



An Adventure of Faith: Walking With Abraham (Notes from Faith Baptist Church)

Introduction

1. Today, we're beginning a NEW series: **An Adventure of Faith: Walking With Abraham**
 - this study isn't really so much about Abraham as it is the GOD of Abraham
 - we want to keep that in mind as we study the life of one of God's chosen servants – and a key figure in the OT and in the history of God's plan for mankind!
2. Today our focus is on Genesis 11-12:9 [please turn there] -- ***The Foundation of our Faith***
 - Next week we'll study Genesis 12:10-20 – "*When God's People Blow It*"
3. I want to begin our study in Gen. 11 **READ 11:1-9** – with brief commentary]
 - Let's divide our study of "*The Foundation of Our Faith*" into three parts:

I. The Sovereign Plan of God

- for us to fully grasp what we've just read, there are few issues/points we need to understand that set the context for Gen. 11 and 12:

A. In Creation: God created man – Gen. 1:26

- ❖ **Genesis 1:26** Then God said, "**Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.**" **27** God created man in His own image, in the image of God **He created him; male and female He created them.**

- God had created mankind to be His visible representatives (image and likeness of God) of His invisible self to declare His glories to the created order.

Note: In the Ancient Near East when a great king arose in power over a region and wanted his influence and authority to be represented in a distant region, he would put up "his image and likeness" as a statue to represent him and his authority.

- ***image & likeness*** = describes what man is in relationship to God (Gen. 1:26) –(the words come from the same words used by an Ancient Near East king.

Point: God, THE GREAT KING, is in essence saying, "*Man will be My living visible representatives in the created order.*"

- > Mankind is to fill the created order with My likeness and image so as to bring My glory and influence to all the earth.

B. The Fall: God makes a promise – Gen. 3:15

- In Gen. 3, the *image* gets corrupted and the battle between the serpent and mankind begins in which God promises that "the seed" of the woman would eventually crush "the seed" of the serpent (Gen. 3:15)

- ❖ **Genesis 3:15** **And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.**" – [this is an act of GRACE on God's part – God giving what we do not deserve!]

- that 'seed' continues in Gen. 4 (Cain kills Abel, but God raises up Seth – Gen 4:25-26)
- the seed continues to Gen. 5 (to the genealogy resulting in Noah), . . . then in chp. 6:

C. The Flood: God demonstrates His Holiness through Wrath, and His Grace through the Ark – Gen. 6 – 8

❖ **Genesis 6:5** Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. **6** The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. **7** The LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them." **8** But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. (God's grace)

- Gen 6-7-8 God destroys all of "the seed" of man, except Noah and his family
- Gen. 7:23 reveals the devastation on man and everything on dry land on which "the seed" was to have dominion – God starts over with Noah)

Note: Genesis 8:1:

❖ **Genesis 8:1** But God remembered Noah [another act of GRACE] and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark; and God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water subsided.

Point: God is in control – He is absolutely sovereign over the events of man – it's HIS PLAN!

D. The Covenant: God makes a promise to Noah, his descendants, and every living creature – Gen. 9—10

- The rainbow is the sign that God made that covenant, and He's intends to keep it
- As the ark had 1 door, that God ultimately closed, Jesus called Himself 'the Door' (Jn. 10:9)

- that brings us to Chp. 11:

E. The Rebellion: God scatters man in spite of their rebellion – Gen 11:1-9

- The descendents of Noah, instead of making a name for God by being His image and likeness and spreading out all over the earth, congregate at one place to make a name for themselves – directly disobeying Gen. 9:1
 - > God gives them the name "*Confusion*" (Babel – 11:9) because of their confused state.
- *Language* (the primary means of communication) is now confused – as an act of judgment and thus the families of the earth divide along the lines of language and from there we get all the nations of the earth.

Note: God's plan is moving ahead and He will accomplish what He chooses to accomplish

Lesson: * **When we try to make a name for ourselves, God ensures that we get a name—the name "confusion!**

* How appropriate! – instead of clear communication and understanding and doing what God, the Creator, commands, we end up in '*confusion*'

- > confusing our role (He is the Creator, not us)
- > confusing who is God (the Lord, not us, though we try to play God!)
- > confusing what really satisfies and brings joy (obedience, vs. my selfish wants/ desires)

F. The Seed: God allows Abram's wife, Sarai, to be barren (no 'seed') – Gen. 11:30

❖ **Gen. 11: 30. Sarai was barren; she had no child.**

- The seed of the woman seems to be faltering, failing.

Q: How is the 'seed' of the woman going to "crush" the head of the serpent?

Lesson: * Barrenness is the way of human history. It is an effective metaphor for hopelessness!

- I'm reminded of a phrase I heard sometime ago:

"Man at his best is at best a man!" – we need God's help!

- but there is hope – because God speaks again in chp. 12:

II. The Gracious Choice of God – Gen. 12:1-3 [READ]

"Now the Lord said to Abram . . . " – this is another step in God revealing Himself to us – He is making His will known to Abram (just like He did to Adam, Noah, David . . . and to us!)

- God once again sets the stage to receive the glory for what He is about to do!

A. The Lord speaks to Abram (revealing Himself and His will) – *Q: Who was Abraham?*

- Abraham was an ancient near eastern nomad sheik whose original home was in the current area situated around Iraq (where the tower of Babel episode happened in chapter 11).

- A nomad/sheik basically was:

- 1) The head of a tribal group of people bound together by family ties and gaining their living by their flocks of livestock (Gen 13:2).
- 2) They carried their possession & acquired servants wherever they traveled (Gen 12:5).
- 3) They would travel or sojourn wherever they could to find the necessary grazing pastures for their livestock (cf. Gen 12:10, 13:5-6).
- 4) Many times these tribal groups could wield significant power and influence as they grew in wealth and power.

- Nomads owned no property [the only property Abraham ever owned was the property he bought for Sarah's grave – Gen 23:1-20, esp v. 20].

B. The radical nature of God's commands and promises to Abraham

- God is undaunted though in his intent of having a people of His own image and likeness be His representatives to the entire created order!

> In the chaos of mankind (and the effects of the curse of sin), God reaches down to start bringing order to the mess by working in one man whom He chose!

Commands: *Go forth . . . be a blessing*

- Leave the land in which you are used to traveling around
- Leave your kinsman and specifically your father's house/tribe
- Go to a *different* land – 'to a land that I will show you' (Abram didn't have all the details)
- Be a blessing to those around you

Promises: [Note: We usually say these promises in the order of *land*, *seed*, and *blessing* – it's actually seed, blessing, and land – in order of *priority*

#1: I will make of you a great nation [seed] (independent of his father's clan/tribe)

- Since Sarah was *barren*, Abraham did not know HOW God was going to make him into a “*great nation*” and God didn’t tell him how it would happen!

➤ As the progression of revelation is given to Abraham as to the MANNER OF FULFILLMENT, we need to watch the progression of Abraham’s faith!

#2: I will bless you and make your name great (allowing God to make Abraham’s name great vs. the Babel generation that sought to make their own name great, Gen 11:4)

- God said He would not only bless Abram, but He would bless those who bless him . . . and curse those who curse him!

Q: *What are the results of all this?* “IN YOU” . . . all of the families of the earth will be blessed (i.e. those formed as a result of God’s judgment in Gen. 11)

Lesson: * Your life and the choices you make have an impact on others!

- later on, God makes a 3rd promise:

#3: I will give this land – v. 7

C. The Expectation God had of Abraham: Faith and Action!

- The only requirement is that Abraham believes God and acts upon what God says!

> In this way God’s purpose would be fulfilled, and in the process, God would make a name for Abraham!!

- This sets the stage for the ultimate “seed” or lineage of Abraham through which the fullness of God’s promises to Abraham would be realized—Jesus Christ—the perfect image of God who perfectly represents God.

> And, through Christ, God would redeem for Himself a people that are being created in the image of Christ (Romans 8:29) to be God’s people, declaring to the created order the glories of God, fulfilling God’s original intent in Genesis 1.

- This sets the stage for what is required of us to be a people of God used for His purposes (i.e. salvation)—FAITH (Romans 4, Gal 4).

III. The Faith-Based Response of God Servant – Gen. 12:4-9

> that’s **FAITH = believing that God KNOWS something we don’t know and God can DO something that we can’t do!**

A. Faith leads us to obedience.

❖ **Genesis 12:4 So Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him**

IMPORTANT: THIS IS THE KEY—WHEN ABRAHAM BELIEVED AND ACTED UPON GOD’S WORD, HE BECAME A PIVOTAL PERSON TO BRING BACK ORDER TO THE CHAOS OF MANKIND—ULTIMATELY RESULTING IN THE MESSIAH. HE DID ALL OF THIS WITHOUT FULL KNOWLEDGE OF HOW GOD WAS GOING TO ACCOMPLISH THIS.

- However, as we will see the story unfold, Abraham’s pivotal role is NOT a one time “act of faith.”

- His pivotal role is realized as he journeys on with God with multiple *acts* of faith --an adventure of faith if you will-- that, yes, starts here with a single step!);

Genesis 12:4 . . .and Lot went with him. (possible that Abram thought that Lot was the key to the seed?). **Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 5. Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they**

had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired [the servants that they hired to help them] in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan. 6. Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite was then in the land.

- God's promise is not easy to believe and practice

> It must always be believed and practiced in the midst of those who practice seemingly more effective and attractive ways—the *Canaanites* [descendants of Ham, the father of Canaan – it was Ham who said the nakedness of Noah and told his brothers – God cursed him for that – evidently was disrespectful and should have covered his dad)

B. Faith leads to worship – Gen. 12:7

❖ **Genesis 12:7** The Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him

- This is an act of worship stemming from his fear of the Lord and his faith in Yahweh

> This act of Abraham expresses a life identifying decision he had made in verse 4.

> Abraham's calling on Yahweh's name means that he had resolved to cling to none other than to the Promise-Maker . . . or in Abraham's case, the “Promise-Keeper”

Point: One altar tends to lead to another altar – look at 12:8 , then later (Gen. 22) the altar upon which Isaac his son was to be offered!

Lesson: *What you do at the altar of TODAY impacts the altar of TOMORROW!

C. Faith leads to dependence

❖ **Genesis 12:8-9 [READ]** – v. 9 (You get the picture that Abram is walking all over the land that God scoping out what God has promised!)

- v. 8 called upon the name of the Lord = reference to their view of God – a name is significant to a Jew

- Examples: Abram (exalted father) to Abraham (father of a multitude) – Jacob (deceiver) to Israel (God prevails); Jesus = Savior; Emmanuel = God with us

- The fact that he called on the name of Lord reveals a heart of humility and wisdom – he called upon Yahweh, not the gods of the Canaanites!

READ Hebrews 11:1-6

Conclusion:

1. By the end of the Abraham narrative, you see Abraham believing God (even if he does not understand “how”) no matter what radical thing God says like, “*Abraham go kill your only son which I promised I would make into a great nation.*”
2. In all of this, we see Abraham's “adventure” or “journey” of maturing faith.
 - > Abraham goes from one that believes yet tries to work out the plan in his own understanding, to one that believes EVEN when he does not fully understand.
3. **Even though His faith was not perfect he was a “key person” who acted upon what God said!**
 - > And God used Him to bring blessing to all of creation ultimately through Christ.

Genesis 11:1-9

[Brief Comments]

1. **Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words** (there was only one language in the beginning).
2. **It came about as they** (descendants of Noah) **journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there** (basically the region between the Tigris and Euphrates River in Iraq today).
3. **They said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly.” And they used brick for stone** (from the perspective of the children of Israel who only used stones in their building, making bricks was a foreign concept. But the geographical area of Babylon in which they settled does not have stones and rocks like Israel and Egypt had. This comment though was ultimately a highly sarcastic remark. It has the essence of —“Look! They have to use man-made bricks for stones, to make their man-made tower, to make a name for themselves), **and they used tar for mortar.** (again, similarly, this is a derogatory comment)
4. **They said, “Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”** (in direct opposition to making a name for God and filling the earth with his image, likeness, and name – go back to Gen. 9:1 READ it!)
5. **The Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.** (This is highly sarcastic! In their best efforts to go up and reach the heavens, the Lord still has to “come down!”)
6. **The Lord said, “Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them** (impossible could be translated, lit. *withheld from* – it ‘s not that man can accomplish whatever he want, but whatever they attempt, or purpose to do, will not be withheld – i.e. they are going to try whatever they want!).
7. **“Come, let Us go down** (contrast this “let Us” w/ v. 3 – this “Us” overrules the other ‘us’; *Us* = a reference to the Trinity; the God-head is involved as in creation – Gen. 1:26; again note the ironic sarcasm, furthermore, whenever the Lord is said to be “going down” it is for judgment cf. Gen 18:21) **and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another’s speech.”** [if you want to understand the significance of this act, try to accomplish something with a large group of people, but you have no clue what they are saying!]
8. **So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth** [which is what God told them to do in the 1st place!] **and they stopped building the city.**
9. **Therefore its name was called Babel (“*confusion*”), because there the Lord confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.** [things are repeated in the Scripture for the sake of emphasis – Point: God is in control of this situation!]

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