



Overview

ABRAHAM MUST MAKE MANY DECISIONS FOR GOD

Abraham's story is told in Genesis 11-25. He is also mentioned in Exodus 2:24; Acts 7:2-8; Romans 4; Galatians 3; Hebrews 2, 6, 7, 11.

We all know that there are consequences to any action we take. What we do can set into motion a series of events that may continue long after we're gone.

Unfortunately, when we are making a decision many think only of the immediate consequences. These are often misleading because they are short-lived.

Abraham had a choice to make. His decision was between setting out with his family and belongings for parts unknown or staying right where he was.

He had to decide between the security of what he already had and the uncertainty of traveling under God's direction.

All he had to go on was God's promise to guide and bless him.

Abraham could hardly have been expected to visualize how much of the future was resting on his decision of whether to go or stay, but his obedience affected the history of the world.

His decision to follow God set into motion the development of the nation that God would eventually use as his own when he visited earth himself

ABRAHAM

Also called Abram, the son of Terah

Genesis 11:26-27

When Terah was 70 years old, he became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

This is the history of Terah's family. Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran had a son named Lot.

Abram marries Sarah

Genesis 11:29

Meanwhile, Abram married Sarai, and his brother Nahor married Milcah, the daughter of their brother Haran. (Milcah had a sister named Iscah.)

Abram lives in Ur, but moves to Haran.

Genesis 11:21

After the birth of Serug, Reu lived another 207 years and had other sons and daughters.

Neh. 9:7

"You are the Lord God, who chose Abram and brought him from Ur of the Chaldeans and renamed him Abraham.

Acts 7:4

So Abraham left the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran until his father died. Then God brought him here to the land where you now live.

Abram lives in Canaan.

Genesis 12:4-6

So Abram departed as the Lord had instructed him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. [5] He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all his wealth—his livestock and all the people who had joined his household at Haran—and finally arrived in Canaan. [6] Traveling through Canaan, they came to a place near Shechem and set up camp beside the oak at Moreh. At that time, the area was inhabited by Canaanites.

Divine call of Abram

Genesis 12:1-3

Then the Lord told Abram, "Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you.

I will cause you to become the father of a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and I will make you a blessing to others.

I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you."

God lead Abraham to Canaan

Joshua 24:3

But I took your ancestor Abraham from the land beyond the Euphrates and led him into the land of Canaan. I gave him many descendants through his son Isaac.

Abraham becomes a great nation.

Isaiah 51:2

Yes, think about your ancestors Abraham and Sarah, from whom you came. Abraham was alone when I called him. But when I blessed him, he became a great nation.”

Stephen gives his account.

Acts 7:2-3

This was Stephen's reply: "Brothers and honorable fathers, listen to me. Our glorious God appeared to our ancestor Abraham in Mesopotamia before he moved to Haran.

God told him, 'Leave your native land and your relatives, and come to the land that I will show you.'

Abraham leaves without knowing where he is going.

Hebrews 11:8

It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going.

Canaan given to Abram

Genesis 15:7-21

Then the Lord told him, "I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land."

But Abram replied, "O Sovereign Lord, how can I be sure that you will give it to me?"

Then the Lord told him, "Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon."

Abram took all these and killed them. He cut each one down the middle and laid the halves side by side. He did not, however, divide the birds in half.

Some vultures came down to eat the carcasses, but Abram chased them away. That evening, as the sun was going down, Abram fell into a deep sleep. He saw a terrifying vision of darkness and horror.

Then the Lord told Abram, "You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, and they will be oppressed as slaves for four hundred years.

But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and in the end they will come away with great wealth. (But you will die in peace, at a ripe old age.)

After four generations your descendants will return here to this land, when the sin of the Amorites has run its course."

As the sun went down and it became dark, Abram saw a smoking firepot and a flaming torch pass between the halves of the carcasses.

So the Lord made a covenant with Abram that day and said, "I have given this land to your descendants, all the way from the border of Egypt to the great Euphrates River—the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites."

Abram lives in Bethel

Genesis 12:8

After that, Abram traveled southward and set up camp in the hill country between Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar and worshiped the Lord.

Abram sojourns in Egypt

Genesis 12:10-20

At that time there was a severe famine in the land, so Abram went down to Egypt to wait it out. As he was approaching the borders of Egypt, Abram said to Sarai, "You are a very beautiful woman.

When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife. Let's kill him; then we can have her!' But if you say you are my sister, then the Egyptians will treat me well because of their interest in you, and they will spare my life."

And sure enough, when they arrived in Egypt, everyone spoke of her beauty.

When the palace officials saw her, they sang her praises to their king, the pharaoh, and she was taken into his harem. Then Pharaoh gave Abram many gifts because of her—sheep, cattle, donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.

But the Lord sent a terrible plague upon Pharaoh's household because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

So Pharaoh called for Abram and accused him sharply. "What is this you have done to me?" he demanded. "Why didn't you tell me she was your wife?"

Why were you willing to let me marry her, saying she was your sister? Here is your wife! Take her and be gone!" Pharaoh then sent them out of the country under armed escort—Abram and his wife, with all their household and belongings.

A famine strikes the land.

Genesis 26:1

Now a severe famine struck the land, as had happened before in Abraham's time. So Isaac moved to Gerar, where Abimelech, king of the Philistines, lived.

Deferring to Lot, Abram chooses Hebron

Genesis 13:1-18

So they left Egypt and traveled north into the Negev—Abram with his wife and Lot and all that they owned, for Abram was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold.

Then they continued traveling by stages toward Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where they had camped before. This was the place where Abram had built the altar, and there he again worshiped the Lord.

Now Lot, who was traveling with Abram, was also very wealthy with sheep, cattle, and many tents. But the land could not support both Abram and Lot with all their flocks and herds living so close together.

There were too many animals for the available pastureland. So an argument broke out between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot. At that time Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land.

Then Abram talked it over with Lot. "This arguing between our herdsmen has got to stop," he said. "After all, we are close relatives!

I'll tell you what we'll do. Take your choice of any section of the land you want, and we will separate. If you want that area over there, then I'll stay here. If you want to stay in this area, then I'll move on to another place."

Lot took a long look at the fertile plains of the Jordan Valley in the direction of Zoar. The whole area was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the Lord or the beautiful land of Egypt. (This was before the Lord had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.)

Lot chose that land for himself—the Jordan Valley to the east of them. He went there with his flocks and servants and parted company with his uncle Abram. [12]

So while Abram stayed in the land of Canaan, Lot moved his tents to a place near Sodom, among the cities of the plain.

The people of this area were unusually wicked and sinned greatly against the Lord.

After Lot was gone, the Lord said to Abram, "Look as far as you can see in every direction. I am going to give all this land to you and your offspring as a permanent possession.

And I am going to give you so many descendants that, like dust, they cannot be counted! Take a walk in every direction and explore the new possessions I am giving you."

Then Abram moved his camp to the oak grove owned by Mamre, which is at Hebron. There he built an altar to the Lord.

Abram lives in Gerar

Genesis 21:22-34

About this time, Abimelech came with Phicol, his army commander, to visit Abraham. "It is clear that God helps you in everything you do," Abimelech said.

"Swear to me in God's name that you won't deceive me, my children, or my grandchildren. I have been loyal to you, so now swear that you will be loyal to me and to this country in which you are living."

Abraham replied, "All right, I swear to it!" Then Abraham complained to Abimelech about a well that Abimelech's servants had taken violently from Abraham's servants.

"This is the first I've heard of it," Abimelech said. "And I have no idea who is responsible. Why didn't you say something about this before?" Then Abraham gave sheep and oxen to Abimelech, and they made a treaty.

But when Abraham took seven additional ewe lambs and set them off by themselves,

Abimelech asked, "Why are you doing that?"

Abraham replied, "They are my gift to you as a public confirmation that I dug this well." So ever since, that place has been known as Beersheba—"well of the oath"—because that was where they had sworn an oath.

After making their covenant, Abimelech left with Phicol, the commander of his army, and they returned home to the land of the Philistines.

Then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and he worshiped the Lord, the Eternal God, at that place. And Abraham lived in Philistine country for a long time.

Abram defeats Chedorlaomer

Genesis 14:5-24

One year later, Kedorlaomer and his allies arrived. They conquered the Rephaites in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzites in Ham, the Emites in the plain of Kiriathaim, and the Horites in Mount Seir, as far as El-paran at the edge of the wilderness. Then they swung around to En-mishpat (now called Kadesh) and destroyed the Amalekites, and also the Amorites living in Hazazon-tamar.

But now the army of the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela (now called Zoar) prepared for battle in the valley of the Dead Sea against King Kedorlaomer of Elam and the kings of Goiim, Babylonia, and Ellasar—four kings against five.

As it happened, the valley was filled with tar pits. And as the army of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some slipped into the tar pits, while the rest escaped into the mountains. The victorious invaders then plundered Sodom and Gomorrah and began their long journey home, taking all the wealth and food with them.

They also captured Lot—Abram's nephew who lived in Sodom—and took everything he owned.

One of the men who escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, who was camped at the oak grove belonging to Mamre the Amorite. Mamre and his relatives, Eshcol and Aner, were Abram's allies.

When Abram learned that Lot had been captured, he called together the men born into his household, 318 of them in all. He chased after Kedorlaomer's army until he caught up with them in Dan.

There he divided his men and attacked during the night from several directions. Kedorlaomer's army fled, but Abram chased them to Hobah, north of Damascus. Abram and his allies recovered everything—the goods that had been taken, Abram's nephew Lot with his possessions, and all the women and other captives.

As Abram returned from his victory over Kedorlaomer and his allies, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). Then Melchizedek, the king of Salem and a priest of God Most High, brought him bread and wine.

Melchizedek blessed Abram with this blessing:

"Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Creator of heaven and earth.
And blessed be God Most High,
Who has helped you conquer your enemies."

Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the goods he had recovered.

The king of Sodom told him, "Give back my people who were captured. But you may keep for yourself all the goods you have recovered."

Abram replied, "I have solemnly promised the Lord, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, that I will not take so much as a single thread or sandal thong from you. Otherwise you might say, 'I am the one who made Abram rich!'

All I'll accept is what these young men of mine have already eaten. But give a share of the goods to my allies—Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre."

Hebrews 7:1

This Melchizedek was king of the city of Salem and also a priest of God Most High. When Abraham was returning home after winning a great battle against many kings, Melchizedek met him and blessed him.

God's Covenant with Abraham

Genesis 17:1-22

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; serve me faithfully and live a blameless life. I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to make you into a mighty nation."

At this, Abram fell face down in the dust. Then God said to him, "This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of not just one nation, but a multitude of nations! What's more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be Abram; now you will be known as Abraham, for you will be the father of many nations.

I will give you millions of descendants who will represent many nations. Kings will be among them!

"I will continue this everlasting covenant between us, generation after generation. It will continue between me and your offspring forever. And I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you. Yes, I will give all this land of Canaan to you and to your offspring forever. And I will be their God.

"Your part of the agreement," God told Abraham, "is to obey the terms of the covenant. You and all your descendants have this continual responsibility. [10] This is the covenant that you and your descendants must keep: Each male among you must be circumcised; the flesh of his foreskin must be cut off. This will be a sign that you and they have accepted this covenant.

Every male child must be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. This applies not only to members of your family, but also to the servants born in your household and the foreign-born servants whom you have purchased. All must be circumcised. Your bodies will thus bear the mark of my everlasting covenant.

Anyone who refuses to be circumcised will be cut off from the covenant family for violating the covenant."

Then God added, "Regarding Sarai, your wife—her name will no longer be Sarai; from now on you will call her Sarah.

And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly, and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings will be among her descendants!"

Then Abraham bowed down to the ground, but he laughed to himself in disbelief. "How could I become a father at the age of one hundred?" he wondered. "Besides, Sarah is ninety; how could she have a baby?" And Abraham said to God, "Yes, may Ishmael enjoy your special blessing!"

But God replied, "Sarah, your wife, will bear you a son. You will name him Isaac, and I will confirm my everlasting covenant with him and his descendants.

As for Ishmael, I will bless him also, just as you have asked. I will cause him to multiply and become a great nation. Twelve princes will be among his descendants.

But my covenant is with Isaac, who will be born to you and Sarah about this time next year."

That ended the conversation, and God left Abraham.

God's faithfulness and unfailing love

Micah 7:20

You will show us your faithfulness and unfailing love as you promised with an oath to our ancestors Abraham and Jacob long ago.

Luke 1:73

The covenant he gave to our ancestor Abraham.

God's promises are to the whole earth.

Romans 4:13

It is clear, then, that God's promise to give the whole earth to Abraham and his descendants was not based on obedience to God's law, but on the new relationship with God that comes by faith.

Christ came to fulfill God's promises.

Romans 15:8

Remember that Christ came as a servant to the Jews to show that God is true to the promises he made to their ancestors.

God swears by his own name.

Hebrews 6:13

For example, there was God's promise to Abraham. Since there was no one greater to swear by, God took an oath in his own name, saying:

The children of Abraham are those who put their trust in God.

Galatians 3:6-18

In the same way, "Abraham believed God, so God declared him righteous because of his faith." The real children of Abraham, then, are all those who put their faith in God.

What's more, the Scriptures looked forward to this time when God would accept the Gentiles, too, on the basis of their faith. God promised this good news to Abraham long ago when he said, "All nations will be blessed through you." And so it is: **All who put their faith in Christ share the same blessing Abraham received because of his faith.**

But those who depend on the law to make them right with God are under his curse, for the Scriptures say, "Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all these commands that are written in God's Book of the Law."

Consequently, it is clear that no one can ever be right with God by trying to keep the law. For the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life."

How different from this way of faith is the way of law, which says, "If you wish to find life by obeying the law, you must obey all of its commands."

But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing.

For it is written in the Scriptures, "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

Through the work of Christ Jesus, God has blessed the Gentiles with the same blessing he promised to Abraham, and we Christians receive the promised Holy Spirit through faith.

Dear brothers and sisters, here's an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or amend an irrevocable agreement, so it is in this case. God gave the promise to Abraham and his child. And notice that it doesn't say the promise was to his children, as if it meant many descendants. But the promise was to his child—and that, of course, means Christ.

This is what I am trying to say: The agreement God made with Abraham could not be canceled 430 years later when God gave the law to Moses. God would be breaking his promise.

For if the inheritance could be received only by keeping the law, then it would not be the result of accepting God's promise. But God gave it to Abraham as a promise.

You are the true children of Abraham.

Galatians 3:29

And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and now all the promises God gave to him belong to you.

Trial of Abraham's faith in the offering of Isaac

Genesis 22:1-19

Later on God tested Abraham's faith and obedience. "Abraham!" God called.

"Yes," he replied. "Here I am."

"Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will point out to you."

The next morning Abraham got up early. He saddled his donkey and took two of his servants with him, along with his son Isaac. Then he chopped wood to build a fire for a burnt offering and set out for the place where God had told him to go.

On the third day of the journey, Abraham saw the place in the distance. "Stay here with the donkey," Abraham told the young men. "The boy and I will travel a little farther. We will worship there, and then we will come right back."

Abraham placed the wood for the burnt offering on Isaac's shoulders, while he himself carried the knife and the fire. As the two of them went on together, Isaac said, "Father?"

"Yes, my son," Abraham replied.

"We have the wood and the fire," said the boy, "but where is the lamb for the sacrifice?"

"God will provide a lamb, my son," Abraham answered. And they both went on together.

When they arrived at the place where God had told Abraham to go, he built an altar and placed the wood on it. Then he tied Isaac up and laid him on the altar over the wood.

And Abraham took the knife and lifted it up to kill his son as a sacrifice to the Lord. At that moment the angel of the Lord shouted to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Yes," he answered. "I'm listening."

"Lay down the knife," the angel said. "Do not hurt the boy in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld even your beloved son from me."

Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a bush. So he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering on the altar in place of his son.

Abraham named the place "The Lord Will Provide." This name has now become a proverb: "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided."

Then the angel of the Lord called again to Abraham from heaven, "This is what the Lord says: Because you have obeyed me and have not withheld even your beloved son, I swear by my own self that

I will bless you richly. I will multiply your descendants into countless millions, like the stars of the sky and the sand on the seashore. They will conquer their enemies, and through your descendants, all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me."

Then they returned to Abraham's young men and traveled home again to Beersheba, where Abraham lived for quite some time.

Through Faith Abraham offered up Isaac.

Hebrews 11:17

It was by faith that Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God was testing him. Abraham, who had received God's promises, was ready to sacrifice his only son, Isaac,

James 2:21

Don't you remember that our ancestor Abraham was declared right with God because of what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?

Sarah, the wife of Abraham dies.

Genesis 23:1-2

When Sarah was 127 years old, she died at Kiriath-arba (now called Hebron) in the land of Canaan. There Abraham mourned and wept for her.

Abraham marries Keturah

Genesis 25:1

Now Abraham married again. Keturah was his new wife,

Abraham provides a wife for Isaac

Genesis 24:1-5

Abraham was now a very old man, and the Lord had blessed him in every way. One day Abraham said to the man in charge of his household, who was his oldest servant,

"Swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and earth, that you will not let my son marry one of these local Canaanite women. Go instead to my homeland, to my relatives, and find a wife there for my son Isaac."

Testament of Abraham

Genesis 25:5-6

Abraham left everything he owned to his son Isaac. But before he died, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them off to the east, away from Isaac.

Wealth of Abraham

Genesis 13:2

For Abram was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold.

Genesis 24:35

"And the Lord has blessed my master richly; he has become a great man. The Lord has given him flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, a fortune in silver and gold, and many servants and camels and donkeys.

Isaiah 51:2

Yes, think about your ancestors Abraham and Sarah, from whom you came. Abraham was alone when I called him. But when I blessed him, he became a great nation."

Life Applications:

When Jesus Christ came to earth, God's promise was fulfilled; through Abraham the entire world was blessed.

You probably don't know the long-term effects of most decisions you make. But shouldn't the fact that there will be long-term results cause you to think carefully and seek God's guidance as you make choices and take action today?

Key verse: "Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness" (Genesis 15:6).

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: Living Bible Translation