

The Man from Ur
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston, NC
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.
August 16, 2020

Diaspora XXII – The Church Scattered, Twenty-second Sunday

Text: Genesis 12:1-3, 15:5-10, 17, 18; 17:1-22

Purpose: The call of God is one that is offered to each and every person. In Abraham's case, God called him to leave his familiar surroundings, and go to a land chosen by God. Each of us are called to be believers in God, followers of Jesus and to go wherever He leads us.

I. Introduction

Last week we concluded the first eleven chapters of Genesis with the scattering of the various people and language groups across the face of the earth. The descendants of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, over several hundred years, multiplied their families into 70 different people groups. Instead of scattering across the face of the earth like God had instructed them to do, they came together and built a tower high up in the air in order to worship the god of their own making instead of the one true and living God. God came down and changed their languages from one universal language to literally hundreds of languages and dialects. Because they could not communicate with one another, they stopped the work on the tower and began to disperse across the face of the earth, just like God had instructed them to do in the first place.



One of the questions that often arise during the study of this section of scripture is the question, **“Where did the different races come from?”** The Bible does not directly answer that question. You would need to do a little speculation and detective work.

Some people claim that when Cain was banished from the presence of God, that God placed a mark, or different pigmentation on his skin to distinguish him from other races. The scripture is not very clear for us to know exactly how Cain was marked.



Some have looked at the genealogy of Noah and determined based upon their geographic location, that those descendents developed unique characteristics of skin color, culture, language, and heritage. If you look at the descendants of Ham, as listed in Genesis chapter ten, you will notice they settled in the area of North Africa and the coastal regions of Canaan and Syria. Those that live in that region are usually of a darker skin color.

Through the centuries people have wrongly implied that that their race was superior to another because of their skin color. A school in Wayne County lost a lawsuit many years ago and even lost their tax-exempt status because they denied African Americans admission to their private school.

During World War II, the German nation wanted to breed a superior race of people that were “pure” in order to form the Arian race. A part of their plan was to eliminate all people that did not fit their picture of a perfect race of people.

Racism has, at its heart, sought to elevate one group of people over another on the basis of an external appearances. God looks on every person, (red, yellow, black, brown, or white) in the same manner. As the song says, “They are precious in His sight!”



Our nation is now in the midst of re-examining racism and racial prejudice. In recent months we have experienced peaceful protests (and mob violence) against institutional racism. The group, “Black Lives Matter” has risen as the arbiter over the problem of racism. Many sports teams are now kneeling during the national anthem as a way of identifying with the movement to eradicate racism from our culture.



This recent movement has magnified the past racial issues of segregation and slavery. Today some feel the need to remove any existing memorials that reminds us of the Civil War as they seem to glorify slavery or elevate those who enslaved others.

I have been reexamining my heart lately related to these important issues facing our nation – racial equality, equal treatment under the law, institutional bias, cultural and community differences, derogatory and disparaging comments about others – and I am becoming more aware of this and am taking steps to change my heart and attitude.



I am searching my heart to make sure I eradicate those thoughts that are not of God and that exhibit an unconscious bias towards those different from me.

I have come to the conclusion, We are ALL sinners in need of a Savior. One people group is not superior to another in God's eyes. The only criteria that God judges us by is: *“What have we done with His Son, Jesus Christ?”* Those that accept Jesus are accepted by God. Those that reject Jesus are rejected by God. It has nothing to do with culture, race, money, political party, social status, or even which governmental system you live under. It is all about Jesus.

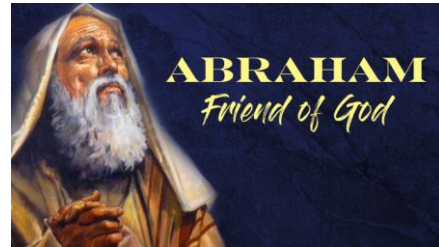


II. The Man Abraham

Today, I want us to examine the life of Abraham. I want us to look at three things this morning related to Abraham. First, the call of Abram. Secondly, the covenant God created with Abram. And lastly, the ratification of that covenant between God and Abraham and how that relates to us today.

Abram or Abraham has been described as one of the Bible's most important figures. If you examine the religions of the world today, you will find that Christianity, Judaism, as well as Islam, trace their roots back to this one man – Abram.

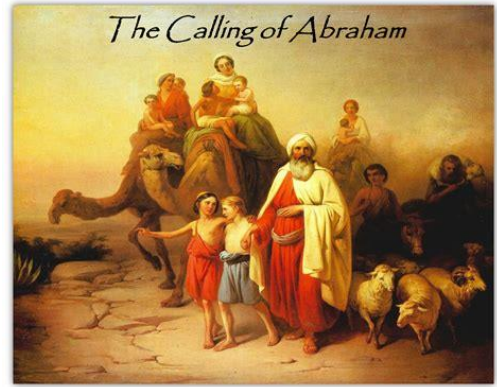
In the Bible, (2 Chronicles 20:7; James 2:23) Abraham is referred to as a *“friend of God.”* Even though Abram was childless at the age of 75, God promised him *“All the families of the earth will be blessed through you.”* (Genesis 12:3) This word from God seemed to contradict the present reality Abram faced. Over the next 30 years, God provided various tests of Abram's faith but ultimately the prophecy was fulfilled with the birth of his son, Isaac.



In Abram's life, God revealed his plan of choosing and making covenants with him and later his offspring. Because Abram trusted God, and God did as he promised, he is now known as the father of God's own people. Abraham's original name was Abram, which meant, *“father is exalted.”* His father, Terah, was a part of a moon cult in the city of Ur. Later in Abram's life, God changed his name to Abraham, which reflects a change in identification from his father's former moon cult, to his relationship with YHWH.

III. First, Abram's Call to Separate

In our first scripture reading this morning, we see that God called Abram to come out from his family, community, and comfortable surroundings. God said, *“Get out of your country, from your family, and from your father's house, to a land which I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.”*



Imagine getting a special call from God at the age of 75 to pack up your stuff, put it in a Winnebago, and go on a journey. Your family would say you are crazy. But that is exactly what God asked Abram to do. I'm not sure if the voice that Abram heard was audible, a quiet inward voice, or just an intuition. At any rate, the call was real and personal. Abram responded after the death of his father while they lived in Haran.

IV. Our Call to Separate

If we overlay this story with our life, we can ask ourselves the same question. Has God called us to separate ourselves from our past sinful life?

There is a hymn we often sing which was written by Cecil Alexander. This adaptation clearly echoes this call to every person.

Jesus calls us from out of the turmoil of life's wild restless sea.
Every day His voice is calling us with his sweet voice, "Come sinner, follow me."

Jesus calls us to give up chasing and worshipping the world's gold and wealth.
All these idols are keeping us from saying "Jesus I love you more."

In the midst of joys, trials, tears, and hours of toil and hours of ease,
Jesus is calling from us out of these events to say, "I love you more than these."

Jesus is calling us by His mercy, O that we may hear His call.
Give us a heart to become obedient so we may say, "I have loved Thee best of all."

V. Secondly, Abram's Covenant

As we move forward in the story of Abram's encounters in obeying the LORD, we see the LORD entering the scene again, ten years later, when Abram is 85 years old. It is in the second reading found in Genesis 15 that we find a second step in the covenantal relationship between Abram and God. The LORD again repeats His promise to Abram that he will be a great nation.

Abram reminds the LORD that he has no heir, except his steward Eliezer of Damascus. The LORD repeats the covenant that the seed of promise, Abram's heir, will be from his loins. (At this point, it is not mentioned that the heir would also be the son of Sarai.) The LORD reminded Abram of all the events that He has brought Abram through and He has never failed him.

To ratify and ensure that this is a covenant, the LORD instructs Abram to prepare several animals for the cutting of covenant. Abram must have known what to do with these animals in order to prepare them for this solemn ritual. Abram gathered together the items required by the LORD: a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtle dove, and a young pigeon. Abram prepared the animals according to the same guidelines that would be found later in Leviticus 1:17 and Jeremiah 34:18.



When the sun set that day, the LORD appeared as a smoking furnace and a burning lamp (KJV), or a smoking oven and a burning torch (NKJV) and passed between the prepared animals. If you will notice, only the LORD passed between the animals because only the LORD was able to accomplish what He had promised. The LORD'S promise to Abram was that his **descendants** would be as numerous as the stars are in the sky and they would be given the **land** that stretched from Egypt to the Euphrates.

Notice the promise is related to the **descendants** and the **land** – a **people** and a **place**.

Abram and Sarai took God's promise to mean that they should have a child by their handmaid Hagar. As the story unfolds, we see the son that was born, Ishmael, was not to be the child of promise God intended. Abram later sent Hagar and Ishmael away from the family – but God protected them. It is this child, Ishmael, that the followers of Muhammad, claim kinship with.

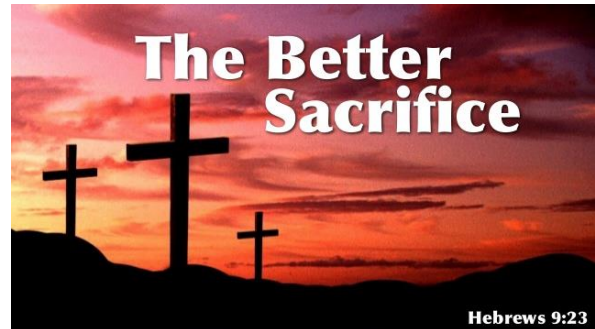


VI. Our Covenant Relationship with God

Just as God entered into a covenant with Abram about his family and his descendants, God has offered us a covenant relationship as well.

All through the Old Testament, God had the blood of animals used as atonement for the sin of man. The Book of Leviticus has detailed instructions about when, what, and how these offerings were to be brought. When Solomon dedicated the temple in Jerusalem, thousands of sheep and oxen were offered as a sign of their dependence and loyalty to God.

But the blood of sheep, oxen and goats could never fully pay the price for our sin. These were just shadows or copies of what would come in the future with Christ. We read in Hebrews:



“For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into the heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another – He then would have to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”

“And if it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly await for Him He will appear a second time apart from sin for salvation.” (Hebrews 9:23-28)

Jeremiah 31:34 and Hebrews 10:17 both remind us of the forgiveness offered by God. *“Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”*

When we come under the blood and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we are restored and have entered into a covenant relationship with God. This is not a work or sacrifice that we can offer; only God could accomplish this covenant. Abram could not ratify the covenant that God offered by the ritual of cutting of covenant. God walked in the midst of the animals and sealed the covenant. Today, we cannot do anything to ratify our covenant with God. Only Jesus’ sacrifice could ratify the covenant. Today, if we answer the call offered by God and accept the sacrifice of Jesus, we are then under the blood.

That is why songs like “*Are you washed in the Blood?*” are so important to Christians. We know that it is only through the shed blood of Jesus Christ that we are cleansed from any unrighteousness. Those that understand this promise and covenant know that those that are not “washed in the blood” are still under condemnation by God. God has called us and God has provided the cleansing. Those that reject this offer are rejected by God.



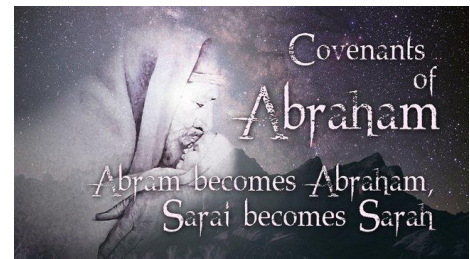
The hymn written by Elisha Hoffman leaves us with these questions to ponder.

*Are you washed, in the blood, in the soul cleansing blood of the Lamb?
Are your garments spotless? Are they white as snow?
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?*

If you have not accepted the offering of salvation and forgiveness found only in Jesus Christ, you are not saved.

VII. Lastly, Abram becomes Abraham

The third part of the covenant that the LORD made with Abram is shown in Genesis 17:1-22, when he was 99 years old. The LORD picks up right where He left off with Abram 14 years earlier and re-emphasizes that Abram will have a great nation. He will have a son by his wife Sarai, and He will be his God. In this section, we see the exchanging of names.



Abram takes on the new name Abraham, and his wife, Sarai, takes on the new name of Sarah. From this point forward, we see the LORD, (YAHWEH) is described as the “God of Abraham.” They have exchanged names. Abraham ratifies the commitment by being circumcised, along with his household.

The covenant is complete. The promise has been made (Genesis 12). The promise has been ratified by the cutting of the animals in two and the passing of the LORD between them (Genesis 15). And finally, the covenant is complete by the exchanging of names and circumcision (Genesis 17).

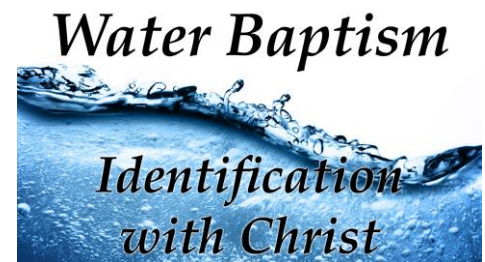
VIII. We Too Can Be Children of God

God also extends this offer to us to become a friend of God, an heir of this promise – a child of God. We have been offered a great thing in this covenant with God.

When we accept the offer of forgiveness offered by God through Jesus Christ, we become identified with Him. We are washed in the blood of Jesus Christ. Our sins are forgiven.

One of the things that signified Abram's identification with God was his willingness to be circumcised. This tradition has been one that has continued down through the centuries to today. The sons of Abraham, the children of Jacob (who was renamed Israel) continue to circumcise their male children on the eighth day.

Some have looked at baptism as an equivalent identification with Jesus. Baptism is a clear identification of our relationship with God. We may profess that we believe in God, we may attend church, but we also need to identify with his death, burial, and resurrection through baptism. I will be the first to say that baptism does not save you, but it does confirm outwardly to the world that you are not ashamed of your relationship with God.



Some people refuse to be baptized because it may mess up their hair, or they are afraid of water, or they are embarrassed and don't want others watching them. I would not let anything like that interfere with my identification with Jesus Christ. Jesus said if you will not acknowledge me before men, He will not acknowledge you before our Heavenly Father. When you make a commitment to Jesus Christ – you don't care who sees you – just so the One that died for you on Calvary sees you!

Jesus permitted John the Baptist to baptize Him in the Jordan River. If Jesus, the sinless Son of God was baptized as identification with the Father, why should we shun being baptized? Mark 16:16 says, *“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe is condemned already.”* It is our belief that brings about our salvation, but it is baptism that seals the covenant and identifies us with the Father.

IX. Conclusion

Maybe you are here this morning thinking about your relationship with God. It is good to examine your situation before God. What we do during this life affects all of eternity. Have you ever answered the call of God to come unto Him? If not, then the offer is still valid. You can come to Him by simply asking.

Have you ever acknowledged that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life? There is no other name under heaven by which you can be saved. Only Jesus Christ offers eternal salvation. His offer is sealed through the promises of God himself. Jesus is the

fulfillment of the anticipated Messiah as prophesied in Genesis 3:15. This salvation is offered through a blood covenant sealed by God's only Son. At Calvary, Jesus poured out His blood voluntarily to be our atonement, our propitiation, our substitute. Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin.

Have you taken the step of taking on the name of Christ? Have you identified with Jesus through baptism? If I believed in God, accepted the sacrifice of Jesus for my sins, I cannot think of any good, valid reason not to follow Jesus into the waters of baptism.

Just as Abraham became known as the friend of God, you too can become the friend of God. The offer of fellowship and relationship is offered to all. Having walked with God for many years, I can honestly say that there is no sweeter fellowship anywhere.

These three passages of scripture tell us about the beginning of God's covenant with Abraham which foreshadows our relationship with God through Jesus Christ. This passage speaks to Christians today. The same God that is in covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the one that promised a Messiah. Sprinkled throughout the old covenant, we find promises of a coming Redeemer. That promised one is Jesus Christ.

Jesus is our new covenant (Hebrews 8).

Jesus has promised us eternal life if we accept Him (John 3:16).

Jesus has paid the price of covenant (Hebrews 9:28).

We are children of that promise. We have a covenant-giving God. We have a covenant-keeping God. We have an eternal God who promises an eternal reward. Let us praise God!

What about you? How will you respond?
The Lord is waiting for your response.

LET US PRAY



**How to
Respond?**



Notes:

Handfuls on Purpose, Vol. I, page 60-61.

iLumina Encyclopedia Content – Abraham