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What You Need to Know About The Life of Abraham

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM

FINGER-TIP FACTS CONCERNING HIS LIFE

I. Events During His Early Years: From birth to age 86 (Gen. 11-16)

1. He was born and raised in Ur of the Chaldees, a city located in the land of Mesopotamia (Gen. 11:27-29; Acts 7:2-4).
2. Prior to his conversion, Abram was a worshiper of idols (Josh. 24:2).
3. God appeared to him, and Abram became a believer (Acts 7:2).
4. He was commanded by God to leave Mesopotamia for a new land that God had promised to show him (Gen. 12:1; Acts 7:3).
5. He receives a seven-fold promise from God (Gen. 12:2-3).
6. He departs from Haran at age 75 (Gen. 12:4).
7. He arrives in Canaan, is promised the land by God, and builds an altar at Bethel (Gen. 12:5-9).
8. He goes to Egypt during a famine in Canaan, and lies about his wife Sarai (Gen. 12:10-20).
9. He returns to Bethel and again worships God (Gen. 13:4).
10. He separates from his nephew Lot after an argument over land grazing rights (Gen. 13:5-13).
11. God again promises to give him the land of Canaan (Gen. 13:14-17).
12. He moves to Hebron and builds an altar to God (Gen. 13:18).
13. He rescues his nephew Lot (now living in Sodom) who had been taken prisoner by a Mesopotamian king named Chedorlaomer (Gen. 14:1-17).
14. He meets, gives tithes to, and is blessed by Melchizedek, king of Salem (Gen. 14:18-24).
15. He is promised a son and to become the father of a great nation (Gen. 15:1-5).
16. He believes God and is declared righteous due to his faith (Gen. 15:6).
17. He enters into a blood covenant with God (Gen. 15:7-11).
18. In a dream God reveals to him that his descendants would serve in a foreign land for 400 years, but then depart with great substance (Gen. 15:12-17).
19. He is now given the boundaries of the land (Gen. 15:18-21).
20. At the advice of his barren wife Sarai, he marries Hagar, her Egyptian handmaid with the hope that he could father a son through her (Gen. 16:1-3).
21. Soon after conception, and following an argument, Hagar is sent to the desert by an angry Sarai (Gen. 16:4-6).
22. Hagar is ministered to by the angel of the Lord, promised a son whose name would be called Ishmael, and sent back to Sarai (Gen. 16:7-14).
23. Hagar gives birth to Ishmael when Abram was 86 (Gen. 16:15-16).

II. Events During His Latter Years: From 86 to 175 (Gen. 17-25)

1. God appears to Abram when he was 99 years old and changes his name to Abraham (Gen. 17:1-5).
2. He again is promised both seed and soil (Gen. 17:6-8).
3. God now institutes the ceremony of circumcision (Gen. 17:9-14).
4. Sarai's name is now changed to Sarah (Gen. 17:15-16).
5. God promises to bless Ishmael and reassures Abraham that Sarah would give birth to a baby boy who would be called Isaac (Gen. 17:17-22).
6. Abraham circumcises himself and all the males in his camp (Gen. 17:23-27).
7. Abraham is visited by the Lord and two angels, who again reassure him of Isaac's birth, now to occur in less than a year (Gen. 18:1-15).
8. God tells him Sodom would soon be destroyed (Gen. 18:16-22).
9. God grants Abraham's request to spare the city if but ten righteous people could be found living in it (Gen. 18:23-33).
10. Abraham later views the smoke of this burning city, destroyed by God for its immorality (Gen. 19:27-29).
11. He moves to Philistia and, as he had once done in Egypt, lies about his wife (Gen. 20:1-2).
12. Later he prays for and accepts gifts from the Philistine king (Gen. 20:3-18).
13. Isaac is born when Abraham was 100 years old (Gen. 21:1-8).
14. At God's command Abraham separates from both Hagar and Ishmael (Gen. 21:9-21).
15. He enters into a special agreement with a Philistine king at Beer-sheba (Gen. 21:22-34).
16. He offers up Isaac on Mt. Moriah at God's command (Gen. 22:1-10).
17. He is ordered to kill a ram in place of Isaac (Gen. 22:11-13).
18. He calls the name of that place Jehovah-jireh (Gen. 22:14).
19. The Abrahamic Covenant is now reconfirmed (Gen. 22:15-19).
20. He learns concerning the births of his brother Nahor's children including a daughter named Rebekah (Gen. 22:20-24).
21. Sarah dies at age 127 (Gen. 23:1-2).
22. Abraham buys the cave of Machpelah from a Hittite ruler to bury her in. (Gen. 23:3-20).
23. Abraham sends his servant to Mesopotamia to fetch a bride for Isaac (Gen. 24:1-67).
24. Abraham marries Keturah and fathers six sons through her (Gen. 25:1-6).
25. He dies at the age of 175 (Gen. 25:7-11).

A BIBLICAL REFLECTION ON HIS LIFE

I. His Names and Titles

- A. He is called "*the friend of God*" (2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; James 2:23).

- B. He is the acknowledged "*father of the Hebrew nation*" (Psa. 47:9; 105:6; Isa. 41:8; 51:2)
- A. The abode of departed believers prior to Calvary was named after him, known as "*Abraham's bosom*" (Luke 16:22). From this abode Abraham himself carried on a conversation with a rich man who had died unsaved (Luke 16:24-31).
 - 1. The man, being tormented by flames, asked Abraham for relief.
 - 2. Abraham told him this could not be done.
 - 3. The man then asked Abraham to send Lazarus (a poor beggar who had died saved) back to earth that he might witness to the rich man's five lost brothers.
 - 4. Again, Abraham refused, pointing out that they had had ample opportunity to hear the prophets.
 - 5. If his brothers did not heed their message, they would not listen even if someone were to be raised from the dead.

II. His Universal Influence

- A. He was referred to by John the Baptist to rebuke the unbelieving Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt. 3:7-9).
- B. Abraham was often referred to by Christ.
 - 1. In distinguishing between Abraham's physical and spiritual seed (Matt. 8:11-12; Luke 13:28-29; John 8:39).
 - 2. To prove that God is the God of the living and not of the dead (Matt. 22:32).
 - 3. To contrast himself with Abraham—"Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58).
 - 4. To testify that Abraham enjoyed the blessings of the preincarnate Christ—"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56).
- C. Peter mentioned Abraham on two occasions during his sermon at the Jerusalem gate called Beautiful.
 - 1. "*The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go*" (Acts 3:13).

2. *"Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed"*(Acts 3:25).
- B. Stephen referred to Abraham on five occasions during his defense before the Jewish high priest (Acts 7:2, 8, 16-17, 32). Stephen pointed out the following:
1. The God of glory had appeared to Abraham in Mesopotamia.
 2. God gave him the seal of circumcision.
 3. Abraham had purchased the cave of Machpelah as a burial ground.
 4. God had promised Abraham that he would someday deliver his descendants from Egyptian bondage.
 5. God invoked the name of Abraham during his call to Moses.
- C. Paul mentioned Abraham.
1. During his first recorded sermon (Acts 13:26).
 2. To illustrate four great truths
 - a. The meaning of and need for justification (Rom. 4:1-3, 11-12, 16; Gal. 3:16-18)
 - b. The true identity of Abraham's spiritual seed, namely, saved Jews and Gentiles, and not merely physical Jews (Rom. 4:11-12, 16; Gal. 3:6-9, 14, 29)
 - c. The sovereignty of God (Rom. 9:6-9)
 - d. The wisdom of God (Rom. 11:1)
- F. God himself on three occasions reminded various individuals that he was Abraham's God.
1. He reminded Isaac (Gen. 26:24).
 2. He reminded Jacob (Gen. 28:13).
 3. He reminded Moses (Exod. 3:6).
- G. At least 10 individuals referred to Abraham in their prayers or admonitions.
1. Jacob (Gen. 32:9-12)
 2. Moses (Exod. 32:13)
 3. David (1 Chron. 16:15)
 4. Elijah (1 Kings 18:36)
 5. Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 29:7)
 6. Hezekiah (2 Chron. 30:6)

7. The Levites in Nehemiah's time (Neh. 9:7)
8. Micah (Mic. 7:20)
9. Mary (Luke 1:55)
10. Zechariah (Luke 1:73)

III. His Enduring Legacy

- A. God often spared Israel and delivered that nation because of his covenant with Abraham. This occurred:
 1. In the days of the Egyptian captivity (Exod. 2:24)
 2. During the Exodus (Psa. 105:42)
 3. During the reign of King Jehoshaphat (2 Kings 13:22-25)

- B. At least 18 events from Abraham's life are mentioned in the New Testament:
 1. His early life in Mesopotamia (Acts 7:2)
 2. His belief (Acts 7:2; Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6; James 2:23)
 3. His receiving of the Abrahamic Covenant (Luke 1:73; Acts 3:25; Heb. 6:13-14)
 4. His call to Canaan (Heb. 11:8)
 5. His sojourn in Haran [Charran, KJV] (Acts 7:4)
 6. His nomadic life in Canaan (Heb. 11:9)
 7. His victory over Chedorlaomer (Heb. 7:1)
 8. His meeting with Melchizedek (Heb. 7:1)
 9. His (and Sarah's) faith in God's promise concerning the birth of Isaac (Rom. 4:18-21; Heb. 11:11)
 10. His circumcision (Acts 7:8; Rom. 4:11)
 11. His marriage to Hagar and the birth of Ishmael (Gal. 4:22-24)
 12. His meeting with God, just prior to Isaac's birth (Rom. 9:9)
 13. His circumcising of Isaac (Acts 7:8)
 14. His offering up of Isaac (Heb. 11:17; James 2:21)
 15. His belief that, if necessary, God would raise up Isaac from the dead (Heb. 11:19)
 16. His submissive wife, Sarah (1 Peter 3:6)
 17. His purchase of a sepulcher for Sarah (Acts 7:16)
 18. His anticipation of that heavenly city (Heb. 11:10)

PERSONAL THOUGHTS ABOUT HIS LIFE

How Abraham could have reflected on his life:

I still miss Sarah. Let's see, how long has she been gone? I was 137 when she died at age 127. On my next birthday I'll be 175. Nearly 40 years. That's a long time to be separated from someone you love. I can still vividly remember when she and I packed up and left Ur a century ago! What a handsome couple we were back then. Of course

all our friends and relatives thought we were crazy! They told us it was bad enough to leave the comfort and safety of city life, but to head out for an unknown land at the command of some invisible God, well, that was sheer insanity! I wonder how Ishmael is doing these days? As I remember, he'll be 88 on his next birthday. The last report I heard was that he had married an Egyptian girl and had fathered 12 sons. That's good! I hope the best for him. My heart still grieves when I think back on those events which made it necessary for us to go our separate ways. Keturah has been a good wife to me, certainly a fruitful one, giving birth to six healthy sons. But it is Isaac of course, the heir of the covenant, the miracle son, who is the source of my joy and comfort. Again my thoughts turn to Sarah. So much has happened since leaving Ur. God's righteousness has been imputed to the both of us. Her barren womb bore us our beloved Isaac. Each of our names has been changed for the good. From our seed the Messiah Himself will someday come. No, old girl, our friends, not us, were wrong. You probably did on occasion miss the comfort and safety of big city life. I know I still do at times. But not to worry, beloved daughter of the covenant, for we both look for *"a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."*

SPIRITUAL LESSONS GLEANED FROM HIS LIFE

1. The believer's relationship to the world is never the same after his conversion (Gen. 12:1-3).
2. I am never to depend upon Egypt (a type of the world) in time of trouble (Gen. 12:10).
3. Lying always increases, but never decreases, our problems (Gen. 12:13).
4. My sin can affect unsaved people (Gen. 12:17; 20:18).
5. Righteousness is only imputed by faith (Gen. 15:6).
6. Never substitute God's revealed plan for one of your own (Gen. 12:2; 16:2-3).
7. The purest kind of faith is accepting from God those terrible things you cannot possibly understand (Gen. 22:1-2, 15-18; Heb. 11:17-19).
8. Make every attempt to see that your children marry believers (Gen. 24:1-4).
9. Anticipate the "sweet by and by" while living in the "nasty now and now!" (Heb. 11:10).

A STATISTICAL SUMMARY OVERVIEWING HIS LIFE

Father: Terah (Gen. 11:26)

Spouses: Sarah, Hagar, and Keturah (Gen. 11:29; 16:3; 25:1)

Sons: From Hagar: Ishmael (Gen. 16:15-16). From Sarah: Isaac (Gen. 21:2-3). From Keturah: Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah (Gen. 25:2)

Brothers: Nahor and Haran (Gen. 11:26)

Sisters: Half sister was Sarah (Gen. 20:12)

First mention: Gen. 11:26

Final mention: 1 Peter 3:6

Meaning of his name: "Father of a multitude"

Frequency of his name: Referred to 307 times

Biblical books mentioning him: 27 books (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Nehemiah, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Micah, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter)

Occupation: Patriarch

Place of birth: Ur of the Chaldees (Gen. 11:31)

Place of death: Near Hebron in Canaan (Gen. 23:19; 25:9)

Age at death: 175 (Gen. 25:7)

Important fact about his life: He was the father of the Hebrew nation and the ultimate role model for faith (Gen. 12:1-3; 1 Chron. 1:34; 2:1-2; Heb. 11:8-10).

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