

Date : 26 Feb 2023
Theme : The men who walk by Faith
Topic : Abraham's going out faith
Key passage : Gen 12 to 13 (NKJV)
Key verse : Gen 12:2-3 – "I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. 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." (NKJV)

Introduction

Today we are starting a new series on the men who walk by faith in the book of Genesis. While the first eleven chapters of Genesis introduces us to the God whom we should trust, the rest of Genesis shows us examples of 4 great men who trusted God.

One important covenant that God made with one man, Abraham, is found in Genesis 12. This covenant underlies and shapes the plot of the whole Bible — God's story of Redemption. Last Sunday, we learnt that a covenant relationship consists of 3 components – Blessing, Instruction, and Sign. The passage today reiterates God's promised blessings and instructions that God had given to Abraham.

Today, as we walk through Abraham's journey of faith, we want to understand:

- 1) How did Abraham progress in his covenantal relationship with God?
- 2) How did God test Abraham's covenantal faithfulness?

QUESTION 1: HOW DID ABRAHAM PROGRESS IN HIS COVENANTAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?

1. Abraham's Going-Out Faith

a) Abraham faced distractions and was influenced.

In Ur, God first called Abraham into a covenantal relationship and gave him the instructions to leave Ur.

"...The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said to him, 'Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.'"

– Acts 7:2-3

- *Get out ... of your country.*
- *Get out ... from your relatives.*
- This instruction reflects a biblical concept for those who would follow God, to be separated from sin. Abraham's hometown – Ur of Chaldeans was fast getting corrupted.
- Abraham was called upon to separate himself from everything that would hinder his progress into God's appointed purpose. God wants to make him a blessing, first to the nation that would come from him (the Israelites) and ultimately to all the people of the earth.
- Abraham must first move out of his comfort zone to God's appointed place.
- God wanted Abraham to leave his relatives, but he went with his father and nephew, Lot. As a result, he was distracted and influenced and settled in Haran. (Genesis 11:31)
- Abraham responded with half steps of obedience, as a result the fulfilment of the promise was delayed because partial obedience is disobedience.
- It is through obedience that we experience all the fullness of blessings. Anything less is sin in the eyes of God and cannot please God.

b) Abraham obeyed as he placed his confidence in the character and promises of God.

In Haran, Abraham remembered the covenant instruction given and continued his journey.

"Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you."

Genesis 12:1

- God promised to bless Abraham in 7 ways. (Genesis 12:2-3)
 1. I will make you a great nation.
 2. I will bless you.
 3. I will make your name great.

4. Abraham would become a blessing to others as to God.
 5. I will bless those who bless you.
 6. I will curse those who curse you.
 7. I will bless all of the families of the earth through you.
- The above-mentioned 7 promises have a greater reach.
 - Those who have faith in Jesus Christ, who believed that Jesus died on the cross and acknowledged Jesus as Lord, are grafted into the Abrahamic blessing.
 - As Abraham believed, it was credited to him as righteousness.

"Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith." (Galatians 3:8-9)
 - Abraham took the risk, even though he didn't know the challenges, changes and joy to come, but he obeyed each step of God's instructions.

c) Abraham responded in awe and worship.

In Shechem (Canaan), when Abraham was at the appointed place, God appeared to him and further promised him that this is the land He would give to him and to his descendants.

- Abraham built his first altar for God when God appeared to him for the first time.

"Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him." – Genesis 12:7
- He built another one when he pitched his tent at Bethel. Abraham was a worshipper. Everywhere he went he set up his altar of worship.
- His altars gave clear testimony to the condition of this man's heart. He took the time to worship as he journeyed. He was not ashamed to worship God openly while his heathen neighbours watched him.
- Worship expresses God's Lordship in our lives. It declares that "Jesus Christ is Lord," the oath of loyalty we take as his servants to acknowledge and obey him alone as the supreme authority in life. Worship is the principal activity through which the covenant is proclaimed, affirmed, and extended.

QUESTION 2: HOW DID GOD TEST ABRAHAM'S COVENANTAL FAITHFULNESS?

1. Daily needs test

- There was a famine in the land and Abraham decided he should move to Egypt. It seemed the most common-sense solution because he needed to feed his big family. (Genesis 2:10)
- But God did not tell him to head for Egypt.
- Abraham was walking by sight rather than by faith.
- God did not speak to Abraham when he was out of the promised place.
- Our faith muscle develops by trusting God in real life challenges. God's tests are never temptations toward evil, rather they are opportunities to depend on Him. Consult God for directions in our decision making because He is the Decision Maker.

2. Integrity test

- Abraham persuaded Sarah to lie (it was a half-truth) that she was his sister. His intent here was clearly to deceive. (V13)
- That half-truth led Pharaoh to assume beautiful Sarah was unmarried and available to take her as his wife.
- Sarah was taken into Pharaoh's house. However, God inflicted Pharaoh's household; then God intervened and extended favour.

3. World view test

- Finally, Abraham returned to Bethel, where he built his first altar. (V4)
- Abraham and Lot then parted ways. Lot chose financial benefit without regard for spiritual health, for Sodom was a wicked city.

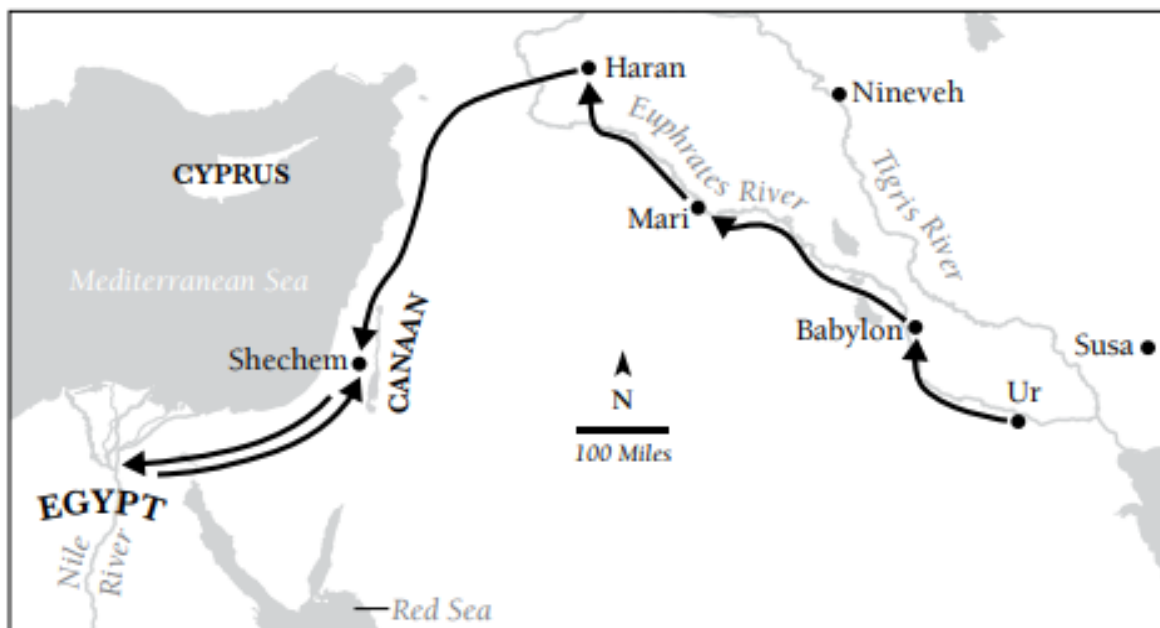
- The distraction was gone, in the appointed land, God appeared to Abraham again and gave a more vivid picture to him with regards to the Abrahamic Covenant. (V14-V17) and that encounter led Abraham to build another altar to the Lord. (V18)
- Abraham didn't see all the promises that God made to him in his lifetime, however he had the perspective of eternity, and he was looking for a city build by God.
- Home in Ur was living in a city. But in Canaan, Abraham would be living in tents. He was not at all concern with the inconvenience because he was looking forward for a city not built with hands.
"By faith he (Abraham) dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents.....for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." – Hebrews 11:9-10

APPLICATION

Abraham's response to God in his faith journey shows us how when we respond to God's promises, it determines the outcomes in our lives.

Where are you in your journey of faith?

1. Perspective of sight – Have you left your "Ur" (self-sufficiency, comfort) or shifted your focus to God (His desires, walk of faith)?
2. Posture of heart – Do you sense God wants you to give Him priority to hear His word and know what is assigned for you to do?
3. Progress of faith – Have you been making progress in your faith journey, or have you stopped half-way?
4. Can you identify why you may have stopped in your faith journey?
5. Have you entered into a covenant relationship with God?



Abraham's Journey of Faith