

The Man Abram (Abraham)



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 11

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Genesis 11:27–15:21.

MEMORY VERSE: “Abram believed the Lord. The Lord accepted Abram because he believed. So his faith made him right with the Lord” (Genesis 15:6, NIV).

WE ENDED LAST WEEK ON A SOUR NOTE. THE TOWER OF BABEL AND ALL AROUND IT SHOWED THAT SINNERS COULD NOT LEARN FROM THE PAST.

This week, we begin on a more hopeful note. The family line which led to the birth of Abram. Paul says that Abram is “the father of us all” (Romans 4:16). This means that Abram is the father of all who believe in Christ. Through Christ, the promises made to Abram are fulfilled. Through Christ, we are now Abram’s seed (children), “and heirs¹ according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29). This is the promise of a heavenly Canaan where there will be no more evil, sin, and death.

The events² of the Fall,³ the Flood, Noah’s drunkenness, and the Tower of Babel are horrible. But now God introduces hope for the human race. This hope begins with Abram. His family was involved in idol worship. But Abram was a follower of the true God. For his faithfulness, Abram was given promises for himself, for his family, and for the whole human race.

This week, we begin looking at Abram’s life, his call, his answer, his feelings, and his relationship with God. Abram is one of the greatest examples of what it means for a sinner to be justified (made righteous and holy) by faith, but still have that faith be shown through works.

¹heirs—people who receive a person’s property after that person dies. We are Abram’s heirs because we have received the promise of salvation in Christ.

²events—things that happen.

³the Fall—when Adam and Eve first sinned.

SUNDAY—NOVEMBER 12**ABRAM'S BACKGROUND
(Genesis 11:10-32, Nlrv)**

Read Genesis 11:10-32. (Also read Joshua 24:2 and Acts 7:2.) What story comes before Genesis 11:10-32? Why might these stories have been placed next to each other? What details are found here about Abram's background and family?

Bible history suggests that Abram was the youngest of Terah's sons. But Abram appears to be mentioned first in Genesis 11:26, 27 because he was an important member of God's chosen family. Archaeology⁴ has shown much about the times in which Abram lived. But the great kingdoms of the day form just part of the background. The focus is on certain Bible leaders and their families who tried to keep alive God's truth. This is the great goal of Genesis: The stories center on those whom God entrusted with carrying on the knowledge of Him in a world filled with idol worship and all other kinds of false beliefs.

How many times did God call Abram (Acts 7:2-4)? (Also read Genesis 12:1.) Why do you think Abram went through these two times rather than going quickly to Canaan?

Stephen says God first appeared to Abram in Ur of the Chaldees and called him to go to the land He would show him. But Abram did not go right away. Instead, he stopped at Haran, where he lived until his father, Terah, died. After his father's death, Abram finally left for the Promised Land.

Abram's family was involved in idol worship. But, for quite a while, Abram remained with them. What might we learn from this story about how we should relate to members of our own family who are not walking with God?

MONDAY—NOVEMBER 13**THE CALL**

(Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 11:8-10)

What reason did God give for calling Abram to leave Haran? Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 11:8-10.

Notice something strange here: Among the things God says He will do for Abram is to "make thy [Abram's] name great" (Genesis 12:2). Contrast⁵ this with the Tower of Babel story. In this story, one of the reasons people worked on the tower was in order to "make us a name" (Genesis 11:4). From a human point of view, those who would try to create a great movement would seem to have a better chance of having "a name"

⁴archaeology—the process of digging up relics (old things) from the earth which show what life was like in an earlier time period.

⁵contrast—show how things are different.

than someone who would travel to a place “not knowing whither [where] he went” (Hebrews 11:8).

Today, no one knows the name of any one of those who worked on the tower. But almost all the world knows the name of Abram.

What powerful lesson should there be for us, who in our own way might try to “make us a name”?

When God called Abram again to go to Canaan (Acts 7:2; Genesis 12:1), He gave Abram the wonderful promise that He would make of him a great nation. This clearly suggested Abram would have a lot of descendants.⁶ This is something else Abram would have to take on faith, because at that time his wife had been childless (Genesis 11:30). But Genesis 12:4 seems to suggest that Abram did not put off going this time. God called him. God made promises to him. And Abram went (Romans 4:13) by faith.

Sure that God had called him, Abram moved out by faith. To humans, the move would seem very foolish. What does this say to us about having to move and live by faith, no matter how “foolish” it may be (1 Corinthians 1:25; 1 Corinthians 2:14)? At the same time, how must we be careful not to step out by “faith” guessing that God is leading when He might not be?

⁶descendants—future family members.

How can we know the difference between when He might not be leading and when He might be?



TUESDAY—NOVEMBER 14

THE FAITH OF ABRAM (Genesis 12)

What message impresses you about faith, trials (troubles), and about character in Genesis 12? What can you learn from this story that could help you in your daily walk with God?

We might think that, because Abram was following God’s call, God would make his paths smoother. But the Bible gives no proof that as long as we remain faithful to Him, no trials (troubles) will come.

Not long after Abram had entered

Canaan, a famine⁷ caused him to leave for Egypt. Egypt was watered by the flood waters of the Nile. The Bible teaches us that even those who follow God's commands may have to suffer for their faith. Think about the doubt that the famine could have put on Abram's faith. God called him to go into this land, and look what happens! A famine! This famine, which drove Abram out of Canaan, could help explain why Abram lacked faith about Sarai and Pharaoh. Hunger and fear caused the hero of faith to be a person with weaknesses that most of us can understand. Faith gave in to fear. And fear turned to lies as Abram used one half truth to hide the other half.

"The Lord in His leading had brought this trial upon Abram to teach him lessons of surrender, patience, and faith. These lessons are in the Bible for all of us who should afterward be called to go through trouble or suffering. God leads His children by a way they do not know. But He does not forget or throw out those who put their trust in Him."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 129.

When was the last time you failed a test of faith? What lesson did you learn from that failure that can help you next time trouble comes?

WEDNESDAY—NOVEMBER 15

ABRAM AND LOT (Genesis 13:1-13)

What does Genesis 13:1-13 tell us about Abram's character? How does this help us understand why he was an example of great faith? What Bible verses can you find that encourage us to show the same kind of faith? (Read for example, Philippians 2:4.)

Returning from Egypt, Abram called on God at the second altar he had built in Canaan (Genesis 13:3, 4). He was made stronger by this renewal of his relationship with God. So Abram was able to face another test. Once more, the promise of land seemed to "escape" Abram (Genesis 13:5, 6). He had to make a decision.

Abram had failed in Egypt. But he showed noble character when he offered Lot a choice of land. From the hills of Bethel, Lot saw the rich and fertile⁸ Jordan Valley and the plains of Mesopotamia. To Lot, the Jordan Valley looked the same as the Garden of Eden. Lot decided to choose what would seem to make him a richer man. Little did he know what his choice would cost him (Genesis 19). Lot's decision was between "faith" and "sight." The results show the wisdom of making

⁷famine—not having enough food over a long period of time.

⁸fertile—able to grow a lot of fruit, vegetables, and grains.

the right choice. Abram's close relationship with God and his decision to walk by faith helped him to keep his eye on the reward of eternal life, not the reward of wealth.



Abram lied in Egypt about Sarai. But he was noble when he let Lot choose the best land.

What promise does God give Abram? Genesis 13:14-18. Why do you think God waited until this time before giving this promise to Abram (verse 14)? Why did it require a lot of faith for Abram to believe in this promise?

Think of the last time you saw someone show the same kind of unselfishness Abram showed to

Lot. What do you think is the secret of being unselfish? What needs to happen in your life so you can be more unselfish? Imagine what your local church would be like if everyone would be unselfish.

THURSDAY—NOVEMBER 16

MELCHIZEDEK AND ABRAM (Genesis 14:1-24)

Genesis 14:1-16 tells what happened at Sodom and Gomorrah. Abram was a man of faith. He worshiped the true God. But he could also be a man of war.

What does the Melchizedek event⁹ show about Abram's spiritual condition? How again do we see his faith shown in his works? Genesis 14:17-24.

Melchizedek (meaning "my king is righteous [holy]") was king of Salem (a name for Jerusalem; Psalm 76:2) and priest of the Most High God. Abram worshiped the same God Melchizedek worshiped. Abram showed respect to Melchizedek, who welcomed and blessed Abram after he returned from the battle. Abram gave the king-priest a tithe of all (Genesis 14:20). This shows that people tithed long before Moses and the Jews.

After this great victory, God appears to Abram and gives him a wonderful promise. "I am like [the

⁹event—thing that happens.

same as] a shield to you. I am your very great reward” (Genesis 15:1, NIRV). Ellen White showed that Abram needed that encouragement, because some of his neighbors were angry about his recent victories.

Read Abram’s answer in Genesis 15:2, 3. Why would he answer that way? Why did his answer make so much sense?

God then repeated His earlier promise that Abram would have very many future children (Genesis 15:4-6; Genesis 12:2; Genesis 13:16). Abram and Sarai were old. This would seem to make God’s promise of children impossible. But Abram took God at His word. He trusted God’s power (Genesis 15:5; Romans 4:3).

Abram believed God. So God accepted him as righteous (holy). How does this help us understand what it means for God to accept us? What things about Abram give you hope? What things about him show you the need to make some changes in your life?

FRIDAY—NOVEMBER 17

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “After the Flood,” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 125–136; *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, comments on Genesis 11:26 to 15:21.

God promised Abram again that

his children would become a great nation. So Abram looked for a sign of this promise (Genesis 15:7, 8). “The Lord agreed to enter into a covenant¹⁰ with Abram. God used such things that were common among men for the approval of this covenant. With God’s leading, Abram sacrificed a heifer, a she-goat, and a ram, each three years old. He divided the bodies and laid the pieces a little distance apart. To these he added a turtledove and a young pigeon, which he did not divide. After he did this, Abram walked between the parts of the sacrifice. He made a vow to God of eternal obedience. Then Abram remained beside the bodies of the animals until the sun went down. This was to guard them from being defiled or eaten by flesh-eating birds. About sunset, Abraham sank into a deep sleep, and, ‘a thick and terrible darkness covered him’ (NIRV). Then the voice of God was heard. God warned Abram not to expect a quick take-over of Canaan. God pointed Abram forward to the sufferings of his children before their settlement in Canaan. The plan of salvation was here opened to him through the death of Christ, the great sacrifice, and His coming in glory. Abram also saw the earth restored¹¹ to its Eden beauty. Then the earth would be given to him for an eternal home, as the final and complete fulfillment of the promise.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 137.

¹⁰covenant—promise or agreement between God and His people.

¹¹restored—to make something as it was in the beginning.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ As a class, discuss your answers to the question at the end of Thursday's lesson. How do we understand what it means to be accounted (accepted as) righteous (holy) before God?

❷ Do you know someone right now who believes that she or he is being called to go, as was Abram—not knowing “whither [where] he went”? What could you as a class do to help this person through whatever struggles she or he is having?