey.
 - God has you where you are right now for a reason. Don’t forget that.

Galatians 3:16 (cf. Gen. 12:7) - Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

Psalms 105:9-12 - Which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac; And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant: Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance: When they were but a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it.

8 And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord.

And he removed from thence – He leaves Shechem



Unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east – He makes his way to a mountain between Bethel on the West and Ai on the East

Illustration – topical sermon that I heard preached as a teen on choosing between Bethel (the house of God) and Hai (the house of ruin)

And there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord – Abram built another altar, by implication made a sacrifice, and called upon the name of the Lord.

- The expression of “calling upon the name of the Lord” was first used in Genesis 4:26.
 - Genesis 4:26 - And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD.
 - The meaning of this expression is broad. It can mean to invoke Jehovah for assistance, publicly worship Him, or proclaim His name. (Keil & Delitzsch, 1857-1878)
 - Thus, Abram is in the midst of pagan Canaan, worshipping and proclaiming the name of the one true God.
 - Application – that’s what God calls us to do on this earth
 - Don’t get too comfortable. This world is not our home. God hasn’t called us to fit in with the pagans. He’s called us to be a light among them.

Genesis 28:19 - And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first.

Genesis 35:3 - And let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.

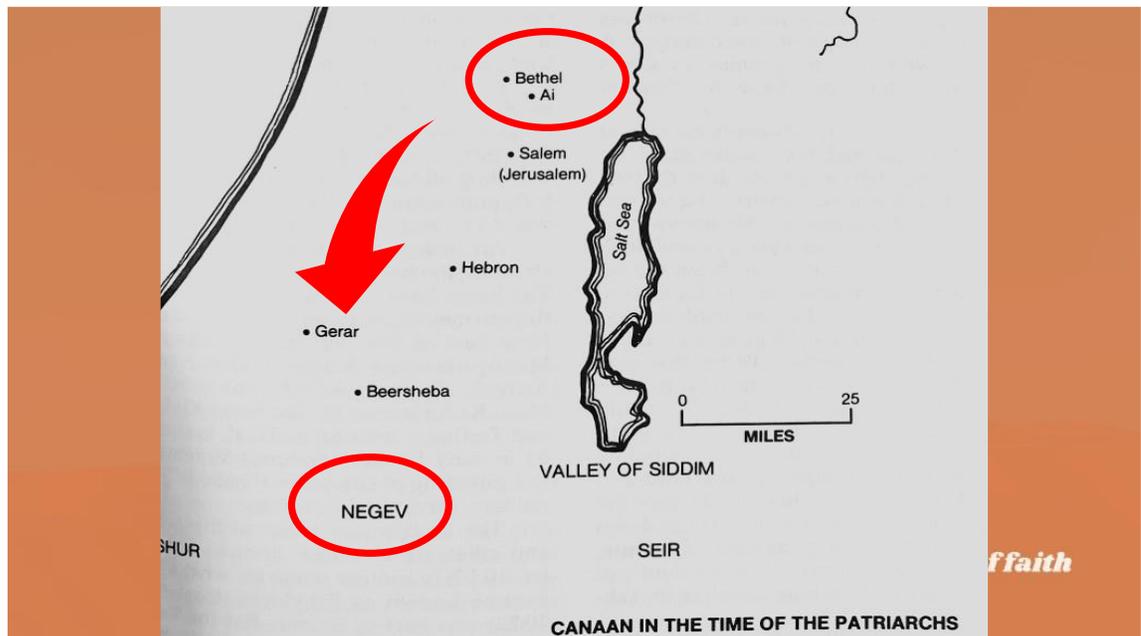
Genesis 35:15-16 - And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Bethel. And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour.

Psalms 116:4 - Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.

Joel 2:32 - And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

Romans 10:12-14 - For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

9 And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south.



And Abram journeyed going on still toward the south – after having constructed his second altar, Abram continued journeying south to the Negev region, which means “dry, parched.” (Swindoll, 2014, p. 17)

- The word for “south” refers to the southern region of Judaea known as the Negev.

1.) Abram’s Misadventure in Egypt

God did not tell Abram explicitly in Genesis 12 that the promise of children would be fulfilled through Sarai, but it certainly was implied considering that she was his wife. Additionally, later on in the Genesis account, God makes it abundantly clear that His plan always was for the promised seed to come through Sarai, not anyone else. Why is that important?

The story is essentially about the threat to Sarai, and thereby a threat to the fulfillment of promise God made to Abram that a great nation would come from him through his seed. Abram’s fear and deception put his wife and by extension the promises of God in grave danger. And yet despite Abram’s failure, we’re going to see God’s gracious intervention as He preserves the man and woman through which God’s promises would be fulfilled. (Ross, 1997)

- This is the first of three similar stories (cf. chapters 20 and 26). Isaac followed in his father’s fearful footsteps.

Chart 16. **Comparison of the Sister Stories**

Gen. 12:10–20	Gen. 20:1–18	Gen. 26:1–11
famine in the land (10)	—	famine in the land (1)
beauty of Sarai (11)	—	beauty of Rebekah (7)
deception as sister (13)	deception as sister (2)	deception as sister (7)
fear of death (13)	fear of death (11)	fear of death (7)
Egyptians saw her (14)	—	men of that place asked (7)
taken by Pharaoh (15)	taken by Abimelech (2)	—
wealth to Abram (16)	wealth to Abram (14–16)	—
plagues (17)	warning dream (3–7)	observed by Abimelech (8)
Abraham rebuked (18–19)	Abraham rebuked (9–10)	Isaac rebuked (9)
expulsion (20)	prayer of Abraham and healing of wombs (17)	—

(Ross, 1997)

A.) The Setting

10 And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.

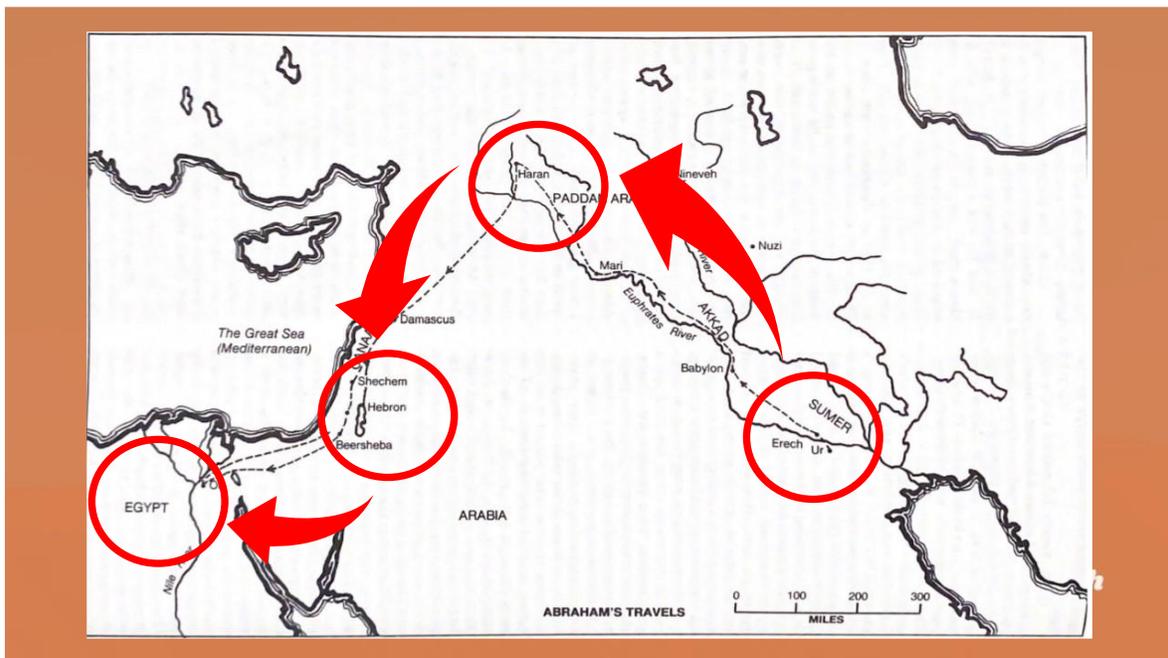
And there was a famine in the land – the word famine here means hunger. We don’t know why there was hunger or what caused the famine, but we know that it happened. And we know that (apart from the Canaanites being in the land) this is Abram’s first major obstacle that is highlighted on his journey of faith.

- Having come from a part of the world known as the Fertile Crescent, he may have expected lush grass for his flocks along with bumper crops of wheat and barley. Compared to the land on the banks of the Euphrates, the Negev looked like a wasteland. And yet that's exactly where God wanted him to be.
- Application: Often God's will for your life is not going to be easier than what it used to be. Why? Because God's will for our life involves living by faith, and faith is uncomfortable.

Here with this famine, we see a major test of Abram. "Abram, do you trust me to provide for you in the place where I've called you to be: Canaan?"

God doesn't use difficult circumstances to find out what we'll do. He already knows what the future holds. He uses tests to reveal us to ourselves! A season of learning often follows a season of testing in our lives. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 18)

How did Abram respond to this first test? He failed.



and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land. – He went to Egypt. Rather than staying where God had called him to be, Abram quickly rushed to the place where he had likely heard from caravan merchants that he could find food in abundance. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 18) Nevertheless, we are told that he went to Egypt with the intention of merely sojourning there while the famine was grievous in the land. (Ross, 1997)

- In Genesis 26:1-3, there is another famine in the land of Canaan, and God explicitly tells Isaac not to go down into Egypt, but to remain in the land He had promised to Him.

- In Genesis 45, Joseph reveals himself to his brothers in Egypt, and he invites them and their father Jacob to come dwell in Egypt. In Genesis 46:1-4, after Jacob worshipped God, God appears to Jacob, calms his fears about leaving Canaan, and gives him express permission to take his clan from Canaan down into Egypt
- Further, in the Scriptures, Egypt is often used as a picture of the world.
 - o Isaiah 31:1 - Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord!
 - o Abram looked at the difficulties facing him where God had called him to be and became paralyzed with fear. He grasped at the first means of deliverance that suggested itself, much as a drowning man will grab at anything. It was a terrible mistake, and yet how many of us make the same mistake? In a moment of panic, we adopt methods of delivering ourselves in spite of what God has called us to do and where God has called us to be. (Meyer, 1996, pp. 41-43)

Fear leads Abram to leave the land God had called him to occupy and go to greener pastures in Egypt. And although Abram expects to find the grass greener in Egypt, there are also some dangers as well.

Genesis 26:1-3 – And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar. And the LORD appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father;

Genesis 42:5 - And the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those that came: for the famine was in the land of Canaan.

Genesis 46:3-4 - And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.

B.) The Danger

11 And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon:

And It came to pass when he was come near to enter into Egypt – when they were close to arriving in Egypt

That he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon – Honey, you are so gorgeous (so far, so good)

- “Okay, Abram, what do you want?”

1 Corinthians 10:12-13a - 12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. 13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man:...

Genesis 26:7 - And the men of the place asked him of his wife; and he said, She is my sister: for he feared to say, She is my wife; lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she was fair to look upon.

Genesis 39:6-7 - And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured. And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me.

12 Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive.

Therefore it shall come to pass – do you know what we see here? We see fear (false expectations appearing real). Fear is the art of assuming the worst and living as if it were the truth. Abram jumps to the worst case scenario, assumes that it is certain, and lives in light of that false expectation. He lets his worry turn into fear which leads him to deception. He plays out scenarios in his head and paralyzes himself with fear.

Illustration – if I assume that someone wants to hurt me, it’s going to change the way I treat them, and it’s going to change the way that I interpret them treating me

When the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive - because you are so beautiful, these strangers will kill me and take you alive. (Ross, 1997)

Genesis 26:7 - And the men of the place asked him of his wife; and he said, She is my sister: for he feared to say, She is my wife; lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she was fair to look upon.

Proverbs 29:25 - The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.

C.) The Deception

13 Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.

Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister – When we arrive, if anyone asks, say that you are my sister.

- It was fear of starvation that led Abram to rush down to Egypt, and it was fear of false expectations that led him to lie. Abram had this built in defense complex where he responded to danger with deception.
 - Illustration – have you ever told a half lie?
 - Son, did you clean your room? “Yes” (thinking to myself well I did clean it last month, even though I know she means to ask if I cleaned it today like she asked me to)

That it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee – to protect my life for the good of the marriage and perhaps for the good of the promises of God as well (Ross, 1997)

- By claiming to be Sarai’s brother, Abram hoped to leverage local custom to his advantage. He might, indeed, be killed as her husband, but ancient laws made him her guardian as her brother. Anyone interested in taking Sarai as a wife would have to approach Abram for marriage arrangements, giving him time to take self-protective action. (Swindoll, 2014, pp. 20-21)
- His plan backfired.

Genesis 20:2 - And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah.

Matthew 26:69-75 - Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

D.) The Crisis

14 And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair.

And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt – when they arrived

The Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair – The Egyptians took note of the beauty of Sarai. There’s no problem so far, but then verse 15 happens.

15 The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.

Esther 2:2-16

The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh – Pharaoh’s princes/officials/nobles in his palace took note of Sarai (uh oh), and spoke highly of her to Pharaoh

And the woman was taken into Pharaoh’s house – Pharaoh took her into his house to wed her. Regular Egyptians might have approached Abram to negotiate for marrying Sarai, but guess who didn’t need to do that? The Pharaoh. The top dog. If he wanted it, he took it. He didn’t ask. Pharaoh takes Sarai into his house to wed her.

- Sarai is both silent and passive. The text offers no details or explanation. And Abram is powerless to prevent the seizure. (Ross, 1997)
- Fortunately, ancient marriage rituals included a waiting period long enough to ensure that the bride wasn’t already pregnant. So Sarai lived inside the palace, but she was kept from physical intimacy with anyone, including the Pharaoh. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 20)

16 And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels.

And he entreated Abram well for her sake – in verse 13, Abram asked his wife to lie so that it would be well with him because of her. And guess what? She gets taken into the Pharaoh’s household to be wed, and what happens to Abram? Ironically, it is well with him because of her. He gets exactly what he wanted and yet it is not at all what he wanted. (Ross, 1997)

And he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and men servants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels – Meanwhile, Pharaoh sent Abram (Sarai’s brother) numerous wedding gifts (a dowry) in anticipation of the big day (wealth, animals, servants). (Swindoll, 2014, p. 20) Whereas Abram had come as a mere stranger sojourning in the land, now he was an honored, wealthy guest due to the generosity of the Pharaoh. (Ross, 1997)

- It appears in the story that Abram prospered from his deception. He did get away rather rich, but it is worth mentioning that his ill-gotten gain plagued him with problems for years to come.
 - o It was his overabundance of cattle that led to the tensions between him and his nephew Lot that caused them to separate. Lot ends up near Sodom and Gomorrah and then in Sodom and Gomorrah. As God is destroying Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot’s wife dies, and subsequently through sinful relations, Lot fathers two nations the Moabites and the Ammonites. These nations would be thorns in the sides of Israel for generations. All of it traces back to this trip.
 - o Not only that, but it was an Egyptian maid named Hagar that was at the center of a series of sinful decisions made by Abram and Sarai leading to the birth and sending away of Ishmael from whom many Arabs today trace their lineage. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 3396-3398)

Application – imagine how Sarai felt. Her husband’s no faith cowardice put her in grave danger while he was living the high life. While she dwelled among strangers, subjected to unfamiliar rituals and facing an uncertain future, Abram mingled around with Egypt’s elite class. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 20)

- At this point, if you’re Abram, what do you do? The further he gets into this ruse with the most powerful man in the land, the more difficult it is to come clean, and the more likely it is that if he does, the Pharaoh will kill him and take Sarai to be his wife anyways.

Genesis 13:2 - And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.

E.) The Deliverance

If God had done nothing here, then what would have happened? Sarai would have been married to the Pharaoh. Who knows what would have happened to Abram? God’s plan to raise up a people through Abram and Sarai would have been foiled. The story that started in Genesis 12:1 might have been over before the chapter even ended. But God stepped in to preserve His plan and fulfill His promises.

17 And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife.

And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram’s wife – where Abram failed his wife, God protected her. He sent plagues on Pharaoh and his household. This is the first of two instances of plagues in Egypt mentioned in the Old Testament (the second taking place during Israel’s exodus from Egypt at the hand of Moses).

Genesis 20:18 - For the LORD had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah Abraham's wife.

Chart 17. **Parallels Between Abram’s and the Nation’s Experiences**

Incident	Abram	Israel
Severe famine in land	Gen. 12:10	Gen. 43:1; 47:4
Sojourn in Egypt	Gen. 12:10	Gen. 47:4
Killing of the males	Gen. 12:11–13	Exod. 1:16
Bondage	Gen. 12:14–15	Exod. 1:11–14
Great wealth	Gen. 12:16	Exod. 12:36
Plagues on Egypt	Gen. 12:17	Exod. 7–11 (see 11:1)
Summons: "Take . . . go"	Gen. 12:19	Exod. 12:32
Use of <i>šillah</i> ("send")	Gen. 12:20	Exod.—"Let my people go"
Journey to the Negev	Gen. 13:1	Num. 13:17, 22

(Ross, 1997)

18 And Pharaoh called Abram and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife?

Like most people in his day, Pharaoh viewed the world through the lens of superstition. This ancient view presumed that the root cause of disease was spiritual, not physical. We don't know exactly how, but somehow Pharaoh discovered the truth that Sarai already had a husband. She may have drawn his suspicion assuming everyone else in the house was being plagued, but not her. We don't know. Somehow, Pharaoh realizes that something is up with Sarai, and learns the truth, that she is a married woman. He confronts and calls out Abram because of it.

- Abram should have been morally superior to the king of Egypt, but Pharaoh burned with righteous indignation and scolded God's man. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 22)
- Application: what a shame it is when lost people are a better example of Christlikeness than Christians are
- How many people have yet to embrace the God of the Bible because they continue to live in the shadows created by our moral failures? (Swindoll, 2014, p. 22)

Genesis 3:13 - And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

Genesis 4:10 - And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

Genesis 20:9-10 - Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said unto him, What hast thou done unto us? and what have I offended thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done. And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing?

19 Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way.

Why saidst thou, She is my sister? – why did you say she was your sister?

- The answer to Pharaoh's question was fear, by the way.
so I might have taken her to me to wife – I might have made her my wife

now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way – the statement “here is your wife” strongly suggests that she was returned unharmed, as his wife (Ross, 1997)

- Pharaoh's command to leave and go away is reminiscent of God's call to Abram in Genesis 12:1.

20 And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.

And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had - Pharaoh could have stripped Abram of his possessions and tossed him into a slave pit . . . or a grave. But he did neither. Perhaps it was because he had endured enough of this God's displeasure, but he simply deported the man along with his wife, his ill-gotten gifts, and his small army of relatives and servants. (Swindoll, 2014, pp. 22-23)

Application

It was faith that led Abram to Canaan. It was fear that led Abram to Egypt.

It was faith that led Abram to proclaim God in Canaan. It was fear that led Abram to shame God in Egypt.

It was faith that led Abram to trust. It was fear that led Abram to lie.

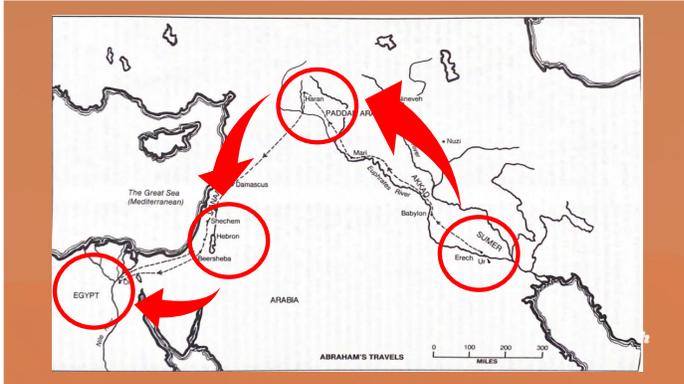
Each day, on a moment by moment basis we must make the decision to live by faith or to live in fear, to trust in God or to take things into our own hands.

Like Abram, when we give into fear, it often leads to sin and to ruin. Fortunately, like Abram, we also serve a God who is gracious and forgiving when we fail him, though there are consequences to our actions.

May we make the decision this week to live by faith and not by fear.

Genesis 13:1-18

Review



1. Ur -> Haran
 - a. Because of God's call and promises to Abram, Abram journeys from Ur to Haran with his wife, father, and nephew.
 - b. While in Haran, his father dies. Abram sets out from Haran for Canaan.
2. Haran -> Canaan
 - a. He arrives and there are Canaanites in the land.
 - b. Shechem
 - i. God reaffirms His promise to Abram. Abram builds an altar and worships the Lord.
 - c. Mountain between Bethel and Ai
 - i. Abram builds an altar and worships the Lord.
 - d. Negev
 - i. A horrible famine hits the land.
 - ii. Abram leaves the Promised Land for greener pastures in Egypt. This ends up being a big mistake.
3. Canaan -> Egypt
 - a. In fear for his life, Abram convinces his wife to join him in lying about their relationship. They claim to be siblings (which is a half truth) even though they are husband and wife. This deception leads to disaster.
 - b. Pharaoh takes Sarai into his home to wed her and showers Abram with gifts. God's plans and purposes are at risk because of Abram's sinful decisions.
 - c. God comes to the rescue. He plagues Pharaoh's house. The truth is revealed. Pharaoh sends them away with all of their ill gotten gains in tow.

Sermon

ABRAM'S SEPARATION FROM LOT

Abram faltered during his first crisis, reverting to his default coping strategy—deception—rather than trusting in his Lord. Sometime later, he faced a different crisis: prosperity. Fortunately, this test revealed that Abram’s faith had grown. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 28)

1.) The Return to the Promised Land

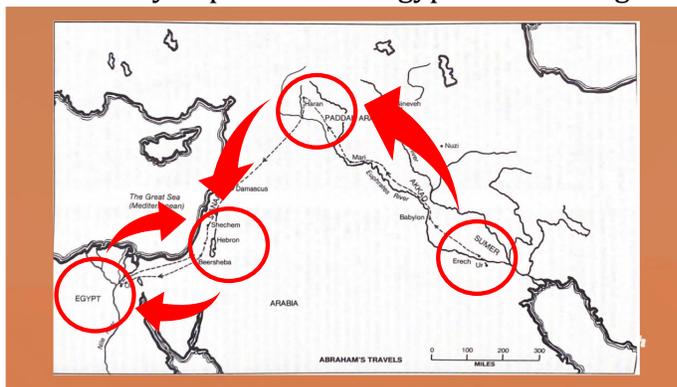
1 And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south.

And Abram went up out of Egypt, he and his wife, and all that he had, And Lot with him – Abram, Sarai, Lot and all in his clan departed from Egypt.

- Lot’s inclusion here tells us that apparently, he was with Abram and Sarai during their misadventure in Egypt

Into the south – into the Negev

- They departed from Egypt into the Negev



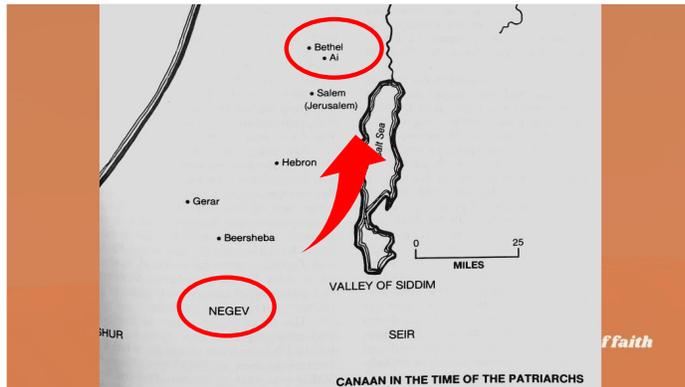
2 And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.

And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold – Abram returned to Canaan with greater wealth than when he first arrived from Ur. He is described as being very rich. The literal Hebrew expression means “heavy”. In essence, he was loaded. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 28)

- How would his character hold up under such great prosperity?
- Application: our tendency is to cling to God when things aren’t going well and to forget about Him when they are.
 - o Illustration – getting tokens from my parents at Chucky Cheese, going off, having fun, and forgetting about my parents until I needed more tokens.
 - We do that in life too often.

3 And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai;

And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel – Abram journeys from the Negev back up to the region of Bethel



Unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai – more specifically, he went back to the mountain between Bethel and Hai, where he had encamped before when he had first arrived in the land.

Genesis 12:8-9 - And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he built an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD. And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south.

4 Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the Lord.

Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first – more specifically, he went back to the place of the altar that he constructed there when he first arrived in the land.

- Abram's return from Egypt is portrayed as backtracking to the last place where he'd got it right and worshipped God (Swindoll, 2014, p. 29)

And there Abram called on the name of the Lord – what does he do when he gets there? He worships again. He returns to the Lord.

5 And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents.

And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents – as Abram has prospered, so has Lot, his nephew. He had flocks of sheep and goats. He had herds of cattle, and many tents for his servants. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 29)

- As verse 2 is a parenthetical note regarding Abram's wealth, so verse 5 is a parenthetical note about Lot's wealth. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 3458)

2.) The Conflict over the Promised Land

Greater wealth brought greater conflict. More money brought more problems.

6 And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together.

And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together; for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together –

- Illustration: we just had the Bible barn activity for the kids this past Saturday. There are cut outs of goats and pigs and sheep all over the place. Let me ask you a question. The more animals you have, the more of what do you need?
- Expanding flocks and herds require increasing amounts of food and water. The land may not have fully recovered from the earlier famine, so available resources could not sustain both men's livestock. Besides that, they had to contend with the existing inhabitants, the Canaanites and the Perizzites. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 30)
- Notice that we are told twice in this verse that the land could not bear them together and because of their substance, they could not dwell together. There were too many mouths to feed.
 - o This was a problem, and, as is often the case, this problem led to conflict

7 And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.

And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle - All the elements necessary for family conflict were stacked like dry tinder just waiting for a spark. When two groups of people are confronted with the problem of limited resources, and the cause of the problem is perceived to be the other group, tensions can escalate rather quickly. When the water and vegetation became insufficient to feed both men's livestock, Abram and Lot's herdsmen began to clash. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 30)

- Illustration
 - o This happens between businesses vying for the same customers.
 - o This happens between kids wanting the same toy.
 - o This happens between teenage girls liking the same boy.
 - o This happens between departments vying for the same resources.
 - o Limited resources -> tension -> conflict

And the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled in the land – a further reason for the inability of the land to sustain them is likely explained in this final parenthetical comment. These original inhabitants of the land (the Canaanite and the Perizzite) probably occupied the better parts, so that Abram and Lot had to scarp for water and food in the remaining sections on the back end of a famine. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 3466)

3.) The Resolution in the Promised Land

8 And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.

Take note of what Abram didn't say here. He didn't say, "Look, I'm the adult here and you're the nephew. It's been great, but you've got to go, young man. Besides, God gave this land to me, not you. So take your flocks and herds and tents, and find your own land somewhere else!" (Swindoll, 2014, p. 30)

And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren – Abram affirmed their relationship and expressed his desire to preserve harmony between them. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 30)

- Abram sought peace, and that was a sign of wisdom and spiritual maturity on his part.
- "We're family. We shouldn't be fighting like this."
- Abram urged his nephew towards peace because they were brothers. They were family.
 - o Cain allowed his conflict with his brother to drive him to murder him. Abram resolved the conflict with his brother by pursuing peace.
 - 1 John 3:11-15 - 11 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 12 Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. 13 Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. 14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. 15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.
- Just as Abram pursued peace, so too as those who take on themselves the name of Christ, God calls us to pursue peace.
- Application:
 - o Peace making is a fruit of the spirit (Gal. 5:22). If you are filled with the Spirit, you will be a peacemaker.
 - Galatians 5:22 - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,
 - o Peace making is a beatitude (Matt. 5:9). It is a character trait of the citizens of the kingdom of God.
 - Matthew 5:9 - Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.
 - o Peace making is a mark of spiritual maturity (Romans 14:19). Stronger brothers are called to pursue peace with weaker brothers.
 - Romans 14:19 - Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

- Peace making is a command (Rom. 12:18; Heb. 12:14).
 - Romans 12:18 - If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.
 - Hebrews 12:14 - Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:
- Peacemaking is a necessity among family (1 John 4:20-21).
 - 1 John 4:20-21 - 20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? 21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

In this interaction with Lot, Abram was a peacemaker, and God calls us to be peacemakers as well.

Abram expressed his desire for peace to Lot. How does go about securing it? What's his approach?

9 Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.

Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. – In grace, Abram treated Lot as his equal, appealing to his sense of fair play rather than dictating terms. He then proposed a solution that put Lot in control of his own fate. This was an unselfish act on Abram's part. By giving Lot his choice of territory and accepting whatever was left, Abram gave up control of his future. In giving Lot first choice of the land, Abram trusted that God would take care of him regardless of what happened. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 31)

- The one who believed that God promised to give him the land did not have to reserve it for himself. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 3478-3480) Abram pursued peace by choosing to live by faith. He trusted that regardless of what Lot chose, God would keep His word and right all wrongs.
 - Abram had learned his lesson from his misadventure in Egypt. His decision to walk by sight led him out of God's will and into Egypt. That decision got him into all kinds of trouble. Here Abram chooses to walk by faith and to trust God to keep His promises to him.

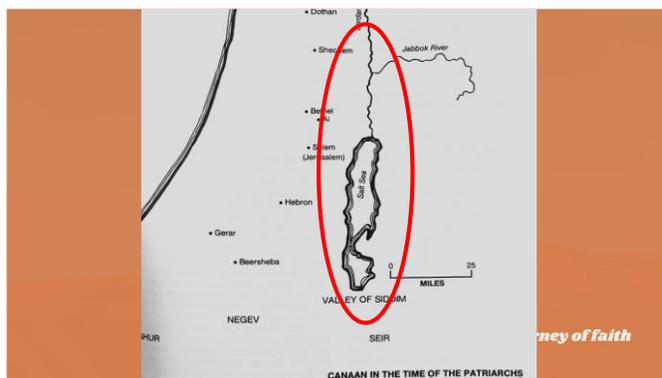
Illustration - Let's say you and a member of your extended family—a nephew or a cousin—own a business together. You own 60 percent; he owns 40 percent. Orders are rolling in and you're operating in the black, but it's taking a toll on your relationship. You're not as close as you once were, and now your families are beginning to quarrel. It's time to separate. You invite your business partner to breakfast and suggest that the best way to ensure growth is to divide the company. The eastern and western divisions would become independent companies. When you roll out a map of the country and examine the sales

figures, it's clear that one division performs far better than the other. As the majority stakeholder, you have the right of first choice, which presents you with an intriguing question: What do you do? There's nothing wrong with choosing the better territory. It's your right as the senior partner. And yet Abram decided to put that choice in his partner's hands. Why? Because he had faith that regardless of how the chips fell, God would provide for him and keep His word. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 31)

- Application: Just as Abram trusted God to keep His promises and provide for him, so we can too. God is faithful. We just need to trust in Him and live in obedience by faith.

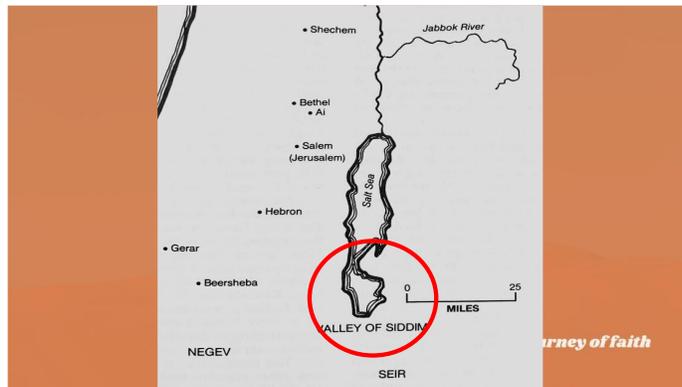
How did Lot respond to Abram's generous offer?

10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.



And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere,...even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar - here we see a striking contrast between Abraham's walking by faith and Lot's walking by sight (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 3415)

- The plain of Jordan likely referred to the level country on either side of the Jordan River from the Jabbok river in the north to the lower end of what today is the Dead Sea in the south. (Plummer, 1902)
- The description of what he saw is lavish; the area was well watered. As if this description were not sufficient, the writer compares it to the garden of God, probably a reference to the rivers in the garden that went out and watered all the region (Gen. 2:10-14), and to the land of Egypt, which was always well watered because cause of the Nile. There would be no difficulty finding water and vegetation in that lush area. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 3489-3492)
 - o Lot would end up settling in the southern end of the Jordan Valley which is where Sodom and Gomorrah likely were situated.



At least, that was how the land used to look. Tucked away in the description of the land is a parenthetical comment made by the author that this was how the land looked before the Lord destroyed it.

Before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah - The original audience for this story would have known about the destruction of these two cities, and they were familiar with the topography of the Jordan River Valley. Before the destruction, this area had enjoyed the kind of fertility found in Egypt along the Nile or in Babylon beside the Euphrates. Today we call the area at the southern end of the Jordan River the Jordan Rift Valley. It's arid, hot, and dusty—not at all suitable for farming without modern irrigation. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 33)

- The story foreshadows trouble for Lot. The point is obvious: Abram's faith proved to be a better long term decision; Lot's greed would cost him nearly everything. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 33)
- Like sin, Lot's decision to walk by sight brought short term gain and long term trouble.

Genesis 19:24-25 - Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

Genesis 19:20 - Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live.

Verse 10 tells us what Lot saw. Verse 11 tells us what he did about it.

11 Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.

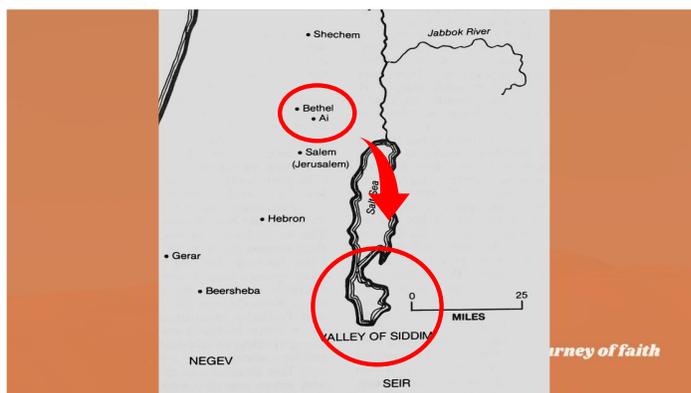
Take note of what Lot does not do. He does not say, "Uncle Abram, I owe you a great debt of gratitude. In fact, I owe you everything! You brought me on this journey and today I am a wealthy man because of you. Since you have been so gracious to me, I insist that you take the best land. God will take care of me either way." (Swindoll, 2014, p. 32)

Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan – He chose for himself the land that caught his eye and he did so without any thought for his uncle. Lot chose greed over gratitude. He

chose wealth over family. He chose to trust himself rather than God. Truth be told, most of us are more like Lot than Abram. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 32)

- We who are blessed with this world's goods too easily forget those who are in need. And we who have less usually envy those who have much. To make matters more confusing, envy makes us believe we're perpetually in the "poor" category.
- The best remedy for the disease of greed is generosity. Generosity goes against our nature, it forces us out of our comfort zones, it prompts us to see the needs of others, and it encourages us to rely upon God's provision. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 32)

And Lot journeyed toward the east – Lot saw the land, chose the land, and then journeyed eastward to the land.



And they separated themselves one from the other – and Lot and Abram went their separate ways

12 Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.

Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan – used in reference to a smaller subset of the larger land of Canaan (Spence & Exell, 1883)

And Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain – Lot dwelled in the neighborhood of the cities of the plain of Jordan (Spence & Exell, 1883)

And pitched his tent toward Sodom - and pitched his tent in the direction of/up to/against the city of Sodom

- Lot put himself in a situation/location he had no business being in, and the next verse explains why that was the case.
1 Corinthians 15:33 - Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.
2 Peter 2:7-8 - And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)

13 But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.

But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly – They are not just described as wicked. They are not just described as sinners. Those words in and of themselves did not do justice to the depravity of the Sodomites. They are here described as wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.

Application – your family and your faith and your religion with God are not worth pitching your tent near Sodom.

- All Lot had on his mind was wealth.

Genesis 15:16 - But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

Genesis 18:20 - And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous;

Isaiah 3:9 - The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves.

Exodus 16:46-50 - And thine elder sister is Samaria, she and her daughters that dwell at thy left hand: and thy younger sister, that dwelleth at thy right hand, is Sodom and her daughters. Yet hast thou not walked after their ways, nor done after their abominations: but, as if that were a very little thing, thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways. As I live, saith the Lord GOD, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters. Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good.

Matthew 11:23-24 - And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

2 Peter 2:6 - And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly

Jude 1:7 - Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

Abram walks by faith. Lot walks by sight. What does God do? He reaffirms His promise to Abram.

4.) The Reaffirmation of the Promised Land

14 And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him – after Lot took the best land for himself and left Abram, God came to Him to reassure Him and confirm His promise once again

Application – You might say, “Man I wish God would do that with me.” Do you know where you can go to receive the reaffirmation of God and His promises? The Word.

Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward and westward – Look as far as you can see in every direction.

Genesis 28:14 - And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

15 For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever – All the land you see I will give to you and your descendants as a permanent possession.

- Lot lifted up his eyes. God told Abram to lift up his eyes. Lot saw. God told Abram to look. Lot took the land he wanted for himself. God promised Abram that He would give it to him in His timing. It is far better to receive what God has for us in His timing than to try to force it in our own timing. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 3522)
 - o Illustration – Abram would make that mistake later on with Hagar and Ishmael.
- The Lord assured Abram that in giving up his claim and choosing to trust in God, Abram wasn't sacrificing anything in the long run. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 34)
Genesis 12:7 - And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him

Genesis 15:18 - In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

Psalms 105:9-12 - Which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac; And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant: Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance: When they were but a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it.

Numbers 34:12-29 - And the border shall go down to Jordan, and the goings out of it shall be at the salt sea: this shall be your land with the coasts thereof round about. And Moses commanded the children of Israel, saying, This is the land which ye shall

inherit by lot, which the LORD commanded to give unto the nine tribes, and to the half tribe: For the tribe of the children of Reuben according to the house of their fathers, and the tribe of the children of Gad according to the house of their fathers, have received their inheritance; and half the tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance: The two tribes and the half tribe have received their inheritance on this side Jordan near Jericho eastward, toward the sunrising. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, These are the names of the men which shall divide the land unto you: Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun. And ye shall take one prince of every tribe, to divide the land by inheritance. And the names of the men are these: Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh. And of the tribe of the children of Simeon, Shemuel the son of Ammihud. Of the tribe of Benjamin, Elidad the son of Chislon. And the prince of the tribe of the children of Dan, Bukki the son of Jogli. The prince of the children of Joseph, for the tribe of the children of Manasseh, Hanniel the son of Ephod. And the prince of the tribe of the children of Ephraim, Kemuel the son of Shiphtan. And the prince of the tribe of the children of Zebulun, Elizaphan the son of Parnach. And the prince of the tribe of the children of Issachar, Paltiel the son of Azzan. And the prince of the tribe of the children of Asher, Ahihud the son of Shelomi. And the prince of the tribe of the children of Naphtali, Pedahel the son of Ammihud. These are they whom the LORD commanded to divide the inheritance unto the children of Israel in the land of Canaan.

16 And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.

17 Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.

And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee – Linked to the promise of the land is the promise of the seed, for the seed will be the ultimate possessors of the land. Not only that, but the land was to be an object lesson to Abram reminding him of the promise of the seed. As Abram walked about in the land and stepped on the dust, with every step took, he would be reminded of God's promise to him that his seed would be as innumerable as the dirt on the ground. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 3527-3529)

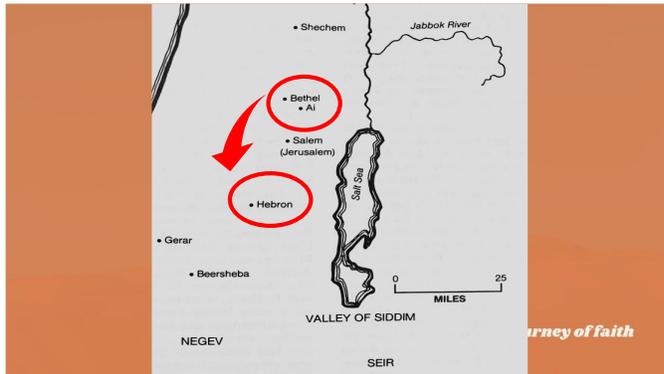
Genesis 15:5 - And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

Deuteronomy 1:10 - The LORD your God hath multiplied you, and, behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude.

1 Kings 4:20 - Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking, and making merry.

Hebrews 11:12 - Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

18 Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord.



Then Abram removed his tent and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron – Abram responded by relocating to Hebron where he would spend much of his remaining life. This area offered good land. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 34) “The soil was relatively fertile, and a variety of fruits (apples, plums, figs, pomegranates, apricots), nuts, and vegetables were grown easily.” (Elwell, 1988, p. 949)

And build there an altar unto the Lord – Once there, Abram quickly built an altar to the Lord where he could worship. This was yet another stone monument that served to memorialize his faith in the one true God. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 34)

Genesis 18:1 - And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day;

Genesis 35:27 - And Jacob came unto Isaac his father unto Mamre, unto the city of Arbah, which is Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac sojourned.

Joshua 14:13 - And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance.

Application

Are you a peacemaker?

- When conflict arises, do you turn the dial up or down?
- When fires appear, do you pour oil or water on them?
- God has called us to peace.

Are you walking by faith or are you walking by sight?

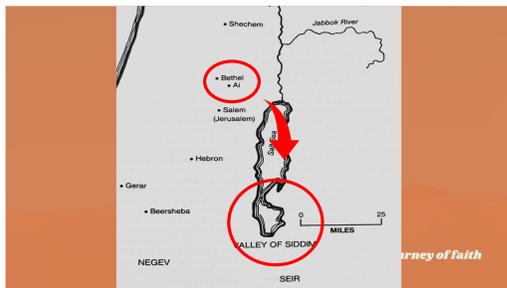
- Abram walked by faith and God blessed Him. He trusted in God to keep His promises and He did.
- Lot walked by sight and he just about destroyed himself. He trusted in himself to provide himself, and he found himself to be a poor object of faith.

Genesis 14:1-16

Review

Last week we saw Abram's separation from Lot.

- After their misadventure in Egypt, they returned to the Promised Land with great wealth.
- Their great wealth led to conflict in the land (there wasn't enough food, water, and land for their clans to stay together).
- Abram was a peacemaker. Rather than assigning blame, he sought out a solution. In faith, he allowed his nephew to take his pick of the land, trusting that God would keep his promises to him regarding the land regardless of what Lot chose.
- Abram walked by faith and chose generosity. Lot walked by sight and chose greed. He chose the area along the Jordan River and would eventually make his way to the south of the Jordan Valley where Sodom was. Abram relocated to Hebron. That's where we left off.



We don't know how much time passed between Abram's separation from Lot and the events described in Genesis 14. Months—perhaps years. It was enough time for Abram's company of servants to number at least 318 men, many of whom had families of their own. It's quite possible that his total clan numbered in excess of 1000 individuals, even though he had no children. Genesis 14:14 describes these individuals as "born into his household," which doesn't necessarily mean they were born into Abram's community as babies. This ancient expression meant "not purchased." The narrator makes it clear that these men were servants by choice, not involuntary slaves.

- Back in the days before strong national governments, people sought safety in numbers. Some became citizens of a city; others asked to live under the protection of powerful men like Abram, offering their personal service in exchange for the benefits of community. They were not slavishly bound to Abram; they participated in a business arrangement: provision and protection in exchange for loyalty. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 42)

Sermon

In chapter 13 we saw Abram's separation from Lot.

In chapter 14, we're going to see Abram's rescue of Lot.

In chapter 13, we saw Abram's faith in his God.

In chapter 14, we're going to see Abram's love for his brother.

- The brother who had just taken advantage of him. He had taken advantage of Abram. He got what was coming to him, and yet Abram rescued Lot in love. He showed Lot grace as his God had showed him grace in Egypt.
 - o Just as God had rescued Abram from his misdeeds in Egypt, now Abram would rescue Lot from his misdeeds in Sodom.

Genesis 14 would make an exciting action movie. It contains all the necessary elements of a great story. Great kings. Political alliances. Rebellion. A long military campaign culminating in a bloody battle. Spoils, plunder, kidnapping, and a daring rescue attempt by an, up to this point, little know clansman of Canaan: Abram. As exciting as this riveting story is, the narrative is even more so a gold mine of great truths that we can learn from even today. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 42)

The message of this chapter has four major features. First, the land promised to Abram was plundered by invading armies who took tribute (cf. the later history of Israel and the tributes and captivities brought by eastern kings). Then, Abram conquered the invading armies by the power of God, chasing them to Dan (the northern frontier of the land) and rescuing Lot and the other captives. Third, Abram's victory was an outworking working of the promises of God (12:1-3), showing that he had indeed become a powerful tribal leader on the international scene and that those who shared his mission would share his blessing. Finally, Abram chose to wait for the blessing of God rather than accept anything from the king of Sodom, for he would not be satisfied with the spoils of war, especially if it put him in debt to this pagan king. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 3589-3593)

1.) The Political Situation in the Land

Chapter 14 describes a typical international skirmish in the ancient world in which powerful nations formed a coalition together to plunder and subjugate areas near the border of the land promised to Abram. (Blum, Walvoord, & Zuck, p. 52)

1 And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar (shee-naar), Arioch king of Ellasar (ell-a-zar), Chedorlaomer (ked-er-lay-o-mer) king of Elam (e-lom), and Tidal king of nations;

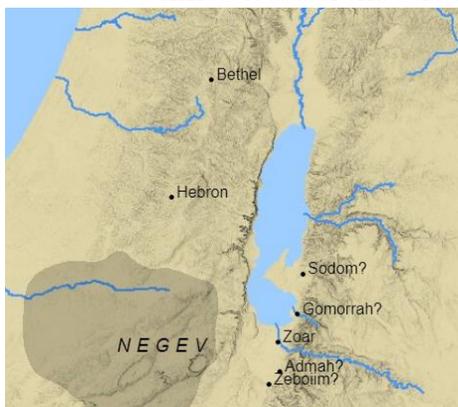


- Shinar – Babylonia (region in Mesopotamia)
- Ellasar – city somewhere in Mesopotamia
- Elam – region in Mesopotamia
- These four kings ruled over in the east in the area that Abram came from. Ur is actually located in the region of Shinar/Babylonia.
 - o This area is 600 miles away from Canaan as the bird flies. If you take the route along the water ways up to Haran and then down the coast to Canaan, it's about a 1000-mile journey.

Created at <https://biblemapper.com/web/>.

2 That these made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela, which is Zoar.

- This Eastern army went to war against a single army formed by a coalition of five kings from the West (in Canaan). Keep in mind that this western coalition is located 600 miles west of the eastern coalition they are going to attack.



Distance Calculator

Enter location 1:

 location: Sodom? [Bab edh-Dhra] ▼

Enter location 2:

 location: Ellasar? [Tell as-Senkereh] ▼

Distance:
 Miles: 608.1673
 Km: 978.7507

Genesis 10:19 - And the border of the Canaanites was from Sidon, as thou comest to Gerar, unto Gaza; as thou goest, unto Sodom, and Gomorrah, and Admah, and Zeboim, even unto Lasha.

Genesis 19:20-30 - Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live. And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken. Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar. Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt. And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD: And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace. And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt. And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters.

Where are they going to battle?

3 All these were joined together in the vale of Siddim, which is the salt sea.

All these – all five of these Canaanite kings

Were joined together – formed a confederacy or coalition

In the vale of Siddim – in the valley of Siddim (located near the southern part of Canaan)

Which is the salt sea – Moses is writing down this account hundreds of years after the life of Abram. By the time of Moses, the valley of Siddim had become the Salt Sea or the Dead Sea.



- - It's from this verse that some believe that the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in chapter 19 led to the creation of the Dead Sea. (Plummer, 1902)
 - The Jordan River runs into the Dead Sea which is 1300 feet below sea level. It's the lowest point on the earth's surface. The Dead Sea has no outlet except for evaporation, and due to the extreme heat and dryness of the region, this evaporation leaves vast quantities of salt behind. The Dead Sea is five times saltier than the ocean making it impossible for marine life to survive in the sea. (Got Questions)
 - Its shores are clothed with loom and desolation. (Spence & Exell, 1883)
- Genesis 19:24 - Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven;

Why did this coalition of kings from the west make war with the coalition of kings from the east?



4 Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled.

For a dozen years, the cities of Canaan had served Kedorlaomer as “vassal cities,” meaning they paid heavy taxes to him in exchange for protection. According to this arrangement, he guaranteed their safety from any potential marauders. If they failed to pay, however, they would need protection from him! After twelve years, the kings of five cities in the Jordan River Valley—Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar (also known as Bela)—decided the time had come to stop the extortion. They did not send a payment that year. Kedorlaomer used this as an opportunity to teach everyone living in Canaan a painful lesson by brutally sacking all its cities. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 43)

Genesis 9:25-26 - And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.

2.) The Conquest of the Land by Invaders

Genesis 14:5-11 describes in detail the areas conquered by Kedorlaomer’s army, as city after city fell. The reason for all this detail is twofold. First, it illustrates the power of this army, which had gathered incredible momentum by the time they came to the cities in the Jordan River Valley. Second, the area conquered by Kedorlaomer corresponds rather closely to the land God had promised to Abram—an important theological point in this story as it relates to the Lord’s covenant with the patriarch of Israel. Put simply, no one had defeated this army, with the result that Kedorlaomer’s kingdom dominated Abram’s turf. (Swindoll, 2014, pp. 43-44)

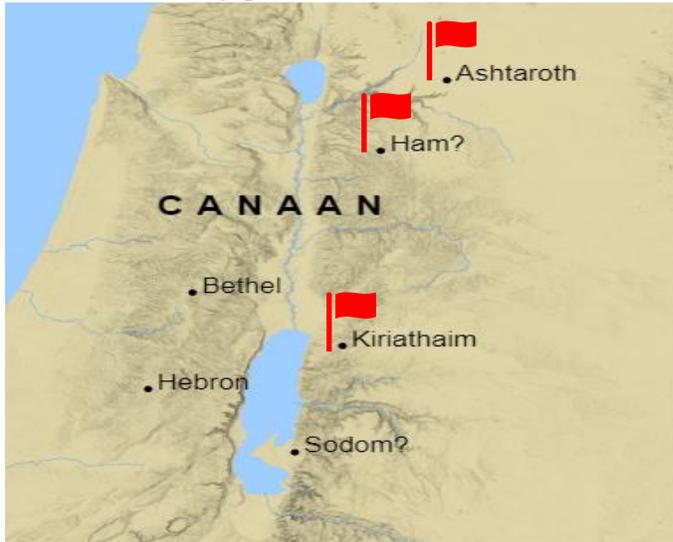
5 And in the fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer, and the kings that were with him, and smote the Rephaims (raw-faw-eems) in Ashteroth Karnaim (kar-nah-yim), and the Zuzims (zoo-zeems) in Ham (hawm), and the Emims (ay-meens) in Shaveh (shaw-vay) Kiriathaim (keer-yaw-thah-yim),

It seems possible that the western coalition took the same route to Canaan that Abram did: northeast to Haran and then southeast to Canaan. Why do you think that’s the case? Two reasons: (1) where they start their conquest (northwest of Canaan) (2) where they go after they’ve ended their conquest (northwest of Canaan)



- They plundered the Rephaims first in Ashteroth.

- Then they plundered the Zuzims in Ham.
- Then they plundered the Emims in Kiriathaim.



Deuteronomy 2:10-11 - The Emims dwelt therein in times past, a people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakims; Which also were accounted giants, as the Anakims; but the Moabites call them Emims.

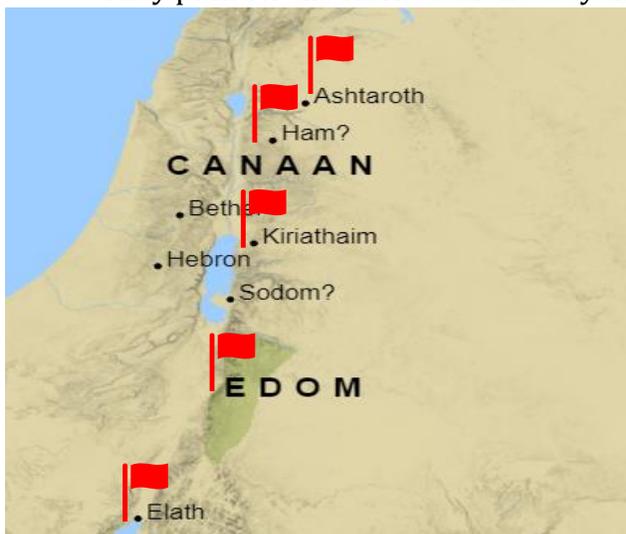
6 And the Horites in their mount Seir, unto Elparan, which is by the wilderness.

And the Horites in mount Seir – this hill country was southeast of the Dead Sea in the area later known as Edom (Blum, Walvoord, & Zuck, p. 53)

- They plunder the Horites in Edom

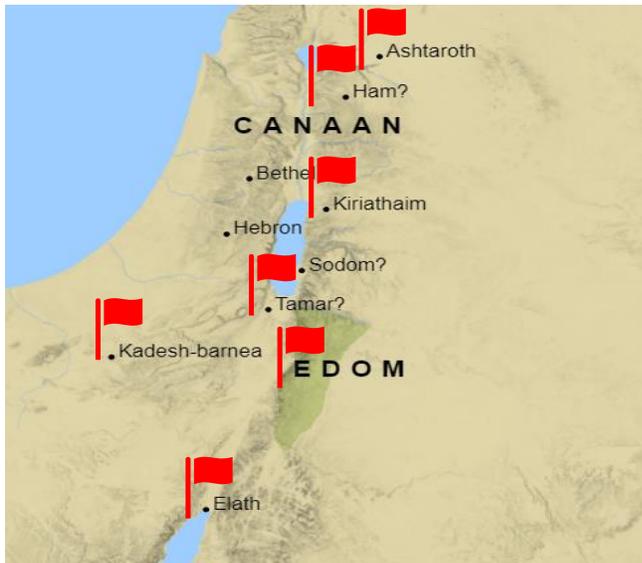
Unto Elparan (ale-paw-ran), which is by the wilderness – This was modern Elat, on the Gulf of Aqaba (Blum, Walvoord, & Zuck, p. 53)

- They plunder the Horites all the way down to Elat



Deuteronomy 2:12 – The Horims also dwelt in Seir beforetime; but the children of Esau succeeded them, when they had destroyed them from before them, and dwelt in their stead; as Israel did unto the land of his possession, which the LORD gave unto them.

7 And they returned, and came to Enmishpat (ane mish-pawt), which is Kadesh, and smote all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, that dwelt in Hazezontamar (khats-ets-one taw-mawr).



Kadesh – plunder the Amalekites

Tamar – plunder the Amorites

Genesis 20:1 – And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar.

All of this sets the stage for the battle against the coalition of the five western kings in the valley of Siddim.

8 And there went out the king of Sodom, and the king of Gomorrah, and the king of Admah, and the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (the same is Zoar;) and they joined battle with them in the vale of Siddim;



9 With Chedorlaomer the king of Elam, and with Tidal king of nations, and Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar; four kings with five.

10 And the vale of Siddim was full of slimepits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountain.

And the vale of Siddim was full of slimepits – places where underground petroleum boils to the surface in the form of sticky goo.

- Why does the narrative give us this detail? Perhaps to illustrate the incompetence of the Canaanite coalition. Five armies marched out to meet Kedorlaomer; two fled. Moreover, these general-kings engaged the enemy on their own ground—a distinct tactical advantage. Not only did they fail to use the tar pits against their enemy, they fell victim to their own home turf. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 44)

And the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled and fell there – the kings and their armies fled and were defeated

- The King of Sodom is still alive in verse 17 so this clause must not mean that the kings themselves perished. (Spence & Exell, 1883)

And they that remained fled to the mountain – those that survived the battle and the tar pits, fled up into the mountains

Genesis 19:17 - And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.

Genesis 19:30 - And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters.

11 And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way.

Having routed the defenses of Sodom and Gomorrah, the raiding armies looted the cities and rounded up captives to take home as slaves. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 44)

Interestingly, none of this appears to have bothered Abram. As far as he was concerned, the land promised by God would eventually come to him regardless of which idol-worshipping king claimed to own it. He didn't involve himself in the intramural skirmishes of Canaan's petty politics or self-serving rulers . . . until their violence affected his family. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 44)

3.) The Capture of Lot by the Invaders

12 And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.

And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son...and his goods, and departed - . Among the captives was Abram's nephew, Lot, along with his household and possessions. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 44)

Who dwelt in Sodom – apparently Lot had moved from tenting next to Sodom to dwelling in it

- If he had not been dwelling there, he might not have been captured, and Abram might not have been drawn into the war. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 3653)
- Lot took advantage of his uncle, made bad decisions, and is now a slave/a prisoner of war. Frankly, as I read this, I'm thinking "good riddance...he got what was coming to him."
 - o Just as we have been told of Lot's fate, someone is going to deliver the news to Abram.

1 Timothy 6:9-11 - But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

13 And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram.

And there came one that had escaped and told Abram the Hebrew – Apparently, someone who remembered Lot's connection to Abram managed to break away from the rest of the POWs, and he got a message to the clansman. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 44)

And told Abram the Hebrew - Abram is identified as "the Hebrew" (note the gentile ending on `ibri, v. 13)-he was a clansman like other tribal chiefs. It may be too much to say that he had now achieved worldwide political significance, but he had become a force to be reckoned with. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 3578-3580)

For he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and the brother of Aner (aw-nare): and these were confederate with Abram - Apparently, to settle even temporarily in this region Abram had to make a treaty/covenant with these Amorites. In this case it likely worked to Abram's advantage; in cases like this where clans were confederate with another, when one went to battle, the others were often obligated to go as well. The significance of introducing these allies of Abram is that it's possible he would have had far more than his 318 men to lead in pursuit of the army from the East. A sizable force of fighters from the four tribal chiefs' ranks and a surprise night attack from different sides were more than sufficient to terrorize the invaders and drive them far beyond Damascus. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 3662-3666)

- We do not know for sure if these Amorite clans went to battle with Abram, but their mention here in this verse hints at it.

Genesis 14:24 - Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.

Genesis 10:16 - And the Jebusite, and the Amorite, and the Girgashite,

How did Abram respond to this news?

4.) The Pursuit of the Invaders by Abram

14 And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan.

And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive. - when he heard the news, how did he respond? Take note of how he didn't respond. He did not respond as I would have.

He didn't say, "Okay, it's time for that young man to learn some hard lessons. He chose where to live and didn't have enough foresight to stay away from trouble, so he'll just have to deal with the mess he's made." He also didn't say, "What does that have to do with me? That's Lot's concern. He made his bed; let him lie in it." We see no petty responses from Abram. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 45)

Rather, what do we see?

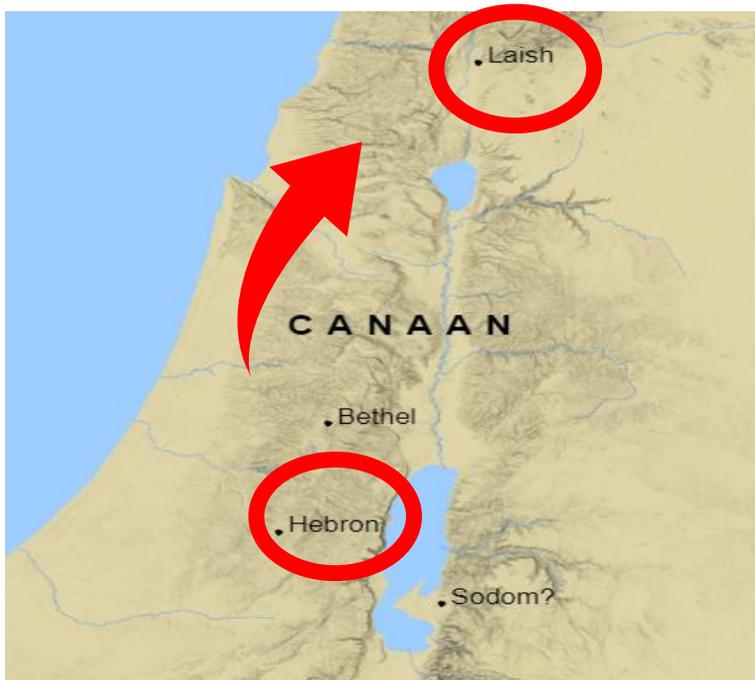
He armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen - He responded by mustering a personal army of servants and embarking on a rescue mission.

- He responded with grace and love in action.

- Great people don't judge others for having needs—even troubles they've brought upon themselves. Great people see the crisis of another as a call to action. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 45)

And pursued them unto Dan – the future northern border of the Promised Land. Dan was then named Leshem (Josh. 19:47) or Laish (Judges 18:29). (Blum, Walvoord, & Zuck, p. 53)

- This city “guarded a major trading route running between Damascus and Tyre, and was therefore an important commercial center.” (Swindoll, 2014, p. 45)
- It was a 125 mile journey from Hebron to Laish.
- Illustration – imagine someone calling you up in the middle of the night and saying they need you to drive and come get them 125 miles away. Imagine that you have to walk that distance.



Galatians 6:1-2 - Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

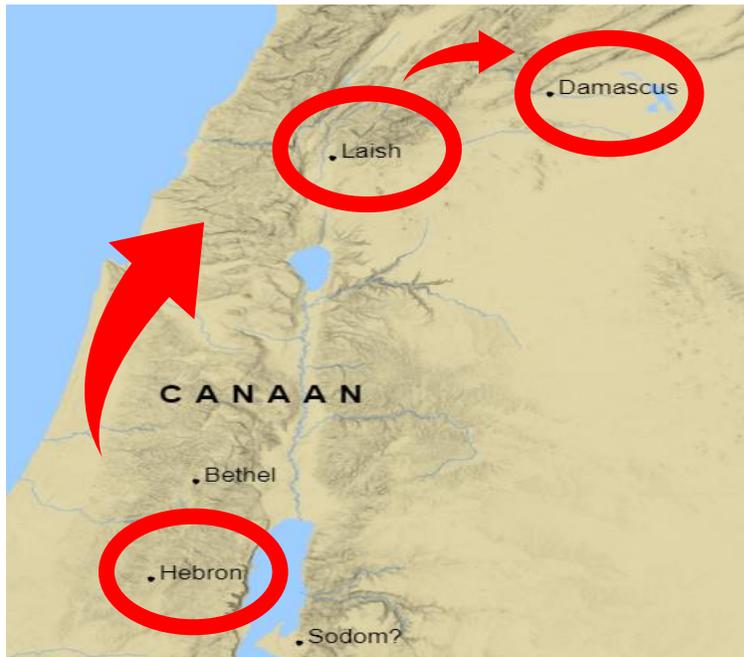
Judges 18:29 - And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born unto Israel: howbeit the name of the city was Laish at the first.

15 And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus.

And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night – he divided his servants into companies likely to attack the Eastern army from multiple angles at once by night and incite a panic

And smote them – in the confusion, his 318 men routed an army of perhaps thousands and sent them running (Swindoll, 2014, p. 45)

And pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus - Then, rather than gathering up their recovered prisoners and property and scurrying on home, Abram pursued the army another fifty miles into the mountains past Damascus!



16 And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.

And he brought back all the goods – Abram recovered all the goods taken from Sodom and Gomorrah

And also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods – He recovered Lot and all of his goods

And the women also, and the people -He recovered all of the women and people that had been taken captive from Sodom and Gomorrah as well

The biblical account doesn't give us the details of the reunion of Lot and Abram. We have no idea whether Abram received any thanks for this heroic rescue. (Probably not, knowing Lot!) But greathearted people have little need to be thanked; that's not their motivation. They don't keep a journal with a list titled "People Who Never Said Thank You." You're greathearted when you come to the rescue without calling attention to yourself or expecting to be written up in the paper. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 46)

Genesis 12:2 - And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

Application

You know what you see here in this passage? Love and grace.

- In Egypt, Abram had learned the importance of walking by faith. That greatly influenced the way he approached resolving the conflict he had with Lot over the land.
- In, Egypt, he had also learned the importance of love and grace. That greatly influenced the way he approached Lot's kidnapping.

In chapter 12, Abram had made some bad decisions that got him into a world of trouble in Egypt. He had sinned against his God, and yet God in his mercy and grace rescued Abram from a terrible situation of his own making even though he did not deserve to be rescued.

In chapters 13 and 14, Lot had made some bad decisions that got him into a world of trouble in Sodom. He had sinned against his brother Abram, and yet Abram in his mercy and grace rescued Lot from a terrible situation of his own making even though he did not deserve to be rescued.

My friend, you and I had made some bad decisions that got us into a world of trouble as it pertains to our eternal destiny. We had sinned against God, and yet God in his mercy and grace rescued us from a terrible situation of our own making even though we did not deserve to be rescued.

Just as God has shown grace, mercy, and love to us when we didn't deserve it, in the same way He calls on us to show grace, mercy, and love to those in our lives that don't deserve it either.

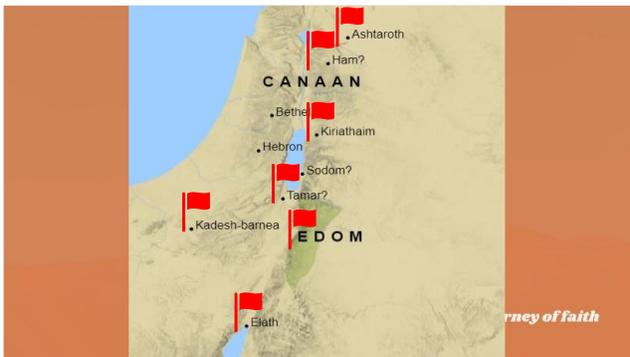
Abram did not treat Lot in the way that Lot had treated him. He treated Lot in the way that God had treated him. God calls us to treat others not in the way they have treated us, but to treat them in the way that He has treated us.

Genesis 14:17-24

Review

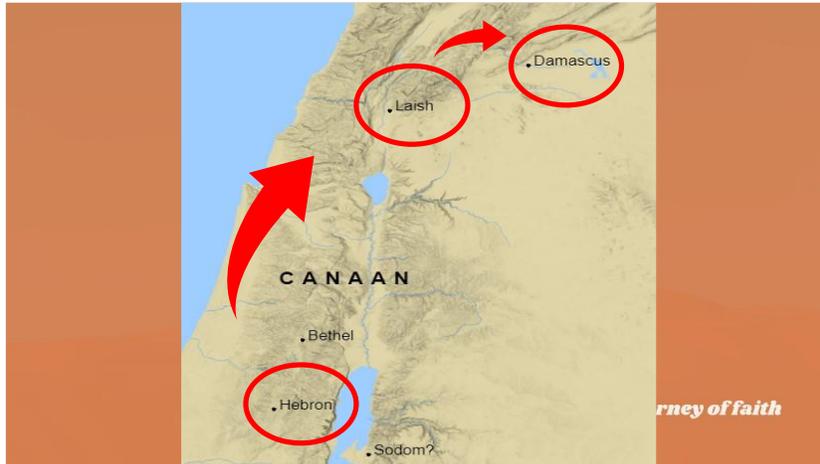


There was a coalition of four kings from near Ur in the East and a coalition of five kings from Canaan in the West. When the Canaanite kings stopped paying their tribute, this led the kings from East to embark on a 1000 mile journey to get their tribute and teach the Canaanites a lesson.



They made the long journey and upon arriving in the land they destroyed and plundered six Canaanite towns on their way to the battle that would ensue between them and the coalition of five Canaanite kings in the Valley of Siddim.

The coalition from the East easily defeated the Canaanite kings and plundered Sodom and Gomorrah, taking money, cattle, and people (including Lot).



Abram heard about this, gathered his trained servants (and possibly some allies), and pursued the Eastern coalition 125 miles to Dan. Upon arriving, Abram divided up his warriors into companies, sneak attacked the army under cover of night, and recovered all of the goods and people that had been taken from Sodom and Gomorrah, including his nephew Lot.

And that is basically where we left off last week. This evening we're going to take a look at the return of Abram to the land, following his victory of the coalition of kings from the East.

Sermon

The Return of Abram to the Land

As we look at the return of Abram to the land, we are going to be reminded that God is the ultimate source of provision, victory, and blessing.

- In Abram's division with Lot over the land, we saw that God is the ultimate source of provision.
- In Abram's victory of the Eastern coalition, we saw that God is the ultimate source of victory.
- Tonight, in Abram's encounter with two very different kings, we are going to see that God is the ultimate source of blessing.
 - o For Abram is going to face a choice between the blessings of God from the King of Salem and the blessings of the world from the King of Sodom.
 - The King of Salem was a priest and a worshipper of the one true God. The King of Sodom was a pagan whose city lived in utter defiance of the one true God.
 - The King of Salem brought refreshments to Abram. The King of Sodom brought nothing.
 - The King of Salem blessed Abram. The King of Sodom bartered with him.

- The King of Salem offered Abram the blessing of the most High God. The King of Sodom offered Abram the riches of the world. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 3603-3605)
- This is the context we need to understand when taking a look at this passage.

After the great victory, when the conqueror might be most vulnerable to entangling arrangements, Abram met another challenge to the promises and came away unscathed. This part of the story shows how easily the spiritual victory can be lost, but it also shows how Abram was able to avoid the loss. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 3668-3670)

1.) Abram's Encounter with the King Priest Melchizedek

17 And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale.

18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.



And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him - News of Abram's victory spread quickly. While accompanying Lot and his family back to their camp near Sodom and Gomorrah, two kings came out to greet Abram near Jerusalem—two figures who could not have been more different. The king of Sodom traveled north to greet Abram and to escort his citizens the rest of their way home. The king of Salem (which means “peace”) also came out to greet the returning hero. (Swindoll, 2014, pp. 46-47)

- The King of Sodom is mentioned first, but there is little information about him. A glimpse at his kingdom, however, would give some indication of his life. He ruled over a city that was so wicked that God eventually destroyed it. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 3664) We're going to get a much more detailed look at its wickedness and destruction later on in chapter 19. For now our emphasis will be on Melchizedek King of Salem (Jerusalem).

at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale. - "The King's Vale" is mentioned in 2 Samuel 18:18 as the site of the monument raised by Absalom, and was supposed in the days of Josephus to be two "stadia" from Jerusalem (Ant. vii. 10, 3). The word Shaveh means "a plain," cf. Genesis 14:5. (Plummer, 1902)

2 Samuel 18:18 - Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and reared up for himself a pillar, which is in the king's dale: for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance: and he called the pillar after his own name: and it is called unto this day, Absalom's place.

A.) He brought Abram bread and wine

18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.

And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine - As a generous and thoughtful king, he brought Abram bread and wine (food and drink; refreshments), and served it with a priestly blessing. (Swindoll, 2014, pp. 46-47)

- Melchizedek stands as a type or a picture of Jesus Christ. The book of Hebrews talks about how Melchizedek is a picture of Jesus.
 - o Hebrews 7:1-3 – 1 For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; 2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; 3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.
 - o What does that mean and how is Melchizedek a picture of Jesus? I'll give you a brief overview tonight. If you'd like a more detailed explanation, you can watch the sermon on Hebrews 7 on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/txCVPOdlv3U>.

Melchizedek	Jesus
King & Priest	King & Priest
King of righteousness and peace	King of righteousness and peace
Not a descendant of Levi	Not a descendant of Levi
Without beginning or end	Without beginning or end

journey of faith

-
- Outside of Jesus, Melchizedek is the only priest in the Bible, who was also a king. Melchizedek was a king and a priest. Jesus is a king and a priest.

- Melchizedek was a king of righteousness and peace. Jesus is a king of righteousness and peace.
- Melchizedek was not a descendant of Levi. His priesthood was not based on bloodlines. Jesus was not a descendant of Levi. His priesthood was not based on bloodlines.
 - In fact, David, the first Israelite king to sit on Melchizedek's throne in Jerusalem, prophesied in Psalm 110:1-4 that the Messiah would be both a king and a priest, and that like Melchizedek, he would not be a descendant of Levi. His priesthood would not be based on bloodlines. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 3675-3679)
- Melchizedek was without beginning or end in the way he's presented in Genesis 14. His birthday and his death were not recorded in Genesis. Does that mean that Melchizedek somehow was never born and lived forever? No. It just means that in the way he's presented in Genesis he's a picture of Jesus who truly does have no beginning or end.

Psalm 110:1-4 – 1 The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. 2 The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. 3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. 4 The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

B.) He blessed Abram and his God

19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:

Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth - Abram had here found a true spiritual brother (living near him in Canaan!), one who believed in the most high God who created matter, the sovereign God who had given Abram the victory, the true God who had promised Abram the blessing. The words of this marvelous priest surely inspired the patriarch in his anticipation of the promise of God. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 3684-3686)

- The priest's words likely reminded Abram of God's promises to bless Him, that he would rise in prosperity and that God (who owns everything in heaven and earth) would be the one to bring about such blessings. (Ross, 1997, pp. 3690-3693)
- Psalm 24:1 - The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.
- Psalm 50:10 - For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.

- Do you know what that means for us practically? As children of the Most High God who owns everything, we don't have to look to and depend on Satan or his world to have our needs provided. Our Father who owns everything has promised to provide our needs.
- When faced with the choice to wait patiently on the blessing and provision of our Father or sacrifice our integrity on the altar of the world's empty promises, waiting on God is the right choice ten times out of ten.

20 And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.

And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand – Melchizedek blessed Abram and he blessed God. Without taking anything away from Abram's bravery, Melchizedek gave all the glory to God for the victory. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 47)

- Once again, this is a reminder to Abram that the victory he had just achieved was not of his own accord. It was not due to the King of Sodom. It was a direct result of God's intervention on his behalf.
- The same God that brought Abram the victory would bring Abram the blessings he was promised in His own timing.
- This encounter was no accident. It was reminder to Abram of God's promises and provision.

C.) Abram gave the King of Salem a tithe

And he gave him tithes of all - No law of God demanded that he give a gift to Melchizedek; nevertheless, Abram of his own free will gave a tenth of the recovered spoils to him. Although He gave this offering to the King of Salem, he wasn't really giving it to the king of Salem. He was giving it to God through his priestly representative Melchizedek. In doing so, he was acknowledging that God was the one who brought about what he had recovered. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 47)

- In the same way, when we give our tithes and offerings to the church, we aren't really giving to the church. We're giving to the Lord through the church. And we do so out of a grateful heart to the Lord in acknowledgement, that everything we have we owe to Him. It's not my money. It's His. He is the owner of the cattle on a thousand hills.

Ephesians 1:3 - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

Genesis 28:22 - And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

Leviticus 27:30-32 - And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S: it is holy unto the LORD. And if a man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth part thereof. And

concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD.

Deuteronomy 14:28 - At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates:

2 Chronicles 31:5-6 - And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought in abundance the firstfruits of corn, wine, and oil, and honey, and of all the increase of the field; and the tithe of all things brought they in abundantly. And concerning the children of Israel and Judah, that dwelt in the cities of Judah, they also brought in the tithe of oxen and sheep, and the tithe of holy things which were consecrated unto the LORD their God, and laid them by heaps.

Malachi 3:8-10 - 8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. 9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. 10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

Hebrews 7:4-9 - Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham.

2.) Abram's Encounter with the King of Sodom

A.) He offered Abram wealth in exchange for the people

21 And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.

And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the person, and take the goods to thyself – He doesn't bless Abram. He doesn't acknowledge Abram's God. He brings him no bread or wine. What are the first two words out of his mouth? "Give me." What a difference between the King of Salem and the King of Sodom.

- Not only that, but he also attempts to barter with him. He says, "Give me the people, but keep all the spoils that you recovered."
- First of all, by custom, it would have been Abram's right to keep it anyway. Second, Abram's fighting men had just humiliated the army that had humiliated Sodom. If Abram had decided he wanted to keep the plunder for himself, there was nothing

the king of Sodom could have done about it! He was in no position to “let” Abram keep anything. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 47)

B.) Abram refused the King of Sodom’s offer

Why?

He had sworn an oath to God.

22 And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth,

And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth - Even before hearing the king of Sodom’s offer, Abram had already decided what to do with the spoils of conquest. Behind him, a caravan stretched for likely miles bearing all the furniture, clothing, jewelry, pottery, utensils, weapons, and precious metals that were looted. The wealth would have been staggering. Even so, he valued his integrity more than that stuff. (Swindoll, 2014, pp. 47-48)

- What did he swear to the God who owned everything? What was the oath?

He had sworn that he would not take anything from the King of Sodom. He did not want anything to do with that vile man or his kingdom or its wealth.

23 That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich:

That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine – I swore to God that I would not take anything from you, not even something so small as a piece of thread or the lace of a sandal. (Plummer, 1902)

- Abram could have made a legitimate case for accepting the haul as a gift from God. After all, he had 318 eyewitnesses to validate the Lord’s miraculous help and to substantiate his rightful claim. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 48)

Why didn’t he do so? Why had he sworn this oath to God?

Lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich – He wanted to leave no doubt in anyone’s mind that he had been blessed by God, not some sleazy king from Sodom. He did not want anything to do that wicked, awful city of Sodom. He didn’t care for its king. He didn’t care for its wealth. He wanted no association with it whatsoever. What a contrast between him and Lot by the way. (Spence & Exell, 1883)

- Application – You can seek the world’s blessings or God’s blessing, but my friend, God’s blessings are better. There are wicked people and organizations and groups in the world like Sodom that are not worth defiling yourself with to reap the blessing they can offer. They might be able to give you a slightly better return on investment. They might be able to provide you with some better connections, but your integrity is not worth it. There are some things and places in this world that, frankly, you ought keep yourself and your family as far away from as possible. That’s what we

see with Abram. He wanted nothing to do with Sodom, nothing at all. It had nothing to offer him, and this world has nothing to offer you.

Hebrews 13:5 - Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

24 Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.

Save only that which the young men have eaten. - To guard his own honor and to preserve God's reputation, he accepted nothing for himself except reimbursement for expenses. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 48)

and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion. - While Abram held this personal conviction, he didn't force others to follow suit. Three local leaders had joined his mission—Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre. He didn't turn around and say, "Now, you're not going to take anything, are you?" Abram restrained his power and relinquished control over the behavior of others, even when their standards conflicted with his own. He said, "Let them take their share." (Swindoll, 2014, p. 49)

Application

What's the point with all this?

Each of us is daily faced with the choice to look to our Father or to look to the world for provision and blessing. Trust your Father. Wait on His timing. Enjoy His blessings. His blessings are better. His ways are better. Don't sacrifice your integrity on the altar of the empty promises and provisions of the world.

Abram looked to God for His blessings. Abram kept his integrity and look how his life ended up.

Lot looked to Sodom (the world) for its blessings. Lot lost his integrity and look how his life ended up.

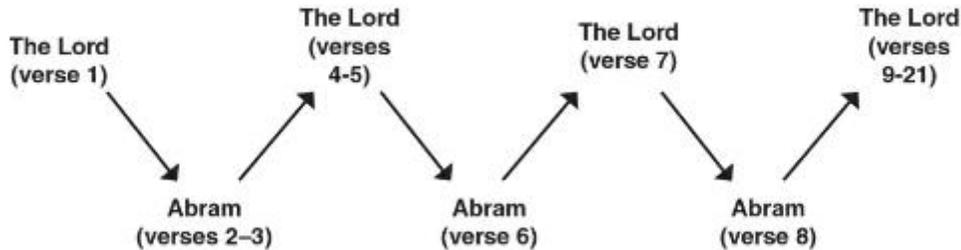
Genesis 15:1-8

Review

Of all the billions of people God created, and of all those whom He has called to serve Him in some special way, He referred to Abram—and him alone—as “my friend” (Isaiah 41:8; see also James 2:23). (Swindoll, 2014, p. 53)

- Isaiah 41:8 - But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.
- James 2:23 - And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

chapter 15 could appear boring. No invading armies or villainous kidnappings or daring rescues. No adventures, no nighttime ambushes. The text records a quiet conversation between two close friends. It would be dull reading if one of the friends didn't happen to be the almighty Creator of the universe and the other an aging clansman with no heir. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 53)



(Swindoll, 2014, p. 54)

The entire chapter is given over to the Lord's confirmation of the promises to Abram, first by his specific Word (15:1-8), and then by a solemn covenant ceremony (15:9-21). In the first place, the specific word from the Lord was necessary because of the complaint of the patriarch—he continued childless. But then the solemn ceremony of the covenant was necessary because of the oppression that lay ahead for the seed of Abraham. The expositor must see the promise in light of the doubts and the dangers and, conversely, must see the doubts and the dangers in light of the promise. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 3728-3731)

Up till now the text has recorded and reiterated the divine promises to Abram; from chapter 15 on, those promises may be looked upon as covenant promises, for God now establishes the covenant formally and guarantees the fulfillment by a solemn swearing that we are going to look at next week. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 3739-3740)

Up to this point the stories of Abram's life have been predominantly interested in the land and tensions relating to that promise-famine, strife, and invasion. With this chapter the focus turns to the seed in the land, and so the stories following this chapter will be concerned more and more with that fulfillment.. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 3755-3757)

THE CONFIRMATION OF THE PROMISES TO ABRAM

1.) Through His Word

This back and forth conversation between God and Abram begins in verse number 1 with God's declaration of protection and provision.

A.) God's Declaration of Protection and Provision

1 After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

After these things – after Abram's miraculous victory of the coalition of kings from the East and his encounter with the Kings of Salem and Sodom

- Having faced the real possibility of dying childless on the battlefield, Abram saw how suddenly life can end and, therefore, how quickly God's promises could die with him. Like any normal person, the patriarch returned from war with big questions on his mind. He was an eighty-five-year-old man with no heir. He needed to hear from his heavenly Father. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 55)
- Illustration – the mental state of soldiers coming back from war (being that close to death changes you and it puts a lot of things in perspective)

The word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, -

Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward – Don't be afraid, Abram. I am your shield and I am your reward. I will protect you, and I will provide for you.

- The fact that God told Abram not to fear gives us a glimpse into his mental state. It seems that he came back from that battle afraid.
 - o Afraid of dying childless
 - o Afraid of having no heir
 - o Afraid of God not keeping His promises
 - o His encounter with the king priest Melchizedek had no doubt encouraged him to some degree, but now God is going to do the same.
- Here God promises protection (shield) and provision (reward).
- Notice the parallel between verse 1 and verse 7.
 - o Genesis 15:1 – I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward
 - o Genesis 15:7 - I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it

- In verse 1 God reveals Himself to Abram and declares His protection and provision. In verse 7 God reveals Himself to Abram and declares His power and purpose.
 - Application – sometimes in the midst of times of doubt and discouragement, we need to be reminded of who God is, how big He is, and that He’s with us.

Deuteronomy 33:29 - Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, **the shield of thy help**, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.

Psalms 3:3 - But thou, O LORD, **art a shield for me**; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.

Proverbs 30:5 - Every word of God is pure: **he is a shield** unto them that put their trust in him.

Psalms 16:5-6 - The LORD is the **portion of mine inheritance** and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.

Lamentations 3:24 - **The LORD is my portion**, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.

Hebrews 13:5-6 - Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: **for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee**. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

Revelation 21:3-4 - And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, **and God himself shall be with them, and be their God**. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

B.) Abram’s Expression of Doubt and Discouragement

2 And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?

And Abram said, Lord God - The phrase O Sovereign Lord is unusual because it brings together two of God’s names: Adonai and Yahweh—Master and Lord. This helps soften Abram’s challenging yet reasonable question. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 56)

What wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? – In verses 2 and 3, Abram is lamenting. He’s expressing doubt in the midst of

his discouragement and sorrow. God, you say you're going to provide for me. Well, what are you going to give me, considering the fact that I'm still childless, and my household servant is currently first in line to inherit everything I own?

- Come on God, a kid is easy. That's not even necessarily a miraculous thing. Just give me a kid. How are you going to give me all these things you promise if you can't even give me a kid?

Proverbs 13:12 - Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.

Genesis 39:4-6 - And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field. And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured.

3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.

And Abram said, Behold to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir – Maybe this is what you want God. You've given me no seed. A servant who has no blood relation to me is currently in line to be my heir. Maybe that's what you want God. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 56)

- You can just see Abram wearing his emotions on his sleeve. That's not necessarily a bad thing. That's honesty. You're honest with people you know and trust and love. Just as David felt that freedom to express his heart to God in the Psalms, so does Abram here. He wears his emotions on his sleeves.

- o Illustration – Liz tells me sometimes I do that

Illustration – it's despairing when you want to have kids and you can't get pregnant

- This is one of the reasons why you should be careful about asking people when they're going to have kids.

Hebrews 10:35-36 - Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

Genesis 14:14 - And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, **born in his own house**, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan.

Ecclesiastes 2:7 - I got me servants and maidens, and **had servants born in my house**; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me:

C.) God's Reassurance of an Heir and a Seed

God is so patient and kind.

4 And, behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.

And, behold, the word of the Lord came unto him saying, This shall not be thine heir – Abram, no. That person will not be your heir. In fact, He doesn't even give Abram's thought any sort of validity by even naming Eliezer, his servant. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 3778)

But he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir – Your heir will come forth from your own body. He will bear your DNA. He will be your biological son. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 56)

- Abram, "not right now" doesn't mean "no".
- Don't undersell my promises by trying to rationalize them in your mind. When I say that I'm going to give you an heir and a seed, I don't mean that I'm going to pass all of your inheritance down to your servant. I mean what I said Abram.
- Stop thinking small. I want you to think big. Come here. I want to show you something.

5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

And he brought him forth abroad – He brings Abram outside. He's going to give Abram an object lesson.

Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be – Abram, look up in the night sky and gaze on the stars (perhaps God opens his eyes to the immensity of their number). See if you can count them. Your descendants will be like those stars in the sky. People won't be able to count them.

Illustration - How many stars can a person in a rural area with twenty-twenty vision see? Too many to count. That's the point. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 56)

Psalm 147:4 - He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.

Genesis 13:16 - And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.

D.) Abram's Faith in God's Word

Moses, comments on Abram's interaction with and relationship to God. This one verse commentary is one of the most important verses in the Bible.

6 And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

And he believed in the Lord – You see this through Abram’s life. He had ups and downs. He had mountains and valleys. He had doubts and discouragements, but he trusted in God. He believed in the Lord and His Word to Him. He believed in the promises. He lived by faith.

Hebrews 11:8-19 - 8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. 9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: 10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. 11 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. 13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. 15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. 16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. 17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: 19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

E.) God’s Reckoning of Righteousness to Abram

6 And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

and he counted it to him for righteousness - Abram did not suddenly become a morally flawless person (righteous). Far from it! Later in the story, Abram sinned in spectacular fashion. Nor did his behavior suddenly conform to God’s perfect standard. Nothing inherent about Abram changed at all. God declared him righteous. God, acting as the supreme Judge, applied all the rights and privileges of righteousness to Abram despite Abram’s own inability to be righteous. The Lord did this because of Abram’s faith. God considered Abram righteous, not because he was, but because of Abram’s faith in God. (Swindoll, 2014, pp. 57-58)

- New Testament writers use this passage to prove that people receive salvation/forgiveness of sin by God’s grace through faith (see Romans 4:3, 20-22; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23) rather than through man’s merit through works. That’s why Paul regarded Abraham not only as the father of the Hebrew nation but also as “the spiritual father of those who have faith” (Romans 4:11). Just like Abraham, all those who place their trust in the Lord God “are counted as righteous because of their faith” (verse 11). (Swindoll, 2014, p. 58)

Romans 4:1-6 - What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

- Looking back at Abram (our father; the father of the Jews), what did he discover in the matter of salvation?

2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.

- If Abram were righteous before God because of his good works, he would have cause for pride and boasting. That's pretty amazing.
- But this was not the case in what we see in Abram's relationship with God.

3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

- What does the Bible tell us?
- Abram trusted in God. He put his faith in God. And God declared/counted/credited him as righteous on account of his faith.

4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

- Paul here uses a business analogy
 - If a man works, his wages are credited to his account according to debt. He is owed that money for the work he has done. However, if a man does not work and yet still receives wages, his wages are given to him by grace, not owed to him as a debt. It is given by grace to one who does not deserve it, not paid as a debt to one who does deserve it.
 - Illustration
 - You are paid your wages. It is a debt that your employer owes to you.
 - You are given a bonus. It is a gift that your employer graciously gives to you.
 - We give gifts. We pay debts.
 - Salvation is not a debt that God pays to you because of your works. It is gift that God gives to you in accordance with faith.

5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

- In the same way, the one who realizes that he can't do enough good to be deserving of God's righteousness, but puts his faith and trust in God to save him, will be given forgiveness of sins and declared righteous, not as something he deserves but as a gracious gift he is freely given from God.
 - Salvation is not something that God pays to us because we deserve it.
 - It is something God gives to us though we don't deserve it.

6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works

- It's just like what David talked about in Psalm 32:1-2 when he talked about how blessed the man is who is forgiven and declared righteous by God, not based on how good he is but how gracious God is.
- Psalm 32:1-2 – 1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

Romans 4:20-25 - He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

- We too can be forgiven. We too can be declared righteous if we believe that God raised up Jesus from the dead, the one who had died on the cross to pay for our sins.

Galatians 3:6-14 - Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

- If we put our faith in God as Abram did, then we are in a sense the spiritual children of Abram.

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

- God knew all the way back when that He would save the world faith in Jesus and His death on the cross. That's how He could tell Abram that it would be through his great great great great great ...grandson that all nations of the earth would be blessed.

So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

- Those who fail to perfectly obey the law are cursed before God. Leviticus 18:5 tells us that. The problem is that none of us perfectly keep the law.
- Therefore, those who seek to justify themselves before God based on their works are cursed because no one can live up to that standard.

But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

- We know that we can't be forgiven and declared righteous and have spiritual life based on what we do. Habakkuk talked about this in chapter 2 verse 4 when he said that the righteous have life by means of faith. (Poole, 1990) And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

- Under the law, you can only have life if you perfectly keep every command. Otherwise, it's a curse under which you stand condemned. Therefore, all of humanity as sinners stands condemned under the curse of the law. (Poole, 1990)

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

- Christ took on Himself our condemnation, our curse, our death sentence when He died on the cross on our behalf. (cf. Deut. 21:23)

That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

- He did so that all the nations of the earth could be blessed through Himself.
- That we could be saved from our sin, declared righteous by God, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit not through works, but through faith in Christ. (Barnes, 1834)

F.) God's Declaration of Power and Purpose

7 And he said unto him, I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.

And he said unto him I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees to give thee this land to inherit it – Abram, I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur to this land (power) for the purpose of giving you this land to inherit (purpose).

- I brought you here for a purpose, and I'm going to fulfill that purpose.
Nehemiah 9:7 - Thou art the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham;

Acts 7:2-4 - And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.

Genesis 12:7 - And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.

Genesis 13:15-17 - For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.

G.) Abram's Request for Confirmation

8 And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?

And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? – Abram's question was not an expression of doubt, but of desire for the confirmation or sealing of a promise, which transcended human thought and conception. (Keil & Delitzsch, 1857-1878)

- That's confirmation through a formal covenant is what we're going to look at in detail next week.

Genesis 24:2-4 - And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.

Genesis 24:13-14 - Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.

Application

Are you dealing with doubt and discouragement in your life right now? Do you feel like God's promises are not being kept in your life? Are you wandering in a valley wondering when it's going to end?

Take some time to encourage yourself in the Word of God. The God we serve is a powerful, purposeful protector and provider. And in the midst of difficult times we can encourage ourselves in God's Word and His promises by spending time in this book.

Genesis 15:9-21

Review

Genesis 15 is all about God's confirmation of His promises to Abram

Last week, we saw this back and forth between God and Abram wherein God confirmed His promises to Abram through His word. We left off with Abram asking God to formally confirm His promises through some sort of sign or ceremony.

This week we are going to see God confirm His promises to Abram through a covenant ceremony.

Sermon

Apparently, the events of verses 1-21 happen over at least a two day period. Verses 1-6 happen at night time. Abram's preparations for the covenant ceremony take place prior to sunset of the following day. The actual covenant ceremony itself takes place the following evening in the darkness of night. (Sorenson, 2007)

1.) The Preparations for the Covenant Ceremony

9 And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.

Today our contracts (covenants) are formalized electronically or physically with signatures and notaries. Local governments keep these records and enforce them when issues arise. Although some during the time of Abram could read and write, most people could not. In fact, paper had not even been invented yet, so most writing, when done, was done on clay tablets.

- All of that goes to say that when your average Joe needed to enter into a contract agreement with another party, paper and ink contracts weren't really an option. In the case of important agreements/covenants, the parties often engaged in a quite memorable and gory ceremony involving animal sacrifice.

In similar fashion, God and Abram are going to engage in such a covenant/contract ceremony to formalize the agreement between the two of them.

God instructed Abram, "Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon" (Genesis 15:9).



Heifer – female cow

She Goat – female goat (generally slimmer than sheep; browse for food; hair)

Ram – male sheep (generally stockier than goats; graze for food; wool)

Turtledove – generally of smaller stature

Pigeon – often larger and stubbier

10 And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not.

Having surely been apart of such covenant ceremonies in the past, Abram knew just what to do. (Swindoll, 2014, pp. 58-59)

And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not - He took the animals, killed them, cut the three larger land animals in half, and laid them on the ground adjacent to one another likely forming a sort of pathway down the middle.

- Traditionally, both parties in the contract/covenant agreement would walk down the middle aisle of those cut up animals (in front of family and witnesses). In doing so they were committing to keep the terms of the contract and saying, “If I break this agreement, may I be cut in pieces like these animals.” (Sorenson, 2007)
 - o Illustration – imagine having to do that every time you bought a house; some people would probably take their mortgage payments a little more seriously
- Jeremiah 34:18-19 - And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof. The princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of the calf;

11 And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

It's important to remember that nothing is ever recorded in the Bible by accident. The fact that this occurrence is recorded in this story tells us that it is significant in its relationship to the covenant ceremony.

And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away – To his shock and dismay, birds of prey/vultures came down on the carcasses that were to be used in the covenant ceremony.



- It's almost like these carnivorous birds are attacking the covenant ceremony with God.
 - o If you're Abram, this is not how you would have wanted to start the ceremony. This is a bad, dark sign and a bad start to this important ceremony. Abram likely would have interpreted it ominously. (Blum, Walvoord, & Zuck)
 - o This dark sign is going to set the stage for a dark dream.

2.) The Dream before the Covenant Ceremony

12 And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.

And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram – earlier in the day, Abram had seen a dark sign (the vultures attacking the animals for the covenant ceremony). Now, he has fallen asleep in the dark of the night, and what happens?

And lo an horror of great darkness fell upon him – as Abram fell into a vision by dream, it was horror provoking in its darkness (Rudd)

- Dark sign -> Dark dream (nightmare) provides the setting for a dark revelation to Abram

Genesis 2:21 - And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

1 Samuel 26:12 - So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster; and they gat them away, and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither awaked: for they were all asleep; because a deep sleep from the LORD was fallen upon them.

Job 4:13-14 - In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake.

13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

Dark Sign -> Dark Dream -> Dark Revelation

And he said unto Abram – In the midst of this dark dream, God is going to reveal a dark outlook/a dark glimpse into the future for Abram that is going to explain the symbolism of the vultures attack on the covenant ceremony.

- God's announcement of Israel's 400 year affliction would have clarified the meaning of the attacking birds. (Blum, Walvoord, & Zuck)

Know of a surety – you need to know something Abram

That thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs – your descendants will be foreigners in a foreign land that does not belong to them

- Illustration – imagine someone telling you that your grandchildren will be enslaved and persecuted as foreigners in a foreign land; no one wants to hear that!

And they shall afflict them four hundred years – and the inhabitants of that land will persecute your descendants and cause them great suffering for 400 years.

- Illustration – 400 years is nearly twice the age of our country. That is a long time to be persecuted.
- The word afflict used here is the same Hebrew word used in Exodus 1:11-12 to describe the suffering of Israel in Egypt. This is obviously in reference to Israel's eventual 400 year enslavement in the land of Egypt.
 - o Abram -> Isaac -> Jacob -> Joseph -> dwelling in the land -> enslaved in the land -> Moses (leads them on an Exodus from Egypt)
- Exodus 1:11-12 - 11 Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses. 12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel.
- The 400 years is significant because later, in Moses' day, when the Israelites were in bondage in Egypt they could literally count down the years and know that the time of their deliverance from slavery was not far off.
 - o Exodus 12:40 and Galatians 3:17 indicate that the total time in bondage was 430 years. Some suggest the 400 year figure given in this verse and in Acts 7:6 are rounded. (Blum, Walvoord, & Zuck) Others posit that although Israel was in the land for 430 years, they were persecuted for 400 years. Further, in an effort to reconcile these numbers with the genealogical data, some have posited an earlier start date for the countdown.

[\(https://answersingenesis.org/bible-questions/how-long-were-the-israelites-in-egypt/\)](https://answersingenesis.org/bible-questions/how-long-were-the-israelites-in-egypt/)

Acts 7:6-7 - And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four

hundred years. And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place.

Exodus 12:40-41 - Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.

Galatians 3:17 - And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.

And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge – God promised that the oppressing nation would be judged

- If God had revealed to Abram that Egypt would be the nation that would enslave his descendants, then where do you think Abram's descendants would have avoided at all costs? Egypt. Nevertheless, Egypt would be part of God's plan for the nation. (Ellicott, 1905)

And afterward shall they come out with great substance – afterwards, Israel would come out with great riches (cf. Ex. 11:2-3; 12:35-36; Ps. 105:37)

- Psalm 105:37 - He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes.
Genesis 46:1-34

Exodus 6:5-6 - And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant. Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments:

Deuteronomy 4:20 - But the LORD hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day.

Exodus 3:21-22 - And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: But every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.

15 And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.

And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age - The Lord calmed Abram's worry with the reassurance that he would die in peace after a long and fruitful life. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 59)

- Abram, this isn't going to happen in your lifetime. You will live a long life and die a peaceful death.
- What's remarkable is that all of this happened when Abram was around 85 years old. Believe it or not, Abram had not even hit his midlife crisis yet. He would live to be 175 (Gen. 25:7) and then he would die in peace and go to his fathers (as the Hebrew expression puts it). (Swindoll, 2014, pp. 59-60)
Genesis 25:8-9 - Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people. And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre;

16 But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again – after 400 years in captivity in a foreign land, your descendants will exodus from that land and return here again. But why? Why 400 years?

Why was Israel going to be in bondage for 400 years before they returned to the Promised Land and conquered it?

For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full – The Amorites are likely listed here as representative of all the Canaanite peoples.

- God was going to knock out two birds with stone. God was going to begin giving the land to Israel as He had promised, but there was a problem. As we know, there were people in the land. God was not going to have Israel arbitrarily attack and conquer the peoples of the land. He would not have Israel conquer the Promised Land until the sinfulness of those people groups had reached such a point that it merited decisive divine judgment. In the process of keeping His promises to Abram and giving Israel the land, God would use Israel to judge the inhabitants of the land for their sins by conquering and eradicating them. (Blum, Walvoord, & Zuck)
- Illustration – God does judge nations for moral depravity. The statement that “If America doesn't get right with the Lord, the Lord is going to judge it” is true. God does judge nations for their moral failures, and He has every right to.
 - o What's significant about God's judgment of the Canaanites was that God was going to use Israel as the means through which He would bring about that judgment.
 - o This is the answer to the claim by some that Israel's conquest of the land of Canaan was unjust and immoral. It was not because God (in the perfect timing, when their iniquities were full) was using them as the instrument of

divine judgment on those morally bankrupt Canaanite nations (of whom the Amorites seem to represent)

- God had planned out how He was going to fulfill His promises to Abram. Just as we often wish God would share His plans with us, I'm sure Abram felt the same way. But for Abram to see all this history in advance must have been horrible. It was, however, helpful to see it as well. For it would be a reminder to Abram and his descendants that the dark times that would occur down the road were not a threat to the fulfillment of God's promises. It was all a part of His plan. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 3824-3826)

Exodus 12:40 - Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years.

1 Kings 21:26 - And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.

2 Peter 3:8-9 - But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

3.) The Execution of the Covenant Ceremony

17 And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.

In verses 5-7, Abram had asked God for verification of His promises to Him. In verses 9-11, God had instructed Abram to take five animals and lay them out for the covenant ceremony. Then Abram fell asleep. In verses 13-16, God came to Abram in a dream and gave him further revelation about his seed as it related to the fulfillment of the promise. Now, in verses 17-21, the scene returns to God granting the verification that Abram had asked for earlier. (Sorenson, 2007)

And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark – that same night after sunset

Behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp – The Lord revealed Himself with the image of an oven and a torch (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 3824)



- These were two elements connected with ancient sacrificial rituals. (Blum, Walvoord, & Zuck)
- After God had spoken of the future suffering of the children of Abraham, a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed down the aisle that those animals had formed. I believe that the smoking furnace was a visible picture of the furnace that Israel would go through while in bondage in Egypt.
 - o Deut. 4:20 - But the Lord hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day.
- Further, I believe that the torch was a picture of God's presence. Just as God would appear to Moses as fire in the middle of a bush and just as God would lead Israel through the wilderness wanderings as a pillar of fire by night, so too God would be with them in the midst of the furnace of their bondage in Egypt.
 - o Exodus 13:21-22 - 21 And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: 22 He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

That passed between those pieces - With the darkness present, nothing else was seen in the vision except these fiery elements passing between the animals: the torch and the furnace.

- Take note of who does and who does not pass through the aisle. God does and Abram does not. If this was a contract/covenant between God and Abram, why didn't Abram pass through the aisle as well? Here's why. It wasn't a conditional covenant from God. God wasn't saying to Abram, "If you do this, then I will do this." God was saying, "Abram, I will do this. I will keep my promise to you, and that promise is unconditional." (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 3837-3841)
- As an act of pure grace, God walked the sacrificial pathway, obligating Himself to fulfill His unconditional covenant with Abram. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 60)
Exodus 3:2-3 - And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

Jeremiah 34:18-19 - And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof. The princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of the calf;

18 In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram – the Lord cut a covenant or made a formal treaty with Abram

- Hebrews 6:13-14 - 13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, 14 Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.
- The covenant was unilateral. There were no conditions attached which is what makes it an unconditional covenant that to this day has not been completely fulfilled. (Blum, Walvoord, & Zuck)

From the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates – In His covenant with Abram, God specifies the borders of the land He promised to Abram. It would be from the river of Egypt (Nile or Wadi el-Arish) in the West to the Euphrates River in the East. (Rudd) (Blum, Walvoord, & Zuck)

The territory was marked to the north and the south by ten nations that have long since dissolved

- Israel has never fully possessed all of this land, but they will when Christ returns the second time to reign in the millennial kingdom.
Genesis 13:15 - For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

Genesis 17:8 - And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

Genesis 50:24 - And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

Exodus 6:4 - And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers.

Exodus 23:27-31 - I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee. And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee. I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land. And I will set thy bounds from the Red sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river: for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee.

2 Samuel 8:1-3 – 1 And after this it came to pass that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them: and David took Gath out of the hand of the Philistines. 2 And he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive. And so the Moabites became David's servants, and brought gifts. 3 David

smote also Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates.

1 Kings 4:21 - And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life.

19 The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites,

Numbers 24:21-22 - And he looked on the Kenites, and took up his parable, and said, Strong is thy dwellingplace, and thou puttest thy nest in a rock. Nevertheless the Kenite shall be wasted, until Asshur shall carry thee away captive.

20 And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims,

Genesis 14:5 - And in the fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer, and the kings that were with him, and smote the Rephaims in Ashteroth Karnaim, and the Zuzims in Ham, and the Emims in Shaveh Kiriathaim,

21 And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

God describes the ten principal nations inhabiting the Promised Land that would be driven out by the seed of Abraham (Israel). Similar (albeit smaller) lists of nations to be conquered in the land are given during the time of Moses and Joshua. (Gill, 1811)

- Compare with Ex. 3:8; 3:17; 13:15; 23:23; 34:11; Deut. 7:1; 20:17
- The only nation listed in other passages that is not listed here is the Hivites.

According to this chapter, Abram, troubled by the apparent failure of God to provide him with a child, requested that God would guarantee the promise to him. God did so through his own covenant. However, a period of enslavement and suffering would precede fulfillment of the promises. For Abram the message was clear: In spite of having no proof of the fulfillment, and in spite of the prospects of death and suffering, his descendants would receive the promises-God assured it. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 3841-3843)

Exodus 23:23-28 - For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off. Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images. And ye shall serve the LORD your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee. There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren, in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil. I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee. And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee.

Deuteronomy 7:1 - When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou;

Application

Just as God made promises to Abram, He has made promises to us as well.

He has promised us that He will never leave us nor forsake us.

He has promised to supply our need.

He has promised us a home in heaven.

He has promised to never give us more than we can handle.

May we rest in the certainty of the promises of God.

Genesis 16:1-16

Review

Genesis 15 was all about God's confirmation of His promises to Abram.

Abram, troubled by the apparent failure of God to provide him with a child, requested that God would guarantee the promise to him.

God confirmed His promises to Abram through His Word, and then God formally confirmed His promises to Abram through a covenant ceremony.

Abram laid out five animals for a covenant ceremony. God walked through the midst of them in the form of an oven and a torch.

He unconditionally promised Abram a seed and the land.

Chapter 15 – mountain top moment of faith

Chapter 16 – pitiful valley of faithlessness

In chapter 16, Abram and Sarai become antsy about the fulfillment of God's promise to them. What did they do? They decided to help God fulfill His promises through their own plans. They grew impatient and they ran ahead of God, and they created a mess.

In chapter 16 we see the circumvention of the promise through Hagar and Ishmael.

2 primary lessons from this chapter

- From Abram & Sarai
 - o Wait on the Lord and His timing
- From Hagar
 - o Trust in God and His plan in the midst of oppression

In this story, you have an Egyptian woman, oppressed by her Jewish masters, fleeing into the wilderness, and being rescued by the Lord. This story certainly foreshadows Israel's future, in which the Jewish people would be oppressed by their Egyptian masters, flee into the wilderness, and be rescued by the Lord.

Although Abram & Sarai would cause tremendous problems by their attempt to circumvent God's timing, the Lord will show Himself faithful by responding to Hagar's affliction, providing for her needs, and promising her blessing through her son, Ishmael. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 3894-3896)

1.) The Setting

1 Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar.

Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children – up to this point in time, Abram's aging wife still had born her no children

- With every passing year Sarai's outlook as a mother was growing dimmer and dimmer. You can imagine how frustrating this would have been for Sarai. She wanted to be a mother her whole life, and for 65 years she has never gotten pregnant. Later on in her life God promises her that she will have a child, they move from Ur to Canaan and then 10 more years pass in which she does not get pregnant.
 - o Hope deferred makes the heart sick, and this now 75 year old woman must have been heartbroken.
- Not only that, but Abram's childlessness certainly become more and more embarrassing with each passing year. No doubt, he had told people of God's promise to him regarding a son and a seed, and with each passing year, it became more and more embarrassing. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 69)
 - o Illustration – telling people to just wait till next year with the Jags.

And she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar – Sarai had a personal servant, an Egyptian lady name Hagar, who was likely picked up during their misadventure in Egypt some 10 years prior when they first arrived in Canaan (cf. 12:4 and 16:16). (Plummer, 1902)

There is a parallel between the stories in Genesis 12 and 16. In Genesis 12, God has called Abram to the land that He has promised to him, but after he arrives, a grievous famine strikes the land, and it is barren. In that moment, Abram is faced with decision. Do I stay here where God has called me and patiently wait on God's provision, or do I take things into my own hand and go to Egypt for my provision?

In Genesis 16, God has promised Abram a son through his wife Sarai. However, as time goes on, it appears that his wife is barren. She has gone her whole life without bearing him a child, and it does not seem as if that is going to change any time soon. In this moment, Abram is faced with a decision. Do I wait patiently on God's provision with my barren wife as He has promised, or do I look to the Egyptian for provision? That faithless trip to Egypt in Genesis 12 brought Abram great heartache (split up of him and Lot), and this faithless scheme in Genesis 16 will bring Abram great heartache as well.

Genesis 15:2-3 - And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.

Genesis 12:16 - And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels.

Galatians 4:24 - Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

2.) Abram & Sarai's Faithless Scheme

2 And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

And Sarai said unto Abram Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing – Sarai blames God for her circumstances and for the lack of the fulfillment of His promise to them. On the one hand, God had promised them a child. On the other hand, He had kept her from having children her whole life. Sarai's frustration certainly stems from her impatience as God declines to fulfill His promise in her timing.

- Over time if not dealt with, hurt and heartache turns into bitterness.
 - o Bitterness is the poison we swallow hoping to hurt the other party, and all we end up doing is destroying ourselves and every relationship we touch.
- I believe that's what we see here. She is bitter and blames God for the situation.

I pray thee, go unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her - Sarai's solution to the problem of not having a child incorporated social customs of the day as a means of fulfilling the promise. Legal customs made it clear that a barren wife could give her maid to her husband as a wife and that a son born of that union could be the heir if the husband ever declared him to be so. Sarai's plan, then, was culturally acceptable in the Ancient Near East. We look back on this and say, "What in the world were they thinking?" ...but culture at that time would have said, "Eh, no big deal." (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 3915-3918)

- Sarai's mindset is seemingly, "Hey, I might not be able to have children, but my husband can still father a nation. And if we wait much longer, we won't even be able to raise this child. Perhaps God wants us to pursue His promise rather than wait for it to happen? God helps those who help themselves, right?" (Swindoll, 2014, p. 69)
- The problem is not necessarily that Sarai suggested such a solution to her husband. The problem is who she didn't ask. God. The same thing happened in Genesis 12 when they left Canaan for Egypt because of the famine. They didn't ask God. No one took the time to ask God if what they were planning was what He was planning. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 70)

- o Illustration – asking God for wisdom with the planning day this Saturday

And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai – Abram acquiesced to his wife, when he should have been the one leading her. He should have gone to the Lord in prayer. He should have told his wife no, but he failed to spiritually lead his home in this situation.

- Men, God has called you to be the spiritual leader in your home, not just in name, but in action.
 - o It is a shame that in many Christian homes today, the wife is in a far higher plane of spirituality than her husband. The solution to that conundrum is not for the wife to come down here, but for him to get his rear up there.
 - For him to be a man of prayer
 - For him to read the Bible
 - For him to be in church

- For him to emulate the fruits of the Spirit
- For him to love his wife as Christ loved the church
- For him to raise his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord
- Being a man has nothing to do with size of your biceps or the tone of your voice, and it has everything to do with your Christlikeness.
 - Tough guys that don't emulate Jesus are weak.
 - Guys that aren't meek, kind, forgiving, gracious, generous, selfless, etc are weak.

Genesis 30:3 - And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her.

Genesis 3:12, 17 - 12 And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. 17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

3 And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.

And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife - ten years had passed since when Abram and Sarai had arrived in Canaan and the current events. And Abram was 75 (Sarai 65) when they arrived. Ten years is a long time to wait for a promised child, but when you're as old as Abram and Sarai were, 10 years wouldn't have been a long time. It would have been an eternity.

- So after ten years of waiting, Abram and Sarai decided to help God fulfill His promise to them and exploited a cultural loophole. Sarai gave her maid to Abram to be his wife.

Genesis 30:4 - And she gave him Bilhah her handmaid to wife: and Jacob went in unto her.

Genesis 30:9 - When Leah saw that she had left bearing, she took Zilpah her maid, and gave her Jacob to wife.

Genesis 25:6 - But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country.

Genesis 28:9 - Then went Esau unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife.

4 And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.

And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived – Abram marries Hagar, and almost immediately Hagar becomes pregnant. We know this because Abram is 86 when Ishmael is born which means that from the marriage to the birth was a year.

- “Well, would you look at that? God finally answered our prayers. See, God just wanted us to take things into our own hands this whole time. Praise the Lord. He is good. Abram, now you will be a father of a great nation.”

And when she (Hagar) saw that she had conceived, Her mistress (Sarai) was despised in her eyes – Upon becoming pregnant, Hagar begins to look down on Sarai and treat her with insolence. As a proud mother of the soon to be heir of Abram, Hagar’s disposition towards Sarai shifts dramatically.

- In the ancient near east, barren women were seen as worthless to society, and it seems as if Hagar been to treat her mistress as such.
- The plan to have Hagar bear a surrogate son backfired, and rather than bringing joy to the household at last, it caused everyone to start turning against one another. The home became a combat zone. (Swindoll, 2014, pp. 71-72)

5 And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the Lord judge between me and thee.

And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee – You know how Sarai blamed for the conflict between her and Hagar? Abram. Abram, this is your fault!

- She was bitter against God, and now she is bitter against Abram.

I have given my maid into thy bosom – I gave you Hagar

And when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes – and when she became pregnant, her attitude toward me completely changed. My handmaid now looks down on me, and you haven’t done anything about it.

The Lord judge between me and thee – may God judge between me and you, you unrighteous man, since this is all your fault. He’ll show us who is in the wrong here.

- In invoking God, she expresses incredible confidence that she is right and her husband is wrong...even though frankly they were both in the wrong.
 - o Her ability to utilize religious vernacular in invoking God’s judgment on another for the negative outcomes of the faithless act that she had come up with is unbelievable. But sin and self righteousness have a way of blinding us to our own sin and enlarging the sins of others in our line of sight.

Genesis 31:53 - The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob sware by the fear of his father Isaac.

6 But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thine hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.

But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thine hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee – in what Abram says here, he is relinquishing Hagar in status back to Sarai as her servant. He is making it abundantly clear that Hagar is not on the same plane of importance as Sarai, and that Sarai can treat her as her servant in whatever way she'd like. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 3929) "You day what you want with her."

- You say, "That's terrible." Absolutely it was.
- In Genesis 16, Abram and Sarai are the bad guys.

And when Sarai dealt hardly with her – because of her bitterness, she lashed out in anger. The word here used to describe Sarai's treatment of Hagar is the same word used to describe Egypt's future treatment of Israel when they were in bondage to them (cf. Gen. 15:13). (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 3929) Sarai persecuted and afflicted Hagar. She was putting Hagar back in her place.

She fled from her face – it was so bad that she ran away

- This really makes you think. "Just how bad does a situation have to be for a pregnant woman to risk dying in the wilderness rather than staying under that roof?" (Swindoll, 2014, p. 72)
- It was that bad.

3.) God's Sustaining Encounter with Hagar

A.) His Presence

7 And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur.

And the angel of the Lord found her – in the midst of her oppression, injustice, and pain, God saw her and found her.

- This is the first time that the "Angel of the Lord" is mentioned in the Old Testament. The angel is identified with Yahweh in 16:13, 22:11-12; 31:11, 13; 48:16; Judges 6:11, 16, 22; 13:22-23; and Zechariah 3:12. However, the Angel of the Lord is also seen as distinct from Yahweh (cf. Gen. 24:7; 2 Samuel 24:16; Zech. 1:12). This has led some to believe that the Angel of the Lord is Jesus, that the appearances of the angel of the Lord are preincarnate appearances of Christ. (Blum, Walvoord, & Zuck, p. 57)

By the fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur – the road to Shur was a caravan route used by merchants traveling from Canaan to Egypt. This is where the angel of the Lord found her by a spring. She was probably on her way back to Egypt. (Plummer, 1902)

- Israel fled from Egypt. Hagar fled to Egypt.

Genesis 25:18 - And they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that is before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria: and he died in the presence of all his brethren.

Exodus 15:22 - So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water.

8 And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai.

And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, when camest thou? And whither wilt thou go? – To check her pride and humble her, the angel of the Lord calls her Sarai's maid, not Abram's wife. (Benson, 1857)

- He then asks her, "Where did you come from? And where are you going?"
 - o He asks her not because He doesn't know. I mean He already knows who she is. Undoubtedly, He knows everything about the situation. But He wants to draw the truth out of her.

And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai – Note that she doesn't say where she's going. Perhaps it is the case that she's not really heading to Egypt as much as she is fleeing from the wrath of her mistress Sarai.

B.) His Counsel

9 And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.

And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Return to thy mistress and submit thyself under her hands – God tells her to return to Sarai, humble herself before her, and submit to her.

- Why?
 - o Was it because Sarai deserved it? No.
 - o Was it because Abram and Sarai were in the right? No.
 - o It was because God was going to work through her and bless her in the midst of the unjust situation she had been put into.
 - o He wasn't really calling her to obey them as much as He was calling her to obey Him.

Application – you are not responsible for the wrongdoing of others. You are responsible for how you respond to what God has called you to do.

Illustration – "Life is 10% what happens to me and 90% of how I react to it." – John Maxwell Quote

Illustration – when someone mocks me, criticizes me, lashes out in anger at me, every fiber of my being wants to respond in kind. But guess what? That is not how God has called me to act. God's calling and commandments in my life are independent of how I am treated.

- This is what Jesus means when he says to love your enemies. We don't love people because of how they treat us. We love them because of how God has called us to treat them.

Ephesians 6:5-6 - Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

Titus 2:9 - Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again;

1 Peter 2:18-25 - Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

1 Peter 5:5-6 - Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

C.) His Promise

God promises blessing in respond to obedience to Him, even when we don't understand Him.

10 And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.

And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude – God promises Hagar that through her an innumerable seed of descendants would come forth.

- In the following verse, He describes how this would happen.
Genesis 17:20 - And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.

11 And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction.

And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child and shalt bear a son – Hagar, you’re pregnant, and you are going to have a son

- Up to this point, they would not have known the gender of the child. There were no ultrasounds.

And shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction – God is the one who names Hagar’s son, and He names him Ishmael which means “God hears.”

- Application: Friend, God hears you, and God sees you where you are at.
- His name would forever be a reminder of how the Lord heard Hagar’s cry in the wilderness as she suffered affliction at the hands of Sarai. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 3948)
Psalm 22:24 - For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.

12 And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.

And he will be a wild man – he will be like a wild donkey (untamable, strong, free, and roaming) (Plummer, 1902)

- The image of a wild donkey is derogatory in our language and culture, but that was not the case in the ancient Near East. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 73)

His hand will be against every man, and ever man’s hand against him – he will be hostile and in conflict with others. His destiny will be filled with strife and tension. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 3968)

- In this way, Ishmael’s life would reflect his origins. He would be an aggressive man born into a hostile home environment. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 73)
- Application: hostile home environments often manifest themselves in the character of the children that are raised within them
 - o Ephesians 6:4 - And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Genesis 21:20 - And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer.

Genesis 25:18 - And they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that is before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria: and he died in the presence of all his brethren.

And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren – he will maintain his independence from his brethren (Abram’s other offspring) and as a foe will dwell close at hand over against them ever ready to attack and raid their territory. (Plummer, 1902)

D.) Her Response

13 And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?

And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me – She calls Yahweh the God who sees me. Why?

For she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me? – Have I here seen the one who sees me?

- Thus, in the name that God gives to Ishmael and in the name that Hagar gives to God, we see that God is a God who hears us and who sees us and blesses us when we obey Him.

Application – when we find ourselves in the midst of oppression, injustice, or sorrow, we too can encounter God just as Hagar did. We can encounter God in prayer, and we can be confident that He hears us, and He sees us. And we can encounter God in His Word, and we can be confident that we hear Him and see Him.

Psalm 139:1-12 - O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

14 Wherefore the well was called Beerlahairoi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

Beerlahairoi – well of the living One who sees me (Blum, Walvoord, & Zuck, p. 57)

The location of the well is commonly believed to be located in a place where there are springs and on the caravan road to Egypt. (Plummer, 1902)

Genesis 25:11 - And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac dwelt by the well Lahairoi.

15 And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael.

And Hagar bare Abram a son: And Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael – the fact that Abram names the boy Ishmael suggests that Hagar told him of her encounter with God and all that He had told her.

- How humbling it must have been for Abram and Sarai to hear about the revelation of “the God who hears” to Hagar in the wilderness and her faith in His Word which was evidenced by her obedient return.
 - o The Lord sent Hagar back into a tense situation from which she fled, but he sent her with a message and with hope.
 - That message was that if we in times of distress call out to the God who hears us and sees, He will keep His promises to us. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 3996)
 - “Trust God's Word and patiently wait for his promises. Foolishly to adopt worldly customs and expedients will only complicate matters and bring in greater tensions.” (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 4002-4004)
- When Isaac’s wife was barren, he would not make the same mistake that his parents did. He prayed (Gen. 25:21).
Galatians 4:22-23 - For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.

16 And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.

- Abram was 86 when Ishmael was born to Hagar.
- It was 11 years after Abram arrived in Canaan that he had Ishmael. Do you know how much longer it would be before he had the true son of promise? 14 years...when he was 100 years old. (Genesis 21:5)

We like things to be fast. When we’re at a restaurant, we don’t want to wait for a table. When we order something online, we want overnight delivery or an instant download. We like the fast lane. We like the idea of bullet trains. We like fast food. We don’t even like missing one panel of a revolving door. Why? Because life is short, and we don’t want to waste time waiting. But it is usually in waiting that God does His best work in us. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 76)

Application

Do you find yourself in the midst of a situation where you don’t have clear direction? Are you unsure of what to do? Wait on the Lord. Ask Him what He would have you to do?

Do you find yourself in the midst of a situation of hurt, fear, or oppression? Trust in the Lord. Know that through prayer and the Word of God, He sees you and hears you, and that you can see Him and hear Him.

Genesis 17:1-14

Review

Following God's formal guarantee of his promise of a seed to Abram in chapter 15, Abram and Sarai grow impatient in chapter 16.

They take the fulfillment of God's promise into their own hands and move forward with a plan without asking His input. Sarai gives her handmaid Hagar to be Abram's wife. Hagar quickly gets pregnant, and then the situation explodes.

Hagar begins looking down on Sarai. Sarai responds by mistreating and abusing Hagar to the point where she runs away into the wilderness.

God meets her in the wilderness, counsels her to return, and promises her that a great nation will come from her. He tells her to call her son Ishmael which means "God hears", she calls God by the name "The God who sees", and the well where they met was called Beerlahairoi which means "well of the living one who sees me."

Hagar returns, tells Abram and Sarai of her encounter with "the God who sees" who told her to name the child Ishmael ("God hears"), and Ishmael is born 11 years after Abram and Sarai had arrived in Canaan.

Chapter 15 – The Confirmation of the Covenant

Chapter 16 – The Circumvention of the Covenant

Chapter 17 – The Reaffirmation of the Covenant

Sermon

1.) The Reappearance of Almighty God

1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

And when Abram was ninety years old and nine – in Genesis 16:16, Abram is 86. In Genesis 17:1, he is 99. Do you know what that means? 13 years had passed. 13 years of silence had passed between Genesis 16 and Genesis 17.

The Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God – God refers to Himself here as El Shaddai. "El" means "God", and "Shaddai" means "Mighty." He calls Himself the Almighty God.

- This is the first time the Bible uses this name for God, although it uses it 47 more times subsequently. Of the 48 total times the Bible refers to God as El Shaddai, 31 of

them occur in the story of Job, another man who experienced God's silence/inactivity for a prolonged period of time.

- The basic message God communicated through this name following a prolonged silence was: "While I am sometimes silent, I remain in control of your circumstances." (Swindoll, 2014, p. 81)

Walk before me – take note that God tells Abram to walk before Him, not to walk with Him. Although both can be accurate descriptions of what God calls us to do in our relationship with Him, the metaphor used here has a distinct connotation.

- We walk with a friend.
 - o Illustration – my wife and I taking walks
- We walk before a superior as they instruct us in where to go.
 - o Illustration – drill instructor in the military
 - Walking before your drill instructor is doing what he says.
 - Walking before God is doing what He says.
 - o "Walk before me, doing the right things one step at a time, one day after another, for all the days of your life. Do this as I direct you on where to go." (Swindoll, 2014, p. 82)
 - Application – we walk with God, but we also walk before God. He is our friend, but He is also our superior.
 - In order to walk before God, we have to be listening to Him, and then we must heed his voice (not just being hearers, but being doers of the word)

And be thou perfect – be thou complete, mature, blameless

- A mature, wholesome Christian life is the result of walking before God.
Genesis 16:16 - And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.

Ephesians 3:20 - Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

Genesis 5:24 - And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.

Genesis 6:9 - These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.

Genesis 48:15 - And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day,

Micah 6:8 - He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

Job 1:1 - There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.

Deuteronomy 18:13 - Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God.

2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.

And I will make my covenant between me and thee – God had already promised and formally made the covenant with Abram in Genesis 15:18. Here the Hebrew wording indicates that He is going to give the covenant, that He is going to set in operation the things promised in the covenant. (Keil & Delitzsch, 1857-1878)

Genesis 15:18 - In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

And will multiply thee exceedingly – and I will take you (one person) and will make you exceedingly numerous

3 And Abram fell on his face:

And Abram fell on his face – following thirteen years of silence/inactivity, Abram did not respond to God's presence with questions or complaints. He fell on his face before his God and his friend. This was an expression of humility in lowering himself in recognition of the greatness of the Almighty God. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 81)

2.) The Reminders of the Covenant

3 ... and God talked with him, saying,

A.) A New Name for Abram

4 As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.

And God talked with him, saying, As for me – so far as I am concerned

Behold – admire, take note of. Behold what?

My covenant is with thee and thou shalt be a father of many nations – my covenant is with you and you will become a father of a multitude of nations.

- This would be true both physically and spiritually.
 - o Abram would physically be the father of many nations through Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and Esau.
 - o Abram would also spiritually be the father of many nations as he is called the spiritual father of all those who have followed in his footsteps as people of faith.
 - Romans 4:16-17 - 16 Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, 17 (As it is written, I have made thee a

father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

Genesis 12:2 - And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

Genesis 13:16 - And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.

Genesis 15:18 - In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

Romans 4:11-18 - And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.

Galatians 3:28-29 - There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham, for a father of many nations have I made thee – In Eastern cultures a change of name is important because it advertises a change in status or circumstances of the person. A name change is a public billboard that communicates something about the person. (Jamieson, Fausset, & Brown, 1884)

- Illustration – change of last name in western culture communicates a change of marital/family status

- God is going to publicly communicate something by changing Abram's name to Abraham.
- The name Abram is composed of two elements "ab" meaning "father" and "ram" meaning "exalted". Thus, Abram's name meant "exalted father". Having received this name at birth, Abram himself was not a father, and the name was likely in reference to his father Terah. It would signify that he was born to an exalted father or that he was a person of high birth. It pointed back to Terah.
- Abram's new name "Abraham" sounds very similar to "Ab-hamon" which means "the father of a multitude." Thus, the biblical explanation of the significance of the name change is a play on words, rather than an exact etymology.
 - o And yet, this new name would be a perpetual reminder of the promise that Abraham would be the father of a multitude. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 4088-4098)
 - o Application – just as Abraham was called a new name by God to signify his status in relation to God, so too we as believers have been called/named by God to signify our status in relationship to Him. In the New Testament, Christians are often referred to as the "called" of God (Rom 1:6; 8:28; 1 Cor 1:24). That word "called" does not just mean that God has invited us to be saved, it also signifies that since we have responded to His call in faith, He has called us/named us His people. The phrase "called" has a naming significance to it. As Christians, we also have a calling to live in accordance with our newfound identity as God's people (for example, 1 Cor 1:26; Eph 4:1, 4; Phil 3:14; 2 Thess 1:11; 2 Tim 1:9). Our status of being called God's people entails that we have an obligation to live and act in a manner that befits that calling. (Klein, 2015, p. 255)

Genesis 32:28 - And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

John 1:42 - And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.

Revelation 2:17 - He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

In verses 6-8, five times God is going to affirm unconditional promises regarding things He Himself (the Almighty One) would accomplish.

B.) A Restatement of God's Promises

6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

And I will make thee exceeding fruitful – I will make you bear much fruit. Abram had already had Ishmael by Hagar. He would also have Isaac by Sarah, and following Sarah's death and his subsequent marriage to Keturah, he would have six additional sons. Abraham would be exceeding fruit bearing. (Gill, 1811)

And I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee - A multitude of nations and kings are to trace their descent from Abram. This is true in a literal sense. The twelve tribes of Israel and many Arab tribes, the twelve princes of Ishmael, Keturah's descendants, and the dukes of Edom sprang from him. (Barnes, 1834)

Matthew 1:17 - So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee - I will establish my covenant between me and not only you, but also your descendants, and I will do so as an everlasting covenant. I will be a God unto you and your seed after you forever. (Sorenson, 2007)

Psalms 105:8-11 - He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations. Which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac; And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant: Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance:

Romans 9:4 - Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;

Romans 9:7-9 - Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.

Exodus 3:15 - And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.

8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession – God promised the land of Canaan (the land in which Abraham was currently a pilgrim) to him and to his descendants after him for an everlasting possession.

And I will be their God – once again, He reiterates that He will be a God to Abraham's seed forever.

Genesis 12:7 - And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.

Genesis 13:15 - For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

Genesis 13:17 - Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.

Exodus 31:16-17 - Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.

Exodus 40:15 - And thou shalt anoint them, as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office: for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations.

Leviticus 16:34 - And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year. And he did as the LORD commanded Moses.

Numbers 25:13 - And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.

C.) A Perpetual Sign of Circumcision

9 And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.

And God said unto Abraham – as for you, let me share some additional things. The Lord now turned the subject from Himself to focus on Abraham. He had outlined His own part of the covenant and had given Abraham a confirming sign in the form of a new name. Now He gave Abraham a part to play. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 85)

Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations - He was to keep the covenant and teach his descendants to do the same. The Hebrew word for keep means “to watch, preserve, have charge of.” It's the same term God used in giving Adam the responsibility to tend the Garden of Eden (see Genesis 2:15). The covenant was

unconditional, and yet God called Abraham and his descendants to hold to the covenant. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 85)

- How were Abraham and his descendants to hold to the covenant? They were to do so, as verse 10 explains, by observing the token/sign/reminder of the covenant. Psalm 25:10 - All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.

Psalm 103:18 - To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

10 This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.

This is my covenant which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; - This is the token/sign (vs. 11) of my covenant which you and your descendants will observe between you and me.

- Signs/Tokens – point us to things; remind us of things
 - o Illustration – lobby tv signage points people to where they should go; it reminds them of where the auditorium, restrooms, and classes all are.
- Illustration – God made a covenant with Noah that he would never completely flood the earth again, and He gave him a token/sign to remind him of that promise. Do you remember what it was? It was the rainbow. The rainbow was the sign of the covenant God made with Noah not to flood the whole earth again
Genesis 9:11-13 - 11 And I will establish my covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. 12 And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: 13 I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

God was giving Abraham and his descendants a token/sign that they were to keep which would remind them of God's promises to Abraham that He would give him the land, a great seed to inherit the land, and that through his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed. What was the token/sign/reminder? Circumcision.

Every man child among you shall be circumcised - As a reminder of His covenant/promise that a great multitude would come from Abraham, God wanted each male starting with Abraham to bear a very personal reminder. On the eighth day of a boy's life, his father must circumcise him. This would remind them of God's promise, and it would identify them as a Jew (part of the covenant community). (Swindoll, 2014, pp. 85-86)

Deuteronomy 30:6 - And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.

Romans 2:28-29 - For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

Romans 4:9-11 - Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

Galatians 5:3-6 - For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

Colossians 2:11-12 - In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

- “You believers, you have no need of external circumcision. You have already received the true circumcision of the heart and life. Your whole sinful nature has been cut away. You received it by virtue of your union with Christ by faith. When He was buried, you, your former wicked selves, were buried with Him. When He was resurrected, as new creatures, you were resurrected with Him, all by the power of God when you believed. It is done. It is complete. The old nature is dealt with; new life is begun. Complete salvation is yours; you don’t need anything else.” (MacArthur, Complete in Christ Colossians 2:10-15, 1976)

Philippians 3:5 - Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.

And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin – just as Abraham’s name change was meant to be a reminder of God’s promise to him of a seed, the sign of circumcision would be a very pertinent physical reminder of God’s promise to Abram to provide him with a seed. You can see the obvious connection there. Further, it would be a reminder to those male descendants that they were a part of the fulfillment of that promise that God made to Abraham.

And it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you – this token/sign was to serve as a personal symbol of man's participation in God's promise to Abraham. It identified you with ethnic Israel.

- For those who were born physical male descendants of Abraham, the symbolic act of circumcision didn't give the boy salvation; it merely reminded him that God gives grace to the undeserving and that like father Abraham, he must receive it by faith. So from the ancient days of Abraham until now, circumcision has remained the mark of the covenant carried by every obedient Hebrew male. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 86)
- By the time of Jesus, about two thousand years later, many Jewish theologians believed that circumcision automatically made a boy righteous in God's eyes. The apostle Paul set the record straight: physical circumcision is just a symbol of a man's desire to keep the covenant. Or at least it should be. Circumcision cannot replace a personal relationship with God any more than a wedding ring can substitute for a marriage. In our culture, one wears a ring on the third finger of the left hand as a sign of being faithfully married to a spouse. If you're a cheating spouse, your ring is a lie. Likewise, Paul writes that "a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not merely obeying the letter of the law; rather, it is a change of heart produced by God's Spirit" (Romans 2:29). Jewish writers called this internal devotion to God circumcision of the heart (see Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6)(Swindoll, 2014, p. 86)
- Circumcision was both a sign (symbol) and a seal (guarantee)
 - o Circumcision was a sign (symbol)
 - Every Jewish baby boy was circumcised, every one of them. It was a reminder of God's promise to Abraham. It was a sign that they belonged to an ethnic group called the Jews. It was a sign that they belonged to the nation Israel. It was not a sign of salvation. What did Paul say in Romans 9? "Not all Israel is Israel."
 - It said nothing about their salvation and yet it was also a reminder that God's ultimate desire was the spiritual circumcision of the hearts of His people. (MacArthur, 2011)
 - Jeremiah 4:4 - Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem:
 - o That symbol of physical circumcision was also a seal/guarantee (cf. Rom. 4:11)
 - Romans 4:11 - 11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:
 - Signs reminds us of things.
 - Seals guarantee us of things.
 - Circumcision was a sign/reminder of God's promises and marked one off as belonging to the ethnic group of Israel.

- Circumcision was also a seal/guarantee that Abraham was saved by faith, apart from circumcision.
 - Why? Because he had already been saved for 14 years before he was ever circumcised. Thus, we can know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Abraham was not saved by this ceremony, but by faith. And we can know beyond a shadow of a doubt, that just like Abraham, we too are not saved by ceremony, but by faith.
 - Thus, circumcision was a seal/guarantee that Abraham had been saved by faith and that we are too.

Exodus 12:48-49 - And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof. One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you.

12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.

And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you – newborn males were to be circumcised a week after the day of their birth

Every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed – the rite was to be required of every male member of the household including servants, regardless of whether the servant was born into the household (cf. Gen. 14:14) or acquired (cf. Ex. 12:44). (Plummer, 1902)

- If you were going to be part of the Jewish nation, you had to be circumcised.

13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised – Even those who were not physical descendants of Abraham were required to be circumcised to be part of the covenant community and were subsequently regarded as part of Abraham's household.

And my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant – as the sign of the covenant, circumcision is called the covenant in the flesh so far as the nature of the covenant was manifested in the flesh (Keil & Delitzsch, 1857-1878)

14 And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people – the one who would not observe the sign of the covenant

would be cut off from the people either by excommunication or death. (Lev. 17:4, 10; Num. 15:30; Ex. 12:15; Num. 19:13; Ex. 12:19). (Spence & Exell, 1883)

- Why?

He hath broken my covenant – He has broken my covenant by neglecting the symbol/reminder of it that marked off people as belonging to the community and reminded them of the promises God made to Abraham.

Exodus 12:15 - Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.

Leviticus 18:29 - For whosoever shall commit any of these abominations, even the souls that commit them shall be cut off from among their people.

Numbers 15:30-31 - But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he hath despised the word of the LORD, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him.

Jeremiah 11:10 - They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words; and they went after other gods to serve them: the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant which I made with their fathers.

Why is it so important for us to have a proper understanding of circumcision as a sign of God's promises to Abraham? Here's why. This passage and this idea is where the unbiblical teaching of infant baptism comes from.

- Circumcision was the sign of God's covenant people in the Old Testament. Baptism is the sign of God's covenant people in the New Testament. They circumcised babies born into the covenant community. Therefore, we should baptize babies born into the covenant community since baptism has replaced circumcision as the sign of the covenant. Do you see how smooth and deceptive that is?

Four Reasons Why We Reject Infant Baptism

1. Infant baptism is not in the Bible
 - a. Circumcision of Jewish babies is both prescribed and described in the Old Testament.
 - b. Baptism of Christian babies is never prescribed or described in the entire Bible.
2. Infant baptism is not New Testament baptism.
 - a. The only people who are ever baptized in the New Testament are people who have come to faith in Christ.

- b. The only mode of baptism ever mentioned in the New Testament is by immersion.
 - i. *Baptizo* – to immerse
 - ii. Baptism is a picture of your immersion into Christ's death, burial, and resurrection that took place at salvation. It's not only a picture of it. It's a public declaration of it that we are commanded to practice.
 - 1. Romans 6:3-5 - 3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:
 - c. Baptism is only ever prescribed for believers, and the Bible only ever describes believers as getting baptized.
- 3. Infant baptism is not a replacement sign for the Abrahamic mark of circumcision.
 - a. Circumcision was only a sign that people belonged to an ethnic group, a group called Jews, a nation called Israel. It said nothing about their spiritual condition. Baptism is always tied to salvation. There's no parallel. There's no connection.
 - b. The Bible never one time ever says that baptism is the new testament replacement for circumcision.
 - i. In fact there were those in the early church that claimed that you had to be circumcised in addition to faith in Jesus in order to be saved. You know how Paul never responds to that? "Whoa, whoa, whoa, wait a minute. You guys don't get it. Baptism replaces that." That would have ended the argument. Then the Judaizers would have been satisfied. He never says that.
 - c. Circumcision only applied to males. Does that mean that we should only baptize males?
- 4. Infant baptism creates an unsaved church
 - a. It destroys the reality of a saved church. Why? Because infants who have not been saved yet are declared to be a part of the church. The result is that the world is full of baptized people who do not believe in Jesus.
 - i. Just as you had only a small part of ethnic Israel that were true spiritual Israel, infant baptism creates a church in which only a part of it consists of truly saved people.
 - ii. Illustration – how many people do you know who were baptized as infants that don't even believe in God anymore?
 - iii. Illustration – this is what happened for much of church history when the church and state were merged. Every citizen was required to be a part of the church. Every citizen was thus baptized as a baby into the

church. Thus, large portions of the church consisted of people that didn't even believe in Jesus.

- b. The church universal is the collection of those who have been saved (Eph. 5:23), and the local church is a local expression of that universal body. We do not become a part of God's people, of God's church through infant baptism. We become a part of it through salvation and we publicly declare that decision through believer's baptism (Acts 2:41). (MacArthur, Is Infant Baptism Biblical?, 2011)

That is why we do not practice and will never practice infant baptism here at Horizon Baptist Church.

Application

Just as God gave Abraham and his descendants of His promises to them, God has given us reminders in the church as well: baptism and the Lord's table.

I want to encourage you as a Christian to remember what God has done for you and to remember the promises that He has made to us.

Genesis 17:15-27

Review

1.) The Reminders of the Covenant

A.) A New Name for Abram – Abraham

Abraham sounds like Abhamon which means father of a multitude. His name would be a perpetual reminder to him of God's promise that he would be the father of a great multitude.

B.) A Restatement of God's Promises

I will make you fruitful.

I will make nations and kings from you.

I will establish my covenant with you and your seed after you forever.

I will give you and your seed after you the land of Canaan forever.

I will be your seed's God.

C.) A Perpetual Sign of Circumcision

The act/rite of circumcision for Abraham and his seed would be a perpetual, personal, painful physical reminder of God's promise to Abraham to give him a seed.

Sermon

D.) A New Name for Sarai

15 And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be.

And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife – up to this point she has not been directly referenced in any of the covenant promises, but here God is going to explicitly state her role in the covenant promises

As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be – Sarai and Sarah both mean “princess”, and there is some difference of opinion in regards to the significance of the name change. Some suggest that Sarai signifies “my princess” whereas Sarah signifies “princess” in a general broader sense. (Spence & Exell, 1883) Others suggest that the slight name change is solely meant to mark off a new beginning in Sarah's life as she is now going to be explicitly included in the covenant promises. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 4126-4134)

- Regardless, verse 16 explains the significance of God's renaming of her.

Genesis 17:5 - Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

Genesis 32:28 - And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

16 And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.

And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her – here God explicitly promises that Abraham would have a son of Sarah...and not only that

Yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her – God additionally promises that through that son born to Sarah, nations and kings would arise.

- In comparing God's statement here with his statements to Abraham in verses 5-6, it becomes clear that God plans to fulfill His promises to Abraham through a child born to Sarah.
 - o To Abraham
 - **5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham;** for a father of many nations have I made thee. 6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.
 - o To Sarah
 - 15 And God said unto Abraham, **As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be.** 16 And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.
- How does Abraham respond to this revelation? His response is going to give us insight into his frame of mind at this point in his life.

Genesis 12:2 - And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

Romans 9:9 - For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.

Galatians 4:26-31 - But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

Genesis 17:6 - And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

1.) The Reaction of Abraham

A.) What he did

17 Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?

Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed – He fell on his face and cracked up. Some like to claim (based on Romans 4:19-20) that is laughter of joy, but the second half of the verse makes it pretty clear that such is not the case.

- Application – has God ever brought things into your life that were so crazy you couldn't help but laugh? Really God is that what you're doing? There's no way.
 - Illustration – laughing when Josh called me about candidating to pastor Horizon

B.) What he thought

And said in his heart, - Verse 17 describes what Abraham said in his heart. Verse 18 describes what Abraham actually said out loud.

- Illustration – isn't there often a difference between what we say in our heart and what we say out loud?
- What he says in his heart explains why he falls on his face and laughs.

Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? And shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? – Abraham having a child at 100 would have been quite improbable, but Sarah conceiving and giving birth at 90 would have been impossible. (Swindoll, 2014, pp. 86-87) Abraham laughs, not for joy, but because of the seeming ridiculousness of what God suggests.
- How do you reconcile this verse with what the Bible says in Romans 4:19-20?
 - Romans 4:19-20 - And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;
 - Staggering not at the promise of God does not mean that we never have times of uncertainty. Abraham's life was filled with moments like these. Rather, what it means is that despite those moments, our faith in God and submission to His will triumphs.

- Faith really isn't demonstrated by how we feel, but by what we do. At first, Abraham may have laughed at God's plan, and yet despite that initial reaction, he remained submissive to God and obedient to His will.
- Abraham's reaction isn't just revealed in how he laughed or what he thought, but also by what he said.

C.) What he said

18 And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!

And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! – it seems that up to this point Abraham has regarded Ishmael as the covenant son, the promised one, the one through whom God would fulfill His promises to him.

- In fact, if you go back into Genesis 16 and reread that story, despite the mess that the conception of Ishmael caused, Abraham and Sarah are never explicitly told that Ishmael was not the promised seed. The longer that time went on (remember that it's now been 13 years; Ishmael is 13), the more they probably believed, and told others, and told Ishmael that he (Ishmael) was the son of promise.
- Now imagine going 13 years believing and living and planning as if Ishmael is the son of promise and then being told by God, "Nope. He's not the one."
- You can see how Abraham's response here regarding his biological son Ishmael would make sense. "Oh that Ishmael might live before thee!"
 - Ishmael may not be Sarah's son, but he is very much Abraham's son. This is his boy, his only child!
- Application – What do you do when God takes your plans and balls them up and throws them away and lights them on fire?
 - Abraham's plan was 13 years in the making.
 - "Come on God, can't we just do my plan? Can't Ishmael just be the heir?"

2.) The Rejoinder of God

God is going to first answer what Abraham thought in his heart, and then he is going to answer what Abraham said with his lips. (Plummer, 1902)

- Application: there's no point in hiding your thoughts and feelings from God. Just tell Him how you feel and what's going through your mind.

19 And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed – Certainly, without a doubt, Sarah, your wife, will bear you a son (Ellicott, 1905)

and thou shalt call his name Isaac – and you will call him “he laughs” so that any time anyone asks about his name it will be a reminder that his birth was such an impossibility that the mere mention of it as a possibility was laughable (Ellicott, 1905)

- I want to work in your life in such a way that when people ask how your seed came to be, the answer is not “Hagar”It’s “God.”
 - o God is more concerned with His glory than He is with your plans.
 - o There are times in our lives where we need to die to our plans and submit to God’s.
- Anytime anyone asked how Isaac (“he laughs”) was born and why he was named Isaac, you know what Abraham’s response was going to be? “God” ...and in fact the story is so crazy that when God first told me I couldn’t help but laugh, and it’s probably going to make you laugh too. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 87)
 - o Illustration – how did Larry Bickford recover from Covid? God.
 - o Illustration – often when people ask me how I became the pastor, do you know what my answer is? God. He took my plans and destroyed them in a most painful confusing way, and then He replaced them with something so much better.
 - Before God can open your eyes to His plans, do you know what He often has to do? He has to destroy your plans...so that you’ll get your eyes off of yourself and your plans and your agenda, and you’ll cling to Him and hear His voice.
 - Don’t forget that the story of your life is not your story. It’s His story...and if God redirects my story a little bit to bring about His glory, well then that’s perfectly okay with me. I’m not the star of the show. I’m just a supporting character.

and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him – he is the son through which the promises I have made to you will be kept. My promises to you will become my promises to him and to his seed after him.

- Here God chooses Isaac as the line through which His promises would be fulfilled. As Paul tells us in Romans and Galatians, Isaac is a picture of salvation by faith and Ishmael is a picture of salvation through self effort. Ishmael was conceived through self effort and human plans. Isaac was conceived through a miracle of God. Just as God chose that the promises would be kept through the line of Isaac and not Ishmael, so God has chosen to save people not based on the self effort, but through faith in what he has done for them. God’s blessing in your life is not based on what you do (Ishmael). It’s based on what He did for you (Isaac).
 - o Galatians 4:22-23 - Galatians 4:22-23 – 22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a

freewoman. 23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.

Romans 9:6-9 - Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.

Galatians 4:22-31 – 22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. 23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. 24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. 25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. 26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. 27 For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. 28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. 29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. 30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. 31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.

And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee – with regards to what you said regarding Ishmael, I have heard your request.

- Application: God hears your prayers.

Behold I have blessed him – I have determined to bless him. I have many blessings in store for him. (Benson, 1857)

and will make him fruitful, - just as God had promised to make Abraham fruitful in verse 6

and will multiply him exceedingly – just as God had promised to multiply Abraham exceedingly in verse 2

Twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation – similar to what God had promised Abraham when he said in verse 6 that kings and nations would come from him.

- this promise of 12 princes coming from Ishmael is fulfilled in Genesis 25:12-18

Genesis 16:10-12 - And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction. And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.

Genesis 25:12-18 - Now these are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, bare unto Abraham: And these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: the firstborn of Ishmael, Nebajoth; and Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam, And Mishma, and Dumah, and Massa, Hadar, and Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah: These are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names, by their towns, and by their castles; twelve princes according to their nations. And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died; and was gathered unto his people. And they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that is before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria: and he died in the presence of all his brethren.

Genesis 21:13 - And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.

21 But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

But my covenant will I establish with Isaac – but Isaac is the son that I will establish my covenant with. His is the line through which my promises will be kept. His is the line through which all the nations of the earth will be blessed, and his is the line to which the land is promised.

- Application: but Abraham, we're not doing your plan. We're doing mine. Your plan is dead, and you need to bury it.
 - o By the way, notice what God does not tell Abraham here in his explanation. He doesn't tell him why. "Why can't it be Ishmael?" He doesn't answer that question.
 - o He tells him what, how, and when, but He doesn't tell him why...and that's okay. That's how God often operates in our lives.
 - Illustration – have you ever had a kid ask you a why question that there's no just possible way to dumb the answer down to their level? That's how it is often with God and us.

which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year – for the first time with regards to any of His promises to Abraham, He gives him a timeline. By this time next year, Sarah will give birth to Isaac.

- Application – God could have told Abraham when he first got to the land that he would have a son in 25 years. He didn't do that. He directed one step at a time and called Abraham to follow him one step at a time. That's what it looks like to follow God one step at a time.

22 And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.

Once God had said all that He had come to say, He left Abraham's presence and returned up to heaven from where He came. (Spence & Exell, 1883)

God has wrecked Abraham's plans. He has destroyed Abraham's vision of the future. He has shared His own plans with Abraham. How does Abraham react to that? How should we react to that? Faith, obedience, and submission.

2.) The Institution of the Covenant Sign

23 And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him.

- God had laid out 4 reminders of the covenant promises that He had given to Abraham. He had revealed that the covenant promises would be passed down and fulfilled through the seed of Isaac, not Ishmael. He had given Abraham one thing to do to on his end as a reminder of the covenant: institute the perpetual rite of circumcision.
 - o What does Abraham do? He obeys....that day.
 - o What does his obedience signify? Faith and submission to the plan of God.
 - It signified that he had taken his plans and buried them and given them to the Lord.
 - o Application: what do you do when God flips your life's script? You die to your plans, you bury them, and you submit to God through faith and obedience.
- Just as God had commanded him, Abraham took all of the males in his household/his clan (including himself) and circumcised them that day.
- Illustration: obedience is doing what you're told to do, when you're told to do it, with the right heart attitude (this marks the difference between obedience and compliance).
 - o Compliance – outward submission, inward rebellion
 - o Obedience – outward and inward submission
- How many would that have been?

Joshua 5:2-9 - At that time the LORD said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time. And Joshua made him sharp

knives, and circumcised the children of Israel at the hill of the foreskins. And this is the cause why Joshua did circumcise: All the people that came out of Egypt, that were males, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness by the way, after they came out of Egypt. Now all the people that came out were circumcised: but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised. For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people that were men of war, which came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD: unto whom the LORD sware that he would not shew them the land, which the LORD sware unto their fathers that he would give us, a land that floweth with milk and honey. And their children, whom he raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised: for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way. And it came to pass, when they had done circumcising all the people, that they abode in their places in the camp, till they were whole. And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day.

Romans 2:25-29 - For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

Romans 4:9-12 - Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

Galatians 5:6 - For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

24 And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

- First off, there was Abraham. That's one. He was ninety nine years old when he led the way in painful, but important act of obedience to God. This would be a physical reminder to him of God's covenant promises.

Romans 4:19-20 - And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

25 And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

- Then there was Ishmael. That's two. Although God's covenant promises would not be fulfilled through Ishmael's line, he was a still a part of Abraham's household at this point in time, and was thus circumcised.
- Apparently during Bible times, as a result of Ishmael's circumcision, this practice of circumcision was practiced among the Arabas, but usually not until they were thirteen years old. (Spence & Exell, 1883) (Gill, 1811)

26 In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son.

- It's reiterated that these two were circumcise the very day God instructed them to institute the covenant sign.

27 And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him.

- And not only them, but all the men of the house (the servants), whether they were born or bought.
- Up to this point in Abraham's story, there are three males in his household that we know the names of: (1) Abraham (2) Ishmael (3) Eliezer - his chief servant (who would have been circumcised)
- How many additional servants were in Abraham's household? We don't know for sure, but we do know that some 13-25 years prior when Abraham rescued Lot, that the number of the men servants born into his house was 318 (Gen. 14:14).
- On this day, at the direction of the Lord, Abraham led somewhere between 300-1000 men in this painful act of obedience to God as a reminder of God's promises and as a marker of God's covenant community.
 - o You know what that was? It was painful, yet purposeful submission to the plans of God.

Genesis 15:2 - 2 And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?

Genesis 14:14 - 14 And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan.

Application

What do you do when God takes your plans, balls them up, throws them away, and lights them on fire?

- Die to your plans.
- Bury your plans.
- Draw near to God.
- Listen to Him.
- Submit to Him in faith and obedience.

Genesis 18:1-15

Review

Abraham & Sarah's Special Visitors

In Genesis 16, Ishmael is born to Abraham and Hagar. In between chapter 16 and 17, 13 years of silence from God pass. Abraham is 99, Ishmael is 13, and God reappears to Abraham. In so doing, He reaffirms the promises that He had made to Abraham through reminders of the covenant.

Reminder 1 – a new name for Abram (Abram -> Abraham)

Reminder 2 – a restatement of God's promises

Reminder 3 – the perpetual sign of circumcision

Reminder 4 – a new name for Sarai (Sarai -> Sarah)

In giving Sarah her new name, God clearly enunciates that Ishmael is not the child of promise. He tells Abraham that the following year his 90-year-old wife Sarah will give birth to a boy named Isaac, and he will be the child of promise.

When he returned back to his tent that night, we don't know how much of what God said he shared with Sarah. Certainly, there were many aspects of the encounter that he did share (including her name change), but I don't think he shared with Sarah what God said about her having a child the next year (her surprised reaction to the news in chapter 18 is what makes me think that). Perhaps Abraham thought that if were true, she would find out soon enough.

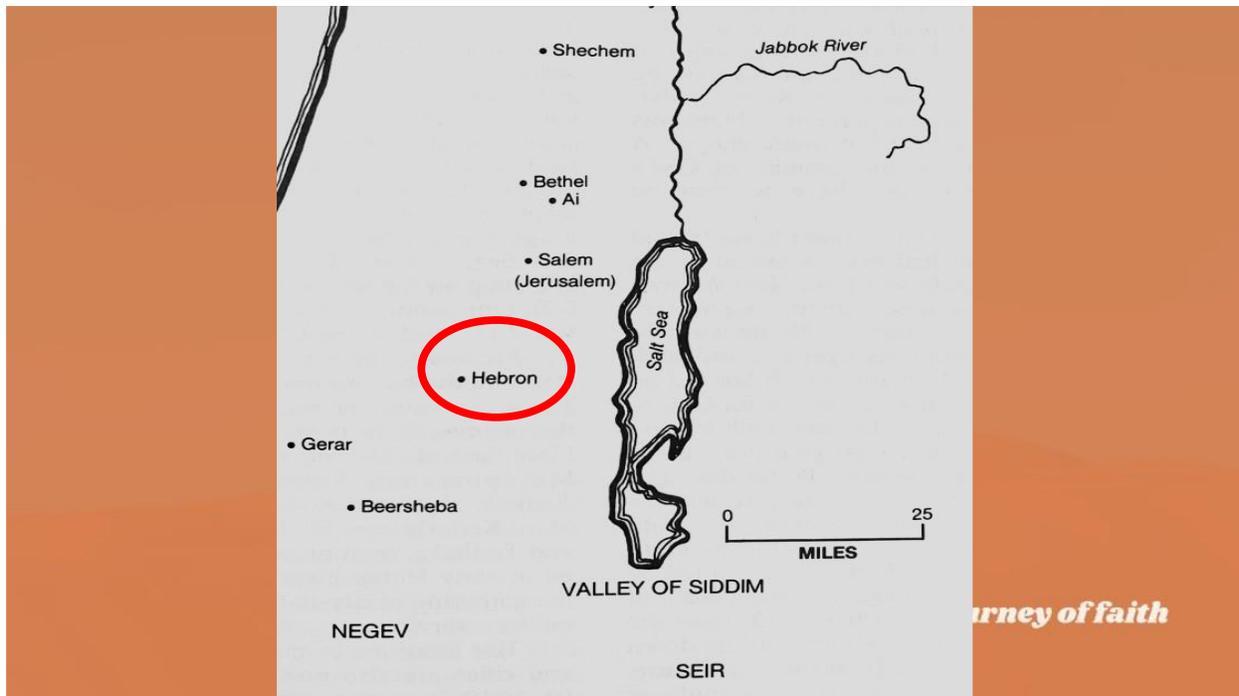
Regardless of how much she knew in chapter 17, she would definitively hear the news for herself in chapter 18 by way of three special visitors. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 95)

Sermon

1.) The Hospitality of Abraham

1 And the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day;

And the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre – Notice first that verse 1 does not refer to Abraham by name but with the personal pronoun "him". The fact that he's not mentioned by name suggests that chapter 18 connects to and builds on chapter 17, in which Abraham had already been identified as the subject. This is one of the reasons why we believe not much time has passed between the two chapters. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 4210)



- Abraham had set up camp in the plains of Mamre in Hebron. This is where He had built an altar to the Lord when he first arrived in the land (Gen. 13:18). This is where he was dwelling in Genesis 14, when he received the news about Lot's kidnapping (14:12-13).
- We are told where the Lord appeared to Abraham, but when did it happen?

And he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day – Abraham was sitting in the door of his tent during the middle of the day, when the Lord appeared to him. How did the Lord appear to him?

Genesis 15:1 - After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

Genesis 17:1-3 - And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,

Genesis 13:18 - Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD.

2 And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground,

And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo three men stood by him – he's sitting in the door of his tent. He lifts up his eyes and sees three men standing nearby.

And when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground – as soon as he sees the three men, he ran to meet them, and greeted them in the customary fashion of that Eastern culture: with a bow.

- Illustration: bows in Eastern cultures are the equivalent of handshakes in western cultures

3 And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant:

And said, My Lord – addressing the one that seemed to be the leader of the three, Abraham says, “My Lord or my good sir”

If now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee from my servant – if I have found favor in your eyes, please don’t leave. Allow me the honor of showing hospitality to you while you stop and refresh yourselves on your journey. (Gill, 1811)

- “People of the ancient Near East extended hospitality to strangers as both a sacred duty and a personal honor. Abraham said, in so many words, ‘Please do me the honor of letting me make you comfortable.’” (Swindoll, 2014, p. 96)
- One of the big questions about this passage of Scripture is, “Did Abraham know who these men were from the very outset?” I think the answer to that question is “no”. But his response here indicates that he sensed they were worthy of honorable treatment. It seemed that there was something special about these guys. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 4225-4227)
- One reason for thinking that Abraham did not know from the outset exactly who these men were is Hebrews 13:2 which says, “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”
 - o Most commentators believe that this is in reference to Abraham and Sarah’s encounter with these men in Genesis 15.

4 Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree:

Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree – Abraham offers them water to wash their feet. Once again, like bowing, this seems foreign to us. In the Ancient Near East, people wore sandals, and the terrain was very dusty, resulting in nasty feet.

- Illustration – wearing sandals at the beach
- Thus, in these cultures one of the foremost means of hospitality was providing guests an opportunity to have their feet washed. This would make them feel cleaner, and it would have the added effect of cooling their body down.
- Abraham offers his guests the opportunity to have their feet washed and encourages them to rest under the shade of a nearby tree.
 - o Recall that it is the middle of the day. It’s hot out.

Genesis 19:2 - And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night.

Genesis 24:32 - And the man came into the house: and he ungirded his camels, and gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet, and the men's feet that were with him.

5 And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said.

And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts – and I will get you some bread to eat so that you can strengthen yourselves

After that ye shall pass on – and then you can be on your way

For therefore are ye come to your servant – I don't believe that Abraham is saying that these men came nearby his tent for the purpose of receiving refreshments (e.g. as a handout). Rather, he seems to be implying that God had ordered their journey nearby his tent for the purpose of allowing him the blessing of ministering to them (which is ironic considering who he is talking to). (Spence & Exell, 1883)

- Bowing, feet washing, and hospitality are all Eastern cultural values, and yet one of those is not just an Eastern value. It is a Bible value. That's the act of hospitality.
- 1 Peter 4:9 - Use hospitality one to another without grudging.
- Romans 12:13 - Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.
- Hebrews 13:2 - Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.
 - o We are all called to be hospitable as Christians, as children of God. It's a command.

Do you know what happens right after Abraham and Sarah's encounter with these three visitors? Sodom and Gomorrah happens, and the "hospitality" they show to the two angels on that visit is the exact opposite of the hospitality Abraham shows in this passage.

The Lord perhaps meant a visit from strangers to be a test of Abraham in this chapter and of Sodom in the next, for the moral state of Abraham and those cities seems to be pretty well demonstrated by their treatment of strangers. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 4181-4183)

In chapters 18 and 19, you have two very different examples of hospitality to strangers.

And they said, So do, as thou hast said -if you insist...

2.) The Fellowship of the Meal

6 And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth.

Illustration – hey honey we’re having people over tonight after the service

And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah – Abraham quickly made his way into the tent to where his wife Sarah was.

And said, Make quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth – Abraham and Sarah did not just have their servants prepare the food for their guests. They went straight to work doing it themselves.

- “Sarah used ‘three measures’ of flour (roughly five gallons) to make bread—enough either to feed the entire camp or to send off the men well supplied.” (Swindoll, 2014, p. 96)
- After the fine flour was kneaded into dough, it was made into round cakes, and these were placed into an oven where they were baked and made ready to eat. (Gill, 1811)

7 And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetcht a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it.

And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetcht a calf tender and good – Abraham, himself, went to the herd and found a choice calf.

And gave it unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it – he gave it to one of the young men in his household who slaughtered it and quickly prepared it for the guests

8 And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.

And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them – and Abraham took curds, and fresh sheep/goat milk, and the calf which had been prepared at his request, and laid it out for his honored guests (Plummer, 1902)

And he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat – thus Abraham honored his guests not by sitting to eat with them, but by standing to wait on them as they ate (Spence & Exell, 1883)

- There is an interesting connection between the reaffirmation of the covenant in chapter 17 and the meal of fellowship between God and Abraham here in chapter 18.
- Often when covenants were instituted in the ancient world, do you know what often followed? A meal...of celebration, of fellowship and communion between the two parties.
- Meals in the Scriptures, the ancient world and even to this day are often symbolic of communion and fellowship with other party.
 - o Example 1 – Isaac & Abimelech (Gen. 26:28-30)
 - o Example 2 – the elders of Israel & God following the establishment of the Mosaic covenant (Ex. 24:10-11)
 - Ex. 24:10-11 - 10 And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the

body of heaven in his clearness. 11 And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.

- Example 3 – peace offering (Lev. 7:11-21)
 - Peace offerings were given as a means of praising God for his goodness, as a means of saying thank you for deliverance in a dire time of need, or in concurrence with a fulfilled vow.
 - Unlike most sacrifices in the Old Testament, the peace offering was meant to be eaten by the worshipper. Only a portion of the offering was burned at the altar, and the remainder was meant to be eaten by the worshipper in a sense of communal fellowship with God.
- Example 4 – in communion, we remember Christ and fellowship with Him as we partake of the elements (John 6:53-58; Matt. 26:26-30)
- Example 5 – the marriage supper of the lamb is a future time of communion/fellowship between God and his people centered around a meal (Rev. 19:7).
- Here, in Genesis 18, following the reaffirmation of the covenant promises to Abraham, the Lord Himself came down to Abraham and fellowshiped with him. He shared a meal with His friend. “Nothing could more effectively communicate the close relationship upon which the promises were based.” (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 4228-4249)

3.) The Purpose of the Visit

9 And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent.

And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? – Abraham must have been taken back by this question. How did they know his wife’s name? It’s significant that they don’t call her by her former name, but by the new name that God had given her in chapter 17. If they had heard tales of this nomadic couple, they no doubt would have referred to her as Sarai, not Sarah. Only God and Abraham’s clan knew about her name change. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 96)

- Illustration – when you hear your name in a conversation, you perk up. Perhaps the same was true with Sarah as she heard her name come up in the conversation between these men and Abraham.

And he said, Behold, in the tent -Abraham responds simply by saying, “She’s in the tent.”

- At this moment, Abraham now knows for sure that these were no ordinary travelers. These men dining with him must have been some sort of messengers from God. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 97)

10 And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him.

And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life – notice that this verse begins with “he said” not “they said” (as has been the case in verse 5 and verse 9).

Now the leader of three is speaking directly himself in reference to himself. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 4258-4259)

- The point man says that he will return unto Abraham according to the time of life: either in reference to the following spring or perhaps the culmination of the pregnancy (Barnes, 1834)

And, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son – and your 90 year old wife Sarah will have a son. For Abraham, this was dejavu. The words of the man are almost identical to God’s words that He had spoken to him in Gen. 17:21 when He said, “But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.”

- The first time God told that to him, he laughed. He didn’t laugh this time, but there was someone who was eavesdropping on the conversation that did laugh. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 97)

And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him – apparently the tent was located behind the three men. From the door of the tent, Sarah heard what the man was saying.

2 Kings 4:16-17 - And he said, About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid. And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life.

In verse 11 we are given a comment by the author to help explain the reaction of Sarah that will take place in verse 12.

11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.

Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age – this is a polite way of saying that they were one misstep short of a casket. Apparently, it did not do justice to their age to call them “old”. Therefore, Moses added the additional description of “well advanced in age”. They weren’t just old. They were old and well advanced in age.

- That’s strike 1

And it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women – with age, her body had stopped the physical processes that make conception and childbirth possible.

- That’s strike 3 (just skip right past strike 2)
Genesis 17:24 - And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

Hebrews 11:11-12 - Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

Genesis 31:35 - And she said to her father, Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise up before thee; for the custom of women is upon me. And he searched, but found not the images.

12 Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?

Therefor Sarah laughed within herself – Sarah reacts the same way that Abraham had reacted the first time he heard the news of the child: with laughter.

- Her reaction here is one of the reasons I don't think that Abraham told her about what God had told him regarding Isaac in chapter 17. It seems that she's hearing this for the first time, and she reacts to the news the same way that he reacted to the news when he first heard it.
- Genesis 17:17 - Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?
 - o Abraham laughed out loud. Sarah laughed within herself. You can imagine her cracking a smile.

Saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? – Sarah chuckles within herself and then says to herself, “Now that Abraham's old and I'm worn out like a rag, will I finally receive the joy of a child that I've always dreamed of? Yeah, ok.” (Poole, 1990)

Ephesians 5:33 - Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

1 Peter 3:6 - Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

13 And the Lord said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?

And the Lord said unto Abraham – and Jehovah/God said to Abraham

- Do you know what we finally have here? We have the identity of the point man of the three visitors.
- Throughout chapter 18, we have slowly been given clues about the identity of the three travelers. At first they just appear as typical travelers making their way through the region. Yet Abraham's overt hospitality shows that he perhaps saw something unique in them. Once they get to talking, the travelers share unique information (Sarah's new name) revealing that they are more than just travelers, but messengers sent from heaven. Then here in this verse, it is revealed to us that the main speaker is none other than God Himself in human form. Many suppose that this is a preincarnate appearance of Jesus Christ (God the Son). (Swindoll, 2014, pp. 98-99)

- Thus it seems that these three men are none other than God Himself accompanied by two angels (cf. Heb. 13:2; Gen. 18:16; 19:1).

Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? – Sarah, from behind the men, in the door of the tent, laughs to herself and then thinks to herself in her mind, “How could that ever happen?”. In response, God says to Abraham (who like all other husbands unfortunately lacks the ability to read his wife’s mind), “Why did Sarah just laugh and think that what I just said was crazy?”

- You can imagine Abraham’s mouth open wide with nothing to say, “Uhhhhh.....”
 14 Is any thing too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.

Is anything too hard for the Lord? – is anything too hard for Jehovah?

- As incredible to Sarah as the birth of Isaac was, Sarah’s response was just as incredible to God.
 - o “You believe that God can create the universe from nothing, but you think He can’t give you a child in your old age?”
 - o Application: how often do we fall into that same fallacious line of thinking?
- This is almost exactly what Gabriel told Mary when he announced the virgin birth to her: “For with God nothing shall be impossible.”
- God delights in doing the impossible.

At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son – God doubles down on what He had said earlier. At the appointed time (this is on the calendar as a scheduled event), I will return and Sarah will have a son.

- We don’t know for sure that Abraham withheld from Sarah parts of his conversation with God in chapter 17, but suppose he did. Here is God personally visiting the family saying, “Ok Abraham, you’re not going to tell your wife about the conception and birth of Isaac. Fine. I’ll come tell you in front of her so that she hears it with her own two ears.”

Luke 1:37 - For with God nothing shall be impossible.

Ephesians 3:20 - Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

15 Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh.

Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid – still trying to wrap her head around who these men were and what they had just said, she denied laughing. This is the first time she speaks out loud.

- Think about it. Sixty seconds these guys were just travelers. Now, one of them is a mind reader.

- Abraham had intimate conversations with God before, and so it likely clicked faster for him who they were dealing with. But Sarah, in fear, doubles down and denies laughing.
- “Sarah's denial of her laughter was probably an attempt to retract her laughter, now that she realized the source of the annunciation and her hasty response. She would have preferred to cancel the laughter.” (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 4272-2473)
 - o Application: I think there are plenty of instances in our lives where we wish we could go back and cancel certain reactions knowing what we know now.
- But the Lord was not having any of it. He addresses her directly for the first time.

And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh – No. You did laugh.

- “Moreover, leaving on that note was particularly instructive, for Abraham and Sarah were to remember their initial response to the promise: laughter. The Lord chose to do the impossible because the promised seed was to be known as the Lord's provision.” (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 4273-4275)
 - He did it this way so that those who look back on the story of Isaac would say, “The Lord has done this thing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.”
- Genesis 4:9 - And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?

Proverbs 28:13 - He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

John 2:25 - And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

Application

Does the way you treat strangers more closely align with Abraham in chapter 18 or Sodom in chapter 19? Are you hospitable, or are you disobedient?

Do you spend time in communion with God? Do you spend time in His Word? Do you spend time in prayer with Him? Are you fellowshiping with Him?

Are you trusting in God in obedience even when His plans seem laughable? God delights in doing the impossible through those who follow Him in faith.

Genesis 18:16-33

Review

Last week we learned about Abraham and Sarah's three special visitors. Abraham showed these strangers tremendous hospitality. They enjoyed a meal of fellowship, and then we discovered the identity of the visitors and the purpose for the visit. One of the men was God Himself, with the other two likely being angels, and the purpose for their visit was to restate to Abraham in front of Sarah God's intention to give Abraham and Sarah a son in their old age named Isaac.

Sarah reacted the same way Abraham did the first time he heard the news: in laughter, to herself. God called her out for laughing. She denied it. God confirmed it, and that's where our story left off last time.

Sermon

ABRAHAM'S PLEADING FOR SODOM

Before we dive into this passage, I want you to take note of a couple of key themes that we will uncover.

At the heart of this passage is the surrounding nations that might share in the promised blessings unless they disqualify themselves through gross depravity. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 4303-4304)

In fact, the account of Genesis 18:16-33 as it relates to Sodom's depravity and looming destruction is very similar to the account of Genesis 6:1-8 as it relates to the earth's depravity and looming destruction through the flood.

Another interesting idea that we see present in this passage is the biblical teaching on the value of a righteous remnant. We see from this passage that God is willing to take into account the presence of a righteous remnant in determining the fate of a nation. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 4311-4313)

Finally, this passage also demonstrates the need for righteous teachers who know the character and the mind of the Righteous Judge, act in accordance with His values, and teach others to do the same. "Foundational to such involvement is the confidence by the faithful that the judge of all the earth will do right." (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 4309-4311)

As we dive into Abraham's pleading for Sodom, the first aspect of this story that we uncover is God's contemplation.

1.) God's Contemplation

16 And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way.

And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom – the three visitors (God & the two angels) rose up from where they were sitting and eating, and they set their eyes towards Sodom

- from Hebron to Sodom the journey would have been approximately 30 miles
And Abraham went with them to bring them on the way – Abraham walked with the three men part of the way to send them off as a courtesy (Swindoll, 2014, p. 99)

17 And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do;

18 Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

19 For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

And the Lord said – there are three different explanations for who God is talking to in verses 17-19

- Option 1: Abraham
 - o It would seem really awkward for God to say to Abraham, “Abraham, should I hide from Abraham what I plan to do? Keep in mind Abraham that through Abraham all the nations of the earth will be blessed...and on top of that I know that Abraham will teach his children righteousness and justice. What do you say Abraham?”
 - o It seems very awkward.
- Option 2: The angels
 - o It seems like Abraham is right there with them. He’s walking with them to see them off. If that’s the case it wouldn’t make sense for him to wander off on the path by himself so as to provide the setting for this kind of a conversation.
- Option 3: Himself
 - o This would be presented as a sort of glimpse into God’s thought process.
 - o If such were true, which I think it is, then this passage would be an anthropomorphism. It’s a description of God in human terms so that we can better understand Him.
 - I think in this passage it’s a description of God in human terms so that we can better understand God’s reasoning in sharing with Abraham His plans for Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - “The description here is not mean to suggest that God is indecisive or that He literally has these internal debates in His mind about things He hasn’t planned for. Rather, it’s used to help us see God’s reasoning

for why He shared this information with Abraham.” (Swindoll, 2014, pp. 99-100)

- To put it another way, verses 17-19 are a glimpse into God’s why.
 - Application: God often doesn’t share “why” with us. That’s why it’s exciting when He does, and we should take special note of it.

Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do: - God certainly had no requirement to share with Abraham what He was preparing to do to Sodom and Gomorrah. God has no requirement to share with us why He does certain things in our lives or in the world at large... and yet in this passage He chose to share His plans with Abraham for a couple of reasons.

A.) Reason 1 – Abraham would be the means of blessing for the nations of the world

Should I not share this information about the destruction of the nation of Sodom with Abraham considering ...

18 Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? – The first reasons why God shared His intentions with Abraham was because he would be God’s means of blessing for the world.

- Genesis 12:2-3 - And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.
- As the means of blessing to the surrounding nations, it would make sense for God to inform him about one nation that would be destroyed and by extension removed from that opportunity of blessing. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 4328)
- Considering that Abraham is going to become a great nation and that through him the nations of the earth will be blessed, should I not share with Him why this one is going to be destroyed?

Genesis 22:17-18 - That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

B.) Reason 2 – Abraham would be a teacher of righteousness and justice

Should I not share this information about the destruction of nation of Sodom with Abraham considering ...

19 For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

For I know him – I have had and do have a special relationship with Abraham. I have known him for a purpose.

that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment– to the end that he may teach his children my ways, in doing what is right and just (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 4328)

Application – dads you ought to be doing this. You ought to be spending intentional time each discipling your children. It is not just my wife’s responsibility to disciple our children. It is mine as well. It’s not just enough to provide for my children. I need to disciple them.

That the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him – to the end that God would keep His word to Abraham and bless him and his children

- God had a special relationship with Abraham partly so that Abraham would know Him and His ways and by extension teach that information to His descendants so that through them God would keep His promises to Abraham.
- Before teachers can teach, what do they have to do first? They have to learn. They have to be taught themselves. Here God is going to teach Abraham a lesson about righteousness and justice to the end that Abraham would take the content of that lesson and teach it to his children as well.

Why does God share with Abraham His plans for Sodom?

Since Abraham would become a great nation and through him the nations of the earth would be blessed, God thought it proper to share with Him why this one was going to be destroyed.

Since Abraham would be a teacher of God’s ways, God thought it important to use this as an opportunity to teach Abraham about righteousness and justice.

Psalm 34:15 - The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.

John 10:14 - I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

Genesis 17:23-27 - And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him. And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son. And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 - And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

Proverbs 22:6 - Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Ephesians 6:4 - And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

2.) God's Declaration

God's declaration to Abraham flows out of His contemplation. His what flows from His why.

20 And the Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous;

And the Lord said – presumably to Abraham

Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great – the word here “cry” here expresses the idea of an outcry for help in time of great anguish. It seems that this is in reference to an outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah from those harmed by them rather than an outcry from within Sodom and Gomorrah.

- Example 1: Genesis 4:10 - And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.
- Example 2: Exodus 3:7 - And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;

And because their sin is very grievous – “To put their immorality in perspective, consider this: the polytheistic, superstitious cultures of that day—many of them practicing temple prostitution and child sacrifice as part of their fertility rites—looked down on these cities as utterly depraved! Additionally, because the entire southern end of the Jordan River Valley had been corrupted by these twin capitols of sin, Abraham had elected to live in the arid hill country rather than pasture his livestock anywhere near them.” That’s how bad it was. (Swindoll, 2014, pp. 102-103)

Genesis 13:13 - But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.

Genesis 19:13 - For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it.

21 I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.

I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know – Hold on. Did God not know what was going on in Sodom? Once again this is an anthropomorphism. It is a description of God in human terms so that we can better understand Him. God did not need to literally go down to the city to discover whether the rumors about how bad it was were actually true. He already knew all of that. This action and description of God is meant to communicate to us something about Him. It is not His benefit, but for ours. It is meant to communicate that His judgment and justice are always based on full and accurate information. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 4339)

“Based on His decision to include Abraham in His plans, the Lord engaged the patriarch in a dialogue. God knew from the beginning what He would do. He’s omniscient; He knows future events before they occur. The narrator of the story makes this plain during Abraham’s earlier dialogue with the men. God saw future events in sharp detail. God heard the inner thoughts of Sarah with crystal clarity. And, in addition to being omniscient, God is sovereign. He didn’t need Abraham’s permission before pronouncing judgment on these evil cities. He dialogued with Abraham so that His chosen man would see the reasonableness of His actions and would learn from this.” (Swindoll, 2014, pp. 100-101)

Genesis 11:5 - And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

Exodus 3:8 - And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

Hebrews 4:13 - Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

22 And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the Lord.

And them turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom – the two angels then left behind Abraham and God to head towards Sodom (where they would arrive in the evening – Gen. 19:1) (Benson, 1857)

But Abraham stood yet before the Lord – but the Lord stayed back for a time and Abraham stood before Him

Genesis 19:1 - And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground;

Psalms 106:23 - Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them.

Ezekiel 22:30 - And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.

3.) Abraham's Negotiation

23 And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?

And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? – Abraham intercedes on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah by questioning the justness of God in destroying the righteous of Sodom alongside of the wicked in the city. God, does it make sense to destroy the good people because of the bad people's sin?

- Likely Abraham had at least one particular person in mind when he said this, and that was his nephew Lot who lived there.
 - o Illustration – my family lives in Cocoa, Florida. If God told me He was planning on destroying Cocoa because of how wicked it had gotten. I would try to do something about that. “God, there's some people in Cocoa. Does it really make sense to destroy those good people alongside of the wicked?”
- Keep in mind to that Abraham “had personally rescued these people (Gen. 14). Now he is personally pleading for their deliverance with boldness and perseverance.” (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 4357-4358)

“The expositor must clarify the difference between the two. Certainly in the Old Testament and already in Genesis 15:6, the concept of righteousness is related to the covenant. Accordingly, those who are joined to the Lord by faith and follow his standards in obedience are called “the righteous”; those who have no part with the covenant and have no interest in obeying the Lord are “the wicked.” The psalms use this distinction repeatedly, showing that the wicked are destined for judgment because they stand outside the covenant and its stipulations. In this text Abraham's concern is that God's people not suffer the same fate as the wicked (cf. Ps. 1:5-6).” (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 4349-4353)

Genesis 20:4 - But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation?

Numbers 16:22 - And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?

2 Samuel 24:17 - And David spake unto the LORD when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house.

24 Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?

Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: - suppose there were fifty righteous people within the city

- It's possible that when Abraham references Sodom, he's referring to all five cities of the plain (Sorenson, 2007)

Wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? – in that situation would you really destroy the city and not spare it for the sake of the fifty righteous within?

- Note that Abraham here is not just asking for deliverance for the righteous. He is asking for deliverance for the whole nation on account of the righteous.
- Isaiah 1:9 - Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.
- As the basis of His request, Abraham is going to appeal to God's justness as judge of the earth.

25 That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

That be far from thee to do after this manner – God forbid that you would do such a thing

To slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous shall be as the wicked – to destroy the righteous with the wicked, to treat the righteous in the same way that you treat the wicked

- This verse illustrates one of the great questions that humanity has sought answers to: “Why do bad things happen to good people?”
 - o Why does it seem that the good are treated in similar fashion at times to the wicked?
 - o The ultimate answer to that question is found not in this life, but in the next, where those who have been made righteous through faith and those who have remained lost in their sin suffer very different eternal fates.
 - o However, in this passage, we will see that even in His judgments on the earth during this life, God does take into account righteous remnants within nations.

That be far from thee – God forbid that you would judge the righteous and the wicked in the same way

Shall not the judge of the earth do right? – Will not the judge of all the earth practice justice and righteous judgment in His dealings?

- o Abraham knows God relationally. He cares for the people of Sodom (particularly his nephew). He's trying to wrap his head around what God is planning to do in Sodom, and he's pleading their case all at once.

Jeremiah 12:1 - Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?

Psalms 11:5-7 - The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup. For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.

Psalms 98:9 - Before the LORD; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.

26 And the Lord said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

And the Lord said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes – God hears Abraham’s request and acquiesces to it. Does that mean that He was fully affirming Abraham’s logic in the previous verse? Not necessarily. But what it does mean is that Abraham’s request resonated with God and made a difference. (Spence & Exell, 1883)

- Because of your request, if I find fifty righteous within Sodom, then I will spare the city for their sakes.

Application – our prayers make a difference

- I can’t tell you why or how, but I’m thankful that I can tell you that it does.
- James 5:16 – the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

27 And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes:

And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes – Abraham talks as one who understands who he is and who he’s really talking to. He’s amazed at his own boldness in pleading his case to the God of the universe. He’s amazed at God’s mercy and grace in allowing him to do so. He is but dust in origin and ashes in end, and yet he has the ear of the ruler of the universe. (Keil & Delitzsch, 1857-1878)

Application – So do you. What a privilege prayer is.

Genesis 2:7 - And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul

Psalms 144:3 - LORD, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him! or the son of man, that thou makest account of him!

28 Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it.

Peradventure there shall be lack of five of the fifty righteous -suppose there's 45 instead of 50

Wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? – would you really destroy the city because it was five short?

And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it. – Abraham, if there are forty five righteous within the city, I will spare it.

29 And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake.

And he spake unto him yet again, - for the third time

And said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there – eh while we're talking about. Suppose there were forty?

And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake – because of your request and for the sake of the forty, I would be willing to spare Sodom.

Ephesians 6:18 - Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

Hebrews 4:16 - Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

30 And he said unto him, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there.

And he said unto him – the fourth time

Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak – if I were in a situation where I kept coming back and back to another person asking for more and more, I would be concerned that they would be angry with me. That would be the natural human reaction. But God is not a man, and He does not get angry at our persistent cries in prayer. (Benson, 1857)

Illustration – asking Chris for more and more money

Peradventure there shall be thirty found there – Suppose there are thirty

And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there – I won't do it if I find thirty there

Judges 6:39 - And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew.

31 And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake.

And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord – for the fifth time

- he uses similar language to what he said earlier in verse 27

Peradventure there shall be twenty found there – suppose there's 20?

And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake – I will not destroy it for the sake of the twenty

Matthew 7:7 - Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

Matthew 7:11 - If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

32 And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once:
Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake.

And He said – for the sixth time

Oh let not the Lord be angry – because in our human nature, that's what we would expect

And I will speak yet but this once – and I will speak only this one time more

Peradventure ten shall be found there – Suppose there are ten

- “Lot and his wife Mrs. Table Salt are two. His two daughters and their fiancés bring the total to six. Lot's a pretty wealthy man; he has become richer since buying a house inside Sodom's city limits. Surely he has at least four upright servants. If not, there has to be at least one other righteous household down there. What's ten people among so many in the two cities and the surrounding area? Surely God will spare the valley now. Maybe? Hopefully?” (Swindoll, 2014, p. 104)

And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake – I will not destroy the city for the sake of the ten righteous

“Israel, and all people in general, would learn that through righteousness they would continue in God's favor. In this interchange between Abraham and the Lord, people would be reminded of God's righteousness as well as the fruits of unrighteousness. Righteous people-ten of them-would have preserved unrighteous Sodom.” (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 4354-4356)

“The judgment which fell upon the wicked cities immediately afterwards, proves that there were not ten "righteous persons" in Sodom; by which we understand, not merely ten sinless or holy men, but ten who through the fear of God and conscientiousness had kept themselves free from the prevailing sin and iniquity of these cities.” (Keil & Delitzsch, 1857-1878)

Proverbs 15:8 - The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

Exodus 34:6-7 - And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

33 And the Lord went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place.

And the Lord went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place. – “The people in these cities carried on with their sin as if nothing else mattered, unaware that God had reached the end of His patience with them. God’s love is infinite and His grace is free, but His mercy has an expiration date.” (Swindoll, 2014, p. 105)

Application

- Prayer makes a real difference with God
- God’s natural inclination is mercy
 - o He is both just and merciful, but He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.
- Righteous remnants within wicked places matter
 - o Illustration – the righteous within the state of California

Genesis 19:1-16

Review

In Genesis 18, after God and two angels paid Abraham and Sarah a special visit, we saw that God decided to reveal to Abraham His plans for Sodom and Gomorrah. He did so because Abraham would be the means of blessing for the nations of the world and because Abraham would be a teacher of righteousness and justice.

Upon hearing of God's plan to judge wicked Sodom, where his nephew Lot lived, Abraham began to plead for Sodom. If there are fifty righteous within, will you spare the city? How about 45? 40? 30? 20? 10? God agreed to spare the city if there were ten righteous found within. Thus ended chapter 18.

Sermon

LOT & SODOM'S SPECIAL VISITORS

1.) The Hospitality of Lot

1 And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground;

And there came two angels to Sodom at even – the two angels arrived at Sodom that evening

And Lot sat in the gate of Sodom – “In the ancient Near East, the gate served as a city hall. Older community leaders gathered there to debate issues, conduct business deals, resolve disputes, and even advise the city ruler on legal matters. Eastern readers of this text would have raised their eyebrows to discover that Lot was sitting at the city gate.” (Swindoll, 2014, p. 122)

- He was sitting in the gate of the city? Like he was actively involved in leadership and the affairs of this vile city?
- Lot was no ordinary citizen of Sodom.

And Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground – although these angels manifested themselves as men and would not have appeared too out of the ordinary, Lot, like Abraham, recognized something unique about them.

- He approached them and bowed himself before them as an expression of respect. Genesis 18:1-2 - And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground,

2 And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night.

And he said, Behold now, my lords – behold my good sirs

Genesis 18:3-4 - And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree:

Turn, I pray you, into your servant's house and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways – please come and take lodging in my home for the night and wash your feet, and then in the morning you can get up early and be on your way

- Recall that it is evening (probably late in the evening) when these men arrived in the city, and hospitality was an important Eastern cultural value.
- “Lot may have initiated this contact in the spirit of hospitality. But likely, he also leaped at the chance to preclude any of his neighbors from inviting the men into their homes, fearing what they might do to the travelers.” (Swindoll, 2014, p. 123)

And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all nights – the angels politely declined saying that they would just spend the night in the city square.

- The city square refers to a wide street and market complex near the entrance of the city. The angels planned to just get comfortable in one of the market stalls on the street and then be on their way in the morning. At least that's what they told Lot. Of course, angels don't need sleep or sleeping arrangements, and yet this seems to be some kind of a test for Lot.
- For, in providing hospitality for guests, the host takes responsibility for the safety of those guests. How insistent would Lot be about taking them in? The answer is: very insistent. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 123)
Hebrews 13:2 - Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

3 And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.

And he pressed upon them greatly – out of fear for the safety of these men, Lot insisted strongly that they lodge in his home for the evening

- The verb "pressed" is the same word that's use of the men of Sodom in verse 9. Lot pressed these men to stay in his home for their own safety. The men of Sodom pressed up against the door of the home to get access to the men for their own lust. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 4451-4453)

And they turned in unto him, and entered into his house – and the angels gave in to his request and entered into Lot's home

And he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat – the word “feast” here can mean a banquet or drink. It seems that Lot prepared a quick meal of drinks and unleavened bread for his visitors, and they ate what had been prepared for them. (Spence & Exell, 1883)

Genesis 18:6-8 - And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth. And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetcht a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it. And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.

2.) The Wickedness of Sodom

4 But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter:

But before they lay down – after the angels had eaten, but before they had retired for the evening

The men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter – the men of Sodom, both young and old, from every part of the city, encircled Lot’s house

- Verses 1-3 compared Lot’s hospitality with Abraham’s hospitality. Verses 4-5 are going to contrast Lot’s hospitality with the men of Sodom’s gross misconduct towards the angels.
- We’re going to see firsthand what God meant when he said to Abraham in Genesis 18:20 that the cry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grievous.

5 And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them.

And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? – the men called out to Lot and said, “Where are the guys that took lodging in your home this evening?”

Bring them out unto us, that we may know them – bring them outside so that we can “know them”

- Know them – euphemism for physical intimacy (cf. Gen. 4:1)
- The men of Sodom shamelessly stated their intention to violate these visitors.
 - o Thus, we clearly see the extent of their depravity.

Isaiah 3:9 - The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves.

Ezekiel 16:49 - Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

Jude 1:7 - Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

Leviticus 20:13 - If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.

3.) The Hypocrisy of Lot

6 And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him,

And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him – Understanding that he needed to do something about the situation, Lot went outside to talk to the men, and shut the door behind him.

7 And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly.

And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly – guys, I'm begging you. Don't do this wicked thing.

8 Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof.

Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man – I have two virgin daughters

Let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do you to them as is good in your eyes – Let me bring them out and you guys can do whatever you want with them

Only unto these men do nothing – but leave these men alone

For therefore came they under the shadow of my roof – because, as my guests, they have come under my protection

- “At first Lot contrasted sharply with the men of Sodom (v. 7), but in his alternative offer the contrast disappears (v. 8).” Guys, don't do this wicked thing to these innocent people. Here, do this other wicked thing to these other innocent people. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 4457-4458)
- Lot's offer here is unfathomable to me as a dad. It makes my blood boil just thinking about it. I would die before someone laid a hand on my daughter. Yet, Lot's offer here shows just how much Sodom's depravity had messed up his own moral compass.

- Lot had not influenced Sodom. Sodom had influenced Lot.
- By the way, at the end of this chapter, we'll see that Sodom had influenced Lot's wife and his daughters as well (19:26; 19:31-38).
- You might think, "Wow. How awful were Sodom and Lot. I can't believe that a people and a person could be so depraved for something like this to happen." Guys, this isn't the only time that this happens in the Scripture.
 - There is almost an exact parallel to this passage in Judges 19 where the same thing happens in Israel. In Judges 19, it's not the Sodomites at the door. It's the Benjaminites.

Chart 18. **Parallels Between Genesis 19 and Judges 19**

Incident	Genesis 19	Judges 19
Arrival and reception	1-3	15-21
Attack and repulse of attack	4-11	22-25
Attack, demand to hand over	4-5	22
Offer by householder	6-8	23-24
Rejection and threat	9	25a
Repulse of attack by guests	10-11	25b

(Ross, 1997, p. Loc 4408)

Judges 19:15-25 - 15 And they turned aside thither, to go in and to lodge in Gibeah: and when he went in, he sat him down in a street of the city: for there was no man that took them into his house to lodging. 16 And, behold, there came an old man from his work out of the field at even, which was also of mount Ephraim; and he sojourned in Gibeah: but the men of the place were Benjamites. 17 And when he had lifted up his eyes, he saw a wayfaring man in the street of the city: and the old man said, Whither goest thou? and whence comest thou? 18 And he said unto him, We are passing from Bethlehemjudah toward the side of mount Ephraim; from thence am I: and I went to Bethlehemjudah, but I am now going to the house of the Lord; and there is no man that receiveth me to house. 19 Yet there is both straw and provender for our asses; and there is bread and wine also for me, and for thy handmaid, and for the young man which is with thy servants: there is no want of any thing. 20 And the old man said, Peace be with thee; howsoever let all thy wants lie upon me; only lodge not in the street. 21 So he brought him into his house, and gave provender unto the asses: and they washed their feet, and did eat and drink. 22 Now as they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about, and beat at the door, and spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, Bring forth the man that came into thine house, that we may know him. 23 And the man, the master of the house, went out unto them, and said unto them, Nay, my brethren, nay, I pray you, do not so wickedly; seeing that this man is come into mine house, do not this folly. 24 Behold, here is my

daughter a maiden, and his concubine; them I will bring out now, and humble ye them, and do with them what seemeth good unto you: but unto this man do not so vile a thing. 25 But the men would not hearken to him: so the man took his concubine, and brought her forth unto them; and they knew her, and abused her all the night until the morning: and when the day began to spring, they let her go.

9 And they said, Stand back. And they said again, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee, than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door.

and they said, Stand back – Lot, get out of the way

And they said again, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge – this guy (in reference to Lot) came into our city as a traveler, and now he intends to be our judge?!

- He may not have taken part in their sin, but before this moment, it seems that he had never opposed it either. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 126)
- “He lived among them with values taught to him by his uncle, but rather than living authentically and presenting himself openly as an example of a better way, he chose to minimize his different ethic, shrug off their wickedness, and blend into the scenery. Instead of representing God’s goodness, he settled on being less evil than his peers.” (Swindoll, 2014, p. 127)
- 2 Peter 2:7-8 - And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)

Now will we deal worse with thee, than with them – now we’re going to treat you even worse than we’re going to treat them

And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door – they pressed upon Lot, who was trying to physically hold them back, and in doing so they came right up against the closed door in an effort to break it down

4.) The Intervention of the Angels

10 But the men put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door.

But the angels opened the door, grabbed Lot, pulled him into the house, and then shut the door behind him.

- The rescuer was himself in need of rescue.
- Lot was protected by the ones he was trying to protect.

11 And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door.

And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great – the angels now transition from potential victims to righteous aggressors. As angels, they did not need protection. They blinded the men of Sodom.

So that they wearied themselves to find the door - I've always thought of the blinding of this passage as meaning that the men of Sodom completely lost their ability to see anything. But upon a closer examination I don't believe that's the case. I believe this means that the angels disoriented their vision so that what they perceived visually did not align with the reality in front of them. That's why they wearied themselves to find the door, almost like a mirage or a kind of hallucination.

- There are two instances in the Old Testament where this word for blinding is used: here and in 2 Kings 6:15-20. In 2 Kings 6, the blinding is not a loss of sight, but a disorienting of visual perception.

2 Kings 6:15-20 - 15 And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? 16 And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. 17 And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. 18 And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the Lord, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha. 19 And Elisha said unto them, This is not the way, neither is this the city: follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. But he led them to Samaria. 20 And it came to pass, when they were come into Samaria, that Elisha said, Lord, open the eyes of these men, that they may see. And the Lord opened their eyes, and they saw; and, behold, they were in the midst of Samaria.

5.) The Mockery of Lot

12 And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place:

And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? – Do you have anyone else in your family living here?

Son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place – anyone and anything that matters to you, you need to take, and get out of this city right now.

- The narrative shifts from the danger of what the men in Sodom intended to do to God's messengers to the danger of what God intended to do to the men of Sodom.
- "The urgency in the voices of the angels must have been jarring. Lot knew nothing of the destruction about to rain down on his adopted hometown." (Swindoll, 2014, pp. 125-126)

There were fewer than 10 righteous in Sodom, and God was going to destroy it.

- If you think it's amazing that there were not ten righteous people in Sodom, try wrapping your head around there not being ten righteous people on the earth when God flooded it. There were only 8 on the ark.

Application – in the rapture, the righteous remnant on the earth will be removed, and God's judgment will pour out on the world

Get out now! Why?

13 For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it.

For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord – because we are going to destroy this place. The outcry against this city is become great before God.

And the Lord hath sent us to destroy it – and God has sent us to destroy it

1 Chronicles 21:15-16 - And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the LORD beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite. And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the LORD stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces.

14 And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.

And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters – marriages were arranged in the ancient near east culture. You can only imagine what sort of moral vices in these men that Lot must have stomached in order to arrange their betrothal with his daughters. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 126)

- Application: if you can't find a godly Christian mate, what do you do? I'll tell you what you don't do: marry an unbeliever!
- He goes to his daughters' fiancés in the middle of the night.

And said, Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city -Lot cared enough about these men (or perhaps cared enough about his daughters) to warn them about the looming judgment and to urge them to leave with him.

- Guys, we've got to go right now. The Lord is going to destroy the city!

But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law – but they thought he was playing some kind of practical joke on them.

- “The Lord? What do you mean the Lord?”
- Unlike Noah, Lot was not able to convince his whole family about the seriousness of the impending judgment of God. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 4381)
- To the men of the city, Lot came across as a hypocrite. To his own future son in laws, he came across as a mocker...a buffoon.

6.) The Passiveness of Lot

15 And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city.

And when the morning arose – at twilight as the first rays of the sun began to dawn on the land (Spence & Exell, 1883)

Then the angels hastened Lot – the angels hurried Lot

Saying, Arise, take they wife and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city – saying, “Go. Take your family and go now or else you guys are going to be destroyed in the depravity of this city.”

Illustration – Lot is reacting calmly to a fire alarm when he should have been doing everything in his power to leave asap

- Our dinner with the Pickers when the fire alarm went off

16 And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the Lord being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.

And while he lingered – and while he delayed

- Lot was hypocritical. Lot was a mockery. Lot was passive. He couldn't bring himself to leave Sodom because it had become a part of him.
- Lot is such a great picture of men who have succeeded in money and career and prestige and lost everything else that matters: integrity, family, themselves, their closeness with God.

“Balancing the theme of judgment is the emphasis on the deliverance of the righteous- although the chapter never so describes Lot or his family. What is amazing in the rescue theme is their resistance-the family would rather not go. At the heart of the tension was the family's assimilation into the life of Sodom, as the final episode in the cave illustrates. Israel had to be warned again and again against the folly of living as the Canaanites did.” (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 4392)

The men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters – the angels grabbed each member of Lot's family by the hand

The Lord being merciful unto him – because of his stupidity and lethargy, Lot deserved to die. But God in His mercy spared him from the fate that his actions merited.

- Lot knew God. Lot had a relationship with God, but he had become carnal. Despite his carnality, God was going to, in his mercy, spare him.

And they brought him forth, and set him without the city – and they dragged them until they were outside the city and then left them there

Illustration – there are times in my life where God has done that with me. He has closed doors and dragged me out of situations and relationships that I had no business being in.

- I wonder how much of that is due to the prayers of some Abrahams in my life.
- Genesis 19:29 - 29 And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt.
- You might be someone's Abraham. If that's you, don't you stop praying for them. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

“Here was an upright citizen, hospitable and generous, a leader of the community who was a judge-meaning that he would screen out wickedness from his town and advise on good living. He knew truth and justice, righteousness and evil. He was nicknamed the Censor. Yet, in spite of his denunciation of the lifestyle of his people, he preferred the good life of their society. He preferred living comfortably in the city to living in the hills, where there might be no filthy living-but no good life either. The hour of truth came when the Lord interrupted this life. His true loyalty was revealed as godly-but in the process his past hypocrisy was uncovered. The Saint had pitched his tent near the evil city, but the evil city had controlled his life. Oh, he was moral. He knew great, great evil when he saw it-he opposed sodomy and homosexuality. Ironically, though, he would sacrifice his daughters' virginity to fend off the vice of evil men. He would escape the judgment by the grace of God, but his heart had become part of this world. His wife was just too attached to the city to follow the call of grace, and his daughters were not uncomfortable with immorality with their father.” (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 4417-4424)

Application

The Lord is coming back to judge the world. Are you ready to leave it all behind? Or has it become a part of you? Are you influencing the world around you? Or has Sodom made you into a hypocrite, a mockery, a passive citizen of the kingdom of this world?

Is there a Lot in your life that you're praying for? Don't stop. You be like Abraham. Plead for that person. Bring them to God every day. You never know what God might do in that person's life.

Genesis 19:17-38

Review

The angels visited Lot in Sodom. He showed them hospitality by taking them into his home. The men of Sodom surrounded Lot's home and wickedly demanded that he send the men out to them. Lot hypocritically offered his daughters in place of the men, but the men of Sodom were having none of it. They pressed Lot up against the door of the house until the angels were forced to rescue Lot and blind the men of Sodom.

At this point the angels told Lot to get anything and anyone that mattered to him and leave the city because God was going to destroy it. Lot went to his daughters' fiancés and pleaded with them to leave the city. They laughed in his face.

Yet, the following morning Lot was so hesitant to leave that it literally took the angels physically escorting him, his wife, and his two daughters outside of the city in order for them to leave. That's where we left off.

Sermon

1.) The Pleading of Lot

17 And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.

And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad – when the angels accompanied the family outside the city

That he said – in reference to one of the angels

Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain – run for your lives. Don't stop in the valley. Don't look behind you in the valley.

- This was not only a command to prevent them from lingering but also to ensure their total abandonment of their past lives and the depravity that these cities epitomized. (Ellicott, 1905)

Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed – get up to the high ground of the mountain or else you're going to be destroyed too

Hebrews 2:3 - How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

Genesis 19:26 - But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

Luke 17:31-32 - In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife.

Genesis 14:10 - And the vale of Siddim was full of slimepits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountain.

18 And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord:

And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord: - please no!

- Illustration – Teenagers saying when their electronics are taken away, “Please no, anything but that. I’ll do anything.”
 - o Illustration – Jacqueline when we take away her tablet
- Once again, here we see a contrast between Abraham and Lot. In chapter 18, Abraham had selflessly interceded for the cities of the plain on behalf of others. In chapter 19, Lot selfishly intercedes for the city of Bela (Zoar) on behalf of himself.
- He does so with all of the marks of a legitimately pious prayer.
 - o Lot knows what is right.
 - o Illustration – someone who has grown up in church

19 Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die:

Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight – you have shown favor and grace to me as your servant in how you have treated me

And thou hast magnified thy mercy – you have shown great mercy to me. How?

Which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life – you have shown mercy to me in saving my life

And I cannot escape to the mountain – but I cannot escape to the mountain. I am not able to do what you have commanded.

Lest some evil take me and I die – If I do, something bad will happen to me and I will die.

- I can’t do what you want. It will literally kill me.
- Illustration – teenager saying, “If you take away my phone, I am literally going to die.”

Two Possible Explanations

- (1) Lot feared that he and his family could not make it all the way to the mountain and would get caught up in the destruction reigning down on Sodom and the surrounding areas.

- However, if Lot were concerned about getting caught up in the destruction, he would not have asked to take residence in an area that was closer to Sodom.
- (2) Lot had grown accustomed to comfortable living in the city and didn't want to leave that behind to go live rough and rugged in the mountains.
 - If you send me to the mountains, I'm going to die up there. I'm not fit for outdoor living. Something is going to kill me. Please let me escape to a city.
 - Lot didn't like camping. He was a city slicker.
- Application – we hold on tightly to our comforts and affluence just like Lot did.
 - We have become accustomed to city living, to our comfort zone. We have to be careful of that.
 - God might call you into ministry. God might direct you to the mission field. God might lead you to be overly generous with others or sacrificial in giving or to do something outside of our comfort zone.
 - When He does, we better be sure our response isn't like Lot's.

1 Timothy 1:14-16 - And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

Genesis 12:13 - Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.

20 Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live.

Behold now, this city is near to flee unto – there's this city named Bela (Gen. 14:2). It's really close, and it's just a little city.

- The city of Bela would come to be known as Zoar (which means insignificant or little one) because of Lot's pleading for it here in this passage.

Oh let me escape thither (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live – can I please escape to there instead? Please. If I go there, I know I'll live.

- Application: we are exactly like Lot when we question God's direction
 - God I know you want me to follow you in this direction, but it's kind of outside of my comfort zone. Can't I just go this way instead? I know this. I'm comfortable here.

Proverbs 3:5-7 - Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

21 And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken.

And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also – alright Lot, have it your way. I will graciously and mercifully grant your request.

- Application: sometimes the worst thing for us is when God allows us to have our way.

That I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken – I will spare the city of Bela (Zoar) on your behalf since you have asked for it.

Genesis 32:25-28 - And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

22 Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.

Haste thee, escape thither – Now hurry up and get out of here.

For I cannot do anything till thou be come thither – in order to act in accordance with God's determination to save Lot and his family, the angel could not and would not destroy the cities of the plain until Lot was safely out of harms way.

Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar – on account of Lot's pleading for the city of Bela, it would come to be known as Zoar (insignificant)

- Finally, Lot and his family began their journey across the plain with everything and everyone that they thought mattered in their lives in the rear view mirror. They would never see their home again. All the time and money and energy they had invested into material and social advancement amounted to nothing. Everything was gone, soon to be destroyed, and never to be seen again. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 138)
- Application: the same is true of everything you own. There is coming a day when you die or when Jesus comes back, that you will leave behind everything material you have accumulated over the course of your life.
 - o Are you ready for that day?
 - o Only one life will soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last.
 - o Are you investing in eternity, or has Sodom distracted you?

Genesis 13:10 - And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.

Genesis 14:2 - That these made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela, which is Zoar.

23 The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar.

The day had dawned. The sun had risen. "The tops of the mountains to the east turned orange with dawn. Behind them, God's wrath rained down from the skies as fire and burning sulfur." (Swindoll, 2014, p. 138)

- This is a time indicator for both the arrival of Lot in Zoar as well as the destruction of the plain.

2.) The Destruction of the Plain

24 Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven;

Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah – as well as upon Admah and Zeboim (Deut. 29:23)

Brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven – the Lord rained burning sulfur/brimstone (a type of mineral) from the skies down on the cities of the plain.



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#)



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)

“The means of the cities’ destruction is said to be “sulphur and fire” which God rained down upon them... Nothing points directly to a volcanic eruption; and there are no lava remains in the surrounding area. Nor does the expression “overthrew” seem to point to an earthquake. The “fire” which rained down from heaven may have been lightning. The burning “sulphur” may have been miraculously created by God and then rained down on the plain. There is also the possibility that a huge explosion of highly flammable materials, including sulphur, deposited in the ground (cf. the “bitumen pits” of 14:10) may have cast these materials, especially the sulphur, high into the air so that they rained upon these cities, causing a vast inferno.” (Leupold, 1958, p. 568)

Regardless, other passages of Scripture have a lot to say about the destruction of these cities.

Deuteronomy 29:23 - And that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath:

Isaiah 1:9 - Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

Isaiah 13:19 - And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

Jeremiah 20:16 - And let that man be as the cities which the LORD overthrew, and repented not: and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noontide;

Jeremiah 49:18 - As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the LORD, no man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it.

Jeremiah 50:40 - As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the LORD; so shall no man abide there, neither shall any son of man dwell therein.

Lamentations 4:6 - For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her.

Ezekiel 16:49-50 - Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good.

Hosea 11:8 - How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.

Amos 4:11 - I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

Zephaniah 2:9 - Therefore as I live, saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, even the breeding of nettles, and saltpits, and a perpetual desolation: the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them.

Matthew 11:23-24 - And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

Luke 17:28-29 - Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.

2 Peter 2:6 - And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;

Jude 1:7 - Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

25 And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

The flaming sulfur destroyed the cities, the land, the people, and the vegetation of the plain. The region being full of bitumen/petroleum/asphalt pits, it's quite possible that fire and brimstone literally lit the whole plain into a raging inferno. (Gill, 1811)

Some believe this could have resulted in the entire valley burning and sinking with the northern part of the Dead Sea expanding into where the cities of the plain used to be in the south. (Keil & Delitzsch, 1857-1878) Keep in mind that the current southern end of the Dead Sea as it exists today is literally the lowest place on earth with its surface being 1400 feet below sea level and its bottom reaching depths of 2600 feet below sea level. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 139) That may have been where these cities were previously located.

Psalms 107:34 - A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.

26 But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

But his wife looked back from behind him – Lot's wife, in disobedience, gazed back intently towards the destruction of the plain. Why? We don't know. Was it unbelief? Was it curiosity? Was it longing for her home? Was it fear for her friends and relatives? We don't know.

- There is some Jewish tradition which states that she was a native of Sodom. Lot may have met her in Sodom and married her after his arrival. If that were the case, then unlike Lot, Sodom and the people therein would have been all she ever knew. The same would be true of his daughters too by the way. (Gill, 1811)
- Application: The truth is that it doesn't matter why she did it. What matters is that she did it. She disobeyed. There is no good reason to disobey God, and there are always consequences when we do.
- Illustration: all people had to do to escape the flood was get on the ark
- Illustration: all people have to do to be saved is put their trust in Jesus
 - o Hebrews 2:3 – how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation...

“Lot's wife is a type of those who look back with regretful longings upon possessions and enjoyments which are inconsistent with the salvation offered to them.” (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 4529)

- Sodom: sin

- Bela: salvation
- She knew what she needed to but just couldn't bring herself to leave her sin behind.

And she became a pillar of salt – the idea here is not likely that Lot's wife was magically poofed from her human form into a pile of salt. Rather, by virtue of her stalling and gazing back intently, she may have been killed in the fire and brimstone and afterwards encrusted in salt. (Keil & Delitzsch, 1857-1878) In fact, Deuteronomy 29:23 implies that fire, brimstone, and salt all had a part in the destruction of the plains and its people.

- Add to this that Josephus, Tertullian, and Irenaeus all testified that the pillar of salt that Lot's wife was encrusted in existed to their day, and there's further evidence that this statement is to be taken literally. (Gill, 1811)

In Luke 17:28-37, Jesus used Lot's wife as a warning to unbelieving Israel of the destruction that would fall on them in the end times. When Christ returns the second time, people should not look back as Lot's wife did lest they too lose their lives as she did. (Blum, Walvoord, & Zuck, p. 61)

Luke 17:28-33 - 28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; 29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. 30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. 31 In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. 32 Remember Lot's wife. 33 Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.

27 And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the Lord:

And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the Lord – eager to know the fate of the cities he had pleaded for the previous day, Abraham got up early to make the journey to the place where had talked with the Lord and seen his visitors off from.

Genesis 18:22-33 - And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD. And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes: Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it. And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for forty's

sake. And he said unto him, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there. And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake. And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake. And the LORD went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place.

28 And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.

And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain – why was Lot's wife killed for looking back, and Abraham not?

- In looking back on the destruction, Lot's wife disobeyed God's explicit command to not do so. Abraham had been given no such command.
- Abraham was a safe distance, some 20 miles away, from the destruction. It seems from the passage, that Lot's wife was not.

And beheld, and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace - The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was so great that from twenty miles away Abraham could see pillars of smoke rising from the cities into the sky. Concluding that God did not find ten righteous people within the city, Abraham must have wondered if his nephew was destroyed alongside of the wicked in the cities.

“The disaster in Abraham's day that swallowed an entire valley, several cities, and thousands of people was even more severe than the destruction rained down on Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the atom bomb. Today, Hiroshima and Nagasaki are thriving modern cities . . . but nothing will ever be built where Sodom and Gomorrah once stood. It is the ultimate ground zero. What land remains cannot support human life on any practical scale; it's barren and bleak and silent. The Dead Sea and the surrounding wasteland continue to warn each new generation to take God seriously and respect His justice.” (Swindoll, 2014, p. 141)

2 Peter 2:7 - And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:

Jude 1:7 - Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

29 And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt.

In His destruction of the cities of the plain, God remembered Abraham's intercession for Lot and saved him at least partly because of it. He saved him by sending him out of the plain before he destroyed it.

- I wonder if he ever saw Lot again. I wonder if he ever even knew that Lot survived.

3.) The Humiliation of Lot

30 And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters.

And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain – Lot and his two daughters arrived in Zoar, but did not remain there. They fled to the mountains where God told them to go in the first place. Why?

For he feared to dwell in Zoar – fearing that Zoar as one of the cities of the plain would be caught up in the aftermath of God's destruction and remembering the angels' initial command to go into the mountains, Lot departed Zoar for the mountains. (Plummer, 1902)

- This would make further sense if Lot's wife died in close proximity to the city of Zoar.
- It seems as if Lot did not trust God to keep His word and protect the city. So they left again.

James 1:8 - A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

31 And the firstborn said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth:

"We don't know how long Lot and his daughters lived in this cave. Enough time, at least, for the daughters to give up hope of ever marrying...The women may have thought the destruction of Sodom and the other cities was a worldwide event, leaving only a few isolated survivors like those in Zoar. Or, having just lost everything, they doubted their chances of ever finding arranged marriages to eligible men." (Swindoll, 2014, p. 151)

Earlier in this chapter, Lot planned to use his daughters for his own selfish and wicked agenda when he offered them to the men of Sodom. In the latter part of this chapter, Lot's daughter decided to use their father for their own selfish and wicked agendas.

Genesis 16:2 - And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

Genesis 38:14-30 - And she put her widow's garments off from her, and covered her with a vail, and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place, which is by the way to Timnath; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given unto him to wife. When Judah saw her, he thought her to be an harlot; because she had covered her face. And he turned unto her by the way, and said, Go to, I pray thee, let me come in unto thee; (for he knew not that she was his daughter in law.) And she said, What

wilt thou give me, that thou mayest come in unto me? And he said, I will send thee a kid from the flock. And she said, Wilt thou give me a pledge, till thou send it? And he said, What pledge shall I give thee? And she said, Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that is in thine hand. And he gave it her, and came in unto her, and she conceived by him. And she arose, and went away, and laid by her vail from her, and put on the garments of her widowhood. And Judah sent the kid by the hand of his friend the Adullamite, to receive his pledge from the woman's hand: but he found her not. Then he asked the men of that place, saying, Where is the harlot, that was openly by the way side? And they said, There was no harlot in this place. And he returned to Judah, and said, I cannot find her; and also the men of the place said, that there was no harlot in this place. And Judah said, Let her take it to her, lest we be shamed: behold, I sent this kid, and thou hast not found her. And it came to pass about three months after, that it was told Judah, saying, Tamar thy daughter in law hath played the harlot; and also, behold, she is with child by whoredom. And Judah said, Bring her forth, and let her be burnt. When she was brought forth, she sent to her father in law, saying, By the man, whose these are, am I with child: and she said, Discern, I pray thee, whose are these, the signet, and bracelets, and staff. And Judah acknowledged them, and said, She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son. And he knew her again no more. And it came to pass in the time of her travail, that, behold, twins were in her womb. And it came to pass, when she travailed, that the one put out his hand: and the midwife took and bound upon his hand a scarlet thread, saying, This came out first. And it came to pass, as he drew back his hand, that, behold, his brother came out: and she said, How hast thou broken forth? this breach be upon thee: therefore his name was called Pharez. And afterward came out his brother, that had the scarlet thread upon his hand: and his name was called Zarah.

32 Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father.

Their comments here make you wonder what kind of vile conversations and activities they had been exposed to in Sodom? Their thinking and moral compass had been so far distorted (just like their father's) that alcohol, seduction, and incest were deemed as acceptable ways of getting what they wanted. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 151)

By the way, this is another negative parallel between Lot and Noah. After the flood in Genesis chapter 9:21, the Bible says of Noah - And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.

- He was humiliated in his drunkenness, and so was Lot.
- Proverbs 23:31-33 - Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.

With kids in the auditorium, I'm not going to read out loud the details of what happened in the following three verses, but the end result can be seen in verse 36.

33 And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose.

Leviticus 18:6-7 - None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover their nakedness: I am the LORD. The nakedness of thy father, or the nakedness of thy mother, shalt thou not uncover: she is thy mother; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.

34 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the firstborn said unto the younger, Behold, I lay yesternight with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, and lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father.

35 And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger arose, and lay with him; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose.

36 Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father.

A few weeks later the signs were evident. The girls had become pregnant.

Genesis 19:8 - Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof.

37 And the first born bare a son, and called his name Moab: the same is the father of the Moabites unto this day.

“Nine months separate verses 36 and 37, and we neither see nor hear anything from Lot. No outrage. No confrontation. No sorrow or repentance or confession or acknowledgment at all. As if to reflect the family's shamelessness in the whole situation, the narrative announces these births as if they were no different from any other.” (Swindoll, 2014, p. 153)

Moab – from father

Ruth 4:10 - Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day.

38 And the younger, she also bare a son, and called his name Benammi: the same is the father of the children of Ammon unto this day.

Benammi – son of my kinsman

“Lot's life would be irrelevant were it not for Moab and Ben-ammi, who became the patriarchs of two nations: the Moabites and the Ammonites. Those familiar with Hebrew

history know these nations as relentless enemies of Israel during the Exodus and the conquest of the Promised Land. These enemy nations continued to harass Israel through the period of the Judges. Israel briefly silenced Moab and Ammon during the reigns of David and Solomon, but when civil war divided the covenant nation, their enemies resurged.” (Swindoll, 2014, p. 154)

Sodom & Gomorrah were reborn in that cave as the Moabites and the Ammonites.

Deuteronomy 2:9 - And the LORD said unto me, Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle: for I will not give thee of their land for a possession; because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot for a possession.

Deuteronomy 2:19 - And when thou comest nigh over against the children of Ammon, distress them not, nor meddle with them: for I will not give thee of the land of the children of Ammon any possession; because I have given it unto the children of Lot for a possession.

Judges 10:6-18 - And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the LORD, and served not him. And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon. And that year they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel: eighteen years, all the children of Israel that were on the other side Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead. Moreover the children of Ammon passed over Jordan to fight also against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim; so that Israel was sore distressed. And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim. And the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines? The Zidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites, did oppress you; and ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand. Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation. And the children of Israel said unto the LORD, We have sinned: do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; deliver us only, we pray thee, this day. And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD: and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel. Then the children of Ammon were gathered together, and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled themselves together, and encamped in Mizpeh. And the people and princes of Gilead said one to another, What man is he that will begin to fight against the children of Ammon? he shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.

Nehemiah 13:1-3 - On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever; Because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing. Now it came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude.

Zephaniah 2:9 - Therefore as I live, saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, even the breeding of nettles, and saltpits, and a perpetual desolation: the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them.

Application

1 John 2:15-17 - 15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Are you living for the world? Have you made your whole life about the accumulation of money and possessions and accolades that you can't take with you?

Matthew 6:33 – But seek ye first the kingdom of God

Are you living your life in pursuit of God's kingdom? Or have you built your life on the unstable foundation of Sodom?

Genesis 20:1-18

Review

In Genesis 19, we saw the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot fled Sodom to Zoar and then the mountains with his wife and two daughters. God rained down fire and brimstone on the four cities of the plain, completely annihilating the cities, people, and vegetation of the plain. Lot's wife gazed back on Sodom, was killed, and encrusted in a pillar of salt. The story of Lot ended with him in the cave humiliated at the hands of his own daughters' gross depravity.

Sermon

Chapter 20 shifts the narrative back from Lot to Abraham.

With the birth of Isaac so soon on the horizon, this story represents once again an attack on God's promise. Due to Abraham's sin of deception, he, once again, just about messes everything up. In the end, it takes God intervening to preserve Sarah's purity and keep His word.

At the heart of this story is the theme of God's control over life and death. When His law is violated, He has the right and power to take life or interrupt the life giving process. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 4553)

Another theme present in this passage is that of guilt and innocence. Abimelech faces death for a moral crime he is perceived to have committed. However, throughout the narrative his innocence is established, and punishment is withdrawn. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 4562) Ironically, in the end of this story, Abraham and Sarah are revealed to be the guilty ones who engaged in deception and lacked the necessary faith that God would protect them.

Genesis 12 – Abraham's Misadventure in Egypt

Genesis 20 - Abraham's Misadventure in Gerar

1.) The Deceitfulness of Abraham

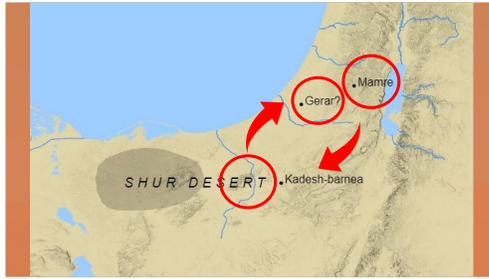
1 And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar.

And Abraham journeyed from thence – from Mamre

toward the south country – toward the Negev

and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur – he spent some time in the south

and sojourned in Gerar – and then he dwelled for a time in Gerar, a Philistine region a few miles from Gaza (Plummer, 1902)



Genesis 14:7 - And they returned, and came to Enmishpat, which is Kadesh, and smote all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, that dwelt in Hazezontamar.

Genesis 16:7 - And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur.

1 Samuel 15:7 - And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt.

Genesis 10:19 - And the border of the Canaanites was from Sidon, as thou comest to Gerar, unto Gaza; as thou goest, unto Sodom, and Gomorrah, and Admah, and Zeboim, even unto Lasha.

Genesis 26:1 - And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar.

2 And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah.

And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister – There are a lot of similarities between this story hrtr and Abraham and Sarah’s encounter with Pharaoh back in Genesis 12. Believe it or not, twenty five years separate Abraham’s deceitful misadventure in Egypt and his deceitful misadventure in Gerar. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 161)

- What that goes to show is that twenty five years later, despite all that he had seen God do, Abraham still had a problem trusting God and would resort to lying as a defense mechanism.
- He was a leader of men. He was a man experienced in battle. He was a man of God, and yet he allowed the fear of men to control him at times.
- As a result, he is going to put the plan of God in jeopardy again because of his sin.
 - o The story of Abraham and Sarah is a story of man time and time again jeopardizing the plan of God due to his failures, and yet God remaining faithful through it all.
 - o “Abraham, in trying to protect himself, gave God more work to do than if he had simply trusted the Lord in the beginning.” (Swindoll, 2014, p. 164)

And Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah – Abimelech was likely a title for the ruler of Gerar, similar to Pharaoh as a title for the ruler of Egypt. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 162)
The ruler of Gerar took Sarah into his harem.

- Sarah was the ripe age of 65 when Pharaoh took her into his harem. She was now 90 years old, and yet apparently, she was still quite the looker. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 162)
- It must have been the essential oils and Mediterranean bath salts.
- Others have suggested that Abimelech's interest in her may have been more political than sexual: wanting to ally himself with her wealthy nomadic "brother", Abraham. Genesis 12:11-13 - And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.

Genesis 26:7 - And the men of the place asked him of his wife; and he said, She is my sister: for he feared to say, She is my wife; lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she was fair to look upon.

Genesis 12:15 - The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.

2.) The Confrontation of Abimelech

3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife.

But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night – Abraham failed to protect his wife and subsequently failed to confront Abimelech with the truth once he had taken her into his harem. However, where Abraham failed, God prevailed. He confronted him with the truth of who Sarah was and the seriousness of what he had done.

And said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man – imagine God coming to you in a vivid dream, and the first words out of His mouth are, "Jacob, you are a dead man....or you are as good as dead."

- That would get my attention.
- Why am I as good as dead?

For the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife – you are as good as dead because you have taken Sarah into your harem and she is another man's wife.

- From the very beginning, God's design has been one man with one woman for one lifetime within the context of an unconditional marriage covenant.
- Even here in this narrative and in other narratives in Genesis you begin to see stories that reveal the truths that will be formally expressed in the law in Exodus.

- This narrative teaches very clearly what is explicitly stated in Exodus 20:14 – Thou shalt not commit adultery.
 - The story of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife teaches it as well.
- Although the ten commandments had not yet been given, it can be clearly seen from this passage of Scripture that adultery has been, is, and always will be a grave sin against God with severe consequences.
 - Passages like this one remind us of the seriousness with which God takes sin. “Abimelech, you’re a dead man.” And yet there are other passages like the story of the woman caught in adultery or the woman at the well that remind us of the seriousness with which God extends forgiveness and grace. Recall that when Christ came, He came full of grace and truth.
 - There is a tension that exists between grace and truth, and that tension is love. Love is gracious because love cares for the person, but love is also truthful. Why? Because love cares for the person.

4 But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation?

But Abimelech had not come near her: - some suggest this was because there was a waiting period to ensure she wasn’t already pregnant. Others posit that Abimelech had already been afflicted with some disease that was slowly beginning to kill him. Regardless of why he had not had relations with Sarah, we know that he had withheld himself from her.

And he said, Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation? – Abimelech’s words here echo those of Abraham in Genesis 18 when he pleaded with God.

- Genesis 18:23-25 - And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?
- His response here shows that contrary to Abraham’s fears and Sodom’s disposition, Abimelech was a God fearing man.
 - He pled his case of innocence to God.

5 Said he not unto me, She is my sister? and she, even she herself said, He is my brother: in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this.

Said he not unto me, She is my sister? – God, did he not lie to me about their relation?

And even she herself said, He is my brother – and God even her, even Sarah, lied to me too!

In the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this – I have done what I have done in integrity and innocency.

- Abimelech's declaration of his innocence to God is very reminiscent of Psalm 24:3-4.
- Psalm 24:3-4 - 3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? 4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.
- Here is a man that appears guilty but turns out to be upright and innocent. Proverbs 11:3 - The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.

6 And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her.

And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart – Yes Abimelech, you are right. I know that you have acted with integrity in your heart in your choosing of Sarah.

- Application: God does know you and your deeds. When we confess our sin to Him, we are not bringing Him new information. We are bringing ourselves into alignment with what He already knows.
- Illustration – parent knowing a child has done something wrong and confronting them about it to see if they will tell the truth

For I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her – in fact, I kept you from sinning against me by having another man's wife. This is the reason I prevented you from touching her.

- How did God prevent this? Once again, we don't know for sure. The wording here does hint at some sort of a malady inflicted on the king though.

7 Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine.

Now therefore restore the man his wife – But, now that you know the truth, you need to restore Sarah to her husband Abraham.

For he is a prophet – this is the first usage of the term “prophet” in the Old Testament (Blum, Walvoord, & Zuck, p. 62)

- He is a designated intermediary between Me and man. As a prophet, he speaks on My behalf.
- “This guy, who lied and whose wife lied, and almost led me into committing a gross sin, is a prophet? You've got to be kidding me.”
- Illustration: Spiritual leaders are sinners too. Spiritual leaders make mistakes.
 - o Adam and Eve were kicked out of Eden.
 - o Noah got drunk.
 - o Abraham lied and had a mistress.
 - o Isaac lied.

- Jacob lied and had two wives and two mistresses .
- Moses wasn't permitted to enter the promised land because of disobedience.
- David committed adultery and had someone murdered.
- John the Baptist had doubts about if Jesus were truly the Messiah.
- James and John wanted to call down fire on a Samaritan village.
- On one occasion, Peter was referred to by Jesus as Satan.
- Thomas doubted.
- Paul refused to give John Mark a second chance and referred to himself as the chiefest among sinners.
- Timothy was fearful.
- We are all in need of grace, myself included.
 - If you've never heard me say "I'm sorry" you probably will at some point. Why? Because I'm not perfect. Abraham certainly wasn't either.

And he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live – when you restore his wife to him, he will make intercession for you, and you will live.

- Prophets not only spoke to man on God's behalf. They also interceded to God on man's behalf.
- "This guy, who just lied to me about his wife being his sister is a prophet? And he's going to pray for me??"

And if thou restore her not – However, if you do not restore Sarah to her husband

Know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine – you and everyone in your clan will die

- Well obviously, he's going to obey right?
 - Obey or die.
 - Do you know who was in a situation just like these and didn't obey? Adam and Eve.
 - "If you eat the fruit you'll die." Guess what they did? They ate the fruit.
- When God makes a statement like this, He means it. Don't forget He just destroyed Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim in a torrent of fire and brimstone.
Exodus 7:1 - And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.

Hebrews 1:1 - God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

Leviticus 6:7 - And the priest shall make an atonement for him before the LORD: and it shall be forgiven him for any thing of all that he hath done in trespassing therein.

Job 42:8 - Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job.

Hebrews 13:4 - Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

3.) The Confrontation of Abraham

8 Therefore Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants, and told all these things in their ears: and the men were sore afraid.

Therefore Abimelech rose early in the morning – he probably couldn't sleep

And called all his servants, and told all these things in their ears – “Do not touch this woman! Our lives hang in the balance.”

And the men were sore afraid – why? Because God treats sin seriously.

9 Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said unto him, What hast thou done unto us? and what have I offended thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done.

Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said unto him, What hast thou done unto us? – although God did not rebuke Abimelech, Abimelech rebuked Abraham (Blum, Walvoord, & Zuck, p. 62)

- What have you done??
- Although the sin of adultery is at the heart of the theme this passage is teaching, adultery is not the sin that has been committed in this passage. Lying is.

And what have I offended thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? – What have I done to offend you so that you would do such a thing, and put me and my people in a position where we could have easily committed such a great sin?

- Sins of ignorance are still sins. In Leviticus, sin offerings were taught as necessary for such occasions. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 4618)

Thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done – You have done things to me that you should not have done.

- It's interesting to contrast Abimelech's treatment of Sarah with Sodom's treatment of the angels. Sodom was intentionally wicked and was destroyed. Abimelech was intentionally upright and lived.

Genesis 12:18 - And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife?

Genesis 26:10 - And Abimelech said, What is this thou hast done unto us? one of the people might lightly have lien with thy wife, and thou shouldest have brought guiltiness upon us.

Genesis 39:9 - There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

10 And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing?

And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing? –
What were you thinking to do such a thing?

- Abimelech had messed up. God confronted him.
 - o Abimelech pled integrity and ignorance.
- Abraham had messed up. Abimelech confronted him.
 - o He could plead neither integrity nor ignorance.
 - o His pitiful defense was self preservation.

11 And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake.

Abraham returned to his habitual sin as a crutch when he was stressed by challenging circumstances. We have to be careful because we do this too.

- For some it's addictions. For others, it's anxiety. For some, it might be anger. For Abraham, it was lying.

And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place – why did you lie, Abraham? Well, I assumed you weren't God fearing people.

- This is so ironic.

And they will slay me for my wife's sake – And I assumed you would kill me and take my wife as your own.

- To be fair, remember the treatment of the angels by Sodom in the preceding chapter. The Ancient Near East at this time was a wicked place.
- And yet, Abraham made a wrong assumption about this place and its ruler, and he allowed his mind to wander to the absolute worst case scenario. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 165)
- As a follower of God, Abraham failed to see the terrible inconsistency in his reasoning behind his lie. "I believe in God, but I don't trust God to protect me from people who don't believe in Him. I trust in lies to protect me from godless people. God can't protect me from them, but lies can."
- The God fearing man behaved like an atheist. The godless man behaved like a believer.

Proverbs 1:7 - The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Proverbs 8:13 - The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

Genesis 12:12 - Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive.

Genesis 26:7 - And the men of the place asked him of his wife; and he said, She is my sister: for he feared to say, She is my wife; lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she was fair to look upon.

12 And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife.

And yet indeed she is my sister – and technically she is my sister

She is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother – half sister

And she became my wife – and we got married later on

- She was my sister before she ever became my wife.

Deception is just as much a sin as bold faced lying. Withholding parts of the truth for the purpose of deceiving another person is wrong.

- In fact, the very first lie recorded in the Scripture was an act of deception when Satan misled Eve regarding the consequences of eating of the fruit.
 - o 2 Cor. 11:3 – the serpent deceived Eve by his cunningness, his subtlety
- 1 Peter 2:1 - Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile (deceitfulness), and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,
- Revelation 21:8 - 8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.
 - o Notice how lying is lumped in with these other egregious sins. God takes sexual sin seriously, but He takes lying seriously too.
 - o In Proverbs 6, there are six things that the Lord hates and two of them are lying.

13 And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou shalt shew unto me; at every place whither we shall come, say of me, He is my brother.

Apparently, this was a decision that Abraham made when he left Ur. This is the kindness you're going to show to me. Wherever we stop along the journey, you're going to tell people that you're my sister. This makes me wonder how many other places Abraham had told this lie and gotten away with it.

Genesis 12:1 - 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 shew thee:

4.) The Restoration of Sarah

14 And Abimelech took sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and womenservants, and gave them unto Abraham, and restored him Sarah his wife.

And Abimelech took sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and womenservants, and gave them unto Abraham, and restored him Sarah his wife – here Abimelech demonstrated his integrity by not only restoring Sarah to her husband but also by making reparations to the family for the wrong he had unknowingly committed.

- “Abraham behaved in a manner unworthy of his God, but Abimelech looked past the man to honor his rank as God’s prophet. The king honored God by treating His representative with honor. And in response, God favored Abimelech and his household.” (Swindoll, 2014, p. 166)
- He gave them animals and servants just as Pharaoh had done in Genesis 12. Genesis 12:16 - And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels. Genesis 12:19-20 - Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way. And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.

15 And Abimelech said, Behold, my land is before thee: dwell where it pleaseth thee.

And Abimelech said, Behold, my land is before thee: dwell where it pleaseth thee. – He also gave them permission to dwell in his land wherever they pleased.

- Abraham did wrong, and Abimelech got in trouble for it. Abimelech could have harbored bitterness and anger and frustration towards Abraham, but do you know what he did? He let it go. He showed kindness and he moved on.
 - o What do you do when someone wrongs you and asks forgiveness? You forgive and you move on, just as God has forgiven you.
 - o What do you do when someone wrongs you and doesn’t ask forgiveness? You can’t really give forgiveness to someone who doesn’t ask for it, but do you know what you can do? You can give it to God and move on.
 - Illustration – longsuffering: allowing God to take vengeance
 - There have been many a times that people have hurt me, and I know they will never apologize for it. Do you want to know what I think about those people? I don’t. Why? Because I’ve given it to God, left it in His hands, and trust that He will take care of it. It’s off my plate.
 - When you will take those people and put them off of your plate and onto God’s, do you know how you’ll feel? Lighter. The opposite is true as well.
 - Application: maybe there are some people in your life that have hurt you and you’re bitter, and you just need to give them to the Lord.

Genesis 13:9 - Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.

16 And unto Sarah he said, Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver: behold, he is to thee a covering of the eyes, unto all that are with thee, and with all other: thus she was reproved.

And unto Sarah he said, Behold I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver – he also gave Abraham a thousand pieces of silver in Sarah’s name.

- To put that in perspective, Joseph was sold into slavery for 20 pieces of silver.
- Notice the parting shot Abimelech levels in referring to Abraham as Sarah’s brother!

17 So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare children.

So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants – Abraham prayed to God on Abimelech’s behalf, and God healed him and his wife and his concubines.

And they bare children – this sets the stage for what is to follow in Genesis 21. As God opened up the wombs of the women of Gerar, so too He would soon open up the womb of Sarah at last.

18 For the Lord had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah Abraham's wife.

For the Lord had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech – God had prevented conception in the household of Abimelech. Why?

Because of Sarah Abraham’s wife

Genesis 12:17 - And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife.

Genesis 16:2 - And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

Application

This story reminds me of a short story Paul Harvey wrote about the way in which an Eskimo kills a wolf.

“The Eskimo coats his knife blade with blood and allows it to freeze there. Then the Eskimo adds another layer of blood, and then another. As each succeeding smear of blood freezes to the blade of the knife the Eskimo adds an additional coating until the blade is concealed by a substantial thickness of frozen blood. Then the knife handle is buried in the frozen ground with the blade up. The marauding wolf follows his sensitive nose to the scent and tastes the fresh-frozen blood. . . . And licks it. . . . More and more vigorously the wolf licks at

the bait until the keen edge is bare. Feverishly now, he licks harder. . . . In the arctic night so great becomes his craving for blood that he does not notice the razor-sharp sting of the naked blade on his own tongue. Nor does he recognize the instant at which his insatiable thirst is being satisfied by his own warm blood. . . . "More!" his carnivorous appetite craves, "more!" Until dawn finds him dead in the snow." (Harvey, 1996)

Just like that bloody knife, deceit, adultery, and bitterness will kill you if you indulge them. There may be pleasure in the moment, but they will kill you in the process. What's true of these particular sins is true of sin in general.

Is there a sin that you need to turn from? Is there a blade that you need to stop licking? If there is, don't wait another minute. Make that decision today, lest like that wolf, dawn finds you dead in the snow.

Genesis 21:1-21

Review

Following the destruction of the cities of the plain, chapter 20 shifted the narrative of Genesis back to Abraham. With the birth of Isaac on the horizon, there would once again be a threat to the child of promise due to Abraham's ongoing sin problem of lying.

Upon arriving in Gerar he told Abimelech that Sarah was his sister. Abimelech took Sarah into his harem. God confronted Abimelech, who then confronted Abraham and returned Sarah to him. Thus, God resolved the threat to the child of promise caused by Abraham and Sarah's sin.

In chapter 21, we're going to finally see the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham and Sarah, and we're going to see the resolution of another threat to the child of promise that was caused, not by present sin, but by past sin. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 4649)

Sermon

1.) The Fulfillment of the Promise Regarding Isaac

A.) God kept His Word

...in His timing.

- Why did He wait so long? We don't know, we don't need to know, and even if we did know, we probably wouldn't be able to comprehend it.

1 And the Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as he had spoken.

And the Lord visited Sarah as he had said – when the Bible speaks of God's visitation, it's referring to an important intervention by God. For God to visit is for God to intervene in a significant way.

- Genesis 50:24 - And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.
- God intervened in Sarah's life as He **said** He would.
 - o God did what He said. His Word can be trusted.
 - o Our attitude towards the Word of God ought to be, "If God said it, I believe it, and that settles it."

And the Lord did unto Sarah as he had spoken – here the author basically repeats himself for emphasis. God intervened in Sarah's life so as to enable her to miraculously have a child in her old age....as he had said he would.

- Genesis 18:10 - And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him.

- Genesis 18:14 - Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.
- God did what He said. His Word can be trusted.
Exodus 3:16 - Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt:

Luke 19:44 - And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

Genesis 17:19 - And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

Verse 2 explains how the Lord kept His word regarding Sarah.

2 For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.

For Sarah conceived and bare Abraham a son in his old age – God kept His Word by miraculously intervening in the conception and birth of Isaac.

At the set time of which God had **spoken** to him – God did what He said, when He said He would do it, in His timing.

- Twenty five years prior Abraham and Sarah had left Ur on a wing and a prayer at the direction of God to go the Promised Land. Over the course of that twenty five year period, a lot happened. They survived famines, conflicts, a cataclysmic destruction of the plain, and crazy encounters with rulers like Pharaoh and Abimilech. And yet, finally, twenty five years later at the set time, God kept His promise to Abraham and Sarah of a seed.
 - o Genesis 17:21 - But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee **at this set time in the next year.**

Galatians 4:22 - For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

Romans 9:9 - For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.

Hebrews 11:11 - Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

B.) Abraham obeyed God's Word

3 And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac.

And Abraham called the name of his son that was **born unto him**, whom Sarah **bare to him**. Isaac – why does the text repeat itself like that in regards to Isaac's birth?

- The author goes to extra lengths to identify Isaac as the son that was born to Abraham AND Sarah. That's key, and that's a big part of what makes him the child of promise, the fulfillment of God's Word.
- But the main point is that the couple named the child Isaac in obedience to God's command.
 - o Genesis 17:19 - And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; **and thou shalt call his name Isaac**: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

4 And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him.

And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him – They obeyed God. They named the child Isaac, and they circumcised the child on the eighth day, as God had commanded them.

Genesis 17:10-12 - This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; **Every man child among you shall be circumcised**. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.

God kept His Word to them, and they responded to God's Word in obedience.

- Application: we can trust God's Word, and we should obey God's Word.

5 And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him.

And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him – When they were called to set out for Canaan, Abraham was 75, Sarah was 65, and Ishmael had not yet been born.

- Now, at Isaac's birth, Abraham was 100, Sarah was 90, and Ishmael was 14.
Romans 4:19 - And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb:

C.) Sarah rejoiced at God's Word

6 And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me.

And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, – her laugh of unbelief had turned into joyous laughter.

- Illustration – the 2004 Boston RedSox coming back from down 3-0 to the Yankees to win the ALCS and then their first world series in 86 years.

- It just makes me chuckle sometimes thinking about how great it was.
- “Isn’t that crazy? Isn’t God good?”
- “Wow, the promised child has finally arrived.”
 - Do you realize that there was another child whose birth was promised and anticipated and rejoiced at in a similar fashion? Do you know who it was? It was Jesus, the ultimate promised seed.
 - “For the New Testament writers, the coming of the promised seed, Jesus Christ, paralleled the birth of Isaac as no other fulfilled promise could. With the long-awaited and supernatural natural birth of this greater Seed came a far greater visitation from on high (Gal. 3:19; Luke 1:68).” (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 4701-4702)

so that all that hear will laugh with me – Abraham’s notoriety in the land would certainly have spread over the twenty five years that he was there due to his military victories and growing clan. News of their son’s strange birth would have spread quickly and been a testimony to the power of his God. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 180)

Genesis 18:12-15 - Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son. Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh.

7 And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born him a son in his old age.

And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, - one year ago, who could have ever even thought our suggested

that Sarah should have given children suck?- that me, a 90 year old woman, could give birth to a child and then nurse it?

- Who could have ever even thought?

For I have born him a son in his old age – God has done the impossible through me.

2.) The Threat to the Promise from Ishmael

A.) The recognition of the threat

8 And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned.

And the child grew and was weaned – in that ancient near east culture infants were often nursed until about their 3rd birthday and then they would have a big party to celebrate that transition from infancy . This means that on the day of this celebration, Isaac was likely 3 with Ishmael being about 17. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 188)

- That's important because it means that, in that culture, Ishmael would have been considered practically an adult.

And Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned – we don't really do this in our western cultures, but there are cultures in the East that still do this. They will have a special celebration when a child stops nursing from its mother.

- Illustration: massive birthday party for a toddler
- "The birth of a new baby always threatens an older child, especially if he or she has enjoyed exclusive attention in the past. Ishmael, for the first time in his life, had to share his home with a rival. To make matters worse, he understood his position in the family hierarchy. He represented the compromise; Isaac was the true child of promise. And for three years, conflict brewed. It finally came to a head at a family celebration. (Drama always surfaces at family celebrations, doesn't it?)" (Swindoll, 2014, pp. 188-189)

9 And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking.

And Sarah saw the son of Hagar, the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking – Ishmael was ridiculing and making fun of Isaac. Sarah initially laughed at the possibility of giving birth to Isaac in her old age. After giving birth to Isaac, Sarah then laughed with joy at the fulfillment of God's promise to her. Ishmael now taunts and laughs at Isaac in a demeaning fashion.

- What others might have just seen as "kidding around", Sarah, as a mother bear, saw for what it was: a threat.
 - o Galatians 4:29 - But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.
 - Paul describes the activities of Ishmael as persecution.
 - o Genesis 16:12 - And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.
 - It was prophesied that Ishmael would be a man of conflict.
 - o "Ishmael may have been playing with Isaac, but if he was permitted to continue, his real effort would have been to supplant plant this new heir." (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 4724)
 - o "In all the uses there is the idea of a less-than-serious serious toying with someone, a trifling with someone or something, and possibly a deceptive play that could prove harmful." (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 4713-4714)
 - Genesis 19:14; 26:8; 39:14, 17; Ex. 32:6; Judges 16:25
- This enraged Sarah.
 - o This is a continuation of the tension that surfaced in Genesis 16 between Hagar and Sarah.

Genesis 16:3-6 - And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband

Abram to be his wife. And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes. And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee. But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.

Genesis 17:20- And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.

B.) The Removal of the Threat

10 Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.

Cast out this bondwoman – she does not refer to Hagar as a wife, but as a slave

And her son – she refers to Ishmael as Hagar’s son, not Abraham’s

For the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac – this slave’s boy will not be heir with my son

- “Abraham, there’s always going to be this tension with Ishmael and Isaac. Ishmael is not the child of promise. He is not a coheir with Isaac. You need to send him away.”
- Illustration – lest you think that Sarah is off her rocker thinking of the step brother Ishmael as a threat to the young child of promise, don’t forget what Joseph’s stepbrothers did to him. They were going to kill him and sold him into slavery. Galatians 4:22-31 - For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

11 And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son.

And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son - it tore Abraham up because Ishmael was his son

- Genesis 17:18 - And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!
- Abraham had reared Ishmael to manhood, and yet he likely looked forward in anticipation to the day in which he would arrange a marriage for him and get to care for the grandchildren he would bear him.
- Perhaps he thought back to his separation from Lot and how poorly that had turned out.
- Records from that time period indicate that some social customs prevented a man from disowning a concubine and any children she bore him. Others stated that a man could grant them their freedom in exchange for releasing claims to any inheritance. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 189)
- Eighteen years prior Abraham and Sarah had tried to circumvent and rush the plan of God and now they would pay the consequences for it.
 - o Forgiveness of sin does not mean freedom from the consequences of that sin.
 - o Now, because of his sin, he's created a scenario where he's caught between a raging 93 year old wife, a 17 year old son he loves very much, and a 3 year old child of promise that he must protect.
 - What created this situation? Sin. Sin did.

2 Samuel 18:33 - And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!

Abraham faces this incredible inner conflict, and God is going to help him resolve it.

12 And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

And God said unto Abraham – in each of the instances in which there is a threat to the fulfillment of promise created by Abraham's sin, God always comes to the rescue and brings resolution

Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad and because of the bondwoman – Abraham, don't let this eat you up because of the boy and the bondwoman.

- This was a serious problem, and yet God was going to help alleviate its impact on Abraham.
- It's interesting because God never recognizes Hagar as Abraham's wife. Gen. 16:3 says that Sarah gave her to Abraham to be her wife, but in God's encounter with Hagar in chapter 16 and his conversation with Abraham here in chapter 21, He refers to her as a handmaid.

In all that Sarah hath said unto thee, Harken unto her voice – do what Sarah has suggested you should do. Give Hagar her freedom, and send her and Ishmael away.

- Abraham will do this again after he remarries at the end of his life in Genesis 25:6 to once again preserve the inheritance for Isaac.

1 Samuel 8:7 - And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

Romans 9:7-8 - Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

Here's how God alleviates the inner tension for Abraham.

13 And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.

And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed – In promising to make a nation of Ishmael, God is assuring Abraham that He will take care of Ishmael. This alleviates the inner tension that this decision brought to Abraham. He's not sending him away as much as he is releasing him into the care of God. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 4732-4733)

- This isn't even a new promise. This is just the reiteration of what God had already promised to Hagar in Genesis 16:10 and to Abraham in Genesis 17:20.

Genesis 16:10 - And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.

Genesis 17:20 - And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.

3.) The Fulfillment of the Promise Regarding Ishmael

A.) The crisis of Hagar & Ishmael in the Wilderness

14 And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.

And Abraham rose up early in the morning – why is that important? He obeyed immediately. He did not delay. In this, he contrasts with how Lot responded when he received the news of needing to leave Sodom.

- He obeyed in naming Isaac. He obeyed in circumcising Isaac. He obeyed in sending away Ishmael, and in chapter 22 he is going to obey by being willing to offer Isaac.

And took bread, and a bottle of water and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, - this phrasing here likely means that Abraham provided them with the necessary provisions needed for the journey (Malachi 1:7, 12; Matt. 6:11)

- Hagar carried these provisions on her shoulder.

And the child – this does not mean that Hagar carried her provisions and her 17 year old son both on her shoulders. Although, as a single mom, it probably felt like that.

- The idea is that Abraham gave over into the care of Hagar both the provisions and her near adult son. (Spence & Exell, 1883)

And sent her away: - her and Ishmael were sent away

And she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba – they left Palestine likely for Egypt, and during the course of the journey, in the wilderness between the two locations, they lost their way.

- That region today is not very hospitable to life. It can support life but not without a lot of planning and hard work. Hagar’s struggles with Ishmael in the wilderness can be really seen as a picture of the struggles of single motherhood.
 - o “Hagar, like most suddenly single parents, faced the challenge of having to survive alone, wandering aimlessly (at first), having to make too little provision cover too many needs, and being forsaken by loved ones.” (Swindoll, 2014, p. 191)

Application – And yet can I tell you something, in those moments where you just feel like giving up, God sees you. He knows, and when you don’t have the strength, you can lean on Him.

Illustration – Liz telling Jacqueline each night:

- God loves you.
- God knows you.
- God is always with you.

Genesis 25:6 - But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country.

Genesis 16:7 - And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur.

15 And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs.

And the water was spent in the bottle – because they found themselves wandering lost in the wilderness, they exhausted their water supply and were in grave danger of dying of thirst in the wilderness.

And she cast the child under one of the shrubs – “the sense probably is that, having, as long as her rapidly diminishing strength permitted, supported her fainting son, she at length suddenly, through feebleness, released his nerveless hand as he fell, and in despair, finding herself unable to give him further assistance, left him, as she believed, to die where he had flung himself in his intolerable anguish - under one of the shrubs.” (Spence & Exell, 1883)

Exodus 15:22-25 - So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them

16 And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bow shot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept.

And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bow shot – she continued on for just a little bit longer, a ways off from where her son had collapsed, and sat down to die.

For she said, Let me not see the death of the child – they were both going to die, and she couldn't bear to watch as her son died, helpless to do anything about it.

And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept – she started balling her eyes out

- Hagar and Ishmael are a picture of Israel during their wanderings in the wilderness. Because of unbelief in the promises of God, Israel would be condemned to wander in the wilderness.

B.) The Resolution of God's Provision

17 And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is.

And God heard the voice of the lad – God heard the voice of Ishmael (not Hagar), perhaps praying or weeping

And the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her – God heard Ishmael, but spoke to Hagar.

- It's interesting that in all three instances of crisis in the last few chapters (Abimilech to Sarah, Ishmael to Isaac, and the wilderness to Hagar & Ishmael), the crises were met and resolved through a word from the Lord. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 4663)
 - o God spoke to Abimilech.
 - o God spoke to Abraham.
 - o God spoke to Hagar.
- Application

- In moments of crisis, do you know where we can go for resolution? The Word.
- God has spoken. We just need to open the book and listen.

And said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not; - Hagar, what's wrong? Don't be afraid.

for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is – God loves you. God knows you. God is with you.

- God has heard Ishmael.
- Don't forget what the name "Ishmael" means.
 - It means "God hears".

Genesis 16:9 - And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.

Genesis 16:11 - And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction.

Psalm 68:4-6 - 4 Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name Jah, and rejoice before him. 5 A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation. 6 God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.

18 Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation.

Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in the hand – Get up, walk over to Ishmael, lift him up, and support him in your hand

For I will make him a great nation – God said this to Abraham earlier in this chapter to comfort him in sending him away. God says this to Hagar here to comfort her that He will provide for and protect them.

19 And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink.

And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water – the wording here seems to indicate that the well was always there.

- Perhaps it was a distance off and God led them to it.
- Perhaps she was so wearied that she literally just couldn't see it.
- Perhaps God had shut her eyes so that she couldn't see it until the appointed time.
- Regardless, she now saw this well that she had not seen before.

And she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink – and their lives were saved because of the gracious provision of God

- And in saving their lives, God kept His Word regarding Ishmael. He had promised Hagar and Abraham, that from Ishmael a great nation would come...and because He had said it, it would come to pass.

20 And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer.

And God was with the lad – this statement seems to imply that God’s blessing continued in Ishmael’s life. He had promised that He would make a great nation of him and was providentially with him so as to bring that promise to pass.

- Genesis 39:2-3 – And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.

And he grew – he became great (Ellicott, 1905)

And dwelt in the wilderness – as a wild man in fulfillment of the prophecy God gave to Hagar in Gen. 16:12

And became an archer – presumably skilled in both hunting and war

- Once again in fulfillment of the prophecy given to Hagar in Gen. 16:12
- “Today Arabs trace their ancestry back to Abraham through Ishmael. If their claim is true, we may never expect to see widespread or long-lasting peace between the Arabs and their half brothers, the Hebrews. For centuries, they have clashed as nations and as races. And so we might say the sin of Abraham continues to reverberate down through the ages to affect everyone, innocent and guilty alike.” (Swindoll, 2014, pp. 194-195)

Judges 6:12 - And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.

Genesis 25:27 - And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents.

Genesis 27:3 - Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison;

21 And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.

And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran – he made a home out of the barren, desolate desert

And his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt – this responsibility fell to Hagar, as Ishmael no longer had a father in his life.

- She took him a wife out of her hometown of Egypt.

Application

Thus, in this chapter, we see the recurring theme of the Word of God. God kept His Word in the birth of Isaac. Abraham and Sarah's disobedience to God's Word 18 years prior brought about a threat to the child of promise that had to be removed...and yet even with Ishmael God still kept His Word.

We can trust God's Word. We should obey God's Word, and when in unbelief we fail to obey God's Word, there are consequences.

"Paul uses the story to illustrate his point. Ishmael was born according to the flesh through the slave wife, but Isaac was born according to the promise and was the heir. By analogy, the first represents the bondage at Sinai and Jerusalem; the other, the freedom when the promise finally came. Christ was the promised Seed (Gal. 3:16); and the law was meant to bring us to Christ (v. 24). Once the promise was fulfilled, the old order was done away with. But then we see a second step in Paul's development: those who believe in Jesus Christ also become children of the promise, for Paul says we are "like Isaac" (Gal. 4:28), the son of the free woman. Therefore, we must get rid of the son of the slave woman (note that in Gal. v. 30, Paul paraphrases the words of Sarah as the authoritative lesson). Now that the promise has come in Christ, we who believe are joint heirs, we are children of the promise, we are the spiritual seed of Abraham. To go back under the law would be to deny the fulfillment of the promise and to live according to the flesh. The spiritual seed has been set free from the bondage of the law. In the Christian experience, the flesh struggles against the spirit, making a mockery of it at times, for unbelief will attack belief. Paul then advises us to cast out those things of the flesh that undermine and threaten the freedom in Christ, the promised Seed." (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 4752-4759)

Chart 20. Paul's Analogies Between Isaac and Ishmael

Isaac (laughter)	Ishmael (mockery)
Recipients of the promise: believers	Wanderers, in bondage: unbelievers
Spiritual seed: promise fulfilled in Christ, the Seed	Physical seed: awaiting the promise under the law
Spirit: Christians growing in grace	Flesh: Judaizers living under the law

Genesis 21:22-34

Review

Last week we studied the first half of Genesis 21. We saw the fulfillment of the long awaited promise in the birth of Isaac. We saw the removal of the threat to the promise in the sending away of Ishmael, and we saw the fulfillment of the promise regarding Ishmael in God's protection of him. The dominant theme was the Word of God. It is reliable. We can trust it. We should obey it.

- Trust and obey for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus than to trust and obey.

Sermon

The Covenant at Beersheba

This passage is all about peace...conflict resolution...living in harmony with others. These themes are going to be revealed in the covenant/agreement that Abraham makes with Abimelech at Beersheba.

- Desire for Peace
- Discussion of a Conflict
- Resolution of a Conflict
- Attainment of Peace

1.) The Desire for Peace

22 And it came to pass at that time, that Abimelech and Phichol the chief captain of his host spake unto Abraham, saying, God is with thee in all that thou doest:

And it came to pass at that time – this phrase seems to take us back to either the time of the birth of Isaac or the time of the weaning of Isaac and sending away of Ishmael (Spence & Exell, 1883)

That Abimelech and Phichol the chief captain of his host spake unto Abraham – that Abimelech (king of the Philistines) and Phichol (his commander in chief) came to speak with Abraham

- Abimelech was the guy who almost married Abraham's wife. That would have made them husbands in law?
- Abraham is in the region that would come to be known as Beersheba (on the outskirts of Philistine territory)
- Phichol may be a proper name or may have been a title in reference to the prime minister (Ellicott C. , 1905)

God is with thee in all that thou doest – this statement by Abimelech shows that not only was God's hand on Abraham's life, but also that this truth could be seen by those who came to know Abraham.

- Application – people should be able to say that about you.
 - **Joseph** - Genesis 39:2 - And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.
 - **Moses** - Exodus 3:12 - And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.
 - **Believers** – Romans 8:9 - 9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.
 - o “When we get to heaven and ask Moses what it was like to the part the Red Sea, or ask David what it was like to slay Goliath, they will turn to us and ask, ‘what was it like to have the Holy Spirit Himself living inside of you?’”
- Romans 8:31 - What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

23 Now therefore swear unto me here by God that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son: but according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned.

Now therefore – because God is with you

Swear unto me here by God that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son – swear to me before God that you will not lie, trick, or deal falsely with me or my offspring.

- Abimelech knew two things about Abraham: (1) God's hand was on him (2) he was a liar (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 4803)
 - o Ideally believers wouldn't need to swear an oath to be deemed trustworthy.
 - Let your yes be yes and your no be no.
 - But such is not the situation we are in with Abraham and Abimelech.
 - o As we study this desire for peace, this is a good reminder that honesty is essential for healthy relationships. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 4838)
 - Illustration – Anna Sorokin (Delvey) fake it till you make it approach in New York left her in jail with no real relationships
 - From 2014-2017, with no money to her name, she pretended to be a millionaire German heiress in New York City
 - She infiltrated elite New York society
 - She nearly secured a 22 million dollar loan to start the Anna Delvey Foundation, an ultra exclusive high end club
 - The house of cards fell apart in 2017 and she was arrested at a luxurious rehab center in California
 - In 2019, she was sentenced to 4-12 years in prison and ordered to pay a restitution fee

- She was released from prison in 2021 and paid \$300,000 by Netflix for the rights to her story which she used to pay her restitution fee
- In the end, Ana “Delvey” had no friends/no relationships because Ana Delvey didn’t exist. Ana Delvey was a lie, and relationships that aren’t built on truth are a ticking time bomb.



- (Murphy, 2022)

But according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned – I want you to swear before your God that you will not deal falsely with me or my people but will treat us with kindness as we have treated you with kindness

- Genesis 20:14-16 – Abimelech restored Abraham his wife and additionally gifted them sheep, oxen, servants, and gold. He also gave them free access to his lands.
- The end of Genesis 20 seemed to imply that their encounter had ended on somewhat good terms. What prompted this desire by Abimelech to legally formalize the good will between him and Abraham?
 - I think it was the birth of Isaac.
 - Abimelech had encountered first hand Abraham’s God and had probably heard stories of the promises that God had made to Abraham regarding the land, a seed, and a blessing.
 - But Abraham was old and had no child, but then all of the sudden this 100 year old nomad has a kid with his 90 year old wife. God’s promise to Abraham regarding a seed was fulfilled through a miracle.
 - “If God, against all odds, kept His word that Abraham would have a child by Sarah, then God is probably going to give him the land of Canaan and make him the conduit of blessing for all the peoples of the earth. I need to be on this guy’s good side.”

Genesis 26:26-29 - 26 Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahuzzath one of his friends, and Phichol the chief captain of his army. 27 And Isaac said unto them, Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you? 28

And they said, We saw certainly that the Lord was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee; 29 That thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace: thou art now the blessed of the Lord.

Genesis 20:14 - And Abimelech took sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and womenservants, and gave them unto Abraham, and restored him Sarah his wife.

24 And Abraham said, I will swear.

And Abraham said, I will swear – Abraham was a peacemaker. He had a habit of making these kind of alliances.

- Genesis 14:13 - And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram.
- Application: we should be known as peacemakers as well
 - o Hebrews 12:14 - 14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:
 - o Romans 12:18 - 18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.
- “Ok I will make this oath to you, but we’ve got to talk about something first.”

2.) The Discussion of a Conflict

25 And Abraham reprov'd Abimelech because of a well of water, which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away.

And Abraham reprov'd Abimelech because of a well of water, which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away – Abraham confronted and corrected Abimelech regarding a well that Abraham's people had dug and that Abimelech's people had violently taken possession of.

- You might think to yourself, “A dispute over a well? That’s weird.” But, in those hot and dry countries, water was liquid gold, and so disputes over wells were quite common. (Poole, 1990)
 - o Illustration – modern disputes over money
- The word used here for "violently taken away" was a term that came to be used in the law for the violation of another man's property. The usage of it here indicates that Abraham was making a formal, legal complaint with Abimelech. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 4810-4812)
- “Before I swear this oath to you, there’s something between us that I need to get off my chest.”

Application – if you have a problem with somebody, and it’s a small thing and you can let it go, just let it go (Love covers a multitude of sins). People who make big deals out of small things typically don’t have relationships that last very long.

- If it's something that really bothers you, then go talk to them. You have got no business talking about a person that you have not talked to. You have got no business talking about a person you have not talked to. Do not talk about them (that's gossip). Do not make assumptions (that's inaccurate). Make peace.
- There is nothing wrong with confronting when done in the right spirit.
 - o Galatians 6:1-2 - 1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. 2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.
 - o Matthew 18:15 - 15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him (not your friend, not your pastor) his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.
- If you have an issue with another person, please do not come to me about it if you have not yet talked to that other person. The Biblical model is to go to the person.
 - o Here Abraham is bringing his concern to the person.

Genesis 13:7 - And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.

Genesis 26:15-22 - For all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth. And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we. And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there. And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them. And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water. And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, The water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek; because they strove with him. And they digged another well, and strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah. And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.

26 And Abimelech said, I wot not who hath done this thing; neither didst thou tell me, neither yet heard I of it, but to day.

And Abimelech said, I wot not who hath done this thing – “I had no idea that happened. (What's implied is:) If I were aware, corrective actions would have taken place.”

- Would you look at that? Things were not as they seemed to be.

Neither didst thou tell me – “Abraham, you could have just picked up the phone and called me. You never told me.”

Neither yet heard I of it, but to day – “This is literally the first that I'm hearing of this.”

Abraham could have assumed and very well may have assumed that Abimelech was aware of this injustice and complicit in it, and if he had made that assumption, he would have been wrong. Abimelech did not know that Sarah was Abraham's wife (ch. 20), and Abimelech did not know that his servants had committed such a terrible crime (ch. 21).

- Application: there is danger in making negative assumptions about other people.
 - o Give people the benefit of the doubt. (1 Cor. 13 – love believes all things)
 - o This is America. We don't assume guilt until someone is proven innocent.
 - o If you always assume the best of people, you will be disappointed at times (you'll get hurt), because people will let you down. But if you always assume the worst of people, you will have zero influence with people and you will destroy every relationship you come in contact with.

If this incident bothered Abraham as much as it did, he should have just talked to Abimelech about it. Instead, he kept it inside, and Abimelech had no idea that Abraham was even upset.

Compare and contrast Abimelech's defense of his innocence here with his defense of his innocence in Genesis 20:4-5.

3.) The Resolution of a Conflict

27 And Abraham took sheep and oxen, and gave them unto Abimelech; and both of them made a covenant.

And Abraham took sheep and oxen, and gave them unto Abimelech – Abraham accepts Abimelech's statement at face value. He gives him the benefit of the doubt. He believes him, and he gives the king sheep and oxen as a material pledge that he would treat Abimelech and his offspring with the kindness that had been shown to him. (Keil & Delitzsch, 1857-1878)

And both of them made a covenant – and they both made/cut a covenant. That means they likely cut the sacrifice in pieces and then passed between them, signifying that if either party broke the agreement they should likewise be cut in pieces. (Gill, 1811)

Illustration – bring the kids up to demonstrate it

28 And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves.

And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves – in contrast to the sheep and oxen that were given to Abimelech as part of the covenant ceremony, Abraham separately set aside seven young, female sheep.

29 And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What mean these seven ewe lambs which thou hast set by themselves?

And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What mean these seven ewe lambs which thou has set by themselves – Abimelech saw that Abraham had set aside the seven lambs, but he didn't understand why he set them aside. So, he asked.

Genesis 33:8 - And he said, What meanest thou by all this drove which I met? And he said, These are to find grace in the sight of my lord.

30 And he said, For these seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand, that they may be a witness unto me, that I have digged this well.

And he said, For these seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand – Abimelech, these seven lambs are for you to take

That they may be a witness unto me, that I have digged this well – in taking these seven lambs, you are acknowledging/testifying that my people dug this well, your servants wrongfully seized it, and it rightfully belongs to us.

- Application: even though Abimelech was not aware of the wrong done by his servants, they were still his servants. That meant that he was responsible for their actions. Abraham called on him to acknowledge what the servants had done and to acknowledge Abraham's ownership of the well.

- Abimelech agreed.

Genesis 31:44-48 - Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee. And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar. And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones; and they took stones, and made an heap: and they did eat there upon the heap. And Laban called it Jegarsahadutha: but Jacob called it Galeed. And Laban said, This heap is a witness between me and thee this day. Therefore was the name of it called Galeed;

31 Wherefore he called that place Beersheba; because there they swore both of them.

Wherefore – because of the peace agreement and the agreement over the rights to the well that were made

He called that place Beersheba because there they swore both of them – well of swearing or well of seven (both of which are applicable)

- Well of swearing because it was where they both swore.
- Well of seven because of the seven lambs involved in the arbitration over the rights to the well.
- The naming of the place would preserve for future generations the record of how the property was secured by Abraham. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 4820)

Genesis 21:14 - And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.

4.) The Attainment of Peace

32 Thus they made a covenant at Beersheba: then Abimelech rose up, and Phichol the chief captain of his host, and they returned into the land of the Philistines.

Thus they made a covenant at Beersheba – Abraham swore to treat Abimelech and his offspring with honesty and kindness, and Abimelech acknowledged Abraham’s ownership of the well.

Then Abimelech rose up, and Phichol the chief captain of his host, and they returned into the land of the Philistines – from Beersheba which was on the border of the land

33 And Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God.

And Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba – Abraham planted a tree there

And called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God – (“there” referring either to the tree or Beersheba)

- Abraham called out to and proclaimed the name of Jehovah, the eternal God. “To plant a tree in Beersheba presupposed a constant supply of water and indicated a determination to stay in the region. Here, then, was faith and security. The tree was meant to be a lasting landmark to God’s provision and a focal point of Abraham’s worship. God would continue to bless with water, and Abraham would continue to call on the name of the Lord. Israel would later understand this symbolism to mean dwelling peacefully in their land (Zech. 3:10).” (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 4830-4832)

Thus, God’s hand was on Abraham, and his peaceful presence in the land was ensured through his covenant with Abimelech.

Genesis 12:8 - And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.

34 And Abraham sojourned in the Philistines’ land many days.

And Abraham sojourned in the Philistines’ land many days – Abraham dwelled in Beersheba peacefully for many days. Beersheba, being on the boundaries of the Philistines’ land, could be rightfully considered both in and outside of the Philistines’ land.

Genesis 20:1 - And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar.

Hebrews 11:9 - By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

The child of promise has been born. The threat to the promise has been removed. Abraham is now dwelling peacefully in the land. All is well. Things are quiet, too quiet. For in the next chapter, Abraham will face the most difficult test of his entire life.

Application

The story of the covenant at Beersheba is all about peace. As Christians, we are called to follow Abraham's example and live peaceably with all men. When conflict arises, if it's small enough to just let it go, we let it go. If it's bigger than that, we go to the person, in good faith, not making assumptions and we seek resolution. With such an approach, we, like Abraham, can become known as people of peace.

Genesis 22:1-8

Sermon

Abraham's greatest test did not come before he received the promise, but after. His greatest test was not the call to leave Ur. It was not the conflict with Lot or his battle with the coalition of kings from the East. It was not even the call to send away Ishmael. The greatest test Abraham would ever face was God's call to give back the miracle child Isaac that he had waited 25 years for.

- Now that he had received the child of promise and sent away his other son, would Abraham cling tightly to Isaac or would he continue to trust and obey the Lord?
- That is the question at the heart of Genesis 22, and we are going to take two weeks to examine this story in detail.

1.) The Command from God

1 And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.

And it came to pass after these things – after the birth of Isaac, the banishment of Ishmael, and the covenant with Abimelech (all of which are discussed in Genesis 21)

- How much time passes between Genesis 21 and 22? We don't know for sure, but we have some clues that it has been a while. Enough time has passed so that Isaac (who was a toddler in chapter 21) is now able to dialogue with his father, make a three day 40+ mile journey, and carry the wood for the sacrifice up a mountain. (Spence & Exell, 1883)
 - o At the very least, he's a teenager, and he may have been an adult. (Gill, 1811)
- The time gap between Isaac's birth and God's command to sacrifice him may have been similar to the time gap between Ishmael's birth and God's declaration to Abraham that he was not the child of promise: 13 years.
 - o A lot of time has passed between chapters 21 and 22.

that God did tempt Abraham – after a decade plus of peace, Abraham was now going to face a time of temptation/testing.

- Temptation, as it's used in the Bible, is a broad term that can refer to enticing someone to sin or proving someone through a test.
 - o James 1:13-14 - 13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: 14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.
 - o God does not engage in temptation to sin, but He does engage in temptation to prove/test.
- This temptation was not to entice Abraham to sin (James 1:13), but rather to test/prove him. (Spence & Exell, 1883)

- That's exactly how the author of Hebrews interprets it in chapter 11 verse 17 when he says:
 - o Hebrews 11:17 - By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,
- From the very outset, we the readers are alerted that this is a test, thus removing the concern we might have over any ultimate harm befalling Isaac.
 - o We know this.
 - o God knows this.
 - o But Abraham does not know this.
- However, he does know that God had promised him that through Isaac his descendants would be as the sand of the seashore, and he knew that God's Word was trustworthy.

And said unto him, Abraham – this is presumably said to Abraham in a dream by night since we are told in verse 3 that he rose early in the morning (Plummer, 1902)

And he said, Behold, here I am – this is the first instance in the Bible in which this statement is used (Plummer, 1902)

- I'm here. I hear you. What do you want me to do?
Exodus 16:4 - 4 Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.

Deuteronomy 8:2 – 2 And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

1 Cor. 10:13 - There hath no temptation (referred in a broad sense to testings from God, trials of life, and temptations to sin) taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

Whoa! That escalated quickly. What is going on here? We'll talk about that in a moment, but first I want you to take note of the direct parallel between this command and the prior command Abraham had received in Genesis 12:1.

- Gen. 12:1 - 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 shew thee:
- Perhaps God spoke here in a similar way as He did in chapter 12 to remind Abraham of his faithfulness in caring for him and keeping His word when He gave Abraham the initial call.

Let's break this verse down specifically though.

And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom the lovest – Abraham's life was Isaac. Everything that mattered to him in life was wrapped up in that boy.

- God describes Isaac in a way that recognizes how important Isaac was to Abraham: your only son, whom you love.
- God is calling on Abraham to give up that which matters most to him in his life.
- Application: What would you do if God asked you to give up that which mattered most to you? Would you obey? Would you still love Him? Would you still follow Him?
 - o Career
 - o House
 - o Finances
 - o Kids
 - o Parents
 - o Spouse
 - o Plans
 - o Do we love Him for who He is or merely for what He provides us with? Do we value Him as a God or as a genie?
- Illustration – Every single one of us in the room is blessed beyond belief. It's amazing how much has changed in just 100 years and how well off we are today.
 - o In 1922
 - The average life expectancy for men was 58 years.
 - Fuel for cars was sold primarily in drug stores.
 - Only 14 percent of homes had a bathtub.
 - About 35 percent of homes had a telephone.
 - The maximum speed limit in most cities was 10 mph.
 - The average US wage in 1922 was 65 cents per hour.
 - The average US worker made less than \$2000/year.
 - More than 95 percent of all births took place at home
 - Sugar cost 13 cents a pound.
 - Eggs were forty four cents a dozen.
 - Coffee was fifty cents a pound.
 - Most women washed their hair once a month . and, used Borax or egg yolks for shampoo.
 - The three leading causes of death were:
 - Heart disease
 - Pneumonia
 - tuberculosis
 - Less than 20 percent of Americans graduated from high school.
 - o A lot has changed. Do you realize that you today have a better life than the Bill Gates of the world did 100 years ago? Isn't that amazing?

- But what if God took it from you? What if He asked you to give it up? What would you do?
 - This nearly happened to Abraham, but it did happen to Job.
 - Do you love me for who I am or merely for what I provide for you?

And get thee into the land of Moriah – Moriah corresponds with a location that would later come to be known as Jerusalem.

- Beersheba to Jerusalem is a 40+ mile journey. In fact, the particular mountain in Moriah that Abraham and Isaac are going to travel to is the same mountain that Solomon would later build the temple on: the temple mount.



- 2 Chronicles 3:1 - Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the Lord appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite.
- What that means is that the location where Isaac would be sacrificed is the location that all of the temple sacrifices would one day take place.

And offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of
 – Abraham, go to this region of Moriah and offer Isaac as a sacrifice on the mountain that I tell you to.

- Whoa! Abraham had offered many sacrifices to God in worship, and the pagans practiced human sacrifice, but this must have seemed out of character for the true God, especially in light of the promises that He had made to Abraham which were wrapped up in Isaac.
- The Apparent Problem with God's Command

- Illustration – reading stories of atrocities committed by crazy people because God told them to do it
- At first glance, that seems to be what’s happening here. How do we make sense of this seemingly outrageous command from God to Abraham?
- Making Sense of God’s Command

How do we make sense of God’s command?

1. This is a unique, non repeatable situation
2. God never intended for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac
3. Abraham knew God would provide a way of escape
4. The whole ordeal was a test of Abraham’s faith in God’s promise regarding Isaac

journey of faith

- This is a very unique non-repeatable situation
 - In the background of God's command to sacrifice Isaac was God's initial call to faith for Abraham to leave Ur and go to the promised land. In the background was God's promise that he would provide Abraham a son and make his descendants as the sand of the sea. In the background was the miraculous birth of Isaac to a couple that was fast approaching 100 years old. In the background was God's promise that Isaac was the child through which God would raise up a great nation. All of this is unique context for the situation
 - Additionally, this event occurred prior to the giving of the law with Moses. In His Word, God gives us timeless commands for life, and God would never tell us to do something that contradicts His Word. So, if someone today says, "Hey, God told me to do this" and it contradicts the Bible or the 10 commandments, we would know right away it's not from God.
 - God spoke directly to man during this time period prior to the coming of Jesus and prior to the completion of the Word of God. In our current context, the Bible is completed and although God may impress upon our hearts and guide us in certain directions, all of His direct instructions for our lives are already found in His Word.
 - All of this goes to show that this situation with Abraham is unique and non repeatable.

- From God's perspective, we're immediately tipped off to the fact that God never intended for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac.
 - Verse 1 tells us that God is just testing Abraham.
 - Abraham isn't yet aware of this, but it's the truth.
- From God's perspective, this is a test of faith. God is saying, "Abraham, you had faith in me when you had no child and I worked a miracle and gave you Isaac. Do you have faith in me now to work this situation and keep my promise that your descendants will come through Isaac?"
 - Further, when God reminded Abraham of "his son, his only son Isaac, whom he loves" (vs. 2), He was reminding Abraham of His promise regarding Isaac and His faithfulness to keep it. The implied truth is that the divine promise to Abraham can't be fulfilled without Isaac. God's saying, "I haven't forgotten about my promise."
 - A further reminder of God's faithful character is that God is sending Abraham to a mountain in the region of Moriah - derived from the Hebrew word ra'ah which means to "provide". The very name of the mountain foreshadows God's provision of a way of escape.
- From Abraham's perspective, he knew that God would provide a way of escape.
 - You can't separate God's promises about Isaac in Genesis 12 and 17 from God's command in Genesis 22. Abraham will go up the mountain knowing and believing that Isaac is coming back down it with him. He makes two comments in the passage that confirm this. First, he reassures the young men that have accompanied him on the trip, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you." (Genesis 22:5). On the second occasion, Isaac is wondering about the lamb for the sacrifice and asks his dad and Abraham responds in no uncertain terms, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." (Genesis 22:8).
 - Abraham knew that because of God's promise regarding Isaac one of two things was going to happen when he reached the top of the mountain. Either God was going to provide a way of escape, or God was going to resurrect Isaac on the spot.
- How do we make sense of God's command?
- Understand that (1) this is a unique non repeatable situation (2) God never intended for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac (3) the whole ordeal was a test of Abraham's faith in God's promise regarding Isaac (4) Abraham knew God would provide a way of escape (Copan, 2011, p. Chapter 5)
 - Book recommendation – Is God a Moral Monster? By Paul Copan
 - Killing of the Canaanites
 - Old Testament Slavery
 - Dietary Laws

- Knowing that this is a test, what we understand is that although God is telling Abraham to sacrifice his son, what He is really calling on him to do is to sacrifice his own will, plans, and agenda as it pertains to his son.
 - o He had already called on him to do this in Genesis 21 with his other son, whom he very much loved as well. "Ok, Abraham. You were willing to obey me with Ishmael. Are you willing to obey me with Isaac?" (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 4865)

Romans 8:32 - 32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

1 John 4:9-10 - 9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. 10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

2 Chronicles 3:1 - Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the Lord appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite.

2.) The Journey to Mount Moriah

3 And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

And Abraham rose up early in the morning – notice the similarity between his obedience here and in Gen. 21:14 with Ishmael where we are told that he “rose up early in the morning”

- Abraham is going to obey immediately.
- His obedience here and with Ishmael reminds us of what Jesus said in Luke 14:26 - - “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”
 - o “If your love for Me does not surpass that of your love for your own family, do you really love Me?”

And saddled his ass – he prepared the donkey either to be ridden or to carry the wood for the sacrifice

In this passage, Abraham and Isaac as a father and son are an interesting parallel to God the Father and God the Son, who would be sacrificed for the sins of the world.

Here, with the donkey, we see a parallel.

Zechariah 9:9 - Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

- Just as Isaac embarked on his journey with a donkey to the temple mount in Jerusalem to be sacrificed, some 2000 years later Jesus would make his triumphal entry with a donkey into the temple in Jerusalem just prior to His sacrifice on the cross.

And took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son – Abraham took two young men (likely servants) to accompany him, Isaac, and the donkey on the journey.

- If the donkey were to carry the wood, then perhaps the servants were there to tend to the donkey, or maybe they were just there to tend to any needs of Abraham and Isaac.

And clave the wood for the burnt offering – he split the wood that would be used for the sacrifice (not knowing whether there would be sufficient wood on the mountain that God was sending them to)

And rose up and went unto the place of which God had told him – once again, just as he did in Genesis 12, Abraham left to go to a general area awaiting direction from God on where specifically to go.

4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes. - The 40 miles between Beersheba and Jerusalem corresponds to about a three day journey.

- They make this journey and with every passing moment it must have been gut wrenching for Abraham. Every step he took was a step closer to his promised child's death.
- Application – it corresponds with Jesus' emotions as He was day by day getting closer to His hour
- "In the Bible three days often corresponds with a period of preparation for an important event." (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 4943)
 - o Exodus 5:3 – three day journey from Egypt into the wilderness to sacrifice
 - o Exodus 19:11, 15 – on the third day the Lord would come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of the people
 - o Joshua 1:11 – three days until the Jews crossed over the Jordan
 - o Esther 5:1 – Esther fasted and prayed for three days
 - o 1 Cor. 15:4 – Christ died, was buried, and rose again on the third day

and saw the place afar off - You can see Mount Moriah from about three miles away. That's probably about the distance away they were when they saw the mountain that God would have them traverse.

3.) The Journey up Mount Moriah

5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass – they're probably a few miles away from the mountain at which point Abraham tells his servants to stay behind with the donkey.

- Why does Abraham tell the servants to stay behind? Likely because if they went with him, they would have probably tried to stop the sacrifice, as would have any sane person.

And I an the lad will go yonder and worship – here Abraham describes to his servants the purpose for his visit: to worship the Lord

- Application: Sacrifice is an act of worship.
- When we sacrifice time, talents, treasure, etc. for the Lord, we ascribe worth to Him.
- Compare with Genesis 37:2 where Joseph is 17 and called a “lad”

And come again to you – Abraham fully expects for him and Isaac to go up the mountain and come down the mountain. Why? Because Isaac was the child of promise, and God keeps His word. Abraham didn't know how God was going to resolve this situation, but he believed that He would.

Hebrews 11:17-19 - 17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: 19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

- Going up that mountain, Abraham believed that if it came to it, God could and would raise his son from the dead.
- Remember that the test here is designed to determine Abraham's willingness to obey.
 - o Application - Would Jesus have actually made the rich young ruler sell all his possessions if he would have been willing?
 - Sometimes God just wants to know if we're willing.

6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son – once again, Isaac here is a type of Jesus. Just as Isaac carried up the mountain the wood on which he would be sacrificed, two thousand years later, Jesus would carry to Golgotha the wood cross upon which He would be crucified.

- John 19:17 - 17 And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha:

- The wood is also a picture of our sin which was laid on Jesus.
 - o Isaiah 53:6 – 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.
- This is another indicator that Isaac was no child. He was of sufficient age to be able to carry the wood up the mountain by himself.

And he took the fire in his hand, and a knife – and Abraham carried the knife and the fire (i.e. some sort of torch)

- Abraham himself carried the instruments of death.

And they went both of them together – from where they left behind the servants to the place where the sacrifice was going to be offered (Gill, 1811)

- Once again this is a picture of how the cross was a joint venture between the Father and the Son. They went together.

7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

And Isaac spake unto Abraham, his father, and said, My father – hey dad

- Hearing his son call out to him in such a way must have pierced his heart.
- Illustration – Jacqueline saying “Dad”

And he said, Here am I, my son – Yes son.

- This parallels God’s conversation with Abraham at the beginning of this chapter in which God calls out to him and he replies, “Here am I.”

And he said, Behold the fire and the wood – You’ve got the fire, and I’ve got the wood.

But where is the lamb for a burnt offering? – where’s the lamb that we’re going to sacrifice?

- This indicates that Abraham had not yet shared with Isaac the true purpose of their journey.
- Once again, this must have been gut wrenching for Abraham.

Matthew 26:39-42 – 39 And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. 40 And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? 41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. 42 He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

8 And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering – my son, God will provide the sacrifice.

- Once again, Abraham expresses his faith that somehow God was going to resolve this situation and keep His word. Abraham couldn't explain it at all. He didn't understand God's reasoning or what He was going to do, but He trusted that God would keep His Word.
- Abraham's words here allude to The Lamb of God that would come one day and take away the sins of the world.
 - o John 1:29 – 29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.
 - o 1 Peter 1:19-20 - 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: 20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,
 - o In this sense, we were like Isaac, destined for death, but God in His love and providence provided a lamb for us to die in our place so that we might live forever with Him.

So they went both of them together – content with his father's answer, Abraham and Isaac continued on their journey up the mountain

Application

In our lives we often find ourselves in situations where we do not understand what God is doing. We don't understand why He is doing it. But church, even when we can't understand Him, we can trust Him. His word is good. It's trustworthy. And His heart is pure. but even when we can't understand Him, we can trust that God will keep His Word.

“God is too good to be unkind and He is too wise to be mistaken. And when we cannot trace His hand, we must trust His heart.” – Charles Spurgeon

Next week we'll see how God resolves this situation, but for now, may this week's text remind us to trust His heart.

Genesis 22:9-19

Review

Last week we looked at the first half of the story of Abraham sacrificing Isaac. We saw the unusual command from God: “go to a mountain that I will show you in Moriah and offer your one and only son Isaac to me as a sacrifice.” We spent a good amount of time last week talking about how to make sense of that command. We saw that...

1. This was a unique, non-repeatable situation.
2. God never intended Abraham to sacrifice Isaac.
3. The whole ordeal was a test of Abraham’s faith in God’s promise regarding Isaac.
4. Abraham knew that God would provide a way of escape.

Having wrapped our heads around the command from God, we ended last week looking at the journey to Mount Moriah (with the donkey & two young men) and the journey up Mount Moriah (which included just Abraham and Isaac).

Sermon

1.) The Sacrifice of Isaac

9 And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

And they came to the place which God had told him of – on one of the mountains in the land of Moriah (Gen. 22:2)

And Abraham built an altar there – an altar was a raised place or a high place upon which a sacrifice was made (Larum, 2014)

Illustration – raised platform on the stage

- Altars were typically constructed of either earth or stone prior to the temple time period
 - o Exodus 20:24-25 - 24 An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. 25 And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.

And laid the wood in order – and Abraham arranged the wood on top of the construct of earth or stone that had been built

And bound Isaac his son – as was customary to do with sacrificial animals (likely the binding of his hands and feet)

- This is a foreshadowing of the Messiah who, on the night of His trial, would be bound (John 18:12)

And laid him on the altar upon the wood – and Abraham laid his son on the wood that was on top of the altar

- Isaac's consent, although not explicitly stated, is certainly implied. Remember that he is no child.
- There must have been some sort of conversation inbetween verses 8 & 9 or during the events of verse 9.
- Isaac's silent willingness to be sacrificed as an innocent is a remarkable foreshadowing of the death of the Messiah.
 - o Isaiah 53:7 - 7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.
 - o Acts 8:32 - 32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:
 - o John 10:17-18 - 17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. 18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.
 - I believe that the foreshadowing of Christ's sacrifice is one of the main reasons why God designed this test and brought it to pass in the first place.

The stage is set.

- Isaac is voluntarily bound on top of the wood on top of the altar.
- The moment has come.

10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

And Abraham stretched forth his hand – I imagine with it shaking as he raised it

And took the knife to slay his son – I always pictured this as Abraham taking the knife to stab his son, but how did they kill the sacrifices in the Old Testament?

- They slit their throat.
 - o That adds another layer of emotional trauma to this.
- In taking the knife to slay his son, Abraham had essentially committed the act in his mind. He had made that decision and was in the process of physically carrying it out.

Illustration – I can't imagine what this must have been like

- Not only for your child to die, but for your child to die because of you. It was your fault. You did it.

- We have to be careful in our thinking though. The tendency is to think of Isaac as an infant, which he is not. A better mental picture is of Abraham as a grandfather and Isaac as an adult son. But even so, it's hard to wrap our minds around how devastating it would have been for Abraham to give up that which mattered most to him in his life.

Key Idea #1 – That which we cling to most is what God typically asks us to release.

- This is what is happening in the sacrifice of Isaac.
- Illustrations – asking toddlers to hand things over to you. For many things, they're more than happy to hand them over. But then you reach something that really matters to them and what often comes out of their mouth? "That's mine."
- We do the same thing with our heavenly Father.
 - o Lord, you want me to give you my Sundays? Sure.
 - o You want me to give financially to you? Ok.
 - o You want me to give up control of my plans for the future? Well. Hold on a second. That's mine.
 - o You want me to give up career advancement to serve you? That's mine.
 - o You want me to let go of the bitterness I have in my heart towards someone that hurt me? That's mine.
 - o You want me to let go of the stuff I look at on my phone screen? That's mine.
- That which we cling to most is what God typically asks us to release. It's not because those things matter more to God. It's because God doesn't want part of us. He wants all of us.

"Father, I want to know Thee, but my cowardly heart fears to give up its toys. I cannot part with them without inward bleeding, and I do not try to hide from Thee the terror of the parting. I come trembling, but I do come. Please root from my heart all those things which I have cherished so long and which have become a very part of my living self, so that Thou mayest enter and dwell there without a rival. Then shalt Thou make the place of Thy feet glorious. Then shall my heart have no need of the sun to shine in it, for Thyself wilt be the light of it, and there shall be no night there." (Tozer, 2006, p. 30)

Isaiah 53:10 - 10 Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

James 2:21-23 - 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? 23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

Isaac was voluntarily bound on the wood on the altar. Abraham raised the knife in his hand to slay his son, that which mattered most to him in the world.

But at the last second, when it seemed that all hope was lost, God intervened.

11 And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven – Once again the angel of the Lord is referenced here in the story of Abraham. He called out to Hagar when she ran away from Abraham and Sarah. He called out to Hagar and Ishmael when they were dying in the wilderness. Here He calls out to Abraham as he is preparing to take Isaac's life.

- Remember that there are numerous instances in the Old Testament where the angel of the Lord seems to be equated with God, leading some to believe that the angel of the Lord is a preincarnate appearance of Christ. Either way, the angel of the Lord is not just some angel.

And said Abraham, Abraham – he calls his name twice to make sure he gets his attention

- This was likely shouted in urgency
- God repeats names in important moments with important people
 - o Gen. 46:2 – when He told Jacob it was okay for his family to go to Egypt where Joseph was
 - o Exodus 3:4 – when He spoke to Moses in the burning bush
 - o 1 Samuel 3:10 – when He spoke to Samuel as a boy
 - o Acts 9:4 – when He confronted Saul on the road to Damascus (Plummer, 1902)

And he said, Here am I – “yes Lord, I'm here” he says with muscles tensed and the knife situated in his shaking hand

- Take note of the similarity between this verse and Genesis 22:1: “God...said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.”
 - o In both instances, Abraham indicates a willingness to obey God.

Genesis 16:7-10 - 7 And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. 8 And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai. 9 And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands. 10 And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.

Genesis 21:17 - 17 And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is.

- God came to the rescue at the last second.

Genesis 22:1 - And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.

12 And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him – don't slay or harm your son in any way

- the emotional release for Abraham in this moment must have been immense
- Illustration: breaking down after immense burdens are resolved

Upon the lad – the Hebrew word used here is the same word used to describe the two young men that accompanied them on the journey. It's used to describe Joseph in Gen. 37:2 when he was 17. It's used to describe Absalom as a young adult (2 Sam. 14:21; 18:5) with a wife and kids.

- The usage of lad does not mean that Isaac was a child

For now I know – this expression is often in the Scriptures used by people when God proves Himself faithful by taking action on their behalf. It's often used in reference to an experiential knowledge.

- Psalm 20:6; 56:9; Ex. 18:11; 1 King 17:24 (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 4971)
- Exodus 18:11 - Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them.
 - o Jethro says this upon hearing of all the plagues that Jehovah inflicted on Egypt.
- It is used here anthropomorphically in reference to God's experiential knowledge

That thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me – that you respect/fear Me since you have not held back your only son from Me (note how the angel of the Lord here refers to Himself as God).

- "I know that you fear and respect me because when I asked for what mattered most to you in your life, you didn't say, 'that's mine'."
- This is the first time in the Scripture in which God's mind on human sacrifice is revealed, and from the narrative we see that He is against it. We also see His mind on the matter explicitly stated in later passages in the Old Testament where we are told that God detests physical human sacrifice.
 - o Deut. 12:31 - Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God: for every abomination to the Lord, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods.
 - o Deut. 18:10 - There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch.
- From this story and other Old Testament passages, we see that God does not desire human sacrifice, and yet there is another, very real sense in which God

does desire human sacrifice: the type of human sacrifice that we see in this passage (what the Bible calls a living sacrifice).

- Romans 12:1-2 - I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice (spiritual, not physical; living not dead), holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.
 - I don't want you to give me your life by ending it. I want you to give me your life by living it for my glory.
- You might think, "What would I do if God asked me to do what Abraham did?" The truth is that He does ask you to do what Abraham did, not with a child, but with yourself...your dreams...your plans...every part of you.
 - He asks you to present every part of yourself to Him as a living sacrifice.
 - Are you willing?
 - He gave Himself as a sacrifice for you. Are you willing to give your life as a sacrifice to Him?
 - 1 John 4:9-10 - 9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. 10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

1 Samuel 15:22 - And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

Micah 6:6-8 - 6 Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? 7 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? 8 He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

Jeremiah 19:5 - 5 They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind:

Psalms 111:10 - 10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.

Proverbs 1:7 - The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Matthew 10:37-38 - 37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

Matthew 19:29 - 29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

John 3:16 - For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

2.) The Provision of God

13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

And Abraham lifted up his eyes – He had heard a voice from heaven and lifted his eyes (which were likely focused down on in his son) up in that direction

Key Idea #2 - When we release, God provides.

And looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his thorns – he looked up and then he looked around and he saw behind him a ram whose horns had become caught in a thicket.

- Perhaps he heard the rustling of the ram struggling to free himself and that's why he turned around.
- Just as God opened Hagar's eyes to the well, so here He directed Abraham's attention to the ram.

And Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son – although he was not explicitly directed to do this, Abraham could read the tea leaves, and he interpreted the appearance of the ram as the provision of God.

- He sacrificed that ram that God had provided in the stead of his son.
- Application – when we were lost, without hope, dead in our sins, destined for everlasting spiritual death, God provided a lamb in our stead.
 - 1 Peter 1:19-20 - 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: 20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

Genesis 22:8 - 8 And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

14 And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.

And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh – Abraham’s naming of the place “God sees/provides” indicates that He did not view the provision of the ram as a chance encounter. Rather, he believed that God had provided it. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 4980)

- Philippians 4:19 - But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.
 - o Sometimes we get so caught up trusting in the things that God has given us that we forget to trust the one who provided those things in the first place.
 - o When we God calls us to give back what He has given to us, and we obey, He always takes care of us. He always provides.
- The naming of the place corresponds to Abraham’s statement in verse 8 that God will provide (yireh) a lamb.

As it is said to this day, - the name of this place corresponds to a common saying among the people that has continued unto the present. What is the saying?

In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen – in the mount of the Lord (this place), it shall be seen/provided or God shall be seen/provided

- It shall be seen/provided (clear interpretation)
 - o The mount of the Lord (where the temple would be) is the place where God sees/provides. God sees those who come to worship. He sees their needs, and He provides.
- God shall be seen/provided (prophetic interpretation)
 - o The mount of the Lord (where the temple would be) is the place where God is seen through His provision.
 - o The mount of the Lord is the place where God would be seen by David (2 Chr. 3:1).
 - o The mount of the Lord is the place where God incarnate would be seen/provided (Jesus at the triumphal entry). (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 4989)

In the provision of God, we see that when we release, God provides.

Deut. 32:36 - 36 For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left.

Psalms 22:4-5 - 4 Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. 5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.

Daniel 3:17 - 17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

3.) The Blessing of Abraham

Key Idea #3 - When we release, God rewards

- When we give of ourself to God, He blesses us.
- When we sacrifice our life and our plans to God, we always get the better end of the deal.

Mark 10:29-30 - 29 And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, 30 But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

15 And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,

And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time – the first time that the angel of the Lord called out to Abraham, it was to recognize the spiritual sacrifice he had made and to prevent him from harming Isaac physically.

- Abraham then noticed the ram caught in the thicket that God had provided and sacrificed it as an act of worship to God in his son Isaac's stead.
- It is only then after he had made that sacrifice that the angel of the Lord called out to Abraham a second time, and he does so to renew the blessing that had previously been promised to Abraham as a reward for obedient faith. (Plummer, 1902)

16 And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:

And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord – on account of Abraham's obedience in this test, God swore by Himself an oath to Abraham. In this oath, he renewed his covenant promises to Abraham and expanded them. This act of swearing by God is incredibly significant. It's mentioned all throughout the Bible.

- Gen. 24:7 – Abraham refers back to this oath in a conversation with his servant
- Gen. 26:3 – God refers back to this oath in a conversation with Isaac
- Gen. 50:24 – Joseph refers back to this oath as the reason for why his bones shouldn't be left in Egypt when Israel would one day return to the Promised Land
- Exodus 13:5 – Moses refers back to it in the exodus journey
- Exodus 33:1 – God refers back to it in telling Moses to leave Sinai for Canaan
- Psalm 105:8-9 – David refers back to it
- Heb. 6:13-19 - God's word is secure enough in and of itself, and yet in order to show how serious He was about his promise, He didn't just say it, He swore it. Because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself.

For because thou hast done this thing – God's reassurance/renewal of the promise was in this instance based on his obedience

And hast not withheld thy son, thine only son – with Ishmael, Abraham had taken the fulfillment of the promise into his own hands. Here God had asked him to relinquish control of its fulfillment entirely back to God, and Abraham obeyed. He did not withhold Isaac from God. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 4999)

Romans 4:13-14 - 13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. 14 For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:

Hebrews 6:13-14 - 13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, 14 Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.

Because you have obeyed and not withheld your only son from me, I have sworn that...

17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

That in blessing, I will bless thee – I will bless on top of blessings (Sorenson, 2007)

And in multiplying, I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore – God here combines the metaphors that He had previously given to Abraham on separate occasions: stars of the heaven in chapter 15 and sand upon the seashore in chapter 13 (although chapter 13 was technically dust of the earth).

- As it pertains to multiplication, your descendants will be innumerable
And thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies – this passage is the fifth repetition of God's covenant to Abraham, and just as He did in each of the other instances, God here provided more details about the promises.

- Abraham is promised that his seed would not only be innumerable, but that they would be victorious over their enemies.

Genesis 12:2 – 2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

Genesis 13:16 – 16 And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.

Genesis 15:5 – 5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

Genesis 17:6 – 6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

Psalm 2:8-9 – 8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. 9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Psalm 72:8-9 - 8 He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. 9 They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust.

18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed – a promise that would come true in the person of Jesus Christ and the blessed forgiveness that He would procure for all who put their faith and trust in Him.

Because thou hast obeyed my voice – God renewed and expanded on His promises to Abraham in the form of an oath. Why? Because he obeyed.

Genesis 12:3 - 3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Romans 1:3 - 3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;

Galatians 3:16 - 16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

19 So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.

- Abraham and Isaac came back down the mountain to the two young men, made the three day journey home to Beersheba, and life went on.

Genesis 21:31 - 31 Wherefore he called that place Beersheba; because there they sware both of them.

Application

The things we cling to the tightest are the things God typically asks us to release to Him.

And yet when we do, God provides and blesses. We always get the better end of the deal. Is there anything in your life that you are holding back from Him? Have you presented your life as a living sacrifice to Him?

Genesis 22:20-23:20

Review

Last week we looked at the second half of the story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. We saw that after God provided a ram in the place of Isaac, Abraham and Isaac came back down the mountain, met up with the two young men and returned to Beersheba where life went on and an extended period of time passed.

Sermon

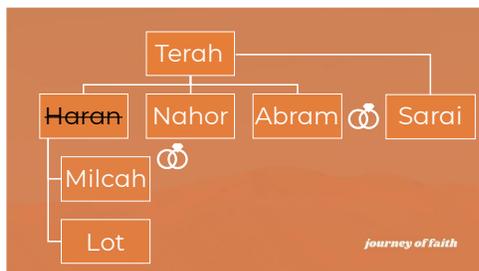
The remainder of the story of Abraham in chapters 22-25 is transitional. Abraham and Sarah begin to fade to the background as Isaac becomes more and more prominent.

This transition begins with a section of verses at the end of chapter 22 in which Abraham is given a detailed description of his brother Nahor's family tree. This description is important background information because of who it includes: Rebekah. The ending of chapter 22 (with its introduction to Rebekah) and the beginning of chapter 23 (with its description of the death of Sarah) are thus setting the stage for the soon to come selection of a bride for Isaac.

1.) Nahor's Family Tree

20 And it came to pass after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, Behold, Milcah, she hath also born children unto thy brother Nahor;

Behold Milcah she hath also born children unto thy brother Nahor – included in the genealogy of Nahor are eight sons and one granddaughter from his wife Milcah



- Terah has three sons: Haran, Nahor, and Abram.
 - o Haran dies, and after he dies, Nahor marries his daughter Milcah.
 - o Assuming that Abraham is receiving this news about his brother's family around the time that Sarah died, he would be receiving it some 60 years after he left Ur.
 - o "Hey Abraham, your brother Nahor and his wife Milcah have been blessed with many children."

Genesis 11:29 - And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah.

21 Huz (*Ooz*) his firstborn, and Buz (*Booz*) his brother, and Kemuel (*Kimooel*) the father of Aram (*Urame*),

22 And Chesed (*Kesed*), and Hazo (*Hozowe*), and Pildash (*Pildashe*), and Jidlap (*Yidlap*), and Bethuel.

23 And Bethuel (*Bethoel*) begat Rebekah: these eight Milcah did bear to Nahor, Abraham's brother.

From Milcah, Nahor had 8 sons, 1 grandson, and 1 granddaughter that are mentioned.

Genesis 24:15 - And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder.

Genesis 28:2, 5 - 2 Arise, go to Padanaram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother. 5 And Isaac sent away Jacob: and he went to Padanaram unto Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.

24 And his concubine, whose name was Reumah (*Reh-oo-maw*), she bare also Tebah (*Thebakh*), and Gaham (*Gah-kham*), and Thahash (*Takh-ash*), and Maachah (*Mah-ak-aw*).

And his concubine, whose name was Reumah, she bare also... - from Nahor's secondary wife, he had an additional four sons

- Nahor -> 1 wife & 1 concubine -> 12 sons (8+4) -> 1 grandson (Aram), 1 granddaughter (Rebekah)
- Abraham -> 1 wife & 1 concubine -> 2 sons (1+1)
 - o His son would marry his brother's youngest son's daughter.
- Jacob -> 2 wives & 2 concubines -> 12 sons (8+4) (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 5047)
-

Genesis 16:3 - And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.

Genesis 25:6 - But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country.

2.) The Death of Sarah

The story of the death and burial of Sarah is significant for several reasons.

1. Abraham and Sarah had not yet seen the complete fulfillment of the promises that God made to them. With her death and the eventual death of Abraham, it becomes clear that the complete fulfillment of the promises will not happen in their lifetimes.
2. The genealogy of Nahor reminds us that Abraham's ancestral home was in the East in Ur. With the burial of Sarah in Canaan, it is a further confirmation to us that for Abraham and his descendants, there was no going back. Their future was in Canaan. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 5051-5056)
 - a. They ignored their ancestry by remaining in Canaan.

1 And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: these were the years of the life of Sarah.

And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: these were the years of the life of Sarah – Sarah is the only woman in the Bible whose age at death is mentioned. (Gill, 1811)

- Sarah is 127, Abraham is 137, Isaac is 37, Ishmael is 50. Abraham and Sarah have been in the land for over 60 years.
- Isaac would have been somewhere between a teenager and his mid 30s when he accompanied his father to Mount Moriah to be sacrificed.
Genesis 17:17 - Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?

2 And Sarah died in Kirjatharba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.

And Sarah died in Kirjatharba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan – Kirjatharba means city of Arba. According to Joshua 14:15, Arba was either a giant or a great man that ruled this area for a period of time. Kirjatharba later came to be known as Hebron. (Poole, 1990)

- Some posit that it was originally called Hebron, renamed Kirjatharba, and then ultimately called Hebron again. (Spence & Exell, 1883)
- What's significant is that Sarah died in Canaan, the land that God had promised to her family.
 - o She died where God had planted her and her family.
 - o She finished well. She finished where she should have been.
- Application: one of the most disheartening things for me is seeing people who have served and followed Jesus their whole life, get bitter in the end, and not finish their race well.
 - o Illustration – running a marathon and quitting at the 25th mile
 - o I want to finish my race well.

And Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her – this likely refers to Abraham coming into her tent and sitting down/kneeling down to grieve and weep over her physically in the presence of her dead body. (Spence & Exell, 1883)

Illustration – when you’ve loved someone for that long and you’ve lived together with someone for that long, and they pass away, it’s like a part of you has died...and it’s been so long that you’ve forgotten what it even means to live alone...and there’s grief in that...and that’s where Abraham is. He is now a widower nearing the end of his own life.

Genesis 13:18 - Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD.

Genesis 23:19 - And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre: the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan.

When someone you love passes away, what is one of the first things you have to do? If you haven’t already, you have to make arrangements for their body and for their burial. Abraham had made no such arrangements, and he needed to quickly. There was no funeral home to care for the body. He was the funeral home, and he needed to secure a place to bury her and for him to be buried himself one day.

3.) The Purchase of a Tomb

3 And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying,

And Abraham stood up from before his dead – this is how we know that he was sitting/kneeling in her presence when he grieved over her. After he had taken time to grieve her he got up and set out to procure a place for her burial.

And spake unto the sons of Heth, saying – Abraham came to a public assembly of the Hittites (sons of Heth) in the gates of their city to make a formal request of the people. (Keil & Delitzsch, 1857-1878)

- From Genesis 10:15, we know that the Hittites were the descendants of Heth, the son of Canaan (Spence & Exell, 1883)
- Even though the Hittite empire never extended this far south, pockets of Hittites may have settled in this area and kept their cultural practices and ways of living. (Waalvord & Zuck, 1983)
 - o There are a number of similarities between archeological records of Hittite trading laws and how negotiations between Abraham and the sons of Heth were carried out in this passage of Scripture.
 - See the Hittite laws of trade recorded at Hattushash, or Bogazkoy (see ANET, pp. 188-91, paragraphs 46-48, 169; paragraph 46 deals with feudal obligations for the whole field; paragraph 47 with gifts that nullify these obligations). (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 5092-5094)

Genesis 10:15 - And Canaan begat Sidon his first born, and Heth,

Genesis 27:46 - And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?

Genesis 49:30 - In the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a buryingplace.

4 I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a buryingplace with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.

I am a stranger and a sojourner with you – I am a foreigner (from a foreign land) and I am a pilgrim (one who lives here, but owns no property)

- Abraham was very wealthy, but he did not have his money in property.
 - o Decades prior he had over 300 servants.
 - o Genesis 13:2 tells us that soon after he first arrived in the land he was very wealthy in cattle, silver, and gold.
- After 62 years in the land, Abraham still saw himself as a foreigner and a pilgrim (Sorenson, 2007)

Give me a possession of a burying place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight – because I am a foreigner and a pilgrim, I am in need of a place to bury my wife, and I would like to purchase such a place from you.

That I may bury my dead out of my sight – with every passing moment, her body was decaying more and more.

- This was a pressing need. It could not wait.
Hebrews 11:9 - By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

Genesis 47:9 - And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.

Genesis 50:13 - For his sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field for a possession of a buryingplace of Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre.

1 Peter 2:11 - Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

5 And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him,

6 Hear us, my lord: thou art a mighty prince among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead.

Hear us (plural) my (singular) lord – The usage of both plural and singular terms indicates that a spokesperson for the Hittites is conversing with Abraham.

- Hear us my good sir, master (title of respect)
- These negotiations were public proceedings and in that Eastern culture it was important you came across as respectful and honorable in the way that you presented yourself.

Thou art a mighty prince among us – Thou art a “Elohim” – god prince among us

- Either the Hittite spokesperson is saying “you are a prince of God among us” or “you are a man exalted by God to the rank of a prince” (Keil & Delitzsch, 1857-1878)
- Very respectful

In the choice of our sepulchres, bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead – as a mighty prince among us, please take your pick of the finest tombs that we have to offer. None of us will hold back from you so that you might bury your dead.

7 And Abraham stood up, and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth.

And Abraham stood up – it seems that he was sitting down up to this point in the negotiations

And bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth – Abraham stands up and bows himself as a sign of respect.

- As was customary in oriental bargaining, both sides were going over the top in presenting themselves as honorable and generous.

8 And he communed with them, saying, If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight; hear me, and intreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar,

And He communed with them, saying, If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight – if you truly desire to help me in acquiring a burial plot for my wife, I know where I would like to bury her.

Hear me, and intreat for me to Ephron the son of Zoar – listen to what I’m saying and speak to Ephron, on my behalf, asking him...

Genesis 25:9 - And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre;

9 That he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of his field; for as much money as it is worth he shall give it me for a possession of a buryingplace amongst you.

That he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of his field – that he would sell me the cave of Machpelah which he owns and is situated at the end of his field

- Machpelah isn't just a name for the cave. Machpelah is a broader location with which this particular cave and the field next to it were associated. We know this from verse 17. (Gill, 1811)

For as much money as it is worth he shall give it me for a possession of a buryingplace amongst you – I will pay him full price for the cave so that I might own it as a burying place among you.

10 And Ephron dwelt among the children of Heth: and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying,

And Ephron dwelt among the children of Heth – Apparently Ephron (who was a Hittite) was sitting there among the people that were situated at the gates of the city

And Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gate of the city, saying. - Abraham requests for to the Hittites to find Ephron and ask him if Abraham could purchase his cave. Ephron is sitting there as Abraham makes this request, and he, himself, answers Abraham in the presence of the all the people that were there.

Genesis 23:18 - Unto Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city.

Genesis 34:20 - And Hamor and Shechem his son came unto the gate of their city, and communed with the men of their city, saying,

Ruth 4:1-4 - Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down. And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's: And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it.

11 Nay, my lord, hear me: the field give I thee, and the cave that is therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee: bury thy dead.

Nay, my lord, hear me – No, my good sir, listen to me

The field give I thee, and that cave that is therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee: bury thy dead – Abraham, don't just take the cave. I want you

take the field as well. In the presence of all of my people here at the gates, take possession of the cave and the field as a gift from me. Go bury your dead.

- For the longest time this passage, and passages like it, made no sense to me. At first glance, it seems like Ephron is being weirdly generous, and Abraham is being stupid for turning down his generosity.
 - This is not how we negotiate in the West.
 - As an American, if someone offered you a piece of real estate for free, you'd sign on the dotted line before they could completely get the words out of their mouth.
 - Illustration – real estate deals
 - They want to sell it to you for as much as they possibly can.
 - You want to buy it from them for as little as you possibly can.
 - The seller starts high. The price gets haggled down and eventually you reach a purchase price.
 - Negotiations can get pretty nasty and heated.
 - If you're a good negotiator, you don't care about how you come across or how awkward the situation might become. All you care about is getting the best possible price that you can.
 - In ancient Eastern cultures, that was not how negotiations were done. What mattered was not just the price that you got, but how you came across to others in those negotiations.
 - Honor and respect mattered just as much as the price. So you wanted to negotiate in a way that made you look honorable and generous.
 - Instead of negotiations starting high, they would often start low so that seller came across as generous and honorable. But that generous offer came with cultural expectations.
 - If someone gave you something of significant value, you were expected to give them something of equal value back.
 - That's what see here. There's cultural strings attached to Ephron's offer.
 - One of the big questions then is, "If not for sake of generosity, why did Ephron include the field in addition to the cave in the negotiations?"
 - Perhaps he was just looking to drive up the price by packaging the field with the cave.
 - Some have suggested that the reason Ephron insisted on Abraham taking the field in addition to the cave had to do with property taxes. He may have wanted to sell it so that he was no longer responsible for the taxes.

Abraham receives this very generous, respectable offer from Ephron. How does he respond? He responds in kind just as he was culturally expected to do.

12 And Abraham bowed down himself before the people of the land.

Once again, he bowed himself before the people as a sign of respect.

Genesis 18:2 - And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground,

13 And he spake unto Ephron in the audience of the people of the land, saying, But if thou wilt give it, I pray thee, hear me: I will give thee money for the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there.

And he spake unto Ephron in the audience of the people of the land, saying – and he spoke to Ephron in the presence of all the people

- Notice how public all of this is as it unfolds in this honor shame culture.
 - o If you haggle over price in public, you come across as cheap and dishonorable.
 - o But, if you both approach negotiations as generous, you both come across as good, respectable men.

But if thou wilt give it, I pray thee, hear me – if you insist on giving me the field and the cave, listen to me

I will give thee money for the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there – I will give you money for the field and the cave thereon

- Take my money, and I will bury my wife there.

Genesis 14:22-23 - And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich:

 - Contrast with what Abraham received from Pharaoh and Abimelech
- 2 Samuel 24:20-24 - And Araunah looked, and saw the king and his servants coming on toward him: and Araunah went out, and bowed himself before the king on his face upon the ground. And Araunah said, Wherefore is my lord the king come to his servant? And David said, To buy the threshingfloor of thee, to build an altar unto the LORD, that the plague may be stayed from the people. And Araunah said unto David, Let my lord the king take and offer up what seemeth good unto him: behold, here be oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing instruments and other instruments of the oxen for wood. All these things did Araunah, as a king, give unto the king. And Araunah said unto the king, The LORD thy God accept thee. And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

14 And Ephron answered Abraham, saying unto him,

15 My lord, hearken unto me: the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver; what is that betwixt me and thee? bury therefore thy dead.

My lord, hearken unto me – Abraham, my good sir, listen to me

The land is worth four hundred shekels of silver; what is that betwixt me and thee? Bury therefore thy dead – notice how nonchalantly Ephron throws out a purchase price while still acting overtly generous in what he says to Abraham: 400 shekels.

- 400 shekels = 10 pounds
 - o Today, 10 pounds of silver is worth about \$3000.
- In the Code of Hammurabi a hireling would not receive more than 1 shekel a month as wages. (Plummer, 1902)
- Joseph was sold into slavery for 20 pieces of silver.
- In Moses' time slaves were worth 30 pieces of silver (Ex. 21:32).

Genesis 20:16 - And unto Sarah he said, Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver

Ezekiel 45:12 - And the shekel shall be twenty gerahs: twenty shekels, five and twenty shekels, fifteen shekels, shall be your maneh.

16 And Abraham hearkened unto Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant.

And Abraham hearkened unto Ephron – Abraham recognized the price that Ephron had just implicitly suggested and agreed to pay it

And Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver – in that time period, silver was paid in weight.

- Using some kind of scales that must have been nearby, Abraham weighed out 400 shekels of silver, the publicly agreed upon price that had been witnessed by the Hittites at the gate. (Plummer, 1902)

Current money with the merchant – weighed in accordance with the commercial standards of trade

Verses 17 & 18 seem to represent a form of the deed of sale between Abraham and Ephron.

- These verses are similar in structure to ancient Babylonian deeds of sale. (Plummer, 1902)
- Take note of the details contained therein.

17 And the field of Ephron which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field, and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the borders round about, were made sure

18 Unto Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city.

Seller – Ephron

Property being sold – the field of Ephron, and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were within the borders of the field

Location of the property – in Machpelah, adjacent to Mamre

Transaction – was made sure, was deeded

Buyer – Abraham

Type of Transaction – possession/purchase

Witnesses of the transaction – the Hittites

Location of the transaction – gate of the city

Genesis 25:9 - And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre;

Genesis 29:29-32 - And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, In the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a buryingplace. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah. The purchase of the field and of the cave that is therein was from the children of Heth.

It's interesting that the only piece of land that Abraham ever owned in the land of Canaan was a grave.

- And yet that grave would tie his family for generations to come to Canaan.
- In purchasing the tomb in Canaan, Abraham was once again acting in faith that God would keep His promises to him regarding the land. In death, Abraham and Sarah would be permanently affixed to the land that God had promised to them. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 5121)
 - o “We believe that God is going to give our descendants this land, so we’re going to put some roots down and stay here permanently. We are going to die and be buried believing that God will keep His promises to us.”
- Application: I hope that each of us as Christians has the same mentality. God’s promises to us are not exhausted in this life. As believers, this life is not the end. It’s just the beginning. We have hope that extends beyond the grave. I pray that when we pass one day, we do so in faith believing that God’s promises and faithfulness to us extend beyond this life.

Mark 12:26-27 - 26 And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? 27 He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

4.) The Burial of Sarah

19 And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre: the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan.

And after this – after purchasing the field and the cave at Machpelah

Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah – Abraham buried his wife in the cave

- The same cave that he, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Leah would all be buried in one day.
- Abraham and Sarah died in faith believing that God's promises to them extended beyond the grave, and guess who followed in their footsteps? Their kids and their grandkids.
- Application: Don't you make the mistake of thinking that the way in which you finish your race doesn't matter to those around you. It matters more than you realize.

Before Mamre; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan – the cave was near Mamre (otherwise known as Hebron) within the land of Canaan

20 And the field, and the cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a buryingplace by the sons of Heth.

Here the summary and repetition of verses 17 & 18 signify the importance of this purchase and the faith that it signified.

Application

Sarah was from Ur. That was her home. That was where everything and everyone she knew was at. But God called her out of that place. She moved to Canaan. She lived in Canaan. She died in Canaan. She died in faith where God had called her to be.

Hebrews 11:13-16 - 13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. 15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. 16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

May we not turn back to what God called us out of.

May we stay faithful to where God has called us.

May we believe that God's promises extend beyond the grave.

May we too one day die in faith, having finished our race and kept the faith.

Genesis 24:1-20

Review

Last week's passage formed the beginning of the end of the story of Abraham. Genesis 22:20-25:11 gradually transitions our focus from Abraham and Sarah to Isaac and Rebekah.

We saw this last week, first off, in the description of Nahor's family tree. We were introduced for the first time to Rebekah who is going to become a major focal point in Genesis 24.

We saw this further with the death and burial of Sarah. Her removal from the story sets the stage for Rebekah to take her place in the spotlight.

Sermon

That's what Genesis 24 is all about: the arrangement of a bride for Isaac, the heir to Abraham's empire and the promises of God.

"Central to the development of the story is the idea of covenantal loyalty/faithfulness (hesed, both from the divine perspective and the human. Abraham acted with hesed (faithfulness) in preparing for the future of the covenant through the marriage, the servant acted with hesed (faithfulness) in faithfully carrying out his responsibilities, and God demonstrated his sovereign hesed (faithfulness) by guiding the servant to the proper place and ensuring that the mission did not fail." (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 5151-5153)

1.) The Commissioning of the Servant

We're going to see here from the beginning that Abraham, towards the end of his life, is concerned with making sure that his son has a godly wife and that God's working in his family continues beyond his own death. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 5197)

1 And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things.

And Abraham was old, and well stricken (advanced) in age – he was about 140, and it had been roughly three years since Sarah had passed.

- We know this because Gen. 25:20 tells us that Isaac was 40 when he married Rebekah.

And the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things – he had been blessed with long life, wealth, honor and children (Gill, 1811)

- As he comes closer and closer to the end of his life, that which really matters (his son and his son's relationship to the covenant promises), is on the forefront of his mind.

Genesis 18:11 - Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.

Genesis 12:2 - And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

2 And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh:

And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had – Abraham spoke to his chief servant, the steward of his house, his chief of staff.

- Who is this?
- Most commentators think that it is in reference to Eliezer of Damascus who held that office 50+ years prior in Genesis 15:2.
 - o The description of the servant and the seriousness of the task lend he's given credence to the idea that this servant is Eliezer, a man who had spent his life at Abraham's side.
 - o On his initial journey in Genesis 12 from Ur to Canaan, Abraham likely would have passed through Damascus on his way to the promised land. This may have been where Eliezer joined his clan. Regardless of how he came to join the clan, Eliezer soon climbed the ranks and became Abraham's chief of staff. "If Eliezer were still alive and serving as Abraham's chief of staff, he would have been Abraham's financial consultant, head of operations, and quite likely his closest friend. He would have been involved in the life of Abraham for decades, thus knowing the aging patriarch as well as anyone." (Swindoll, 2014, p. 225)
 - Why would Genesis 15 name Eliezer and then Genesis 24 just refer to him as the chief servant? Well, if you look closely, in Genesis 15, neither the narrator nor God ever refer to Eliezer by name. It's Abraham that does. Remember, he was frustrated because he had no child, and he was complaining to God that his heir at the time was Eliezer.
 - Wanting to keep the focal point on Abraham, Isaac, and Rebekah, it would make sense for the author not to refer to the servant by name in Genesis 24. The story isn't about him.

Put I pray thee thy hand under my thigh – what does this mean? What's the significance here? I have no idea. It is only referenced twice in the Old Testament: here with Abraham and his servant and in Gen. 47:29 with Jacob and his son Joseph. It was some form of ancient means of securing an oath. (Spence & Exell, 1883)

Genesis 15:2 - And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?

Genesis 39:4-6 - And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field. And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured. Genesis 47:29

Genesis 47:29 -And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt:

3 And I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell:

And I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth – a title for God that Abraham had previously used in Gen. 14:22

- Genesis 14:22 - And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth,
- Put your hand under my thigh and swear by God that...

Thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell – you will not arrange a marriage between my son and a Canaanite woman

Illustration –

- West – dating -> engagement -> marriage
- Ancient Near East – matchmaking -> marriage
- Statistics show that arranged marriages often fare better than our spontaneous approach here in the West. In biblical times, parental matchmaking was the norm. So, when it came time for Isaac to marry, it was up to Abraham to find the right woman. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 223)

Abraham knew how important it was for Isaac to have a good, faithful mate who would become part of God's promises to their family.

Abraham was intent on finding a wife for his son, but he had a problem. Even though Abraham was quite well off, he lived in a pretty awful neighborhood. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 224)

In the ancient world, marriages weren't just the joining of two people. They were the joining of two peoples/families. Abraham likely did not want his new nation to become "mixed into the Canaanite melting pot." (Swindoll, 2014, p. 224)

Application 1 – in finding a mate, listen to the counsel of godly parents/counselors

Proverbs 1:8-9 - 8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: 9 For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.

- Kids need to listen to the counsel of their parents, and parents need to speak truth into their kids' lives.
- Parents, teach your kids about marriage. Teach your kids about Christian sexual ethics. Teach your kids why we don't live together with someone before marriage. Teach your kids about what character traits to look for in a spouse. Be that wise counsel, and model it in your own marriage.
 - o If you don't teach your kids these things, someone else will.

Application 2 – in finding a mate, don't marry an unbeliever

- Parents, teach this to your kids. Teach your kid why the Bible says this. Don't let your kids date an unbeliever.

Deuteronomy 7:3-4 - Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.

2 Corinthians 6:14-17 - Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

Genesis 21:23 - Now therefore swear unto me here by God that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son: but according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned.

Exodus 20:7 - Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

Exodus 34:16 - And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods.

4 But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.

But thou shalt go unto my country – in reference to the larger region of Mesopotamia which contained Haran, where Abraham's brother lived.

- This would have been a 400-500 mile journey to the North East
And to my kindred – to the family of my brother Nahor

And take a wife unto my son Isaac – and there arrange a marriage with a suitable woman for Isaac

- Isaac's marriage isn't even being arranged by his dad. It's being arranged by his dad's chief of staff.

Genesis 22:20-23 - And it came to pass after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, Behold, Milcah, she hath also born children unto thy brother Nahor; Huz his firstborn, and Buz his brother, and Kemuel the father of Aram, And Chesed, and Hazo, and Pildash, and Jidlaph, and Bethuel. And Bethuel begat Rebekah: these eight Milcah did bear to Nahor, Abraham's brother.

5 And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?

And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land – Abraham, this is a great plan, and I'm stoked to be a part of it. But I've got a question for you. I'm going to ask this woman to leave her home and her family with me, a man she's never met, to make a 500-mile journey to Canaan, to marry Isaac, a man she's never seen, and then live in Canaan for the rest of her life. Let's say that she's not willing to do that.

Must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest? – in that case, would you want me to bring your son to Mesopotamia?

- Though Isaac had never been to the land, he may be said to have gone again in that he was seminally present in his father's loins while he was in the land (Heb. 7:9)

6 And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again.

And Abraham said unto him, Beware – watch yourself

That thou bring not my son thither again – do not take my son there; do not remove my son from the land

- You can see Abraham's heart for his son here.

Application: as parents that ought to be our hearts for our kids, that we would not cause our kids to fall back into what we have been saved out of. As a Christian parent, you're going to need to, in love, set up some safeguards for your kids while they're in your home.

2 Peter 2:20-22 - For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

Galatians 5:1 - Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

Hebrews 10:39 - But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

7 The Lord God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence.

The Lord God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land – the God that called me from my family and my home swearing that he would give this land to my offspring

That God will

Send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence – the angel of God will prepare the way for you, and you will bring back here a wife for my son from there

Exodus 14:19 - And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them:

Exodus 23:20-23 - Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him. But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries. For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off.

Exodus 33:2 - And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite:

8 And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again.

Abraham likely makes this statement not due to a lack of faith on his part, but to ease the mind of his servant.

And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath – if the woman won't come, you will be guiltless as it pertains to the oath

only bring not my son thither again – just whatever you do, do not bring my son back to Mesopotamia

- He didn't want his son going there and facing the temptation to stay.

9 And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning that matter.

He made the oath to his master.

10 And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor.

And the servant took ten camels of his master, and departed – “Today we associate camels with the Middle East, but domesticated camels were not common during Abraham's time. Since they were rare and made ideal pack animals for long journeys, each beast represented a small fortune. Ten camels in Abraham's day would have looked like a ten-limousine entourage today.” (Swindoll, 2014, p. 227)

- Why did he take the ten camels?
 - o To impress the bride and her family.
 - o To bring presents for the bride and her family.
 - o To bring back the bride and her handmaids. (Spence & Exell, 1883)

For all the goods of his master were in his hand – for he had oversight of all of Abraham's possessions and had easy access to what would be needed for this mission

And he arose, and went to Mesopotamia unto the city of Nahor – to Haran; this would have been a 2-4 weeklong journey

- This is the city where Nahor's family lived after Abraham's departure
Genesis 11:31 - and Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.

2.) The Prayer before God

11 And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water.

And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water – in the Ancient Near East where water was so vital to survival, cities were built around sources of water. Wells were often built outside the city so as to keep things quieter within the city.

- The servant had his camels rest in a kneeling position by the well. (Spence & Exell, 1883)

At the time of evening, even the time that women go out to draw the water – they would go out at the time of day when the heat of the sun was past to draw water and carry it back in a vessel on their hips or heads (Plummer, 1902)

Genesis 29:9-10 - And while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep: for she kept them. And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother.

Exodus 2:16 - Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock.

John 4:7 - There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.

12 And he said O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham.

And he said O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee – as a part of Abraham's clan, Abraham's chief servant had a personal relationship with the God of Abraham as well.

- He had made this very long journey in an attempt to accomplish a very difficult task, and he knew that he could not do it on his own. So, what did he do? He prayed.

Application: in finding a mate, bath the process in prayer

- As a parent, pray for your kid's spouse now.
- Illustration: praying for Jacqueline's spouse

Psalms 37:5 - Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

Proverbs 3:6 - In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Ephesians 6:18 - 18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

Philippians 4:6-7 - 6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

James 5:16 - 16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Send me good speed this day – make something happen before me today

And shew kindness unto my master Abraham – show covenantal faithfulness (hesed) unto my master Abraham

13 Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water:

The servant lays out for the Lord in prayer the situation he was in.

“Lord I’m standing here by this well a long way away from home...”

14 And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.

“Give me a sign to know which young lady you would like for me to bring home to Isaac. May it be that the woman whom I ask for a drink that offers not only to draw water for me, but also for my camels, may she be the one that you have chosen for Isaac.”

Illustration – be careful of laying out fleeces today

- We have the Word of God and the Holy Spirit inside of us

And thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master – by this sign will I know that you have shown covenantal faithfulness unto my master.

This was not some kind of arbitrary test. It would require that the woman be a person of kindness, generosity, and hard work. It required that the woman be a person of unnatural hospitality.

“Most anyone would offer a sip to a thirsty stranger. Watering ten camels, on the other hand, took a lot of extra effort—especially considering that each camel could drink as much as fifty gallons in three minutes. And he had ten thirsty animals! A five-gallon jar weighed almost fifty pounds. For a woman to volunteer to water someone’s camels would mean offering to haul five hundred gallons, five gallons at a time. (Don’t worry, I’ll do the math.) That’s one hundred trips back and forth from the spring. (Bear with me a little further.) If each trip took only a minute, she just added two hours of backbreaking work to her already busy day.” (Swindoll, 2014, p. 228)

Application: in finding a mate, look for character

- As a parent, teach your kids to look for someone of character.
- Illustration: Liz’s heart for ministry

Judges 6:17 - And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me.

Judges 6:37 - Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said.

Genesis 15:8 - And he said, Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?

3.) The Encounter with Rebekah

A.) Her Character

15 And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder.

And it came to pass, before he had done speaking – before the servant had even finished praying

Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder – here comes this young lady walking out of the city towards the well with her pitcher upon her shoulder

- This young lady just happened to be Rebekah, Abraham's brother's granddaughter. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 229)
- What a coincidence! This was no coincidence.
 - o The servant does not yet know who she is though.

Genesis 21:14 - And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.

16 And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up.

And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her – this young woman that caught the servant's eye was beautiful and, as was indicated from her clothing, she was unmarried. She was a virgin. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 229)

And she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up – from this, it seems that there was some kind of stairs or sloped descent down to the well that Rebekah descended and then came up.

Genesis 26:7 - And the men of the place asked him of his wife; and he said, She is my sister: for he feared to say, She is my wife; lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she was fair to look upon.

17 And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher.

The servant hurried over to catch her and asked for a drink of water from her pitcher.

Illustration – comparisons and contrasts between this story and the story of the Samaritan woman at the well

- Rebekah went in the evening. The Samaritan woman went in the middle of the day.

- Rebekah was a virgin. The Samaritan woman was not.
- Both men asked the woman for a drink
 - o Rebekah responded positively
 - o The Samaritan woman did not initially.
- Both men, though asking the women for a drink, had something of much greater value to offer in return.
- Both encounters were orchestrated by God.
John 4:7 - There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.

18 And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hasted, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink.

And she said, Drink, my lord – Rebekah was considerate and respectful

And she hasted, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink – Rebekah wasn't so caught in what she needed to get done that she missed out on ministering to who was right in front of her.

- Illustration: think in terms of who, not in terms of what
1 Peter 4:8-9 - And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging.

19 And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking.

And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking – she was perceptive and overly hospitable

- Perceptive – she noticed his camels and deduced that they too needed water
- Overly hospitable – she says that she will water the camels (who would drink far more than their master)
 - o She doesn't even ask if he'd like her to water the camels. She just does it.
 - o Application: this is often the way that we need to minister to someone who is in a time of need. Don't ask. Perceive the need and minister.

She said it, but would she do it? Is she a person of her word?

20 And she hasted, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels.

“He watched her tread back and forth from the spring to the trough, carrying that fifty-pound jug for likely hours. The longer she worked, the more confident he became that he had found in Rebekah a rare gem among her peers.” (Swindoll, 2014, p. 229)

- Here was this beautiful, unmarried woman who was considerate, respectful, perceptive, overly hospitable, hardworking, and true to her word. She was a person of character.

What happens next? You have to come back next week to find out.

Application

May we, as Christians parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc. have a heart for the next generation that God has given us influence with.

May we model for them what Christian relationships should look like.

May we teach them from the Word of God as well.

Genesis 24:21-49

Review

In our last Sunday evening service, we began studying the story of the quest to find a wife for Isaac. We saw how Abraham commissioned his chief servant to find a wife for his son from his homeland. We saw that upon making the 500 mile journey, Abraham's chief servant took the matter to the Lord in prayer and asked for a very specific sign: that the wife God had for Isaac would offer to not only provide him with water, but his camels as well. We saw that before the servant had finished prayer, Rebekah entered the scene and upon being asked for some water, she offered to water all the man's camels. That's basically where we left off.

In the encounter with Rebekah, we previously saw her character, and we're going to pick up the story by seeing also her family.

B.) Her Family

21 And the man wondering at her held his peace, to wit whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not.

And the man wondering at her held his peace. - as Rebekah was watering his camels, the servant sort of just stood there in awe and silence

- Can someone pinch me? Is this really happening? Is this really the one? Is this really going to be this easy?

To wit whether the Lord made his journey prosperous or not – trying to discern whether or not the Lord had already answered his prayers and that this was the woman who would accompany him on the 500 mile journey back to Isaac

Genesis 24:12 - And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham.

22 And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold;

And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking – once she had watered the camels and they had finished drinking

That the man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold – the servant took out a ring for her face and two bracelets for her hands. There are differing opinions as to whether this ring was an earring, a ring that hung from the forehead, or a nose ring that would have been situated in one of the side nostrils. (Gill, 1811) (Barnes, 1834)

- “Legal materials from the first half of the second millennium suggest a worker might expect to make at most ten shekels [of silver] per year and often less.” (Walton, Matthews, & Chavalas, 2000)
- Illustration: handing a Rolex to a bellhop as a thank you for taking your bags to your room (Swindoll, 2014, p. 230)
- He gave these items to her in return for her kindness
Genesis 23:15-16 - My lord, hearken unto me: the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver; what is that betwixt me and thee? bury therefore thy dead. And Abraham hearkened unto Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant.

23 And said, Whose daughter art thou? tell me, I pray thee: is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in?

And said, Whose daughter art thou? - recall that the servant had sworn to Abraham that he would find a wife for Isaac of his family. This woman seemed to have met the character requirements for the type of woman he was looking for, but was she of the right family? (Gill, 1811)

Tell me, I pray thee: is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in? - Remember also that during this time period, marriage was not just the marrying of two people. It was the marrying of two peoples. The servant has seen firsthand the character of Rebekah. Here he asks a question to ascertain the character of her family.

- “What family do you belong to? And would your family be willing to provide lodging this evening for me and my camels?”

Past Applications Regarding Marriage

- Application 1 – in finding a mate, listen to the counsel of godly parents/counselors
- Application 2 – in finding a mate, don't marry an unbeliever
- Application 3 - in finding a mate, bath the process in prayer
- Application 4 - in finding a mate, look for character

Application: in finding a mate, know the family that you are marrying into

Illustration – Liz and I met in spring 2014. We started dating in the fall of 2014. In December 2014, Liz was going to fly to Florida with me to meet my parents and spend some time with my family. Before Liz met my family, her parents flew to Florida and spent a couple days with my parents. The first time she flew out to see my family, my parents, her parents, and my grandparents were all there.



24 And she said unto him, I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, which she bare unto Nahor.

And she said unto him, I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, which she bare unto Nahor – just as you and I recognize these names, so too the servant would have. She was a woman of character, and she was from the right family. She was a relative of Abraham’s family, and not only that but with regards to the servant’s second question, look at how she answered.

Genesis 11:29 - And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah.

Genesis 22:23 - And Bethuel begat Rebekah: these eight Milcah did bear to Nahor, Abraham's brother.

25 She said moreover unto him, We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in.

She said moreover unto him, We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in – the difficulty with the servant’s request for lodging is once again not so much as it pertains to himself, but to the ten camels. It was a small thing to offer the servant water. It was of a whole other magnitude to water the ten camels. In the same sense, it was a small thing to provide lodging for one man and perhaps a few others servants for the evening, but to provide lodging and food for ten camels was of a whole other magnitude. And yet she responds in the affirmative. “We have sufficient straw for the camels’ litter, food for the camels’ appetite, and room for you to lodge in.” (Gill, 1811)

- She didn’t have to go run home and ask her family whether they would be willing to provide lodging for the servant and his animals. She knew her family. They were a family of such hospitable character that she felt the liberty to answer the servant’s question in the affirmative without even speaking to them. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 230)
- Did the servant put the rings on her before (vs. 22) or after (vs. 47) he had asked her of her family heritage?

- “The matter is easily reconciled, and both accounts stand clear and plain, if it be only remarked, that he took out the earring and bracelets before he put the question, but it was after it that he gave her them, or put them upon her.” (Gill, 1811)

Genesis 18:4-8 - Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said. And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth. And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetcht a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it. And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.

1 Peter 4:9 - Use hospitality one to another without grudging.

C.) His worship

26 And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the Lord.

And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the Lord - knowing Rebekah’s character, her family, and her family’s hospitality, the servant concluded that God had divinely ordered his steps so as to lead him to the woman that would be Isaac’s bride (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 5215)

- There is no longer any doubt in his mind.

27 And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren.

And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth – the servant praises God for not withholding His kindness and faithfulness from Abraham.

- Application: when God works and moves in our lives, we should be intentional about praising Him. Praise to God ought to flow from our lips on a day by day basis. For we are a most blessed people.
- Psalms 68:19 - Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah.
- Psalms 72:18-19 - Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen.
- Ephesians 1:3 - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:
- the servant praised God for not withholding His kindness and faithfulness from Abraham.

- How did God show kindness and faithfulness to Abraham?
Ruth 2:20 - And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen.

I being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren – on my journey, the Lord has led me to the household of his master's family

Proverbs 3:6 - In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

4.) The Encounter with the Family

A.) The Hospitality of the Family

28 And the damsel ran, and told them of her mother's house these things.

Rebekah initially departs to her mother and those who dwelled in her mother's living quarters. During this time period it was often customary for the women to live separately from the men of the household in some sort of distinct house, tent, or apartment. (Spence & Exell, 1883)

She told her mother and those in the house of the events that had transpired.

29 And Rebekah had a brother, and his name was Laban: and Laban ran out unto the man, unto the well.

Verse 29 explains to us what Laban did. Verse 30 retroactively explains why he did it.

30 And it came to pass, when he saw the earring and bracelets upon his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, Thus spake the man unto me; that he came unto the man; and, behold, he stood by the camels at the well.

Laban saw the gifts that the servant had bestowed upon his sister (the ring and the two bracelets [i.e. the Rolex watch]), and he listened to the story that his sister told of her encounter with the man. As a result (as verse 29 tells us), Laban ran out to the well to greet the man.

- Laban is at the forefront of this narrative as a representative of Rebekah. He's more so at the forefront than even his father Bethuel is. We don't know exactly why that is. Some have suggested that it was because Bethuel was old, which he would have been. Some have conjectured that it was because as the firstborn he shared in the authority of his father. Others have suggested that it was customary during this time for brothers to take particular interest in the arranging of marriages for their sisters. Regardless of the reason why, Laban is at the forefront of this narrative. (Spence & Exell, 1883)

31 And he said, Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels.

And he said, Come in, thou blessed of the Lord – come in, thou blessed of Jehovah.

- His usage of the title Jehovah for God may indicate that Abraham's family were worshippers of Jehovah to some extent at this point in time. (Spence & Exell, 1883)
- Or maybe Laban was shrewd, and his usage came from the servant's worship of Jehovah in the presence of Rebekah in verse 27. (Keil & Delitzsch, 1857-1878)
- Regardless, he calls the servant blessed of God and calls on him to come inside.

Wherefore standest thou without? – why do you stand outside?

For I have prepared the house, and room of the camels – I have made ready a place for you to lodge and have prepared the stables for your camels

Genesis 26:29 - That thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace: thou art now the blessed of the LORD.

Ruth 3:10 - And he said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich.

Psalms 115:15 - Ye are blessed of the LORD which made heaven and earth.

32 And the man came into the house: and he ungirded his camels, and gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet, and the men's feet that were with him.

And the man came into the house – the servant heeded Laban's words

And he ungirded his camels – he (probably in reference to Laban) took off the camels' bridles and burdens

And gave straw and provender for the camels – straw for their litter and food for them to eat

And water to wash his feet, and the men's feet that were with him – Laban provided water to wash the servant's feet as well as the men of his company that had accompanied the servant on the journey (Gill, 1811)

Genesis 18:4 - Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree:

Genesis 19:2- And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night.

Genesis 43:24 - And the man brought the men into Joseph's house, and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their asses provender.

B.) The Request to the Family

33 And there was set meat before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat, until I have told mine errand. And he said, Speak on.

And there was set meat before him to eat – they provided Abraham’s servant with food to eat as a customary act of hospitality

But he said, I will not eat, until I have told mine errand. – I am here on a mission. Before I partake in your generous hospitality, I need to share with you some things. I need to explain why I am here, what has happened, how it involves you, and I need to ask you a very important question.

- Throughout the story that the servant tells, faith and faithfulness are at the heart of it. Abraham acted by faith when he sent the servant on this long journey. The servant acted by faith when he asked God for a sign. God responded to that faith when He brought along Rebekah as the fulfillment of that sign. The only question that really remained was, “Will Rebekah and her family respond to God’s moving in faith?”
- The family’s answer is going to be a sort of spiritual barometer.
- “Do you have faith?”

Application: in finding a mate, discern whether the person is a person of faith

- This is more than just, “Are they a Christian?” It’s, “Are they willing to join arms with me and follow God by faith wherever He takes us?”
- Illustration – Liz was willing to do that with me
 - o We stayed in California, 3000 miles away from either of our families.
 - o Then we moved to Camarillo by faith. Why? Because we were following God.

And he said, Speak on. – sure, go ahead.

John 4:31-34 - In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

Ephesians 6:5-8 - Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

Imagine yourself in this situation. Picture the scene. Everything has led up to this moment for the servant, but this is all just happening for Rebekah and her family. They just met this guy.

He tells them a story.

(1) Abraham’s Blessedness

34 And he said, I am Abraham's servant.

- Perhaps they recognized the name, especially Bethuel.

35 And the Lord hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses.

Genesis 24:1 - And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things.

Matthew 6:33 - But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

(2) Isaac's Inheritance

36 And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old: and unto him hath he given all that he hath.

(3) The Servant's Oath

37 And my master made me swear, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife to my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell:

38 But thou shalt go unto my father's house, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son.

39 And I said unto my master, Peradventure the woman will not follow me.

- Take note of the transparency here.

(4) The Assistance of the Angel

40 And he said unto me, The Lord, before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and prosper thy way; and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father's house:

41 Then shalt thou be clear from this my oath, when thou comest to my kindred; and if they give not thee one, thou shalt be clear from my oath.

(5) The Prayer at the Well

42 And I came this day unto the well, and said, O Lord God of my master Abraham, if now thou do prosper my way which I go:

Genesis 24:12-14 - And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy

servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master

Psalms 37:5 - Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

43 Behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass, that when the virgin cometh forth to draw water, and I say to her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to drink;

Genesis 24:13-14 - Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.

44 And she say to me, Both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels: let the same be the woman whom the Lord hath appointed out for my master's son.

Proverbs 18:22 - Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.

Proverbs 19:14 - House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the LORD.

(6) The Answer of the Prayer

45 And before I had done speaking in mine heart, behold, Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down unto the well, and drew water: and I said unto her, Let me drink, I pray thee.

Matthew 7:7 - Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

46 And she made haste, and let down her pitcher from her shoulder, and said, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: so I drank, and she made the camels drink also.

47 And I asked her, and said, Whose daughter art thou? And she said, the daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bare unto him: and I put the earring upon her face, and the bracelets upon her hands.

(7) The Praise to God

48 And I bowed down my head, and worshipped the Lord, and blessed the Lord God of my master Abraham, which had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter unto his son.

Psalms 32:8 - I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.

Psalms 48:14 - For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.

Psalms 107:7 - And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.

Proverbs 3:5-6 - Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

49 And now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left.

Here's the million dollar question. What are you going to do about it? Will you respond to this marriage proposal from my master for his son in faith and truth? Or will you not?

Illustration – closing the deal in sales, calling people to a decision

- Explain -> Does that make sense? -> Is that something you'd be interested in doing?
-> How about this Sunday?

Everyone else in this God ordained story has acted by faith. Will you? Tell me yes or no right now so that I might know where to go from here.

Application

How do they respond? You're going to have to come back next week to find out.

My question for you is, "How will you respond? Are you surrendered to God's leading in your life? Are you the type of person that is willing to follow God's leading by faith regardless of what it entails? When that moment of decision comes in your life and God is leading you to step outside of your comfort zone, will you respond in faith or in fear?"

Genesis 24:50-67

Review

For a couple of weeks now, we have been studying the story of the quest to find a wife for Isaac. We saw how Abraham commissioned his chief servant to find a wife for his son from his homeland. We saw that upon making the 500 mile journey, Abraham's chief servant took the matter to the Lord in prayer and asked for a very specific sign: that the wife God had for Isaac would offer to not only provide him with water, but his camels as well. We saw that before the servant had finished praying, Rebekah entered the scene and upon being asked for some water, she offered to water all the man's camels.

The servant then asked who her family was and whether or not he and his men and camels could spend the evening in their family's home. She revealed that she was a relative of Abraham's family and immediately approved the servant's request for lodging for the evening. At that moment, the servant worshipped God because he knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that God had directed his steps to Rebekah and that she was meant to be the wife for Isaac. The servant and his men made their way to Rebekah's family home and after getting the animals situated, sat down for dinner with the family. But before the servant would eat, he insisted on sharing with the family the purpose for his visit, the reason he had come such a great distance. He told the whole story from start to finish of how God had ordered his steps to Rebekah, and then at the end, he asked a very direct question of the family.

49 And now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left.

Will you respond to this marriage proposal in faith and truth? Or will you not? Tell me yes or no right now so that I might know where to go from here.

- Remember that the servant had just met Rebekah and this family that evening! This was a big ask, and this is where we're going to pick up our story this evening.

1.) The Encounter with the Family

A.) The Hospitality of the Family

B.) The Request to the Family

C.) The Response of the Family

50 Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from the Lord: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good.

Then Laban and Bethuel answered – this is the only time in the story that Bethuel is mentioned as a key figure, and even here, he is mentioned after Laban, indicating his role was one of lesser importance (perhaps due to advanced age or sickness) (Poole, 1990)

- The verb “answered” is in the singular indicating possibly that only Laban spoke, with Bethuel consenting to his words (Gill, 1811)
- What were they going to say? Remember that they had just met this servant that night, and he was asking for permission to take Rebekah their daughter, their sister, away to marry someone that none of them had met.

The thing proceedeth from the Lord - Yahweh (Jehovah) has brought this to pass. Rebekah’s family recognized the working of the one true God in this situation.

- It seems like the family knew the true God although there are indications that they worshipped other idols as well. (Gill, 1811)

We cannot speak unto thee bad or good – there is nothing we can say

- Since this matter has so clearly been decided by God, there is nothing left for us to say.

Psalms 118:23 - This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.

Genesis 31:29 - It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

51 Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken.

Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master’s son’s wife – you have the family’s permission to take Rebekah with you to Canaan to be Isaac’s wife as Yahweh (Jehovah) has spoken; thus, the betrothal was initiated

52 And it came to pass, that, when Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshipped the Lord, bowing himself to the earth.

And it came to pass, that, when Abraham’s servant heard their words – right there at the dinner table before he began eating

He worshipped the Lord, bowing himself to the earth – He bowed down to the ground and worshipped God

Illustration – praising God in moments where He comes through and provides (the purchase of our home)

- You don’t have those types of moments if you’re not praying and living by faith. Genesis 24:26 - And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the LORD.

Psalms 95:6 - O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.

53 And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things.

And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah – the servant ratifies the engagement by giving betrothal gifts to the bride: clothing and fine jewelry (Plummer, 1902)

- Illustration – for Liz it was an engagement ring

He gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things – he also gave to Laban and Rebekah’s mother precious items, likely as a sort of dowry to secure the engagement (Plummer, 1902)

- Illustration – paying off Liz’s last semester of college

54 And they did eat and drink, he and the men that were with him, and tarried all night; and they rose up in the morning, and he said, Send me away unto my master.

And they did eat and drink, he and the men that were with him – having formally secured the betrothal, they celebrated, and the servant and his men, finally ate and drank

And tarried all night – they spent the night

And they rose up in the morning, and he said, Send me away unto my master – let us not delay any further. Allow me to return this morning to my master with Rebekah.

- He was eager to get back home and complete his mission.
 - o He probably thought Abraham didn’t have too much time left.
 - o Isaac certainly would have been antsy.
 - o Perhaps he had a family he wanted to get back to.

Proverbs 22:29 - Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.

55 And her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten; after that she shall go.

And her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten; after that she shall go – this is all happening really fast. Give us ten days to get things in order, spend some time together, and say our goodbyes. After that, she can return with you.

- She needs to pack.
- We need to make some arrangements.
- We’d like to have some special family moments.
- Just give us ten days.
 - o That’s pretty reasonable.

56 And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the Lord hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master.

And he said unto them, Hinder me not – please don’t delay me

Seeing the Lord hath prospered in my way – seeing that Yahweh (Jehovah) has orchestrated this encounter

Send me away that I may go to my master – send me away from here so that I can return to my master in Canaan and complete my mission

- “Whether this is Abraham or Isaac, is not stated. But, judging from Genesis 24:65, there is ground for the supposition that Isaac is intended.” (Plummer, 1902)
Joshua 1:8 - This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

57 And they said, We will call the damsel, and enquire at her mouth.

Let’s call Rebekah and ask her what she’d like to do.

- This indicates that she was not previously a part of the conversation that morning.

D.) The Readiness of Rebekah

58 And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.

And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? – it’s not just “will you go”. It’s “will you go now”.

- “Are you ready to say goodbye and never see your family again? Your aging parents? Your siblings? Your home? Are you ready to make this 500 mile journey with this man you met last night to marry Isaac, who you haven’t met at all? Are you ready to do so right now?”
- Illustration – those early pilgrims who set out for the Americas for Europe
 - o They had never been there before, but they left everything behind to go and not return.
 - o That’s a great picture of what making the decision to marry is like to.

And she said, I will go – Her willingness here reminds me of Genesis 2:24 - Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. She would leave her family and cleave to her husband by faith.

- “In many ways, Rebekah demonstrated the same kind of faith her late mother-in-law exercised when leaving Ur with Abraham. Like Sarah, Rebekah left her stable existence among her kin to become a nomad with her husband. She committed herself to a life of faith, not knowing where it might lead or what she might find along the way.” (Swindoll, 2014, p. 233)
- In many ways, Rebekah’s faith was greater than Sarah’s.
 - o Sarah left with her husband.
 - o Rebekah left having not even met her husband.
 - o Sarah gradually moved to Canaan (they lived in Haran first).
 - o Rebekah immediately moved to Canaan after less than 24 hours notice.

Luke 1:38 - And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

2.) The Return with Rebekah

59 And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men.

And they sent away Rebekah their sister – “they” and “their” indicates that there was more than one sibling. “Their sister” indicates that Laban was acting as the head of the family.

They didn’t send her away empty.

And her nurse – whose name was Deborah (Gen. 35:8)

Genesis 35:8 - But Deborah Rebekah's nurse died, and she was buried beneath Bethel under an oak: and the name of it was called Allonbachuth.

And Abraham’s servant – who was leading this journey

And his men – who had accompanied the servant on the journey

60 And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them.

And they blessed Rebekah – the family gave to Rebekah a farewell blessing

And said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them – the blessing to their sister centered on their hope that she would be a **fruitful** mother to many and that her descendants would be **victorious** over their enemies.

- The blessing Rebekah received from her family coincided pretty closely with the Abrahamic blessings she would marry into. (Ross, 1997, p. Loc 5245)
 - o Genesis 22:17 - That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;
- The blessing is similar to God’s blessing of Adam and Eve in Genesis 1.
 - o Genesis 1:28 - And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

61 And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

And Rebekah arose, and her damsels – these would have been other maidens to help attend to her needs (which makes it even more remarkable that she herself went to the well to draw water for the family, rather than one of her maidens) (Benson, 1857)

And they rode upon the camels – the 10 camels that she had watered the day prior, the ten camels that would soon belong to her

- Matthew 25:21 – well done, thou good and faithful servant, you have been faithful over a few things. I will make you ruler over many.

And followed the man – the chief servant

And the servant took Rebekah (under his charge) and went his way – to return back to his master in Canaan

- It took the servant 24 hours to secure a wife for his master
- How? God. It was a total God thing.

3.) The Encounter with Isaac

62 And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahairoi; for he dwelt in the south country.

And - As the bridal company was approaching

Isaac came from the way of the well Lahairoi – Isaac had just come from the way of Hagar's well (Gen. 16:14), the one that she had run away to when Sarah bullied her, and the one that the angel of the Lord appeared to her at

For he dwelt in the south country – because he dwelt in the Negev

A.) His Meditation



63 And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming.

Meditate – broad word that has been interpreted a number of different ways

- To think/ponder
- To pray
- To lament/grieve

- His mother was likely on his mind
- His wife certainly was too

Illustration – meditating on the Lord’s return

And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide – the place and the timing for his meditation were quite proper

- In the field: where he could see the beauty of God’s creation in solitude
- At even: when the pressing needs of the day were over and he could easily direct his attention to God (Gill, 1811)
- Isaac found a time and a place to direct his attention to God.
- Application – that’s so important for us to do as well, to slow down, and escape the noise, and give God quality time every day
- Joshua 1:8 - This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.
- Psalms 1:2 - But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.
- Psalms 77:11-12 - I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings.
- Psalms 104:34 - My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD.
- Psalms 119:15 - I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.

And he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold the camels were coming – he looked out and saw the caravan approaching with his fiance and her maidens

- I imagine His heart jumped and his stomach turned to knots.

B.) Their Meeting

64 And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel.

When Rebekah saw Isaac she quickly dismounted from her camel. Why? Since Isaac was walking, it would have been improper in that culture for her to remain seated in an elevated position. For in so doing, she would have been literally looking down upon Isaac when she met him. (Jamieson, Fausset, & Brown, 1884)

65 For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a vail, and covered herself.

For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? – having dismounted, she asked the servant who the approaching man in the field was

And the servant had said, It is my master – the servant confirmed that it was Isaac, her betrothed, who for the first time, the servant referred to as his master

Therefore she took a vail, and covered herself – “According to custom, brides-to-be wore a veil. By pulling her veil across her face, Rebekah signaled that she was his bride. As a red-

blooded male, Isaac wanted to know what kind of face he would be staring at for the next several decades. Because of their marriage rituals, however, it was common for a groom to have no idea what his bride looked like until their wedding night.” (Swindoll, 2014, p. 233)

1 Timothy 2:9 - In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array;

66 And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done.

He recapped the whole story for him.

C.) Their Marriage

67 And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent – “by taking Rebekah into his mother's tent, Isaac communicated to his new wife and the rest of the community she was the new mistress of the household.” (Swindoll, 2014, p. 234)

- Sarah would become the new matriarch of the family, as Isaac would become its new patriarch.
- “The fact that Abraham neither appears on the scene at this point nor is mentioned as the master (Isaac is now referred to as the servant's master in v. 65) suggests that this story formed a very important part of the succession of patriarchal and matriarchal figures in the clan.” (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 5251-5253)

And took Rebekah, and she became his wife and he loved her – what Isaac did is what God calls those of us who are husbands to do

- Not just to marry someone because we are “in love” with them and then just stay committed for as long as that feeling remains...but rather to marry our spouse and then choose to love her in action every single day.
 - o Marriage is not merely the recognition of an attraction. It is a commitment to action...a commitment to love.
- Eph. 5:28 - So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.
- Isaac didn't have an extended dating period with Rebekah before their marriage. They had no premarital counseling. They did not take any compatibility surveys. Neither of them had read any biblical passages on marriage because the Bible hadn't been written yet. And yet they enjoyed a wonderful lifelong marriage despite all of those disadvantages. How? Isaac chose to love Rebekah.
 - o To every husband and wife in the auditorium I want to encourage you with the words of Paul in Eph. 5:33 – Nevertheless let every one of you (husbands) in particular love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

- Husbands, make the decision every morning to love your wife. Wives, make the decision every morning to respect your husband. Those daily choices are the biblical ingredients of a marriage that lasts.
- The promise we make to our spouse before God is the boundary that binds us to them, that binds us to love them in action, even when we don't feel like it. That marriage commitment is a reminder that love is a choice, not a feeling.

Illustration – all of our cultural love stories end with marriage, but marriage is really where the work begins and true love (selfless love) is developed. Marriage is a spiritual incubator in which God uses spouses as tools for chiseling each other in holiness into conformity to Christ. It's hard and it takes work, but if you follow God's blueprint, it will make both of you more like Jesus.

And Isaac was comforted after his mother's death – which had happened three years prior

Application

By way of invitation tonight I want to leave you with the words of the Apostle Paul from Ephesians 5:

Ephesians 5:22-33 - Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord (*follow his lead; show respect to him*). For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church (*the husband is the God ordained leader of the family*): and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it (*Christ loved the church through selfless action and sacrifice; husbands, you do the same...every day*); That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish (*may Christ's example remind us that the purpose of our marriage is holiness*). So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies (*with priority on a daily basis*). He that loveth his wife loveth himself (*for the two are one*). For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh (*one indivisible flesh bound together by an oath they swore to each other before God*). This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself (*husbands, do this every day*); and the wife see that she reverence her husband (*wives, do this every day*).

Husbands, are you loving your wife? Are you choosing to selflessly meet her needs on a daily basis? How is your wife's love tank doing?

Wives, are you respecting your husbands? Are you appreciating him and building him up? Are you following him as the God ordained head of your home?

Genesis 25:1-11

Review

Over the course of the last 10 months, we have covered a lot of ground studying the story of Abraham's journey of faith. We saw his calling by God to leave Ur for the Promised Land. We saw his misadventure in Egypt when he misled Pharaoh regarding his relationship with his wife. We saw Abraham's separation from Lot and then subsequent rescue of Lot from the coalition of kings from the East.

We saw Abraham and Sarah seek to circumvent God's promises by means of Hagar and Ishmael, and despite their disobedience, we saw God reaffirm His covenant to them and institute circumcision as a sign of that covenant. We saw the destruction of the wicked cities of the plain following Abraham's pleas for them, and we saw Lot's narrow escape from the destruction. We saw Abraham's misadventure in Gerar when he repeated the deceitful act that had gotten him in trouble in Egypt years before.

We saw the birth of the miracle child Isaac and the subsequent sending away of Ishmael. We saw the testing of Abraham at Mount Moriah when God instructed him to give back that which he cherished most in the world: his son Isaac. We saw the death and burial of Sarah and the subsequent acquisition of a wife for Isaac. All of this brings us to Genesis 25:1-11 which records the end of Abraham's journey of faith.

Sermon

Although this passage is only eleven verses long, it describes a pretty significant amount of time in the life of Abraham. For, if Abraham was 140 when Isaac married Rebekah at the end of chapter 24, and if Abraham was 175 when he died (as Gen. 25:7 tells us), that would mean that these eleven verses describe a time period of about 35 years, nearly one quarter of Abraham's life, in particular, Abraham's fourth quarter.

What we're going to discover from these eleven verses is that the last quarter of Abraham's life was an exciting time in his life. It seems as if he got a second wind, and if it could ever be said of anyone that they lived a full life, certainly it could be said of Abraham.

The ending of Abraham's journey of faith provides us with a fitting example for how we should seek to finish our journeys of faith as well.

"Tragically for many, their grave marker could read, "Died: age forty-five. Buried: age seventy-five." Many die long before they draw their last breath. They simply stop living; they no longer seek all the joy and purpose and pleasure that God has for them in life."
(Swindoll, 2014, p. 235)

"Those who stop living" inevitably exhibit several negative characteristics:

- Narcissism – they think primarily of themselves and not others; they dig a pit of self pity and willingly live in it isolated from people and purpose
- Pessimism – their self pity and lethargy creates a self fulfilling cycle of pessimism as they subconsciously always see the glass as half full
- Fatalism – their self centered pessimism robs them of joy, purpose and meaning as they resign themselves to the idea that all that awaits them is death (Swindoll, 2014, p. 237)

As Abraham turned the corner to the fourth quarter of his life following his wife's death and son's marriage, he faced two choices: he could become narcissistic, pessimistic, and fatalistic, or he could find a second wind, a renewed purpose...and boy did he ever find a second wind.

As we examine the end of the Abraham's journey of faith, his fourth quarter, the first aspect that we see is

1.) Abraham's New Wife

Isaac got himself a wife, and Abraham figured he'd follow suit and get one too.

1 Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah.

Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah – There are those who would suggest that Abraham married Keturah as a concubine prior to Sarah's death. They would argue for this based on the fact that these types of accounts are not always arranged chronologically, but rather by theme (which is true at times) and that at 140 Abraham would have been too old to have kids.

- However, whether Abraham was 100 or 140, it would have taken supernatural intervention either way for him to have and raise kids. Further, the straightforward reading of the text would lead one to believe this happened chronologically after the death of Sarah, and, beyond that, the fact that Abraham had not taken a concubine until Hagar (which he did at Sarah's insistence) lends credence to the belief that he would not have done so again while she was living. Finally, loneliness after the death of Sarah would seem to be as good an explanation as any for why Abraham would seek another companion. (Barnes, 1834)
 - o "There is no way to tell for sure when Abraham married Keturah, but the verbs imply that it was after the death of Sarah. In that case there could have been thirty-eight years for the births of six sons, who were sent away before the death of Abraham." (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 5296-5298)
- "While romantics would have Abraham feel the pangs of Sarah's loss for another thirty-eight years, God granted him the grace to experience a fresh romance with another woman." (Swindoll, 2014, p. 239)
 - o But not only did Abraham marry this likely much younger woman, he also had kids with her, likely 4-5 decades after Ishmael and Isaac were born (talk about an age gap between siblings!).

- Yes, I did say kid(s) plural.

Genesis 23:1-2 - And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: these were the years of the life of Sarah. And Sarah died in Kirjatharba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.

Genesis 28:1 - And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan.

2.) Abraham's New Children

2 And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah.

And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah -in his old age, Keturah bore Abraham six sons. These six sons would become ancestors of several Arabian tribes in partial fulfillment of God's promise that he would be the father of many nations. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 5288-5289) Part of what makes this so astonishing is that Abraham and Sarah struggled with infertility for decades. Then along comes Keturah, and she has 6 kids like that.

Illustration - story by Chuck Swindoll about his parents:

- "My parents were married in October 1930, and by the following August, she delivered my brother. (Stop counting—the math works out.) She obviously got pregnant shortly after the wedding. About thirteen months later, she delivered my sister. Then, not long after that, while my sister was still in diapers, I was growing in Mom's womb. During her third pregnancy, my parents visited my grandmother. My dad's mother stood at about four feet five and weighed about ninety pounds soaking wet, but she had a reputation for being a pistol. When she saw my mother waddling along pregnant, with two toddlers running around in diapers, she called my dad over. He bent his six-foot-one frame down to hear her. 'Yes, Ma'am?' 'The Bible says to 'be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth.' Earl, God never meant for one woman to do it all.'" (Swindoll, 2014, p. 239)
- That's only three. Abraham and Keturah had six.

Zimran – musician

Jokshan – insidious, crafty

Medan - contention

Midian – strife

Ishbak – one who leaves

Shuah – wealth

- We don't know a lot about the history of the descendants of these kids, but it seems as if the descendants of Medan and Midian eventually mingled to form one tribe referred to at times as the Medanites and at other times as the Midianites. The Midianites were the traders that sold Joseph into slavery in Egypt (Gen. 37:28, 36), and Moses' father in law Jethro was a Midianite as well (Ex. 2:15-16). The Midianites would become powerful enemies to the Israelites during the time of the Judges when God used Gideon to deliver Israel from them (see chapter 6-8). (Ellicott C. , 1905)

1 Chronicles 1:32-33 - Now the sons of Keturah, Abraham's concubine: she bare Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah. And the sons of Jokshan; Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Ephher, and Henoah, and Abida, and Eldaah. All these are the sons of Keturah.

Midian

Genesis 37:28 - Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt.

Exodus 18:1-4 - When Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father in law, heard of all that God had done for Moses, and for Israel his people, and that the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt; Then Jethro, Moses' father in law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back, And her two sons; of which the name of the one was Gershom; for he said, I have been an alien in a strange land: And the name of the other was Eliezer; for the God of my father, said he, was mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh:

Judges 6:1-8 - And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: and because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds. And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them; And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it. And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD. And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD because of the Midianites, That the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage;

3 And Jokshan begat Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, and Letushim, and Leummim.

And Jokshan begat Sheba and Dedan – Sheba was probably connected with the Sabbeans (Job 1:15; 6:19), and Dedan was likely connected with the trading people mentioned in Jer. 25:23 (Keil & Delitzsch, 1857-1878)

And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, and Letushim, and Leummim – these seem to be the names of the three tribes that the Dedanites were divided into (Ellicott C. , 1905)

- Abraham and Keturah (had 6 kids)
 - o One of which was Jokshan (who had 2 kids)
 - One of which was Dedan (who had 3 kids that were the great grand children of Abraham)

4 And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Epher, and Hanoch, and Abidah, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah.

And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Epher, and Hanoch, and Abidah, and Eldaah –

- Abraham and Keturah (had six sons)
 - o One of which was Midian (who had 5 sons that were the grandsons of Abraham)

All these were the children of Keturah – in total there were six sons, seven grandsons, and three great grandsons listed (16 in total) (Spence & Exell, 1883)

“Regardless of the particulars, Abraham continued to live a full life, watching a whole second family sprout, grow, bloom, and then bear fruit. That may not be what you would want in your latter years, but Abraham embraced it . . . and that’s what makes this passage important. I hope his second life causes you to ask the Lord, ‘What future do You have for me?’” (Swindoll, 2014, p. 240)

- God is not done with you yet!

3.) Abraham’s Final Arrangements

5 And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac.

And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac – some time prior to his death

Genesis 21:10-12 - Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son. And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

Genesis 24:36 - And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old: and unto him hath he given all that he hath.

Romans 9:7-9 - Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.

Galatians 3:29 - And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Abraham gave unto Isaac the chief inheritance...

6 But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country.

But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts and sent them away – Hagar and Keturah

“In the ancient world, concubines typically enjoyed all the rights and privileges of a wife, but a legal wife outranked them. Furthermore, the children of a legal wife did not have to share their inheritance with the offspring of concubines. Abraham most likely took Keturah as a wife in the fullest sense of the word, and the Bible offers no evidence that he ever shared a marital bed with more than one woman after his error with Hagar. Keturah was his wife in every way that mattered, but he considered her a concubine (as can be seen in this verse) to protect Isaac’s inheritance.” (Swindoll, 2014, p. 241)

But he still took care of his other kids.

Abraham gave gifts and sent them away...unto the East country – “Abraham loved all his sons and gave them gifts before he sent them away-as he had done with Ishmael. Frankly, it wouldn’t surprise if Abraham kept tabs on Ishmael and helped him out during this time as well. The sending away of these sons of Keturah was necessary to establish Isaac as the true heir, for these sons of the concubine could not be allowed to pose a threat to the heir of the promise.” (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 5300-5302)

While he yet lived – he made these arrangements and executed them prior to his death. The alternative would have made for a messy situation.

Unto the East country – into Arabia (Barnes, 1834)

“Many years ago, a wise and godly financial planner convinced me that Cynthia and I should share our inheritances before we die. He liked to quote the old saying “Do your givin’ while you’re livin’ so that you’re knowin’ where it’s goin’!” In our opinion, that was good advice. Why wait until you’re dead before your offspring and others can enjoy what you have

earned and saved? Why not take pleasure in watching your abundance help people now—especially your children and grandchildren?” (Swindoll, 2014, p. 241)

Genesis 21:14 - And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.

Judges 6:3 - And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them;

4.) Abraham's Death

7 And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years.

And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years – 175 years old

- This description is placed here thematically to provide a close to the story of Abraham and transition into the stories of Isaac and Rebekah and then Jacob and Esau. However, if Abraham died at 175 and Jacob and Esau were born when Isaac was 60, they would have been born 15 years before Abraham died. What that means is that Abraham would have gotten to see his grandkids grow up as kids. (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 5276-5279)
- “As Abraham was seventy-five years of age when he left Haran (Genesis 12:4), his time in Canaan lasted just 100 years. Twenty five of those were spent waiting for Isaac to be born. Sixty plus of them were spent with Sarah. Thirty plus of them were likely spent with Keturah.” (Ellicott C. , 1905)

Genesis 12:4 - So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

8 Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people.

Then Abraham gave up the ghost – he breathed his last breath

And died in a good old age – his grandfather lived to be 148. His dad 205. His son 180. His grandson 147. (Spence & Exell, 1883)

An old man and Full of years – “Abraham died with a full smile. Full of years. Full of satisfaction. Full of contentment. When he looked into the eyes of his children and his grandchildren, he could engage them without a guilty conscience. He gave of himself, and he shared his resources.” (Swindoll, 2014, p. 243)

And was gathered to his people – not in reference to his body, but to his soul which, upon his death, joined his God fearing ancestors in life after death. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 243)

Genesis 25:17 - And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died; and was gathered unto his people

Genesis 35:28-29 - And the days of Isaac were an hundred and fourscore years. And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

Genesis 47:8-9 - And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.

Genesis 49:33- And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.

Numbers 20:24 - Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah.

Numbers 27:13 - And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered.

Acts 13:36 - For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:

5.) Abraham's Burial

9 And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre;

10 The field which Abraham purchased of the sons of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife.

And his sons Isaac and Ishmael – who were 75 and 89 respectively

Buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre The field which Abraham purchased of the sons of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife. – they came together as brothers united by their father's death and buried him in the tomb that he had purchased thirty eight years prior to bury his wife Sarah in

Application – it's amazing how death has the power to bring people together

Illustration – Grandma's Funeral



Genesis 35:29 - And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

Genesis 49:29-30 - And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, In the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a buryingplace.

Genesis 50:13 - For his sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field for a possession of a buryingplace of Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre.

11 And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac dwelt by the well Lahairoi.

“This verse reports that Isaac dwelt near Beer Lahai Roi. God had heard Hagar here and delivered her. And here Isaac had come to meditate when he awaited Rebekah. In the next section of the book Isaac prays here for his barren wife. Isaac thus dwelt in a place where prayer was effectual, where God could be found-and God blessed him.” (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 5306-5310)

Genesis 16:14 - Wherefore the well was called Beerlahairoi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

Genesis 24:62 - And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahairoi; for he dwelt in the south country.

Application

As we conclude our study on Abraham’s journey of faith, I want to encourage you to live by faith. The two key words in that statement are “live” and “faith”. Live. You are not dead yet. You are still here, and as long as God still has you here, find and live out God’s purpose and calling on your life. But don’t just live. Live by faith. Live for God, and live trusting Him as you navigate your journey one day at a time.

Bibliography

- Barnes, A. (1834). *Notes on the Bible*. Retrieved from sacred-texts.com
- Benson, J. (1857). *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*. New York: T. Carlton & J. Porter.
- Blum, E. A., Walvoord, J., & Zuck, R. B. (n.d.). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures Vol. 2*. Wheaton: Victor Books.
- Copan, P. (2011). *Is God a Moral Monster?* Ada: Baker Books.
- Ellicott, C. (1905). *A Bible Commentary for English Readers*. London, Paris, New York, and Melbourne: Cassell and Company, Limited.
- Ellicott, C. J. (1905). *A Bible Commentary for English Readers*. London, Paris, New York, and Melbourne: Cassell and Company, Limited.
- Elwell, W. A. (1988). *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.
- Feiler, B. (2002). *Abraham: A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths*. New York: Harper Audio.
- Gill, J. (1811). *Exposition of the Entire Bible*. William W Woodward.
- Got Questions. (n.d.). *What is the Abrahamic Covenant?* Retrieved from Got Questions: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Abrahamic-covenant.html>
- Got Questions. (n.d.). *What is the importance of the Dead Sea in the Bible?* Retrieved from GotQuestions.org: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Dead-Sea.html>
- Got Questions. (n.d.). *Why did God allow incest in the Bible?* Retrieved from Got Questions: <https://www.gotquestions.org/incest-in-the-Bible.html>
- Harvey, P. (1996, August 21). The Eskimo and the Wolf. *The Florence Times*.
- Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1884). *A Commentary, Critical, Practical, and Explanatory on the Old and New Testaments*. Toledo: Jerome B. Names & Co.
- Keil, C. F., & Delitzsch, F. (1857-1878). *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*. Text Courtesy of Internet Sacred Texts Archive.
- Klein, W. (2015). *The New Chosen People*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock.
- Larum, N. (2014, October 27). *Altars of Earth and Stone*. Retrieved from The Biblephiles: <https://thebiblephiles.com/2014/10/27/altars-of-earth-and-stone/>
- Leupold, H. C. (1958). *The Exposition of Genesis vol. 1*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.
- MacArthur, J. (1976, July 18). *Complete in Christ Colossians 2:10-15*. Retrieved from Grace to You: <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/2142/complete-in-christ>

- MacArthur, J. (2011, September 18). *Is Infant Baptism Biblical?* Retrieved from Grace to You: <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/80-369/is-infant-baptism-biblical>
- MacArthur, J. (2011, September 18). *Is Infant Baptism Biblical?* Retrieved from Grace to Meyer, F. B. (1996). *The Life of Abraham: The Obedience of Faith*. Lynwood: Emerald Books.
- Murphy, C. (2022, February 15). *Anna Sorokin, a.k.a. Anna Delvey, Is Getting a Docuseries*. Retrieved from Vanity Fair: <https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2022/02/anna-sorokin-aka-anna-delvey-is-getting-a-docuseries>
- Plummer, A. (1902). *The Cambridge bible for Schools and Publishers*. Cambridge University Press.
- Poole, M. (1990). *Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Hendrickson Publishers Marketing.
- Ross, A. P. (1997). *Creation & Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*. Ada: Baker Publishing Group.
- Rudd, S. (n.d.). *The River of Egypt (Wadi El Arish)*. Retrieved from Bible.Ca: <https://www.bible.ca/archeology/bible-archeology-exodus-kadesh-barnea-southern-border-judah-territory-river-of-egypt-wadi-el-arish-tharu-rhinocolu.htm>
- Sorenson, D. (2007). *Understanding the Bible*. Duluth: Northstar Ministries.
- Spence, H. D., & Exell, J. (1883). *The Pulpit Commentary*. McLean: MacDonald Publishing Company.
- Swindoll, C. (2014). *Abraham: One Nomad's Amazing Journey of Faith*. Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers.
- Tozer, A. (2006). *The Pursuit of God*. Camp Hill: WingSpread.
- Waalvord, J., & Zuck, R. B. (1983). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament Edition*. Wheaton: Victor Books.
- Walton, J. H., Matthews, V. H., & Chavalas, M. W. (2000). *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament, electronic ed*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.