

Introducing Abraham

One Life Lived Believing God!

Genesis 12-25

The World After the Flood

Within 100 years after the flood, Noah's descendents were defiant towards God and His commandments, and they built the Tower of Babel as a sign of rebellion!

These were the years of Nimrod and his wicked mother Semiramis. Nimrod was the antichrist of his day: a popular world hero who lived his own way, and built the world's first empire – the Babylonian Empire. He hated God, and even married his mother in order to upset God. But that was just the beginning! Sodom and Gomorrah were popping up everywhere as people lived according to their own conscience. Few were seeking God.

God Needed a Man – an Example, who He could use to show what a life of faith looked like, and through whom God could bring a Saviour!

The Birth of Abram

4,168 years ago (2166 BC) a baby boy named Abram (*exalted father*) was born in a large city called Ur of the Chaldeans near Babylon. For the next 75 years of his life he lived and worked in a large, growing metropolitan area near Babylon. Somewhere along the line, he married a beautiful woman named Sarai (*noble woman*). During all of those years neither he nor his wife knew God, but instead worshipped the gods of the Chaldeans.



The Pagan Culture of Ur of the Chaldeans

Abram's ancestors were idolaters and polytheists (worshippers of many gods). Joshua reminded the people, "*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*" (Joshua 24:2). Archaeology shows that both Ur in Lower Mesopotamia and Haran in Upper Mesopotamia area were centres of MOON WORSHIP (that's funny because 'Allah' is the name of the Moon god). Worship in Ur involved temples as well as ziggurats with small temples on the top. These temples were staffed by priests (who offered sacrifices), singers and musicians, as well as male and female prostitutes. Even way after Abraham's death, the Israelites were warned against the worship of the moon, sun, and stars (Deuteronomy 4:19; 17:2-5), yet this kind of worship continued for hundreds of years more under idolatrous kings in Israel and Judah (2 Kings 23:5-12).

God Calls to Abram to Follow Him

At seventy five years of age, God called to Abram to follow Him, leaving his family and home behind him, and trust God's plan for his life, no matter where it led him... and Abram obeyed. What if he had responded like most people do today? "I am fine with MY religion" "I'm too busy to worry about religion or God or the will of God"

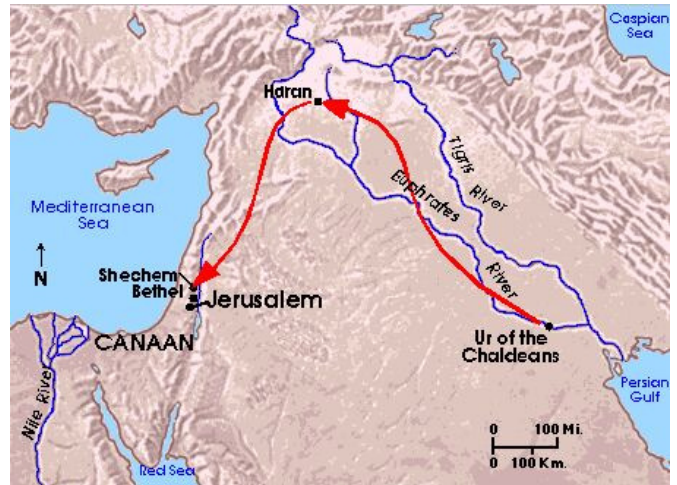
Yet Abram was different – he WAS tired of the lies of pagan ceremonies and empty traditions that left him the same. The difference with Abram was, he obeyed God. Didn't try and figure God out, and make sure God knew what he was doing but just believed God was right. It was so unusual, because NO ONE believed there was only ONE God. But to Abram, it made perfect sense!

So, by faith, Abram left Ur and travelled 500 miles northwest to a city called **Haran**. He doesn't know where he is going, but knows that when he gets there, God will tell him. Unfortunately, Abram did NOT fully obey God and leave his family behind him, but took along with him his father Terah, and his cousin, Lot and all his family. While in Haran, Terah dies (Gen. 11) and Abram will attempt to get back to finding God's will and direction again.

Back when Abram left Ur, he left all the prospects for wealth and success in his own culture and became a semi-nomadic shepherd, living in tents without any home or nationality. But it was during this desert time that God regularly revealed Himself, made promises to him, and entered

into several amazing covenants concerning Abram's future children and the land that they would inherit in the future.

It was at this time that Abram converted from all his pagan beliefs that he grew up with to a steadfast belief in the one true God of heaven and earth! His monotheism contrasts sharply with the polytheism of his forbearers (Joshua 24:2). He believed God to be the Lord of the universe (14:22; 24:3). The supreme judge of mankind (15:14; 18:25). The controller of nature (18:14; 19:24; 20:17). The One who is highly exalted (14:22). And the eternal God (21:33).



What was so unusual and outstanding about Abram was that whenever God spoke to Abram, he obeyed immediately in faith, just believing whatever God said!

In Genesis 15:18, God promised to Abram a plot of land that extend from the Nile River to the Euphrates! Abram believed that God would give it to him. God then also promised that Abram would have children in number greater than all the sand at the sea shore and more than all the stars of the heavens! And Abram just believed that God could and would do that as well! Abram's child-like belief in God's promises was counted by God as righteousness, and his faith shaped the rest of his life.

Ultimately these promises found their fulfilment not in Abram's son Isaac and the nation of Israel, but in Jesus the Messiah and in all those who are Abram's spiritual children because they too trust in Jehovah, the true God.

Abram's departure from Haran and Arrival in Canaan when he was 75 years old

The Lord commands Abram to leave Haran and travel to Canaan. On arriving there he travels as far as Shechem in the centre of the land and is promised that the whole of the land will be his. From there he went to a small village named Bethel (*the House of God*) where he build an altar.

Abram Backslides - Famine in the Promised Land

When a famine struck the Promised Land, Abram quickly forgets God's care and promises and instead takes his family out of Canaan and down into Egypt. He forgot to pray and God what he should do. So, there, out of the will of God, Abram lies to the Pharaoh about his wife being his sister in order to protect his own life, and as a result Pharaoh makes Abram very wealthy. When the lie is discovered, Pharaoh is furious and sends them away (Gen. 12). When Abram leaves Egypt, he is very wealthy, and he has gained many slaves and servants, one of which is a woman servant named **Hagar**, who will; end up hurting Abram for the next 4,500 years! When Abram leaves Egypt, he is very wealthy, and he has gained The only place for Abram to return to is Canaan, travelling north from the Negev desert in the south to as far as Bethel (where he worshipped God). There, Abram and Lot finally separate, Lot moved his flocks into the fertile valley of the Jordan River, while Abram remained in the hill country. After Lot's departure, the Lord renews his promise of the land, and Abram moves his to Hebron where he builds another altar to worship God (Gen. 13).



The Captivity of Lot

Lot, who has now moved into the wicked city of Sodom, is captured by the forces of four invading kings and carried off. Abram organises his household and some local allies into an army, and pursues and defeats the invading kings and rescues Lot. On returning back to the area of Jerusalem he is met by a unique man named Melchizedek, who was the King of Salem. Melchizedek blessed Abram "in the name of the Most High God." That was unusual. Abram accepted the

blessing and gave Melchizedek a tenth (*a tithe*) of the plunder. Shortly afterwards, the king of Sodom greets Abram, but Abram refuses to keep any of his property as a reward because of all the wickedness of that area (Gen. 14). The Lord reassures Abram through a special covenant ceremony in Genesis 15, that all the promises He has made will be fulfilled.

Impatience Breeds “Ishmaels”

Both Sarai and Abram got impatient waiting for this promised son that was supposed to be born to them. It had been ten years since God had made the promise to Abram, and Sarah “wasn’t getting any younger!” So Sarai suggests that Abram take her maidservant **Hagar** and go ahead and have children *by her*. Abram easily agrees and Hagar conceives! Sarai becomes jealous of Hagar and starts threatening her. Fleeing from Sarai’s mistreatment Hagar meets the angel of the Lord at a spring in the desert and he persuades her to return, promising that she would have a son named **Ishmael** (*God hears*) who like his father would become the father of a whole nation (Gen. 16).

Abram, is 86 years old when Ishmael is born. Interestingly, Scripture is silent about the events of Abram’s life for 13 years after the birth of Ishmael.

It will not be until Abram is 99 years old before the Lord speaks again to him. Because it was THEN that God was going to actually give Abram and Sarai their promised son! So the Lord appears to Abram and gave Abram the covenant of circumcision, and changed his name from **Abram** (*exalted father*) to **Abraham** (*father of many nations*). Sarai was now to be known as Sarah (*princess*) and would still bear Abraham a son and heir (Gen. 17), even though she was approaching 90 years of age!

The Coming Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

At 99 yrs old, the Lord and two angels (they all looked just like normal men) visit Abraham and tell him that Sarah would have a child within the next year. He also informed Abraham that Sodom and the other cities of the plain were about to be destroyed for their wickedness. Abraham pleaded for Lot’s sake and the Lord promised to spare Sodom if there were at least ten righteous men in the city (Gen. 18). The two angels go down to Sodom and are invited by Lot to sleep in his house. During the night the men of Sodom demand that Lot turn the angels over to them. The angels blind the attackers and take Lot, his wife and their two daughters out of the city just before the Lord destroyed it by fire from heaven. Lot evidently was the only righteous man in the city (Gen. 19). To this very day, the land of Sodom and Gomorrah are still uninhabitable!

Abraham briefly moved his family into the territory of Abimelech king of Gerar near the Philistines, again pretending Sarah was his sister. Abimelech takes Sarah as his wife but is prevented from committing adultery by a dream from God. He summons Abraham and after receiving an explanation from him for his conduct he gives him gifts of money, sheep and cattle and returns Sarah to him (Gen 20). Abraham still hasn’t learned to completely trust the Lord!

God has the Last Laugh with the Birth of Isaac

In Genesis 21:1-3 the Lord visited Sarah just as He had said he would, and Sarah conceived, and bore Abraham a son in his old age (100 years old). And Abraham called the name of his son, Isaac (it means *Laughter*). It’s quite funny knowing that the name Isaac came from God because GOD said that He would have the last laugh by giving them their promised son. So from that day on, Abraham and Sarah were constantly reminded that God always keeps His promises!

After the birth of Isaac, Sarah sent both Hagar and Ishmael away. It was the right thing to do, but it was a hard thing for Abraham to do, because he loved Ishmael. But the Lord promised Abraham that He would take care of them and make Ishmael into a great nation.

Abraham, the Friend of God

Abraham was never perfect, but was learning how to walk perfectly with God. Abraham failed, but would always try to obey God again. Abraham taught Sarah how to just believe God and both of them were greatly rewarded for their faith. Through this whole journey of twenty five years, Abraham became a friend of God! It was not something that just instantly happened, but it was a

relationship that grew and deepened with every struggle. In the end, Abraham would never again doubt God's will or His word, no matter what it might cost him!

God Tests Abraham

Tests naturally come, and a very big one came to Abraham one day from God! God tested Abraham by commanding him to sacrifice his young son on Mount Moriah, right next to Jerusalem. Abraham obeys. Without telling Sarah, Abraham gathered wood, a fire, his son Isaac, and some servants for a 3 day journey where he announces that he will be worshipping God! There, on the top of that small hill, Abraham built a sacrificial altar, and laid wood on top, and then placed his son, his only son Isaac on top of the wood, tying his hands and his feet. Abraham was probably a bit slow, but never hesitant through this effort. Amazingly, Isaac never flinches either except for the obvious question about where the lamb was that should be offered? Abraham's response is very prophetic "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering" (Gen 22:8). At the last minute, when Abraham was about to kill Isaac, the Lord intervened and stopped Abraham, and then provided his own sacrifice instead of Isaac. In response to Abraham's obedience and faith the Lord repeats his promise concerning the great number of Abraham's descendants (Gen. 22).



Death of Sarah when Abraham was 137 years old (he will live to be 175)

Sarah dies at the age of 127 years and Abraham buys a burial site for her in Canaan from Ephron the Hittite (Gen. 24).

Seeking a Wife for Isaac

Unwilling to allow his son to marry any Canaanite woman, Abraham sends one of his servants (Eliezar) back to his relatives in Northwest Mesopotamia. The Lord guided the servant to meet Rebecca, the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah who was the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor (Gen. 24).

Abraham Remarries

Abraham takes another wife: **Keturah**, who bears him six more sons: Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Dedan (Gen. 25). These children, except for the Midianites intermarry with the Ishmaelites and become enemies of Abraham's promised son, Isaac.

Isaac Marries Rebekah when Abraham is 140 years old

Birth of Jacob & Esau – Abraham is 160 years old

Abraham gets to see his two grandchildren Jacob and Esau born, and is alive for the first 15 years of their lives!

Death of Abraham at 175 years!

Abraham died at the age of 175 years and is buried in the cave of Machpelah (Gen. 25).

Final Summary of this One Life

Abraham is regarded as one of the most influential people in all of history! The world's three largest monotheistic religions found their beginnings with him, resulting in over 3 billion people in the modern world who refer to Abraham as the "father" of their religion. The three main monotheistic religions are: Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Of the three, two branches of his family, the Jews and the Muslims, still battle for Abraham's birthright.

Abraham is The Father of Israel. In Scripture Abraham is referred to consistently as the father of the people of Israel and they as inheritors of the promises made to him. If ever there were a people proud of their ancestry, it was the Jews. They took particular pride in being descendants of

Abraham, believing that this physical descent made them better than others. They even believed their ancestry assured them of eternal life in the kingdom of God. Many of the Jews even believed they possessed salvation solely on the basis of being Abraham's descendant, which was far from the truth!

Abraham is also The Father of Faith. Both Jesus and Paul were clear that mere physical descent from Abraham would never make anyone acceptable to God (John 8:39). The New Testament shows Abraham as an outstanding example of a man of faith (Heb. 11:8-11, 17; James 2:21-23). So, to be acceptable to God a person must simply live by the faith of Abraham (Rom. 4:1-17; Gal. 3:7-9), and they will be the children of faithful Abraham!

Chronology of Abraham's life

Event	Age	Scripture Ref.
Born in Ur	0	11:27, 32; 12:4
Departs from Haran	75	12:4
Sojourn in Egypt during famine		12:10-20
Rescue of Lot from Mesopotamian Kings		14:1-24
Marriage to Hagar	85	16:3
Birth of Ishmael	86	16:16
Reaffirmation of covenant	99	17:1
Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah	99	19:24
Sojourn in Gerar	99	20:1-18
Birth of Isaac	100	21:2; cf. 21:5
Offering of Isaac		22:1-19
Death of Sarah	137	23:1-2; cf. 17:17
Marriage of Isaac to Rebekah	140	25:20
Birth of Jacob and Esau	160	25:26
Death of Abraham	175	25:7