

Abraham

Read Genesis 12-15

The Bible is one continuous story that leads hearers directly to Jesus. Genesis 1-11 provides the environmental backdrop of the world's origins through four foundational events: Creation, Fall, Flood, and Nations. These events are not fictional symbols; they claim to be factual accounts. Serious Bible students must accept them as such.

Talking Points

- God said to Abraham, "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives, and from your father's house to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, and so you shall be a blessing; I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you, all the families of the earth will be blessed."
- Another people, the Canaanites, occupied the land that God would give Abraham and his descendants.
- When Abraham and Sarah entered the land, they were already old and without any children.
- God showed Abraham the stars in the sky. He said, "If you can count them, then you can count your descendants." The Bible says Abraham believed God, and God counted Abraham's faith as righteousness.
- Sarah and Abraham conspired to help God solve the problem of having no descendants. Their plan involved Hagar, Sarah's handmaiden. Abraham and Hagar had sex together, and their union produced Ishmael. Ishmael was not the son that God intended for the seed of the woman to pass through.
- When Abraham was 99, the Lord told the elderly couple they would have a child within the year. Isaac was born right on schedule.
- "Isaac" means laughter.

Seed of the Woman

The grand story of the Bible begins in heaven, where Jesus eternally existed with His Father and the Holy Spirit. John 1:1-5 reveals that Jesus is the Word of God, the agent of Creation. War had broken out on earth between the Creator and one-third of the created heavenly host, led by Satan. In the Garden of Eden, God spoke to Satan, promising as the "seed of the woman" to one day destroy Satan's power over this world forever.

Genesis 12-50 shifts Bible hearers' focus from the world's nations to the beginning of a specific family group, one man's descendants. His name is Abraham.

At the Tower of Babel, God dispersed mankind according to language groupings. Looking closely at Abraham's family tree (See Genesis 10:1-32) reveals that Shem lived over 500 years after the global flood. Abraham was born about 300 years after the flood. That means Shem witnessed God's destruction of everything and everyone outside the

ark. Shem made sure all of his descendants could tell his story. Some believed. Most didn't. Terah's father, along with almost everyone else, served other gods. He did not believe it.

He Stood Alone

In his time, Abraham stood firmly as a contrarian with a radically different worldview. Abraham dared to speak and act alone in a sea of sinful idolaters because he believed in the One God. Abraham's faith put him at odds with his family, friends, and countrymen.

In the same way, God used Noah to establish a new world after the flood, Abraham would provide a new nation's seed. The people God would produce out of Abraham and Sarah would serve Him alone on a land dedicated to Him alone. Abraham and Sarah's descendants were established to provide an example to the world of a people loving and serving the Lord alone.

A Real Man

As you read through the Bible, you will see that the stories of its characters ring true. They were real people who wrestled with many of the same issues plaguing the modern world. Abraham was a sinner, no different than you. He told lies. He used his wife to protect himself, not once but twice. Even though God had proven Himself trustworthy time after time, Abraham doubted Him occasionally. Still, deep down inside, Abraham believed God when He said:

*"Go forth from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father's house, to the land which I will show you;
And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
And so you shall be a blessing;
And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you, I will curse.
And in you, all the families of the earth will be blessed." - Genesis 12:1-3*

Abraham's life stood in stark contrast to those around him. They saw evidence that God loved Abraham, protected him, and provided for his welfare. Abraham's life left a legacy that we are discussing to this day.

There were two thousand years of history between Abraham and Jesus. God has done what He promised Abraham. There have been many blessings:

- God gave the Bible to the world through Abraham and Sarah's descendants.

- In Jesus, the "seed of the woman" entered the world as the greater Son of Abraham. Jesus defeated Satan and the gods of this world through His death, burial, and resurrection from the dead.
- Like Abraham, by faith, anyone who believes can now have a restored relationship with their Creator forever.

The book of James was written by one of Jesus' brothers. During Jesus' life, James did not believe as Abraham did. Abraham trusted God, even when things looked impossible. But, something happened that changed James from the inside out. He wrote: "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God (James 2:23).

Bible Conversations & Questions

- God initiated a covenant with Abraham. A covenant is a legal agreement between two parties.
- A conditional covenant requires both parties to act in specific ways for the contract to remain in force. Conditional covenants contain language similar to "if/then." If either party fails in their legal obligations, the other party is released from the covenant.
- An unconditional covenant requires action from only one party. Unconditional covenants contain language similar to "I will."
- Sarah offered Hagar to Abraham. Did their collusion together produce their desired results? Explain.
- What is the identity of the "man" who told Abraham and Sarah that Isaac would be born within the year?