

## ***Beginnings and Belongings***

### ***The Man Abram***

Lesson #7 for November 18, 2006

Scripture: Genesis 11:27-15:21.

1. Abram or Abraham (ca.1950 -1775 BC), the subject for this lesson, is the number one example of faith given in Scripture. (Romans 4; Galatians 3; James 2; Hebrews 11) He is the person mutually acknowledged as “father” of the three great monotheistic faiths. Why is that? He is the primary subject of the faith chapter, Hebrews 11. There are some very interesting other characters in Scripture also called examples of faith, for example Rahab, the harlot, Samson, and the children of Israel! (James 2; Hebrews 11)
2. Read Acts 16:31. Paul seems to suggest that faith is the only requirement for salvation. Why do you think that is?
3. Some describe Abraham’s faith as “unquestioning.” Is it true that one of the most important characteristics of true faith is its willingness to believe without questioning? Isn’t that the message of the famous gospel song “God said it, I believe it, and that settles it for me”?
4. Let us look at the life experience of Abraham and see if we can determine what makes him a man of faith.
5. Modern-day Seventh-day Adventist Christians speak about reaching the whole world with the gospel. We want to see God’s message reach every corner of the world. Church membership is growing faster, in terms of percentage, than world population. We proudly review these numbers every five years at our General Conference Session. But when we look back at the history of our world, we notice a very frightening trend: In Noah’s day everyone had apparently turned away from God except one family. In Abraham’s day the whole world had rejected God and turned away from him except one family.

After the dispersion from Babel idolatry again became well-nigh universal, and the Lord finally left the hardened transgressors to follow their evil ways, while He chose Abraham, of the line of Shem, and made him the keeper of His law for future generations. Abraham had grown up in the midst of superstition and heathenism...Faithful among the faithless, uncorrupted by the prevailing apostasy, he steadfastly adhered to the worship of the one true God...He [God] communicated His will to Abraham, and gave him a distinct knowledge of the requirements of His law and of the salvation that would be accomplished through Christ. {PP 125.1}

Why was Abraham so different?

6. Did people in the days of Noah and Abraham make attempts to evangelize those around them? Clearly, the answer is yes! Why did the Devil seem to be so much more successful at spreading his “gospel” than God was?
7. Now that Abraham was, in a special sense, connected with heaven, he must dwell among strangers. His character must be peculiar, differing from all the world. He could not even explain his course of action so as to be understood by his friends. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and his motives and actions were not comprehended by his idolatrous kindred. {PP 126.1}

8. Is it dangerous to stay among friends and family? Do our friends and family tend to lead us away from God or nearer to him?
9. Ur of the Chaldees is not too far from Babel. Do you think Abraham's family had been involved in that fiasco? **Why do you think it was God's choice to pick out one individual with whom to work, instead of trying to spread the gospel to all parts of the world? If isolation from those to whom we are closest makes it easier to maintain a pure faith, why didn't God pick someone from South America, Western Europe or Eastern Asia instead of Abraham not far from the center of sin?**
10. Who received the first call of faith? Was Abraham called to move from Ur to Haran or was it his father Terah? (Genesis 11:31) Why does the Bible say it was Terah who took his son Abraham, and other members of his family, and moved to Haran? Do you think God intended for them to spend some years at Haran? Why? (Compare Acts 7:2-4) What happened as a result of this two-step call?
11. Why didn't Abraham and his family go directly to Canaan? **Abraham's family, even some of those who accompanied him to Haran, continued to practice idolatry. Why do you think this giant man of faith could not convince his own family to be faithful to God?** Which is harder: To convince a member of your own family or a stranger about the gospel? Do we have evidence that Abraham was trying to reach out to others and teach them the truth? Read Genesis 12:5.

Among these were many led by higher considerations than those of service and self-interest. During their stay in Haran, both Abraham and Sarah had led others to the worship and service of the true God. These attached themselves to the patriarch's household, and accompanied him to the land of promise. (PP 127)

12. **What would happen today in our church if there were a few members in each congregation willing to do what Abraham did?**
13. **What did God promise Abraham?** What reasons did he give him for leaving his home and his family and traveling to an unknown place? (Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 11:8-10) As we know, historically, Abraham became the father of three great monotheistic faiths: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Millions of people today are still named after him. The people at the Tower of Babel gathered together and worked hard to make a name for themselves! God took Abraham out of that setting and sent him to a distant country to dwell alone to make a name for Abraham! Why was God's plan for Abraham successful and the plan of the builders of the Tower of Babel unsuccessful?
14. **In trying to explore the roots of Abraham's faith, what factors do you see that were important? Remember that Abraham had no Bible, apparently no spiritual advisers, no prophets or pastors to give him guidance, and he lived in a family corrupted by idolatry.**
15. When God called Abraham, how did he do it? How did Abraham know that God was even speaking to him? Did they have a personal relationship? Did he hear voices or see visions? Today, we send people like that to psychiatrists! Does God speak to people and call them in our day? How would you know if God was calling you?
16. The city of Ur was highly sophisticated for its day. Apparently there were water systems and sewer systems and the area was well-watered by the Euphrates River. Do we know for sure how Abraham earned a living prior to his departure?
17. Many ancient families, and even many families in poorer parts of the world today,

lived/live a subsistence life. A famine, an epidemic, a war or even an animal disease could wipe out a whole community. Living in a trade city near a large river protected one from many of these dangers. Moving away by oneself into a country of unknown people with a different language and different tribal customs and background could put one at great risk.

18. **Not long after Abraham reached Canaan, a famine set in. Abraham had to move south to Egypt. Why didn't he go back to Ur? Or at least to Haran? Did Abraham have questions about this wonderful land that God was about to give him?**
19. As we know from historical records, intermarriage with members of one's own family was very common in ancient times. Both Abraham and Nahor married their own sisters, although they were half-sisters due to the fact that their father had multiple wives. Why do you think they did this? Were they trying to remain uncorrupted by the world?
20. When Abraham reached Egypt, he told his wife to tell the Egyptians that she was his sister. (Genesis 12:13) While this was true in the strictest sense of the word, it was intended to misrepresent their relationship. What do you think happened to Abraham and Sarah during their time in Egypt? How did he happen to come in contact with Pharaoh and how did Pharaoh learn about Sarah?
21. How old was Sarah when she seemed to be so attractive to Pharaoh? What do you think it was about Sarah that made her attractive?
22. Was Abraham's faith weakened by the fact that God had led him into a land of famine? How often does God lead us into testing? Don't we pray about that? (Matthew 6:13)  

The Lord in His providence had brought this trial upon Abraham to teach him lessons of submission, patience, and faith--lessons that were to be placed on record for the benefit of all who should afterward be called to endure affliction. God leads His children by a way that they know not, but He does not forget or cast off those who put their trust in Him. {PP 129.2}
23. When was the last time you can remember that God tested your faith? How did he do it?
24. When Abraham and Lot with their herds and herdsmen returned to Palestine, what happened next? Read Genesis 13:1-13. **If Lot had insisted that Abraham choose first, what do you think Abraham would have chosen?** What can we learn from Abraham's very generous spirit?
25. Now that things seem to be looking up for Abraham and his flocks and herdsmen were scattered over the hills of Judea, what did God say to him? Read Genesis 13:14-18.
26. **Since Abraham still had no son, why do you think he didn't choose to adopt Lot? Shouldn't Lot have been the natural choice? Why did Abraham look to someone not even of his tribe or his nationality as the inheritor of his estate?**
27. Read the story of Abraham going to war in Genesis 14. What do you think was going on in this war between four kings and five kings? Where did these different groups come from? Had they traveled a long distance to carry out this attack? If we understand the names correctly, one king was from Babylon; another king was from Iran; one was from Turkey. They apparently went on a raiding party into the Jordan Valley. How large a group do you think was involved in this battle?
28. Abraham took 318 trained soldiers from among his own workers, plus the forces of Mamre, Eshcol and Aner with him as allies, and pursued the escaping group. Did Abraham know these kings who came from somewhere near the area where he had

originally lived?

29. How did Melchizedek get involved in this story? Read Genesis 14:17-24. Who was this king from ancient Jerusalem? Why would he have a name like “righteousness is my king” and “the king of peace”? Had he become a friend of Abraham? Why do you think Abraham refused to keep any of the loot which he had brought back? Why did he choose to pay a tithe of the loot to Melchizedek?
30. After this encounter Abraham was afraid that he would become a target of raiders and war parties. But God appeared to him again, now for the third time, and reassured him, once again promising a son. Despite all the evidence to the contrary, Abraham trusted God. Apparently this is what God wanted. “Abram put his trust in the LORD, and because of this the LORD was pleased with him and accepted him. (Genesis 15:6, GNB) What is implied by this statement?
31. What was the purpose of the strange ceremony that Abraham carried out to seal his agreement with God? (Genesis 15:8-21)
32. How did Abraham relate to all the people around him after God told him that all of their property was to be his one day?
33. What have we learned in this lesson about Abraham? Anything new? What is it that makes him stand out as a man of faith? Is it his willingness to move forward without evidence? **What kind of evidence was Abraham’s faith based on? What kind of faith–based on what kind of evidence–is God looking for in our lives today?**
34. Many are still tested as was Abraham. They do not hear the voice of God speaking directly from the heavens, but He calls them by the teachings of His word and the events of His providence. They may be required to abandon a career that promises wealth and honor, to leave congenial and profitable associations, [127] and separate from kindred, to enter upon what appears to be only a path of self-denial, hardship, and sacrifice. God has a work for them to do; but a life of ease and the influence of friends and kindred would hinder the development of the very traits essential for its accomplishment. He calls them away from human influences and aid, and leads them to feel the need of His help, and to depend upon Him alone, that He may reveal Himself to them. Who is ready at the call of Providence to renounce cherished plans and familiar associations? Who will accept new duties and enter untried fields, doing God's work with firm and willing heart, for Christ's sake counting his losses gain? He who will do this has the faith of Abraham, and will share with him that "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," with which "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared." 2 Corinthians 4:17; Romans 8:18. {PP 126.4}

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