

ABRAHAM—“THE FRIEND OF GOD”

Presented by

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In both the Old and New Testaments we are introduced to a number of memorable Bible characters. Some of those people—like King Ahab and his wife Jezebel, Judas Iscariot, or Pontius Pilate—are well known to us because of their wickedness. Others—like Noah, Esther, Stephen, and Paul—are well known to us because of their faithfulness to God.

On occasion, however, a single biblical character stands out from all the rest for specific reasons. One such individual is the man we know as Abraham. There were others within the Scriptures, of course, whose lives were deemed worthy of special recognition by God. For example, it is said of Moses that he “was the meekest man on the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3). And, regarding Enoch we are informed that he “walked with God” (Genesis 5:24). But only of Abraham is it stated that he was “the friend of God” (James 2:23).

That friendship began in a rather unusual way. Abraham’s story starts with his migration with his father Terah and the rest of his family from Ur of the Chaldees to the flourishing trade center of Haran, several hundred miles to the northwest. While living in Haran, Abraham received a call from God to go to a strange, unknown land that God promised to show him. Genesis 12:1-3 explains how the Lord promised Abraham that He would make him and his descendants a great nation. That promise must have seemed quite unbelievable to Abraham at the time because, as Genesis 11:30-31 points out, Abraham and his wife Sarah were childless. Yet Abraham exhibited not a hint of doubt or disbelief regarding God’s promise. Instead, he took Sarah, his nephew Lot, and all of his household, and headed out toward the land that God had pledged to give him.

Making such a trip was no easy thing. First, as Genesis 12:4 explains, Abraham was **75 years old** when he began this perilous journey. Second, Abraham was a wealthy man who had amassed a sizable estate. Genesis 12:5 tells us, “Then Abram took Sarah his wife and Lot his brother’s son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan.” Third, as Abraham and his group moved south along the trade routes from Haran through Shechem and Bethel, they eventually entered Canaan—a land inhabited by a group of fierce, dangerous, warrior-like people.

Nevertheless, Abraham’s faith in God’s promise that He ultimately would give Abraham this land as a gift for him and his descendants never wavered. The circumstances in which Abraham and his family repeatedly found themselves were truly stressful and difficult, yet Abraham’s faith in God’s promises compelled him to always trust the Lord completely.

The relationship between God and Abraham was what was known as a “covenant relationship,” which was the most solemn and binding form of arrangement between people in the ancient world. According to such an arrangement, individuals or groups agreed to abide by certain conditions that governed their relationship with each other. In Abraham’s case, as an act of trusting and obedient faith on his part, he agreed to travel to the land that God would show him. For God’s part, He agreed to make Abraham a great nation. In Genesis 15:5 God said to Abraham, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them. So shall your descendants be.” Abraham’s response—recorded in Genesis 15:6—is the model by which all future believers’ faith would be measured: “And [Abraham] believed in the Lord, and [God] accounted it to him for righteousness.”

In Genesis 21 we learn that Abraham and Sarah were blessed by the birth of a son, whom they named Isaac. The Bible contains numerous references to Isaac’s sterling character. In Genesis 22:6-9 we see evidence of his willingness to submit to God and to trust Him completely. In Genesis 26:20-22 we learn of Isaac’s peaceful nature, and in Genesis 26:15 we read of his dedicated life of prayer and faith. In the New Testament, Isaac is called “the child of promise” (Galatians 4:22-23), and in Romans 9:7 the apostle Paul referred to Isaac’s position as the channel through which God’s promise to Abraham would be fulfilled.

Forty years after Isaac was born, he married a woman by the name of Rebekah, who then gave birth to twin sons—Jacob and Esau. Jacob, in turn, later married and had twelve sons—who subsequently became the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel. One of those sons was Judah—from whom would spring “the Lion of Judah,” Jesus Christ, Who would “save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him” (Hebrews 7:25).

Have you ever stopped to think about how Abraham’s unquestioning obedience to God ultimately affected every person who would ever live on the Earth after him? You and I today, for example, have the blessed opportunity of becoming “children of God” (John 1:12) because of the faithfulness of that kind old gentleman who trusted the Lord enough to willingly leave his home to travel to an unknown, far-away land, and who, as a result, provided the seed-line that would give rise to the Messiah Who is the “King of kings, and Lord of lords” (Revelation 17:14). Little wonder that Abraham is called “the friend of God”—which leads us to the question: What about **you**; are you, too, “the friend of God”?