

A WALK THROUGH THE OLD TESTAMENT
TIME FRAME #2 – THE PATRIARCHS
2166 BC TO 1805BC
GENESIS 12-45

CLASS NOTES

MAJOR EVENTS

EVENT # 7 – THE CALLING OF ABRAHAM (GENESIS 12:1-9)

We are introduced to Abram and Sarai, whom we know better as Abraham and Sarah. We are not told the details of how Abraham knew God, but when the LORD calls Abraham to take on the long and dangerous journey from Ur to Canaan, Abraham responds with true faith. God will now begin to His work through His chosen people. This initial call includes the promise that his descendants will become a great nation who will possess the land God is directing Abraham to. Also, the promised Redeemer will come through these people. In this way, all the nations will be blessed.

EVENT # 9 – GOD MAKES A COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM (GENESIS 15)

God initiates a conversation with Abram with the intention of making an official Covenant that repeats the promises made in Genesis 12. Despite his struggle against doubts, Abraham ultimately responds with faith in God's ability to do the impossible. **Genesis 15:6** becomes the foundational verse for Saving Faith.

EVENT # 10 – HAGAR AND ISHMAEL (GENESIS 16)

As we read this story Abram and Sarai's tendency to lean on their own understanding and resources when under pressure is on full display. So is God's mercy as He speaks to Hagar, and His determination to give Abram and Sarai an heir through their own bodies and relationship.

EVENT # 11 – THE SIGN OF THE COVENANT AND A RENEWED PROMISE (GENESIS 17)

The key thing in this chapter is God giving Abram (and the Jews) the physical sign of circumcision. This continues to mark the men of Israel right up to our day.

EVENT # 12 – THE BIRTH OF ISAAC (GENESIS 21:1-21)

First God fulfills His promise of an heir for Abraham and Sarah through the birth of Isaac. Then He affirms Isaac's place as heir as Hagar and Ishmael leave. Note that once again God shows merciful provision for them.

EVENT #13 – ABRAHAM IS TESTED (GENESIS 22)

As Isaac approaches manhood, Abraham is given an 'exam' by God to measure how much his faith has grown over the years. Abraham shows a total trust that is seen in his not questioning God. Instead, he trusts that if necessary God will raise Isaac from the dead in order to fulfill His Covenant.

EVENT # 15 – BIRTH OF ESAU AND JACOB (GENESIS 25:19-28)

God's chosen family enters its third generation with the birth of these twins. Their future is revealed at birth, where God reveals that the younger son will be the heir of the Covenant, not the older one. Jacob's character of being a deceiver is also predicted.

EVENT # 16 – JACOB STEALS THE BLESSING (GENESIS 27)

The Blessing is officially stolen by Jacob.

EVENT # 17 – JACOB FLEES ESAU AND SECURES THE PROMISE

Jacob leaves home for his mother's homeland. In route, God affirms the Covenant with Jacob. Jacob's response is conditional – he withholds full surrender to God until the LORD brings him safely home.

EVENT # 18 – MARRIAGE AND THE BIRTH OF HIS SONS (GENESIS 29-30)

The future dysfunction in his household is planted as Jacob is outfoxed by his uncle Laban. The result is that he has not one but two wives and then two concubines. These sons will become the 12 tribes of Israel.

EVENT # 19 – JACOB RETURNS TO PALISTINE (GENESIS 31-33)

Jacob takes his family and household back home. Along the way He encounters God, and his faith in Him and the Covenant is made complete.

EVENTS # 20, 21, 22 – THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

While there is much to be learned through the life of Joseph, the key result of these chapters is that Jacob and his family are living in Egypt. This is where we will pick up the story in Exodus. With this, the Time Frame of The Patriarchs concludes.

KEY CHARACTER – ABRAHAM

SPIRITUAL LIFE LESSON – A GROWING FAITH

Abraham gives us one of the clearest pictures of a growing faith and walk with God found in the Bible. From a background of being raised in a Pagan religion, he hears from Yahweh, the one true God. While we are not told all of the details of how this encounter took place or what God did to get Abraham's attention, the result is Abraham places Saving Faith in Him. What follows is a journey of faith that grows deeper and deeper over time. A growing faith is not deep fried, but is simmered over time as each ingredient is added in its time.

ABRAHAM'S MOMENT OF SAVING FAITH – GENESIS 12:1-9

1. Abraham is raised in the Chaldean religion (**Joshua 24:2**). There are people who know Yahweh, one of whom is Job, a contemporary of Abraham. At some point The LORD reveals Himself to Abraham.
2. God calls for Abraham to take a clear step of faith by saying to leave his land and culture for a place He will reveal to Him. Abraham's decision to obey also was a step of personal faith in the God Who called him.

NOTE: *As one reads the Gospels, Jesus calls us to leave our old lives and choose to follow Him. We are called to place Saving Faith in Him, for we are called to a relationship, not just beliefs or a pattern of behavior. See **Matthew 4:18-22; Matthew 11:25-30; Luke 9:23.***

ABRAHAM'S KEY WEAKNESS IS REVEALED – GENESIS 12: 10-13:4

1. When under pressure, Abraham tended to try to control the situation by using his own understanding and resources. This tendency becomes a significant hurdle for him as his relationship with God grew over time.
2. However, Rather than judging Abram for his failures, God uses them to nurture Abram's faith. This growth comes out of Abram's heart for God. This pattern of nurturing and growth will repeat itself often in Abram's life, as it does in ours. (**Romans 2:4; Hebrews 12:3-11**)

3. We first see this in **Genesis 12:10-13:4**, as Abraham and Sarah respond to a famine by going to Egypt.
 - Faced with famine, Abram turns to Egypt rather than God. There is no record that God told him to leave the Land. This made sense from a human perspective, as Egypt was known as the ‘Breadbasket of the World’. Then faced with his fear of the Egyptians, Abram resorts to deceit, endangering Sarai.
 - God’s Mercy is shown. Instead of disciplining Abram or allowing Sarai to be taken into the harem God speaks to Pharaoh through plagues and she is released back to her husband.
 - Abraham repents by returning to Canaan, where he goes to Bethel and the altar he had built there. There is no mention that the famine has ended. However, now Abram calls on the name of Yahweh – The LORD. A valuable lesson on faith is learned.

NOTE: *We all have some tendency that will take us from a focus on God to a focus on our self. It is essential for us to be aware and honestly face these tendencies or we will limit our spiritual growth.*

ABRAHAM RESPONDS TO GOD’S WORDS WITH FAITH – GENESIS 15

1. Note that it is God who initiates this conversation with Abram. It is significant that from time to time God repeats His promise to Abram. God does the same to us through His Word.
2. Abraham asks two questions – “How will I have any descendants?” (**Vs. 2-3**) and “How will my descendants possess this land (**verses 7 and 8**). God responds in **verses 4 and 5** and **verses 12-16**.
3. Abram responds with faith (**Genesis 15:6**). This is one of the most significant verses in Scripture, giving the foundation for a relationship with God. Out of this faith would come righteous actions by Abram. However, his righteousness; his right standing and relationship with God is based on faith. This verse is quoted four times in the NT (**Romans 4:3,22; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23**)
4. God now seals this with an official Covenant – **verses 9-10; 17-20**
 - When two parties were to enter into a covenant, they would sacrifice animals, cut them in half and separate them, creating a path between them. The parties would then walk together down that path, finalizing the covenant promises. In this case, all of the promises were coming from God. So He alone walks between the sacrificed animals, repeating the promises He had made to Abram.

NOTE: *God speaks to us primarily through His Word. The Bible is the living breath of God intended to draw us to Him. While we may have questions, ultimately the Lord desires that we respond to Him with heart filled faith.*

ABRAHAM EXPERIENCES THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS TENDENCY TO REVERT TO SELF – GENESIS 16

1. Sarai now gives in to the same tendency as her husband – use her own reasoning and resources to meet a need in her life. In this case, to ‘help’ God fulfill His promise of an heir. **Verses 1-3**
 - She validates her actions by blaming God (**vs.2**). If it is God Who has withheld her having a child, it must be OK to pursue other means.
 - Sarai gives her servant Hagar to Abram as his wife. Any children Hagar had would be considered an heir. It would also raise Hagar from the status of servant to wife, though not an equal with Sarai.
2. Abram goes along with his wife’s plan and Hagar becomes pregnant. (**vs. 3-4**). The fact that he will name Hagar’s son (**vs. 15**) indicates that Abram did consider Hagar’s child his own and an heir.
3. The consequence of this failure are still with us today, as Ismael’s descendants are the present day Arabs.

NOTE: *When we sin, or fail to seek God for wisdom and make a bad decision, there will always be forgiveness when we repent. However, God may choose to allow some or all of the consequences to remain.*

ABRAHAM RECEIVES GREATER DETAILS AND UNDERSTANDING OF HIS COVENANT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD - GENESIS 17

1. God now appears to not only repeat the Covenant with Abram but to add vivid detail to it.
 - God reveals a new name for Himself – ‘God Almighty’ (El Shaddai) **vs. 1**
 - “Walk before me” (**vs. 1**) – This carries the idea of a close, ongoing intimacy with God.
 - “Be blameless” (**vs.1**) – This is a pattern of obedience in one’s life. When we do fail, we quickly confess, repent and reconnect with the path of obedience.
 - “That I may make my covenant between Me and you” (**vs. 2**) While this is certainly connected to the covenant made in Genesis 15, God adds Abram’s (and his descendants) part – They are to walk closely with God in obedience to God. As history will show, they will have a very up and down pattern of doing this.
 - God changes Abram’s name (exalted father) to Abraham (father of a multitude). **Vs. 5**
 - God changes Sarai’s name to Sarah (both mean princess). **Vs. 15**
 - God then gives Abraham the sign of circumcision. (**vs. 9-14**)

2. Abraham shows his faith and trust in God by obeying God's command to have every male circumcised. His faith might be hesitant, unsure and uneven, but was still foundational to his life.
(vs. 22-27)

NOTE: *As we mature in our faith over time, God enables us to have a deeper understanding of Himself and His Word. This not only deepens our relationship with Him, but brings greater responsibility to us as well.*

ABRAHAM REACHES FULL MATURITY IN HIS FAITH – GENESIS 22

1. As we come to Genesis 22, Isaac is probably a teenager, at the cusp of full adulthood.
2. "God tested Abraham" (vs.1).- It is important to that this is not temptation to sin but a test meant to measure Abraham's faith and how it has grown since Genesis 12. Duet. 8:2 – "to know what is in your heart."
3. At the center of this test is the tendency we have seen for Abraham to rely on his reasoning and resources when under pressure. In order to 'pass' this test, Abraham will have to overcome this tendency and trust God to work outside of the 'temporal box'. His response in this story reveals the growth that has taken place in his life and faith:
 - When God calls to Abraham, he replies, 'Here I am' (vs.1). These words communicate the heart of a servant responding to the voice of their master.
 - Abraham's obedience is immediate. **Verses 3-4**
 - 'We will come again to you' – Abraham trusts that Isaac will return with him. He believes that even if Isaac dies, God will raise him from the dead. **Hebrews 11:17-19**. Abraham has grown past his tendency to rely on himself, and now trust God fully, even when it does not seem to make sense.

NOTE: *Full maturity is not perfection, nor does it mean we no longer have growing to do. It means we have come to the place where our pattern of life is to follow the Great Commandment – To love God fully with our whole being. For us as Fully Devoted Followers of Christ, it means we have become Christ-like. One of the results will be loving others as Jesus has loved us. In this way, we, God's people are a blessing to all.*