

The Calling of Abraham

The example of Abraham is used by the Apostle to describe the principle that “to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Rom. 4:5). When we consider his calling therefore, it is most instructive for us, who also desire to be justified through faith.

The earliest information we have about Abraham is a reference to his family being idolaters whilst living in Ur of the Chaldees:

“And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith Yahweh, God of Israel, your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nachor: **and they served other gods**. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac” (Josh. 24:2-3).

The family of Abraham then, were idolaters, serving other gods. But Abraham was especially selected by God, taking him out of that situation and bringing him into the land which he was promised to have as an inheritance. Stephen referred to this:

“And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers hearken; the God of glory appeared unto our Father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, **before he dwelt in Charran**” (Acts 7:2).

We are not told of the means by which God appeared to him, but it was quite possibly an angelic visitation, as on previous occasions. But be that as it may, God appeared specifically to Abram and not to the rest of his family. Again, Isaiah confirms this:

“Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for **I called him alone** and blessed him, and increased him” (Isa. 51:2)

This is interesting, as it helps to fill in some of the details we are not told in the Genesis account. Genesis 11:31 reads:

“And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son’s son, and Sarah his daughter in law, his son Abraham’s wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran and dwelt there” (Gen. 11:31).

A number of points emerge from a consideration of these things. Although it was Abraham specifically who was appeared to and was called alone, the Genesis record describes how it was the family, not just Abram who left Ur of the Chaldees. There is no record of Terah’s wife, Abram’s mother leaving with them but members of the family left as a group, and dwelt in Charran. Evidently, Abraham had told them about his visitation, and how he was to depart to the land which God would show him. Terah, being the head of the family then took the lead, and took Abram, Sarah, and Lot and left Ur, and came to Haran and dwelt there. They had gone so far, and settled in Haran. But it was there that

Terah died (cp vs 32): he never made it into the promised land. But once he was dead, God appeared to Abraham a second time. So we read in Genesis 12:

“Now Yahweh said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee ...” (Gen. 12:1).

The AV, renders this as: “the LORD **had** said unto Abraham,” but some other renderings have it as being present tense: “now the LORD said unto Abraham” (see ESV NASB, RV, NET, Youngs Literal). This would suggest a second calling to Abraham after he had left Mesopotamia, whilst he was in the land of Haran. It was during this second calling, that Abram was told: “get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred”. That implies, he had not left his land, family and kindred. They family had left together, and positioned themselves in Haran, still in the land that Abram was being called out of.

There are important principles being established here. To obtain the inheritance as promised by God, it is necessary for us to separate ourselves from our former associations – not necessarily by literally relocating, but spiritually speaking:

“ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. **Wherfore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord**, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor. 6:16-18).

Again, this is the spirit of being part of the mystical Bride of Christ:

“Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; **forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house**; So shall the king greatly rejoice in thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him” (Psa. 45:10-11).

So, we read of Marriage:

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:24).

There is a need then, to come out from amongst the idolaters in the world around us, and become a holy nation (1 Pet. 2:9), separated to be “a chosen generation” called out like Abram was. Then being part of the multitudinous Bride, we will cleave to our Lord for ever.

Genesis chapter 13 describes the separation of Abraham from Lot. There was a dispute between the herdmen of both men, because of material things: “the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great so that they could not dwell together” (Gen. 13:6). Whilst it was a pity that it was material issues that separated them, this turned out to be the means by which Abraham would finally be separated from his family and kindred. He gave Lot the choice of where to go with his

goods, and lot chose that which was visibly better: “And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere” (Gen. 13:10).

Notice, that Lot “lifted up his eyes” and beheld the physical prosperity of the land, not taking into account the morals of those who lived there.

Significantly it was only after Abraham and Lot had ended their association, that further promises were made, and Abram himself was to lift up his eyes?

“And Yahweh said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, ***Lift up now thine eyes***, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward for ***all the land which thou seest***, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever” (Gen. 13:14-15).

Notice that whilst Lot chose a portion of the land to dwell in, Abram was promised “all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it” – the entire land was to be given to him. The Apostle summarised the promises by saying:

“... the promise, that he should be ***the heir of the world***, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith” (Rom. 4:13).

Whilst Lot only chose apart, Abram would be an “heir of the world” – since the land he will possess will be the Kingdom of Messiah, he will defacto be an inheritor of the world.

Significantly, whilst Lot went down into Sodom, and dwelt in a house there (cp. Gen. 19:2), Abraham did not build a house, and instead chose to live in tents as a stranger in the land:

“by faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, ***dwelling in tabernacles*** with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise” (Heb. 11:9).

It was thus a token of faith that Abram’s household resided in tents, as strangers and sojourners (Heb. 11:13), waiting for the land to be given to him. Of him as well as others, it is said that “they desire a better country, that is, and heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city” (Heb. 11:16). Again, we must live out the spirit of Abram – we must not settle into the world at large, like Lot did, but must live out the spirit of One who was separate, and patiently waited for the fulfilment of God’s promises.

Returning to when Abram first entered the land, it is significant to note that the land was promised to his Seed first:

“And Yahweh appeared unto Abram, and said, ***Unto thy seed will I give this land*** and there builded he an altar unto Yahweh, who appeared unto him” (Gen. 12:7).

This is important, for it demonstrates that the Lord Jesus Christ – as the promised “seed” must take up his possession first, before Abraham can have his. The Law was given “... because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made” (Gal. 3:19). But although the Seed has come, he still has not received the promised possession of the land – hence he must come again to take up his inheritance.

Abram also died without receiving the fulfilment of the promises:

“these all died in faith, **not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off**, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb. 11:13)..

But although he did not receive the promised possession, he was able to visualise the promises in his mind. He saw them “afar off”, which might be an allusion to when he lifted up his eyes, and all that he could see was promised to him. Another illustration of this, was when he was called upon to sacrifice Isaac, he “lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off” (Gen. 22:4). It was through the eye of faith, that he had a vision of better things to come: as Jesus himself taught: “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad” (Jno. 8:56). The spiritual vision of Abraham gave him joy – and so it was in the case of his Greater Seed. He, “for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and it set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2).

Having entered into the land, Abraham spent the rest of his life walking throughout it:

“Arise, **walk through the land** in the length of it, and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee ...” (Gen. 13:17).

Abram was not weak in faith, for he saw the promises afar off. His steps as he walked around the land, were steps of faith, trusting that God would deliver that which He Promised in due time.

In a similar way, those who desire to be “Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” with him (Gal. 3:29) must demonstrate their faith. So he is: “the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our Father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised” (Rom. 4:12).

We must then, walk in the steps of Abraham’s faith. That is, we must visualise the fulfilment of God’s promises made to us (2 Pet. 1:4), as did our Lord. We must not be weak in faith, but trust in the power of Yahweh to save, and walk in hope of the coming glories of the Age to come – and that then God will be glorified in our salvation.

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