

GENESIS 1:12-50

As is often the case God uses people to accomplish His purposes and the rest of Genesis is the account of four such people who we call patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph

Gods Nation is born

God was going to make a fresh start and create a new humanity released from the power of Satan, and He was going to do that through Abram. He was going to be the new Adam, the father of the human race, the father of Gods new humanity (See Galatians 3:29)

God calls Abram in chapter 12:1-3 “

“Now the LORD had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you.² I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.³ I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Abram was living at the time with his family in Mesopotamia (Acts 7; 2-3) in the city of Ur, probably the ancient city by that name in southern Babylonia in modern Iraq. God called him to separate himself from the pagan community in which he lived, and from his country, his clan, and his immediate family. What a tall order that was, though Jesus says something similar to those who want to follow Him (Mark 3:31-35 and Luke 14:25-26).

Abrams background was idolatrous (see Joshua 24:2). The dominant cult in Ur was the worship of the moon-god Nannar, maybe just one of the gods his ancestors worshipped.

Abram Obeyed God and the writer of Hebrews puts it like this ***“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance and he went out not knowing where he was going”***. (Hebrews 11:8)

Abram (then 75 years old) and his family went from Ur, and stopped off in Haran until his father Terah died. Gods promise to Abram in Genesis 12:1-3 was repeated and reinforced over many years.

- a. Genesis 12:7
- b. Genesis 13:14-17
- c. Genesis 15:1-21
- d. Genesis 17:1-21
- e. Genesis 18:9-15
- f. Genesis 21:12
- g. Genesis 22:15-18

God placed Adam in a beautiful garden and God was going to send Abram to another kind of “garden” that is Canaan (Deuteronomy 8:7-9). ***7 For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; 8 a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; 9 a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper. 10 When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you***” God promised He would give this land to Abram’s offspring. God also showed Abram that his descendants would go down into Egypt, and He would rescue them and give them the Canaanites land.

After a brief stay in Egypt (where he had lied saying his wife was his sister) now Abram is wealthy and returns to Canaan. He and his nephew Lot agree to separate, and Lot goes to the land of Sodom. A legion of marching armies descend upon Sodom where Lot is currently living, and with the help of only 318 men Abram defeats them. The king of Sodom recognises Abram for his heroic deed, and the priest Melchizedek blesses Abram with bread and wine

Melchizedek (Chapter 14)

Abram met two kings that day, the king of Sodom, and Melchizedek the king of Salem. Melchizedek was a priest of the true God. We meet him again in Psalm 110:4 and in

Hebrews 5; 5-10, 6:20-7.25. He ruled over Salem the city later called Jerusalem, the earthly counterpart of the very city Abram was looking forward to “**whose designer and builder is God**” (Hebrews 11:10). This mysterious priestly king prefigures our great High Priest King Jesus. The King of Sodom offered Abram the spoils of war, but Melchizekek offered him bread and wine. This is probably indicative of more than refreshment, for in those days to eat with someone meant you were in relationship with them. Abram refused the king of Sodom’s booty, instead he chose fellowship with Gods priest and so with God Himself.

A strange ceremony (Genesis 15:9-21)

God confirmed His one sided promise to Abram in Chapter 15:1-6 “**After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.”² But Abram said, “Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?”³ Then Abram said, “Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!”⁴ And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, “This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.”⁵ Then He brought him outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”⁶ And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.**

After this promise God is now going to confirm it to Abram in a way which to us seems rather strange. This was a covenant ceremony which was a serious business in these days. It would be performed by sacrificing an animal. God instructed Abram to make a “corridor of death” by laying out animal sacrifices in two rows. Both parties would normally walk down this “corridor” between the sacrifices, to demonstrate they were committed to keep the covenant that is the solemn agreement made between them. In effect they were saying “I will be like these slain animals if I should break this agreement”

Abram however never walked down the corridor with God, instead God put him to sleep. Abram could never guarantee to keep his part of the covenant so God alone passed between the sacrifices appearing as “**smoking oven and a burning torch**”

reminding us of the pillar of smoke and fire which is how God revealed His presence to the people in the wilderness.

God was to ensure that this solemn covenant could never be broken by the weakness or sin of mankind. By walking down the corridor God took upon Himself to die, should either party break the covenant (though of course God would not break it) though Abrams descendants did. Later Jesus Himself was torn to pay the price for a broken covenant, and here we have again the message of the gospel. Do this remind you when God put Adam to sleep and took a bride from his side? Here God put Abram to sleep so Jesus would have a bride for Himself.

Chapter 17

Later God gave Abram a permanent sign of the covenant. He appeared before him when he was 99 years old and said **“I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. ²And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.” ³Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: ⁴“As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. ⁵No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. ⁶I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. ⁷And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. ⁸Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”**

God declares to Abram **“I am Almighty God”** (in Hebrew *“El Shaddai”*) that is God All-Powerful All-Sufficient. God would do all that He had promised. In other places in the story of Abraham, God is called *“Elohim”* the mighty omnipotent God. Elohim is a plural name which carries overtones of the trinity, the three persons in the Godhead

God promised that Abrams wife would have a son who he was to call Isaac and that he would be born in one years' time...

God commands Abraham and the males in his household to be circumcised as a “**sign of the covenant**” between God and Abraham. They were to remain faithful to God and trust Him to fulfil all that He had promised. By now Abram was 99 years old and impotent “**as good as dead**” (Romans 4:21) and Sarai was barren and well past the age of child bearing. Without God, for them to have a son would have been impossible. However Abraham did trust God “⁹ **and not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah’s womb.** ²⁰ **He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God,** ²¹ **and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.** ²² **And therefore “it was accounted to him for righteousness.”** (Romans 4:19-22)

Abram gets a new name Abraham which meant a new identity, a new status. Circumcision was the occasion when a baby was given their name. It declared that the one circumcised was now in covenant relationship with God and under His authority. God didn’t want mere physical circumcision. He wanted circumcised hearts that were submissive and obedient to Him. Circumcision symbolises death to self-will and self-reliance and a new life of loyalty to God and reliance on Him. God wanted people who loved Him with all their heart and soul (Deuteronomy 30; 6)

Notice that God said “**He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised**” (Vs 13). Those bought with money were part of God’s covenant people even though they were not related to Abraham. This is significant. From the beginning, God’s people were not a single ethnic group. What bound them together as a nation was their covenant relationship with God, not their ethnic origin. From this time forward through the Old Testament age immigrants and purchased slaves could be one of the family and eat the Passover (Exodus 12:43-45, 48-49). God has always wanted people from every nation, tribe, peoples, and languages, to be His people. This principle, foundational to the church’s gospel mission, began way back in the Old Testament (Matthew 28:18-20)

Faith

Job asked a vital question “**how can a man be righteous before God**” (Job 9:2). God tells us in Genesis 15:6 “**Abraham believed the Lord and He credited to Him as**

righteousness". And that verse is repeated in Scripture. It's quoted in Romans 4:3 Galatians 3:6 and James 2:23. It's mentioned in Habakkuk 2:4 Romans 1:17 Galatians 3:11 and Hebrews 10:38. Now Abraham was still a sinner, but He had faith in God, not just believing in God, but responding to Gods revelation and acting upon it. In return God in His grace considered Abraham to be righteous and called Him "my friend" (Isaiah 41:8). But what is righteousness, is it to be morally upright and live a decent life. To be righteous essentially is to have a right relationship with God. Of course being in this relationship demands right living to, and God made this clear to Abraham when He said "**Walk before Me and be blameless**" (Genesis 17:1). That word "blameless" does not mean to be sinlessly perfect, but to walk moment by moment in a relationship with God, seeking to please Him in every way (Colossians 1:10).

Faltering faith

Sometimes Abraham failed in his faith in God. In Egypt and in Gerar Abraham pretended his wife Sarah was his sister (though she was his half- sister) fearing someone would want her and kill him. On another occasion when Sarai was getting impatient waiting for Gods promise of a son, she decided to help God out and persuaded Abraham that he should have a child by Hagar Sarah's maid (Genesis 16:1-16). This proved a disaster, as do all our attempts to do things our own way and act contrary to the will of God. Sometimes people say "God helps those who help themselves" and even suggest it's in the Bible. However the main thrust of Scripture is the exact opposite that is God helps the helpless.

Paul makes reference to this incident in Galatians 4:22-31 illustrating that Hagar's son Ishmael was the result of Abrahams effort, but Isaac was born by Gods enabling. Hagar's son Ishmael symbolises Jews who were trying to be saved by their own efforts. Salvation is a free gift of God's grace (Ephesians 2:8).

God was going to wait until it was absolutely impossible for Abraham and Sarah to have a child when Abram was "**As good as dead**". All human hope and strength had to perish, and this is precisely so in relation to salvation. We must all come to that place where we realise that we cannot achieve salvation, except through The Lord Jesus Christ and what He has done. Eventually God keeps His promise and Isaac is born

Isaac is born

The last and greatest test for Abraham came when God said to him ***“Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”***

The story is in Genesis 22:1-19 and Hebrews 11:17-19. Isaac was the one through whom the promised offspring would come, but Abraham trusts and believes God and moves towards mount Moriah with Isaac ready to sacrifice him. Notice that he says when speaking to his servants ***“I and the boy will come again to you”*** (Genesis 22:5) It seems he believed God would raise Isaac from the dead, indeed the writer to the Hebrews tells us so (Hebrews 11:19). Abraham’s faith was real and living and outworked in obedience, even to the point of sacrificing his own son. Well God provides a lamb and Isaac is spared. Mount Moriah was close to where Jesus, Gods only begotten Son would be sacrificed for mankind, a sacrifice which Abrams offering foreshadows.

Isaac and Jacob

Abraham ensures that Isaac marries the right girl, not a Canaanite, but one from his own family (Genesis 24:1-67). This is great picture of how God the Father through the agency of the Spirit finds a bride for His son Jesus Christ. Woven throughout the Old Testament are these hints, allusions, pictures, types which point us forward to Jesus Himself. Jesus said ***“You search the Scriptures for in them you think you have eternal life and these are they which testify of me”*** (Luke 5:39) See also (Luke 24:27,44, John 1:45)

God blessed Isaac and confirmed the oath He swore to His father Abraham (Genesis 26; 2-5) Just like his father Isaac lied about his wife Rebekah saying she was his sister (Genesis 26.6-11)

Just like Sarah was barren, so was Rebekah, Isaacs wife. Here again God would make sure that the producing of an offspring would be attributed to Him alone and not the strength of men. God healed Rebekah’s barrenness and twins were born, Esau the eldest and Jacob. Esau was unrighteous (Hebrews 12:16). As firstborn he would have succeeded his father Isaac as head of the family and be first in line to continue

Abraham's lineage down to God's promised offspring Jesus. However he despised his birth right and sold it to his brother for a bowl of stew when he was hungry. Esau married Hittite girls (a Canaanite nation) rather than girls from his family group. Jacob stole the birth right by trickery and received the blessing of the firstborn from Isaac his father. The name Jacob is very closely related to a Hebrew word meaning "to seize by the heel" or "to betray". Jacob and his mother were deceitful in their actions and inexcusable. They should have relied on God, but all four participants were at fault. Esau despised his birth right but having sold it he tried to get it back by allowing Isaac to bless him. Isaac allowed Esau to marry Hittite girls. He could have acted like his father Abraham who went to great lengths to find a wife from the family. And why did Isaac try to bless Esau instead of Jacob. Surely he knew what God had said to Rebekah "***The older shall serve the younger***" (Genesis 25:23)

A dream

Esau was determined to kill Jacob, so Isaac sent his son off to Uncle Laban in Haran to give Esau time to cool off. On his way Isaac had a dream (Genesis 28:10-22). God confirmed the promise He had made to his grandfather Abraham. Despite all the family dysfunction God was sovereign

1. He would give him and his offspring the land of Canaan
2. He would have a multitude of descendants
3. All the families of the earth would be blessed through him and his offspring

Isaac dreamt of a ladder that reached heaven from earth with God standing above it speaking to Jacob while he was asleep. Jacob exclaimed "***This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven***"

Compare all this with the tower of Babel and the ziggurats mentioned in our previous study. Jacob saw angels ascending and descending the stairway. Jesus recalled this when he said to Nathaniel "***You will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man***" (John 1:51). Jesus was saying the He was the one in whom heaven and earth met, the living way to the Father.

Jacob responded by worshipping God and making a vow. Jacob named the spot Bethel meaning “the house of God”. This was the beginning of Gods dealings with Jacob but there was still work to do, though in the end he would be named among the men and women of faith in Hebrews 11:21.

Two twister

Jacobs’s time with his uncle Laban was not easy as Laban was a deceiver too. Jacob awoke after his marriage to discover he was married to the wrong woman. Jacob met his match with Laban, which resulted in years of friction and drudgery to weather his character. After 20 years of exile Jacob, now a wealthy man, had to face another tragedy. Rachel, who he worked so hard to get and whom he loved died before he got back to his father Isaac again (Genesis 35.16-20, 27)

A wrestling match

Jacob was still facing the wrath of his brother Esau which had caused him to flee in the first place. They were reconciled but not until Jacob found himself wrestling with God (Genesis chapter 32). God meets with him in an angelic form at Peniel. The angel is trying to overpower Jacob, and doubtless Jacob is trying to wrestle him off. Seeing that Jacob is not going to give up, the Angel dislocates his hip and disables him. Perhaps it’s at this point when Jacob realises that this is no ordinary man but God Himself in angelic form. Instead of wrestling now Jacob just hangs on and clings. He prays a fervent prayer and pleads for a blessing. Hosea tells us “**he struggled with the angel and prevailed He wept and sought favour from him**”. Jacob cries “**I will not let you go unless you bless me**” and God does just that and renames him Israel (Literally “God struggles”) signifying here “you have struggled with God”. Jacob is no longer the self-sufficient and self-reliant man he had been, but an overcomer who had struggled with God and obtained his blessing through faith. For the rest of his life he limps. God has broken his natural powers, his natural human ability and now he must look to God alone and cling to him in faith

Jacob had 12 sons from whom sprang the 12 tribes of Israel. Now God is going to use Joseph, one of his sons, for His purposes

Joseph (Chapters 37-50)

Let's look at the highlights of the life of Joseph. His story is quite different from those of Abraham Isaac or Jacob. We read nothing about Joseph's sin or failure, and in this he is a clear type and picture of Jesus.

He was Jacobs's eleventh son and Rachel's first. He was his fathers favourite and given a coat of many colours. He shared some dreams, which suggested he was lording it over his jealous brothers, and finished up as a slave in Egypt as a result of his brothers actions. Joseph caught the eye of his owner Potiphar, an official in the court of Pharaoh, and was appointed to oversee his household. Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph, but he resisted her advances, and she got him thrown in jail where, even though he interpreted some dreams for some of Pharaohs key servants, he languished in jail apparently forgotten. Eventually he was called from prison to interpret Pharaohs dreams where he found favour by Pharaoh who put him in charge to prepare Egypt for the famine which the dream had foretold. He was a great success and everyone in Egypt was fed and people came from all over to buy food including Jacobs's brothers from Canaan. Eventually Joseph revealed himself to his brothers and graciously Joseph utters that famous line ***"But as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring it about as it is this day to save many people alive"*** (Genesis 50:20)

Pharaoh insisted that Joseph bring his whole family down to Egypt to a temporary land of plenty in Goshen and so Jacob was reunited with his son and the family reconciled. We shall pick up the story in our next study

In what ways was the life of Joseph a picture of the life of Jesus?

1. He is the object of his father's special love.
2. He had promises of divine exaltation.
3. He was mocked by his family.
4. He was sold for pieces of silver.
5. He was stripped of his robe.
6. He was delivered up to the Gentiles.
7. He was falsely accused.

8. He was faithful amid temptation.
9. He was thrown into prison.
10. He stood before rulers.
11. His power was acknowledged by those in authority.
12. He saves his rebellious brothers from death when they realize who he is.
13. He is exalted after and through humiliation.
14. He embraces God's purpose even though it brings him intense physical harm.
15. He is the instrument God uses at the hands of the Gentiles to bless his people.
16. He welcomes Gentiles to be part of his family.
17. He gives hungry people bread.
18. People must bow their knee before him.

Jacobs's prophecy (Chapter 49)

Jacob, now 147 years old, is on his deathbed. He summons his 12 sons to his side for some final words. It is during this time that he pronounces his blessing on his sons. These words are poetic and prophetic. He says the purpose of his words are, "***that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days***" (49:1). Therefore he gathers them together to make his pronouncement (49:2). From one of these sons Jesus Himself would be descended. God gave Judah (4th in line) the honour of being the ancestor of Jesus.

Jacob said to Judah

"Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father's children shall bow down before you.⁹ Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him?¹⁰ The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people.¹¹ Binding his donkey to the vine, And his donkey's colt to the choice vine, He washed his garments in wine, And his clothes in the blood of grapes.¹² His eyes are darker than wine, And his teeth whiter than milk"
(Genesis 49:8-12).

Judah himself was not a completely exemplary character. He suggested a profit motive in getting rid of Joseph (Genesis 37:26). He did not deal faithfully with his daughter in law Tamar (Genesis 38:26) and he had sex with her as a prostitute (Genesis 38:18). This blessing is again an example of the grace of God to the undeserving.

However Judah was not all bad by any means. When Joseph's brothers were thinking about killing him and just leaving him in the pit to die, when they saw the caravan coming towards Egypt, it was Judah who suggested that they sell him to the people in the caravan. He could be sold as a slave in Egypt, but at least he'd be alive. Later on, when Jacob said he would not allow Benjamin to go down to Egypt, it was Judah who offered to be a surety for him and take responsibility for Benjamin.

When they came to Egypt and Joseph put his silver cup in Benjamin's sack and they came and unloaded the sacks they saw the cup they Judah offered himself for his brother Benjamin

Let's look a little closer at this prophecy and see again how Jesus is being revealed to us

“Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise” In other words Judah will always be the leading tribe in Israel until one comes (Jesus) to whom the kingdom truly belongs. The eventual kings of Israel would come from Judah and the Messiah Jesus, God's ultimate leader, would come from this tribe

1. ***Judah is a lion's whelp*** the symbol of Judah was the lion, and there began the prophecy of the Lion of the tribe of Judah that would come. Of course, it was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. And how does this describe the Saviour that strong and mighty Lion who entered into conflict with the lion of the pit and overcame him. In Revelation 5 John weeps because no one was found worthy to open the scroll of God's judgment or even look inside it. Then one of the elders says ***“do not weep behold the lion of the tribe of Judah the root of David has prevailed to open the scroll and its seven seals”*** (Revelation 5:4-5). Of course this lion triumphed because He became a lamb.

2. ***The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people***"

A sceptre is a staff or baton, usually gold and perhaps encrusted with precious stones, that is a symbol of authority. If you visit the Tower of London and see the exhibition of the crown jewels of the monarchy, there is a sceptre there. It was handed to Queen Elizabeth when she was enthroned as a symbol of her authority. So when it says, "***The sceptre will not depart from Judah...until...***" it means that Judah is going to become the chief of the tribes of Israel until a certain thing happens. The tribe of Judah will be the leading tribe until it produces this one, this Messiah, this leader, and then the tribe of Judah will disappear from prominence. All of which is exactly what happened. For many years after Jacob made this prediction, no leading tribe emerged. Moses came from the tribe of Levi. Joshua came from the tribe of Ephraim. Gideon came from the tribe of Manasseh. Samson came from the tribe of Dan. Samuel came from Ephraim and Saul from Benjamin. But then, 640 years after Jacob's prophecy, David, the son of Jesse, from the tribe of Judah became king. And from that point on, Judah was the dominant tribe. Eventually the northern ten tribes were defeated by Assyria, and only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin survived. And they collectively became known as the tribe of Judah.

The word Shiloh is taken from the root word Shalom that means peace. Shiloh is an accepted messianic title (Isaiah 9:6; Micah 5:2-5). Incorporated in Jacob's blessing is this prophetic pronouncement that the Messianic "Seed" will come through the line of Judah (Genesis 3:15; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). Therefore, "Shiloh" the messiah, must come before the sceptre departs from Judah. Since the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Jesus is the only logical and possible person to fulfil this prophecy.

3. ***Binding his donkey to the vine, and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, He washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes.***¹² Look at the incredible language that is used in verse 11. "**binding his donkey to the vine**" Not an obvious place to tie up a donkey. The idea is just like when the spies go into the land of Canaan, and they see grapes the size of grapefruits. This is a very big vine. How wealthy, how prosperous are they?

They don't wash their clothes in water, they wash their clothes in wine. This is the richness and the prosperity of the days of the Messiah. He washes His robes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are dull from wine, his teeth from milk. This is the prosperity of the land being spoken of in the days of the reign of the Messiah.

The story of one family

We are beginning to see how the Old Testament tells us how to locate Jesus Christ in history. We are told that he would be of Adam, through Seth, through Noah, through Shem, through Abraham, through Isaac, through Jacob, through Judah, through Jesse, through David, through Solomon.

Of all the sons of Adam, all were eliminated and Seth was chosen. Of all the descendants of Seth, all were eliminated but Noah was chosen. Of the three sons of Noah, two were eliminated and Shem was chosen. Of the descendants of Shem, all were rejected except Abraham who was chosen. Of the two sons of Abraham, Ishmael was rejected and Isaac was chosen. Of the two sons of Isaac, Esau was rejected and Jacob was chosen. Of the twelve sons of Jacob, eleven were rejected and one Judah was chosen.

We shall see in later studies that of all the families of Judah, only the family of Jesse was chosen. Of the sons of Jesse, all were rejected but the boy David. Of the sons of David, all were rejected except the line of Solomon.

As incredible as it seems, the Old Testament is not primarily the story of the human race or of the Jewish race. It is the story of the one family from whom the Messiah is going to come.

