

The life of Abraham (Genesis 12-25) – Part 1: Introduction

This is a series on the life of Abraham. We need to study Abraham, to better understand God's plan of salvation. We need to understand the roots of the church. Our country and places are very young; but God has been at work for thousands of years. Studying Abraham will help us to go a lot deeper.

1) Why study the life of Abraham?

- Abraham is one of Bible's the five major figures before Jesus Christ (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and David). There are 14 chapters about his life here in Genesis; and the whole book from Genesis 12 is about his family. The whole of the New Testament from Genesis 12 follows his family and God's promises to and dealings with them.
- The Bible tells us that Abraham was a hero of the faith. His life is given to us as an example to copy (Hebrews 11:8-19)
- Especially, Abraham's faith is an example for us. He is a model of true, saving faith (Romans 4:16-25). There is true faith and false faith!
- He is the father of the nation of Israel. They were at the centre of God's purposes for 2000 years, and Christ came from them. Abraham is also the father of other Biblical peoples – the Midianites and Edomites.
- The church begins with Abraham – with him, God first had a family on earth that was separate from the rest of the world. Out of that family came first Israel and then the church. He is our father (Galatians 3:7)!
- Through Abraham, we meet the mysterious Melchizedek, who has much to teach us about the Lord Jesus Christ (Hebrews 7).
- Without Abraham we cannot understand the New Testament very well. A lot of the arguments and disagreements in the early church were about Abraham, and how the church related to him (e.g. Matthew 3:9, Galatians 3:7).
- Abraham's God is our God. God taught Abraham many lessons – but for us to learn. The trials and tests through which Abraham learned many things are there to teach us also (1 Corinthians 10:11).
- Abraham knew about the Lord Jesus Christ – John 8:56.

2) What were the times Abraham lived in?

We need to know where Abraham is in the “big picture” of the Bible. The Old Testament's other major events are like this: Creation -> Fall -> The Flood -> The Exodus + Conquest -> The Exile + Return. The call of Abraham happened after the flood, around 400 years after. According to Genesis 11, Shem the son of Noah was still alive when Abraham was born. At that time, the nations of the world had been divided and scattered after the tower of Babel (Genesis 10). People were speaking different languages and had gone to different places after Babel. At that time there had not yet been any nation of Israel, no kingdom, no promised land. But there was an important prophecy spoken by Noah in Genesis 9:24-27. It seems like a strange prophecy, but it is very significant. He prophesied that Canaan the son of Ham would be cursed, and a servant of servants. It was the sons of Ham that Israel killed and destroyed when they entered the promised land. Abraham was a son of Shem, as were all the Israelites. Most of the Gentiles were sons of Japheth – and Noah prophesied that they would inherit the blessings of Shem; which, through the gospel of the Lord Jesus, we have.

3) What was Abraham's family? (Genesis 11:26-32)

Abraham's family tree – from Noah down to Abraham, Isaac & Jacob:

