

Pray

Today is Father's day!

And, today, in Genesis we finally get to Abraham. But, he doesn't start out as Abraham.

We meet him as the man named "Abram" which is a name that means "exalted Father."

So, this is a good message for Father's day.

But, it is strange that he has that name... because he has no children.

He's 75 years old at the beginning of chapter 12 and "Mr. Exalted Father" has no children.

This is certainly provocative. You would think that someone named "Exalted Father" would have many sons... 7 sons!?

You know the song...

Father Abraham had seven sons And seven sons had Father Abraham

And they never laughed And they never cried

All they did was go like this...

Ridiculous! His sons didn't go like this... He had no sons at all... except for God's miraculous promise.

Which is the point of the whole story of Abraham in the Bible... a story that begins as the story of Abram.

It is a story of the promise of God, how the promise works, what it demands, and the God who makes promises.

Right away, at the beginning of the story of Abram we learn a lesson.

God Makes a Promise to Abram: God's Blessing requires obedience.

First, where are we in the Bible story?

Remember that great story of God working in and with His people... a story that begins in a garden, perfect, full of blessing.

The story ends in a city that God builds for His people gathered from every nation tribe and tongue on earth.

A city filled with the perfect presence of God, in a beautiful new heavens and new earth.

But, in between those two events things are not so nice.

Right away in the garden God's people, Adam and Eve, disobey Him and invite God's curse and death into the world.

Then their son, the first human being born into this world turns out to be a God-ignoring murderer.

This sort of sin spreads to the whole earth and God decides to destroy people in a flood, all except for one man and his family.

Noah survives the flood because God showed him His grace.

But, even then, sin is not eradicated and it spreads once again...

Rather than obeying God and filling the earth...

the descendants of Noah get together to build a city and make a name for themselves.

It doesn't go well. The name they make is the name Babylon... the name will come to have a terrible future.

And, God comes down and scatters them anyway... by confusing their languages.

So, now we have sinful people going all over the world speaking different languages... which explains a lot.

So, we have covered approximately 2000 years in the first 11 chapters of the Bible.

The next thing that needs to be explained in our story is just how Abram shows up.

I. Abram's Linage Gen. 11:10-26

10:1 begins a new section, a new step in the story... "Here's what comes from Shem..."

There are a few interesting observations from this genealogy.

It is very linear. We are getting to Abram as fast as possible.

People are living shorter lives than they have before. Sin is working its destruction.

And, maybe this is a display of the judgment and mercy of God.

If we do the math we will discover that Abraham was born 292 years after the flood.

Which means that Noah is still living and is 892 years old.

So that, when Noah dies Abram is still in Ur or Haran and is 58 years old.

Which means that Abram almost certainly knew Noah.

So, think about it... how difficult would it have been for this early history to be passed on accurately?

Adam knew Methuselah (they were around together for over 200 years).

Methuselah knew Noah (his grandson).

And Noah knew Abraham.

II. Abram's Family Gen. 11:27-32

Beginning in 11:27 we are learning what came out of Terah and what happens with them. It will be the story of a family.

And, it will be the story of Abram's family... he is one of three brothers, Abram, Nahor, and Haran

We read here about Haran's three children: Lot, Milcah, and Iscah

Nahor marries Milcah, the daughter of his brother... this probably happened frequently then. It was fine.

Nahor will be Rebekah's grandpa and Rachel and Leah's great-grandpa. Now we are reading about a family.

Abram marries Sarai = princess, but we read that she is barren, she has no child. It's repeated. It's important.

And, we are meant to instantly wonder... How is it that "Exalted Father" and his "Princess" have no child?

vs. 31 Movement.

Terah and son Abraham and Sarai... and Lot (Abram's nephew) move from Ur (where the family is from) to the land of Canaan.

We don't know why they are going. But, they don't get there.

They get to Haran (named after Abram's brother?) and settle there. We don't know why. Maybe they find family.

And, that is where Abram's father, Terah, will live out his days and die.

But, 60 years before Terah dies, something extraordinary happens to Abram.
God visits him. And, God changes everything about Abram.
Let us see how it begins.

III. Abram's God Gen. 12:1-3

We find here three huge lessons about God and how He deals with people... with Abraham, with us.

1. God picks Abraham out. Abraham was not seeking God that we know of. He did not ask to be spoken to.

We find God doing this over and over in the Bible. It is God's way.

With Abraham, with Jacob, with Moses, with Samuel, with David, with the prophets... like Jeremiah, Jonah.

Think about Zechariah and then John the Baptist. Think about Mary and Joseph.

Think about how Jesus called His disciples. Think about Saul who became Paul... his conversion on the road to Damascus.

We do not see people seeking out God, we see God seeking out people and telling them what they are to do.

Think about yourself. How was it that God got your attention.

He might be doing that right now in your life.

We go along, minding our own business, or maybe in other people's business... we are doing what we want.

And, something happens! God is getting our attention. Maybe a Bible verse we read or notice on a billboard.

Augustine: One day, torn by violent struggles, he fled to a garden to attempt to find calm.

While in the garden he heard a voice say, "Take up and read. Take up and read."

Augustine tells us that he picked up "the volume of the Apostle."

I seized it and opened it, and in silence I read the first passage on which my eyes fell.

"Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof." I had no wish to read more and no need to do so.

For in an instant, as I came to the end of the sentence,

it was as though the light of faith flooded into my heart and all the darkness of doubt was dispelled.

Maybe it is a preacher or a sermon.

Wilson Baria, a textile businessman in India had slipped into the back of a church service out of curiosity.

Preacher, "There is a businessman here who needs to leave his profession and become a preacher to plant churches."

"You!" He pointed right at Wilson. One more thing. The preacher was blind.

Maybe God got a hold of you when you turned on the radio and there was a song. You knew God was singing right to you.

God calls people. God picks us out. We respond. We'd better respond.

2. God demands obedience. (vs. 1) This is a command. It is not a suggestion.

People love to talk about faith. We love the word, faith. It is a good word, a happy positive word.

But, obedience? No, we're not so excited about that word. It sounds burdensome, heavy, difficult. Obey. Yuck.

But that is so wrong. There is no faith without obedience. Obedience is faith in action and faith has to be in action.

Faith is an active word. You cannot have passive faith.

Jesus came and said to Peter and Andrew, "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men." They did! That's faith.

How would it have been if they'd said, "Oh we believe that is a good idea. But, for now we'll stay here?"

Just as Jesus told his disciples to leave their nets, God tells Abram to leave his relatives.

God's commands usually involve leaving something... friends, alcohol, money, job, country... you'll know.

When God shows up and calls it is not comfortable, not safe.

This is why Jesus says, "If you love Me you will obey My commandments."

This is no conflict with grace. This is grace.

A commandment from the God who made you telling you what to do IS GRACE!!!

Have you ever prayed, "God, just tell me what to do. Give me guidance." YES! and, when He does just that. It's good.

3. God promises blessing. In the Bible commands are always connected to blessing from God. Always.

Sometimes it is not explicit, not spelled out. Here it is. In fact these promises set the agenda for the rest of the Bible.

There are 7 promises... and as God speaks to Abraham as we move along in Genesis, they become increasingly clear:

1. Land = this is where we get the idea of a promised land. It was first promised to Abraham.

2. People... "a great nation" = which will be hard for Abraham to understand and believe... he has no child.

Eventually God will make of the children of Abraham a "people for His own possession."

3. Blessing = success, possessions, wealth... but more than that, the presence of God.

Ultimately it will take Jesus and His beatitudes to really understand what this looks like.

4. A name... "make your name great" like Gen. 11:4, but this is God's doing and that makes all the difference.

God says, "He who honors me I will honor." He wants to honor His people. We will share His glory.

5. Blessing to others = this is always the nature of God's blessings. They overflow.

This is where the prosperity gospel gets it wrong. God's blessings are for overflowing, not keeping.

6. Protection = vs. 3 Bless... Curse... when God is on your side you have nothing to fear.

At times we may wonder where God is, what He's doing. Abraham will. But He is always faithful.

7. Blessing to all the earth = There will be hints of this to Israel... Rahab, Ruth... they believe and are included...

Ultimately this promise will be realized in Jesus and His ambassadors who take His message to the ends of the earth.

A command that includes a 7-fold blessing. This is the beginning of God's plan of salvation.