



# Abraham - Introduction

*The Journey of Faith*

By Roy Knight

Though the life of Abraham extends only fourteen chapters in the book of Genesis, his great faith is an inspiration to us today. Even after 1,500 years, his name is referred to seventy-three times in the New Testament. Today, countless Bible students both young and old can recount some aspects of Abraham's life and service to God.

Following the tower of Babel, the genealogy of Shem, son of Noah, is given. Considering the long ages of the patriarchs, it is interesting to note that Noah had died just three years prior to Abraham's birth.

Genesis 11:28-32 records the direction of the family of Abraham prior to his calling in Chapter 12. It is said of Terah, Abraham's father, that he took his son Abram, his grandson Lot, and his daughter-in-law Sarai and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there (31). Terah was already on his way to Canaan prior to Abraham's call. In Genesis 15:7, God speaks to Abraham and says, *"I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it."* Either God called Abraham directly while he was in Ur or spoke to his father Terah setting him on the right direction before Abraham's official call.

Abraham's call came in Genesis 12:1-3. In this Abraham was commanded to depart from his country and family to a land that God would show him. In doing so God would bless him and that he would be a blessing to others. Verse three is a prophecy of the blessings that would come upon those who had faith through Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3:6-9 states, *"...just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham."*

Abraham's faith is seen immediately after God's call. Verse four states, *"So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him..."*. This act of faith reflects the faith that Abraham would have throughout his life culminating in the "sacrifice" of his son Isaac in chapter twenty-two.

Scholars have said of Abraham that one can trace Abraham's journey by his altar fires. Through worship and sacrifice, Abraham sought to keep his focus upon God who was guiding him through this strange land. Chapter 12:6-8 shows two such altars being built in Shechem near the terebinth tree in Moreh and in Bethel.

Though Abraham was a man of great faith, he was still a man. On two occasions, Genesis 12:10-20 and chapter 20, the first before Pharaoh and the other before Abimelech king of Gerar, Abraham lied to preserve his life claiming that Sarah was his sister instead of his wife. On both occasions God delivered Abraham and Sarah from their predicament. Could a God who called and directed them to this new land not have protected them and provided for their needs?

God had blessed Abraham as well as his nephew Lot with great possessions. Because of their great flocks and herds of animals, strife broke out between the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot. Again, reflecting his faith in God, Abraham allowed Lot to choose from all the land of Canaan to which direction he would go. Lot chose the well-watered plain of Jordan in which to reside. Though seeming to be wise, such would prove a costly mistake time and again. In chapter fourteen, Lot and his family are captured. Abraham with his 318 trained servants followed hard after them, defeated the kings and brought them back safely. Again, in chapter 19, Lot, though righteous in the eyes of the Lord (2 Peter 2:7) is found to be surrounded by grave immorality. So serious were their transgressions that the Lord destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain with fire and brimstone. Though once wealthy, Lot is only left with his two daughters and a few items that he could carry in his hands as he fled.

It is important to note how close the relationship that God had with Abraham. In chapter fifteen, God came to Abraham in a vision and repeated His promise of the land to his descendants. God at this time foretold of their sojourn and oppression in Egypt as well as their return to Canaan. In addition to the land promise, God also promised Abraham that he would have an heir that would come through his own body. Such too was an act of faith since Abraham and Sarah were past the age of childbearing. Yet it is said, "*And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness*" (Genesis 15:6).

Attempting to speed up God's promise of an heir, Sarai (later Sarah) gave her handmaid Hagar to Abraham to have a child. Such a plan on behalf of Abraham and Sarah would prove to be costly. Sarai would come to despise her handmaid and in time enmity would grow between Ishmael and Abraham's biological son Isaac as well as their descendants.

As a sign of a covenant with Abraham and his people, God establish circumcision to every male child that was eight days old and above. Such a sign would follow the descendants of Abraham until the days of the New Testament. The Jerusalem council

of Acts 15 focused very much on the issue of circumcision and its waning needs since the establishment of a new covenant between God and His people.

Romans 2:28-29 states, *"For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God."*

Abraham's ultimate test of faith came when God commanded Abraham to take his son Isaac to the mountain of Moriah and to offer him as a burnt offering to the Lord. Abraham unwavering in his faith, *"rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him"* (Genesis 22:3). Binding his son and placing him upon the altar, Abraham lifted his knife to sacrifice his son only to be stopped at the last moment by the Angel of the Lord. In reflection of Abraham's act of faith, the Hebrew writer said that Abraham was, *"concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense"* (Hebrews 11:19). The "sacrifice" of Isaac foreshadows the true sacrifice of Jesus that God the Father would make for the sins of the world.

Abraham's faith stands as a beacon to those who would seek to follow the Lord. The Apostle Paul in encouraging future believers wrote, *"Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all..."* (Romans 4:16).