

Abraham: Background and Overview

ABRAHAM A FOUNDATION STUDY

Commenting on the life of Abraham, the apostle Paul explains that these events were not “written for his sake alone... but for us also” **Rom 4:23-24** “who walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham” **4:12**. The life of Abraham therefore typifies God’s plan and purpose with all those children who accept His call.

Abraham is called **the friend of God**. We see in the life of Abraham a man who was willing to give his “only begotten son” and was thus able to enter into the very feelings of God Himself. When Abraham’s faith had been perfected upon offering up Isaac on the altar, he was called the friend on God **at that point: Jas 2:23**. God looked on a man who was doing exactly what He would do Himself. There is something very moving about that. Friendship is a wonderful thing when based on compatible actions and feelings. The Father/Son relationship is one of the most beautiful of all Scriptural concepts and is the foundation of God’s plan of salvation.

Types in Scripture are presented so we may enter into the feelings of the Lord Jesus Christ and his Father. These stories are given that we may better appreciate God’s plan of salvation **emotionally**. The study of Abraham should therefore move us **personally**. Abraham is mentioned over 70 times in the New Testament. God’s plan with the Jews and the land of Israel is based on events in the life of Abraham. Also God’s plan of salvation *by grace through faith*: **Eph 2:8-20**.

The principles lived in the life of Abraham are also found in the earliest chapters of **Genesis**. To see Abraham’s life in perspective we need to firstly return to these chapters.

GENESIS 3: GOD’S PURPOSE REVEALED IN EDEN

In **Gen 3:6** Eve was deceived by the serpent and gave in to the 3 lusts explained in **1 John 2**:

1 Jn 2v15-17: “Love not **the world**, neither the things in **the world**. If any man love **the world**, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in **the world**, the **lust of the flesh**, **lust of the eyes**, and the **pride of life**, is not of the Father, but is of **the world**. And **the world** passeth away, and the lust thereof, **but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever**.”

However, in **Genesis 3:15** there is a promise of a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who would completely overcome sin in its entirety:

“And I will put **enmity** (hatred) between thee (the serpent) and the woman, and between thy (the serpent’s) seed and her (the woman’s) seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”

Two opposing forces are revealed in this great struggle:

- 1. The Seed of the serpent**: Those ruled by the natural impulses of human nature, and
- 2. The Seed of the woman**: those transformed by God’s Word.

The seed of the woman was ultimately fulfilled in Christ - and by extension is a term which applies to all those who are “**in Christ**” by faith and baptism. These have **faith in God’s Word: Psalms 119:97-105; Lk 4:4,8,10; Gal 3:6-9,26; Heb 11:1-6,13; 1 Jn 1:1; 5:4**.

The seed of the serpent was fulfilled through the ages in faithless individuals who **challenge God’s Word: Gen 3:1**. They also **deny its truth: Gen 3:4; Lk 3:7; Jn 7:7; Rom 8:7**. Throughout history, the seed of the serpent has been the overwhelming majority. For the seed of the woman it has been a struggle for survival.

GENESIS 4: CAIN AND ABEL

In **Gen 4:6-8** Cain murders his brother **Abel**. This is a **type** of what was to unfold through history between these 2 powers. Abel, like Abraham after him, understood the principle of forgiveness - that a **covering** was required, and that a **Lamb** would be provided. This is Christ, the woman’s seed, who would crush the serpent’s head. When Cain murdered Abel he demonstrated this **enmity** between the 2 seeds. An interesting exposition of this is in **1 Jn 3:12-13**.

THE SEED OF THE SERPENT IN A KINGDOM

Serpent enmity has also been represented by many **systems** of rule through the ages. These are described as the **Kingdom of Men: Dan 4:17,25,32; 5:21**. In **Gen 10:8-10** and **11:1-6** the seed of the serpent is organised into a political system based on the thinking of the flesh. There are many examples of this. For instance **Sodom** is used as a symbol of false Christianity in **Jude 3-7** and **2 Pet 2:1-9**. That system became **Babylon the Great**. Babylon’s **religious power** is “*that great city called Sodom and Egypt*”: **Rev 11:8**. Meanwhile the northern invasion of **Genesis 14** typifies the Russian invasion of Israel, the **military power** of latter-day Babylon.

Abraham however was **called out from Babylon: Gen 12:1; Heb 11:8-16**. The events of **Genesis 12** are in direct contrast to the events of **Genesis 10-11**. Here we see **2 cities**. One is of men, the other is of God. Jesus himself said that “salvation is of the Jews”: **Jn 4:22**. The gospel is **the hope of Israel: Acts 28:20**. Consequently, Jews became the target for mankind’s opposition to God’s will.

GENESIS 10: BABYLON – THE KINGDOM OF MEN

The original apostasy is first identified in **Genesis 10**. The false way was initiated in the beginning when Cush begat Nimrod and he “*began to be a mighty one in the earth... a mighty hunter... and the beginning of his kingdom was Babel...*” **Gen 10:8-10**

In the days of Noah, men corrupted themselves before God and the world was swept away by the flood. After the world was cleansed by floodwaters, two religious centres emerged, **Babel (Babylon)** and **Jerusalem (Zion)**. True worship is introduced in **Genesis 14** when Melchizedec, king of Salem (**Jerusalem**), priest of the Most High God, brings **bread and wine** and blesses Abram. Here in the promised land is revealed in a preliminary sense **the city of God**, upon which Abraham’s hopes were centred. **Heb 11:10** “*He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God*”. Here God reveals a city of righteousness and peace, symbolised in the names “Melchizedec” and “Salem”. It was **Jerusalem (Moriah)** where Abraham took his beloved son Isaac for an offering: **Gen 22**.

GENESIS 11:1-9 THE TOWER OF BABEL

The world is not content with God’s city. It strives for a city based on **human strength and achievement** (liberty, equality and fraternity):

Gen 11:4-6 Let **us** build **us** a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let **us** make **us** a name, **lest we be scattered** abroad upon the face of the whole earth... And the LORD said, Behold, **the people is one** and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now **nothing will be restrained from them** which they have imagined to do.

These are foundation principles of the Kingdom of Men. It is a spirit motivated by flesh - **human rebellion and revolution: Prov 14:30; 27:4; 1 Cor 3:3; Gal 5:15,21,26**. It is **demoniacal: Rev 16:13; Jas 3:15-16**. It is like **Legion: Lk 8:30**. The world is like this today.



Entire nations today are on the brink of collapse due to civil war, bankruptcy and revolution. Much of the uprising is caused by **greed** and **corruption** in high places. This has now spread to nations in the Middle East! These events are instrumental in gathering the nations to Armageddon: **Rev 16:13-16**. This is the original spirit of Babylon.

So from this early time in **Genesis** there were **2 rival cities, 2 ways** and **2 names**. These continue through Scripture into **Revelation**, ending with the violent but scintillating climax in **Rev 16-19**. Christ and the Saints bring final judgment on Babylon the Great in its military and religious forms. **The final 3 chapters of the Bible** then summarise the grand conclusion to the 3 great covenants:

THE GLORIOUS FULFILLMENT IN REVELATION

Rev 20 presents the fulfilment of the **Promise in Eden**, which includes God crushing a final rebellion at the end of the millennium.

Rev 21 reveals the fulfilment of the **Promises to Abraham** with a vision of **the New Jerusalem (Rev 21)**. One nation (Israel) embraces all. This is the final destiny of all citizens of Zion.

Rev 22 outlines the fulfilment of the **Promises to David**. Here is a glorious vision of Christ and the Saints in Mount Zion.

JOHN 18-19: CHRIST’S KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD

True believers therefore take no part in politics, political elections or war. God rules in the Kingdom of Men and gives it to who He chooses: **Dan 4:17,25,32;5:21**. These principles are throughout all Scripture. Jesus rejected political power, rather preaching **a future Kingdom**:

Jesus said to Pilate, “My kingdom is **not of this world**: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight” **Jn 18:36**. “You would have no power over me if it were not **given to you** from above” **Jn 19:10** cp. **Dan 8:24**.

In **1 Sam 8**, Israel rebelled against God by asking for a king to rule over them. God gave them what they wanted and they paid a heavy price. True believers are **citizens of Zion: Eph 2:19; Phil 3:20**. Politics is contrary to the spirit of Christ: **Jn 6:15; 18:11; 1 Pet 2: 21-23; 3:14; 2 Cor 10:3**. Abraham’s life teaches us that **our hope is future and not of this present world**. The saints bring judgment on nations at Armageddon, but this will be entirely at God’s command.

GENESIS 18:17-19: GOD CHOSE ABRAHAM FOR A REASON

God knew Abraham would teach his children these principles. He would also learn that his wife Sarah was **intimately connected** with God’s promises: **Gen 17:15-16**. Sarah was an extraordinary woman of faith and God emphasises the importance of a Godly family life:

“I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment.” **18:19**

Children are Yahweh’s heritage and must be taught constantly, particularly by example: **Deut 6:4-9; Prov 2:1-9; Psalms 127:3; Mt 18:3-5; 1 Tim 3:2-5,11-12; Jas 2:20-23**. Abraham’s life is a parable of our lives. There are always trials and difficulties, but God’s promises stand firm. Let us therefore look to **the Lord Jesus Christ**, who is **the centre** of all these promises: **Heb 11:39-12:3**. Jesus says: “**If a man loves me, he will keep my words**”: **Jn 14:23**.