

## The Bible From 20,000 Feet

### Part 3: Genesis 12-21

Tuesday Night Bible Study, June 10, 2008

#### --PART 3 OUTLINE:

- GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM
- ABRAHAM'S IMPERFECTIONS AND MISCELLANEOUS HISTORY
- SUPERNATURAL FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM
- THE FOUNDATION OF THE GOSPEL REVEALED IN GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

#### --GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

--Abram lived in a land of complete spiritual darkness where people worshiped multiple false gods.

--yet Genesis seems to indicate that while living in pagan lands Abram "walked with God" (Genesis 6:9) by faith in a similar way as Noah. (name changed from Abram to Abraham in Genesis 17)

--when God called Abram to leave Haran, Abram responded in faith to His voice:

--Genesis 12:4: "So Abram left, as the LORD had told him."

--Hebrews 11:8: "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going."

--Abraham may very well have known the links in God's plan of salvation that had already been set in place...

--the symbolic covering God provided for Adam and Eve's nakedness after the fall

--God's covenant to defeat Satan

--God's covenant to preserve the world after the Flood

--God's grace... "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." (Genesis 6:8)

--as Abram left Haran "not knowing where he was going" his future was invisible to the world... in the world's eyes he was going to a wilderness... but by faith he could see that God had prepared a future there for him and his descendants...

--"... [Abram] waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Hebrews 11:10)

--God's covenant with Abraham and two major links in God's plan of salvation...

--Genesis 12:1-6: "Now the LORD had said to Abram: 'Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. 2 **I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.** 3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And **in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**' 4 So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 5 Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan. 6 Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land."

--Genesis 13:14-17: The Lord said to Abraham, "Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are — northward, southward, eastward, and westward; 15 for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. 16 And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. 17 Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you."

#### --two major links in God's plan of salvation!

-12:2: "I will make you a great nation"... conception of Israel

-12:3b: "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" ... promise to bring the Messiah into the world through Israel to bless all nations by bringing salvation to all nations!

## **--ABRAHAM'S IMPERFECTIONS AND MISCELLANEOUS HISTORY**

--after Abram and his family arrived in Canaan there was a famine so they traveled south into Egypt where we see Abram's imperfections... (Genesis 12:10-20)

--Abram feared that Pharaoh would kill him and take his wife so he lied and said that his wife is his sister.

--then God sent a plague upon Pharaoh's household and somehow Pharaoh knew that it was because of Sarai being Abram's wife... which caused Pharaoh to give Sarai back to Abram and command them to leave Egypt.

--Abram and his family returned to Canaan and strife began to develop between the herdsmen of Lot's livestock (Lot was Abram's nephew) and the herdsmen of Abram's livestock (Genesis 13:7) so they separated and Lot settled east in the plains of Jordan.

--there is a war in Canaan, Lot is taken captive, and Abram goes to rescue Lot

--this episode gives us an insight into the size of Abram's clan made up of family and servants...

--Genesis 14:14: "Now when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained servants who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan."

--"servants who were born in his own house" could have been lifelong hired servants or purchased servants (Genesis 12:5), which was common in ancient times.

--Genesis 15:2 reveals that at this time Abram was "childless", that is, he didn't have any biological children.

--Genesis 13:2: "Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold."

--Abram was a wealthy patriarch of a large clan

--when Abraham (after name changed from Abram to Abraham) encountered Abimelech, the king of Gerar, he again feared that he would be killed and the king would take his wife so he lied again about her being his sister.

--again God miraculously intervened and delivered Abraham and his wife from that situation

--Sodom and Gomorrah, two "exceedingly wicked and sinful" cities (Genesis 13:13) that God destroyed (Genesis 19), provide a contrast in the life of Abraham to the nation that God planned to raise up through Abraham's descendants, a nation to be a reflection of God's righteous character.

--ironic turn in events where king Abimelech is now afraid of Abraham because of his formidable presence in the land due to God's blessing upon him...

--Abimelech seeks to make a peace treaty with Abraham.

--Genesis 21:22-24: "And it came to pass at that time that Abimelech and Phichol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying, 'God is with you in all that you do. 23 Now therefore, swear to me by God that you will not deal falsely with me, with my offspring, or with my posterity; but that according to the kindness that I have done to you, you will do to me and to the land in which you have dwelt.' 24 And Abraham said, 'I will swear.'"

## **--THE FOUNDATION OF THE GOSPEL REVEALED IN GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM**

--when God called Abram out of Haran He promised that He would make Abram into a great nation and out of him all the families of the earth would be blessed, but by ch. 15 Abram was perplexed about how God would fulfill His promise since he and Sarai were well past child-bearing age.

--Abram was 75 (Genesis 12:4) when he left Haran Sarai was 65 (10 years younger – Genesis 17:17)

--Genesis 15:1-6: "After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward." 2 But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" [*this person was probably the chief servant in Abram's household who by ancient tradition would have been heir if the Abram had no children*] 3 Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir! 4 And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your

own body shall be your heir." 5 Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." 6 **And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.**"

--Genesis 15:6: "And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness."

--in the book of Romans, the most complete analysis of the gospel in the Bible, the apostle Paul presents Genesis 15:6 as one of the foundational concepts of the gospel... "Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old [*by the time Isaac was born Abram was 100 years old, but in Genesis 15 he was under 90*] and that Sarah's womb was also dead. 20 **Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, 21 being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. 22 This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness."** 23 The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, 24 but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. 25 He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification." (Romans 4:19-25, NIV)

--Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'"

**--justification by faith - another major link in God's plan of salvation!**

--fulfillment of the covenant dependent on God alone...

--after this pivotal moment in Abram's life God formally ratified the covenant through a ceremony that was common in Abraham's day (though it seems bizarre today). (Genesis 15:8-21)

--animal sacrifices were cut in half and laid out in a row on the ground, then the two parties who were making a covenant would walk down the row together, signifying that fulfillment of the covenant was dependent on both of them.

--in the case of the covenant between Abram and God, after laying out the animal sacrifices in a row, Abram fell into a deep sleep and God appeared as burning flame that passed down the row alone, signifying that fulfillment of the covenant was dependent on God alone!

## **--SUPERNATURAL FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM**

--after God confirmed in Genesis 15 that Abram would have a child in his old age Sarai suggested that he bear a child through her maidservant Hagar, so he did and Hagar gave birth to Ishmael. (Genesis 16)

--fourteen years after Ishmael's birth when Abram was 99 years old God appeared to Abram, changed his name to Abraham, which means "father of many nations", and commanded him to institute circumcision as a sign of the covenant. (Genesis 17)

--Abraham is not only the physical "father of many nations" but in a sense the spiritual father of all who are saved throughout many nations...

--Romans 4:13-18: "It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. 14 For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, 15 because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression. 16 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. 17 As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were. 18 Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.'" (NKJV)

--"So shall your offspring be..." refers to what God told Abraham in Genesis 15:5: "He took him outside and said, 'Look up at the heavens and count the stars — if indeed you

can count them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.'" [*spiritual offspring in the application of Romans ch. 4*]

--in Abraham's life we see the faith that Paul describes in Romans; but for a time Abraham had the wrong idea about how God would fulfill the covenant, which resulted in a moment that seemed to be a lapse in his faith...

--by the time Abraham was 99 years old he thought that God would fulfill the covenant through Ishmael.

--Genesis 17:15-18: "Then God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. 16 And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her.' 17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, 'Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?' 18 And Abraham said to God, 'Oh, that Ishmael might live before You! 19 Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him. "

--after this moment we never again see Abraham doubt the promise of a child through Sarah, even when Sarah expresses doubt in chapter 18.

--in chapter 21, when Abraham was 100 years old, Isaac is finally born.

--eventually contention develops between Ishmael and Isaac which causes Hagar and Ishmael to leave Abraham's family to live on their own.

#### **--REVIEW OF KEY LINKS IN GODS PLAN OF SALVATION SEEN IN FRIST 21 CHAPTERS!**

--the symbolic covering God provided for Adam and Eve's nakedness after the fall

--God's covenant to defeat Satan

--God's covenant to preserve the world after the Flood

--God's grace... "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." (Genesis 6:8)

--the covenant to establish a nation through Abraham

--the covenant to bless all nations through Abraham's descendants (Christ entered through the nation of Israel to bless all nations with salvation)

--the ratification of God's covenant with Abraham signifying total dependence on God

--justification by faith (the very passage Paul uses in Romans)