

“Abram’s Call”
Genesis 11:10-14:24
Steve Mood

Introduction

- My introduction to Abraham occurred when I was about 10 years old, at a Stockade meeting when we sang the song “Father Abraham”. The theology is not deep in the song, but Abraham did have many sons:
- *Father Abraham had Many sons Many sons had Father Abraham I am one of them and so are you So let’s all praise the Lord. Right arm!*
- Abraham, or Abram, in our passage today, is the common patriarch for the **Jews** (founding father of special relationship between the Jews & God), the **Muslims** (link in the prophets of Islam), and **Christians** (spiritual progenitor of all believers).
- One of the key words in Genesis is “**generations**.” This shows us the outline of the book, and the progression that continually draws the focus from the wide to the narrow: from creation, then man, through Abraham and finally to Jesus the Messiah. Every time it occurs, the scope of the subject is reduced.
- **Gen. 2:4** *These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.*
- **Gen. 5:1** *This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God.*
- **Gen. 6:9** *These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.*
- **Gen. 10:1** *These are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Sons were born to them after the flood.*
- **Gen. 11:10** *These are the generations of Shem. When Shem was 100 years old, he fathered Arpachshad two years after the flood.*
- **Gen. 11:27** *Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot.*
- **Gen. 25:12** *These are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's servant, bore to Abraham.*
- **Gen. 25:19** *These are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham fathered Isaac,*
- **Gen. 36:9** *These are the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir.*
- **Gen. 37:1-2** *Jacob lived in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan. These are the generations of Jacob.*
- As we look at the genealogy in Gen. 11, we see the steady decline of the number of years that people lived, evidence of the change of the environment that occurred after the flood.
- But who is this Abram that we talk about?

- **Joshua 24:2** *And Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods.*
- Abram was raised in the Ur of the Chaldeans whose people worshipped false gods. This indicates that Terah the father of Abram and Nahor served other gods. It is possible that Abram also worshipped false gods before God called him, but we don’t know for sure.
- The name Abram means “exalted father”, Abraham means “father of multitude”. Abram’s name was changed from Abram to Abraham by God:
- **Gen. 17:5** *No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.*
- Today we are going to look at “**Abram’s Growth in Faith.**”

Lesson

- **Step 1: Abram’s response to the call of God (11:31-12:9)**
- **Gen. 11:31-32** *Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram’s wife, and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there. The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran.*
- Here it looks like it was Terah who decided to move the family to the land of Canaan, but Acts indicates a different story when Stephen spoke before the high priest:
- **Acts 7:2-4** *Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, ‘Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.’ Then he went out from the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living.*
- The specifics of Abram’s call are seen in Genesis 12:
- **Gen. 12:1-3** *Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”*
- God communicated directly to Abram, as we see in the phrase “*the Lord said*”. God spoke and likely in a voice that Abram heard. Acts 7 indicates that God appeared to Abram. He was commanded to forsake his own country and his relatives and “Go” to another land, but the place was not defined. God was going to show him another place to live, a place that God Himself would guide Abram to.
- God wanted Abram to live a life of faith, a life that is dependent upon Him and not other people, Abram’s own skills, or chance. God does the same thing in our own lives. God has not told us all the exact details in our lives beforehand, but He does guide us and He wants us to trust in Him, as Paul says:

- **1 Cor. 5:6-7** *So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight.*
- Some have faulted Abram for stopping in Haran first, before going to Canaan, but there is no indication in the Biblical record that Abram was rebuked for stopping. But it is true that the fulfillment of the promise that God made was postponed while he remained in Haran. As soon as Terah died, they continued the journey.
- God commanded Abram to go, but look at what He would provide for him:
- **(1) I will show you** – God was going to show Abram the land that he was to live in, a land he would reside in only as a nomad.
- **(2) I will make of you a great nation** – God promised to make a nation from him. He would have children and grandchildren, and many descendants, enough to populate a great nation, but he would not see this fulfilled.
- **(3) I will bless you and make your name great** – There is probably no more honored name in history than the name of Abram, who is honored by Jews, Muslims, and Christians.
- **(4) I will bless those who bless you and him who dishonors you I will curse** – Historically speaking those nations who have treated the Jewish people well have prospered and been blessed. Those who dishonored the Jews have been destroyed, conquered, and reduced to fifth-rate nations, and this has evened happened to the church when they sought to destroy the Jews.
- **(5) In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed** – Jesus, who was a Jew, died for the sins for both the Jews and the Gentiles, as Paul said:
- **Gal. 3:8-9** *And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.*
- Abram listened to God and made the journey to Canaan:
- **Gen. 12:4-6** *So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land.*
- Abram took his wife, his nephew Lot, all the possessions he had acquired, and all the people he had acquired. Please notice that Abram had acquired much by stopping in Haran. When Abram finally made it to Canaan the land was not empty, but inhabited by the Canaanites, a wicked, idolatrous, and warlike people.
- **Gen. 12:7** *Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him.*
- God appeared to Abram a second time and told him that all the land would be his and his posterity. Abram’s response? He made an altar to worship the God he had followed and who had appeared to him. The first part of the promises that God made to Abram had been

fulfilled, but would only be fully realized by his descendants. God is faithful to His promises and we should always trust Him.

- **Step 2: Abram's response to the famine (12:10-20)**
- **Gen. 12:10-13** *Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, "I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance, and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me, but they will let you live. Say you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared for your sake."*
- Abram had trusted God to move his entire family from Ur to Haran to Canaan. That was a big step of faith. Famine was a serious problem, but God had called Abram to go to Canaan not Egypt. How could this have happened?
- **(1) There is no indication that Abram inquired of God on what to do.**
- **(2) He left the land that God had provided to him, not trusting in the promise God made.**
- **(3) He was fearful for his life and asked his wife to deceive the Egyptians** – it was a half-truth, but implied she was unmarried and therefore available for marriage. The problem was that she was already married.
- **(4) He was willing compromise his wife's marriage vows** – His entire decision seems to be based upon his own physical safety and not his wife's sexual purity.
- Fortunately for Sarai, God intervened and afflicted Pharaoh:
- **Gen. 12:17-19** *But the Lord afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. So Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife; take her, and go."*
- God protected both Abram and Sarai, but Pharaoh was not happy and asked them to go. Have you ever done something that comprised your standards or someone else's? God has asked all of us to trust in Him and live our life by faith, and not by our abilities, schemes, flawed motivations, or reasoning.
- **Step 3: Abram's response to strife with Lot (13:1-18)**
- **Gen. 13:1-4** *So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the Negeb. Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. And he journeyed on from the Negeb as far as Bethel to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, to the place where he had made an altar at the first. And there Abram called upon the name of the Lord.*

- Abram returned to the promised land, the land that God had given to him. He was right back from where he had started. He came back rich from Egypt, but there is no indication that Abram based this wealth upon his decision to go to Egypt.
- In these verses we see that Abram called upon the name of Lord. He turned to God, to worship, to acknowledge dependence upon Him, and to pray to Him. This is the second time we see that Abram worshiped God.
- **Gen. 13:5-7** *And Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents, so that the land could not support both of them dwelling together; for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together, and there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock.*
- There was strife between the herdsmen of Lot and Abram, for the land they were on could not support their animals. This was a problem that needed to be solved.
- What I find interesting is that this occurs after Abram had called upon the name of the Lord. The lesson here in these verses is that just because you do the right thing, doesn't prevent 'bad things' from happening to us. God often tests us to indicate whether we have truly grown and will continue to depend upon Him when our life gets tough. God had done this already for Abram in the previous section when a famine had occurred and Abram fled to Egypt. Here there is a conflict and how would it be resolved? Would he claim the best land for himself? Would he ignore the conflict? Would he run away and avoid the conflict with his nephew Lot? What would you have done? Two verses have guided me in my life:
- **2 Cor. 4:17-18** *For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*
- **2 Cor. 3:18** *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.*
- Let's look at what Abram did with the next problem in his life:
- **Gen. 13:8-9** *Then Abram said to Lot, "Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are kinsmen. Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left."*
- Compared to the famine, this response to strife is truly amazing:
- **(1) Acknowledgment that no strife should be between kinsmen** – They had a close relationship and they were in a land among foreigners, watching how they would deal with their problems.
- **(2) Acknowledgment that there was plenty of room for all** – Since they were nomads, they could move around as needed.
- **(3) Allowed Lot to make a decision on where he wanted to go** – Being the elder it was actually Abram's right to take the better land and to take the first choice. He was putting others before himself. As Paul said in Philippians:

- **Phil. 2:4** *Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*
- **(4) Trusted in God to fulfill His promises in His way** – The promise of the land was made to Abram, yet he allowed God to work through Lot’s choice.
- Lot chose the better area, the Jordan valley. But what does the passage tell us?
- **Gen. 13:13** *Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord.*
- Lot’s decision was not the wisest choice and it had a consequence that we see in Genesis 19, but that is a story for another week.
- Did Abram make the right decision? Here is what God said to Abram after this incident, the third time God had spoken to him directly:
- **Gen. 13:14-15** *The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever*
- **Step 4: Abram’s decision to help Lot (14:1-16)**
- **Gen. 14:11-12** *So the enemy took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who was dwelling in Sodom, and his possessions, and went their way.*
- The next incident we come across in the passage is a war between four kings versus five kings. Lot had not spent many months in his new surroundings before a war engulfed the region. Four kings from Mesopotamia attacked the Jordan valley for they had rebelled against them. Lot was captured. A messenger came and told Abram.
- So, Abram had another decision to make: Should he help Lot or not? Should he battle this large army that had come from far away?
- **Gen. 14:13-16** *Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, who was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and of Aner. These were allies of Abram. When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus. Then he brought back all the possessions, and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his possessions, and the women and the people.*
- **(1) Abram heard that Lot had been taken** – this is the first time we see the term “Hebrew” in the Bible, and is probably a reference that Abram had come from beyond the Euphrates River.
- **(2) Abram gathered his trained men to pursue them** – His force was small, 318 against a large army, but they had been trained in warfare. It is possible that some of the allies of Abram also went with him, as indicated by verse 24.
- **(3) Abram’s men defeated them and pursued them** – He had a battle near Dan, defeated them during a night attack by splitting his army into two groups, and continued to pursue them.

- **(4) Abram brought back Lot** – Abram brought back Lot, their women and people, and their possessions.
- Abram made a quick decision and rescued his nephew Lot. Did Abram do the right thing? Was it wise? Abram was loyal, he was brave, as well as being resourceful, and especially had faith in God. God doesn't always lead us by the safe path, but we are to act according to our principles, and for Abram his family was important and he acted to save his nephew. He was a man of principle and he did what he thought was necessary and right. Abram followed the exhortation that we find in James:
- **James 4:16** *So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.*
- **Step 5: Abram's encounter with the kings of Salem and Sodom (14:17-24)**
- **Gen. 4:17-18** *After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). And Melchizedek king of Salem...*
- After the battle two kings went to meet Abram: the king of Salem and the king of Sodom. The king of Salem gave him a blessing, the king of Sodom made him a handsome and business-like offer, but its disadvantage is shown to someone with faith.
- **(1) King of Salem - Melchizedek**
- **Gen. 4:18-20** *And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!" And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.*
- The king of Salem Melchizedek brought Abram bread and wine, and gave him a blessing. He is introduced as a "*priest of God Most High*," a title that we find in the Psalms written years later. He was a worshipper and priest of the true God and ruler over Salem, which would later be known as Jerusalem. There is much that we don't know about him:
- **(a) Where he came from or who his parents were**
- **(b) How he came to be in Canaan**
- **(c) How he became a worshipper and priest of the true God**
- **(d) How Abram came to know about him**
- Many have wondered who he was: Jewish writers think that he was Shem the son of Noah, others Job, an angel, or even a preincarnate theophany of Jesus. I think these are all speculative, as none are supported in scripture.
- What we do know is that he is a type of the coming Messiah. He is referenced in the Psalms and in Hebrews:
- **Psalms 110:1-4** *The Lord says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." The Lord sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies! ... The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."*

- **Heb. 7:1-3** *For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever.*
- From these verses we glean that:
- **(1) The priesthood of the Messiah is a priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek, a priesthood that does not end, and is not of the Aaronic priesthood**
- **(2) Since Abram pays homage to Melchizedek, the priesthood of Aaron, which came from the descendants of Abram, paid a tithe from Aaron**
- **(3) Since we don't know Melchizedek's father and mother, he has no beginning or ending of life and resembles Jesus**
- **(4) Melchizedek's name means "king of righteousness" and the city he rules means "peace" also resembling Jesus**
- **(2) King of Sodom**
- **Gen. 14:21-24** *And the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself." But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have lifted my hand to the Lord, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich.' I will take nothing but what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me. Let Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre take their share."*
- The king of Sodom was a totally different kind of king. Abram was offered all the spoils of the battle, but he refused. Why did he do this? Because Abram was a servant of the one true God and he did not want the king of Sodom to say that he made Abram rich or was the reason that Abram succeeded. Abram did what he did because he worshipped and served the true God and all his success was because of the God he served and not some human king.
- The others that fought the battle with Abram were welcome to the spoils if they wanted to take them, as was appropriate under the customs of the time.
- So, in this instance we see Abram's growth of faith: he was willing to honor the person who worshiped the true God, giving a "tenth of everything," which implies 1/10 of all that he had. But Abram refused to honor the evil king of Sodom, and be beholden to him.
- **Summary**
- So, what have we learned about?
- **Step #1: Abram responded to the call of God** – He went to an unknown land, away from his family and friends, to a place where God had called him to go.
- **Step #2: Abram's poor response to the famine** – He left the land that God had promised him and was willing to deceive the Pharaoh about his wife and put her in danger.

- **Step #3: Abram allowed Lot to choose where to live and trust in God** – He let his nephew make the first choice and Lot made a bad choice in going to the region of Sodom and Gomorrah, which was filled with ungodly people with ungodly desires.
- **Step #4: Abram rescued Lot from slavery** – Once again Abram trusted God and took a step that was dangerous, but he had a strong belief and trust in God who would be with him and rescue him if needed.
- **Step #5: Abram honored the godly and rejected the ungodly** – Abram was wise in how he dealt with the kings of Salem and Sodom, a wisdom based upon his faith.

Application

- How does this passage impact our lives? Here are my suggestions:
- **(1) We need to walk by faith and trust God for His guidance** – 1 Cor. 5:6-7 *So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight.*
- **(2) We need to understand that our life is short and the things that happen are the means by which God transforms us into His image** – 2 Cor. 4:17-18 *For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*
- **(3) We must commit ourselves to doing the right thing, even if the cost is high** - James 4:16 *So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.*
- After our prayer, please stand for the doxology. Let us pray.