

Date : 19 March 2023

Theme : The men who walked by Faith

Topic : Abraham's going on Faith – Visitations by the Lord

Key passage : *Genesis 17,18*

Key verse : *Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son. Genesis 18:14*

Introduction

Abraham was 75 years old when he left Haran for the land of Canaan *Genesis 12:4*

In Hebron, the Lord had promised Abram a son and the land as his inheritance *Genesis 15:4*. Abram went through a frightening experience of darkness of the soul *Genesis 15:12* while God performed a ceremony to guarantee these promises.

Abram was now 99 years old *Genesis 17:1*. 24 years had passed since the day the Lord had promised to give him a son. God's appointed time had finally come for the fulfilment of His promise.

What was necessary to bring about God's long-awaited promise to pass?

What transpired during the visitations of God on two occasions?

What can we learn about faith in action?

How would Abram's example teach us about the power of covenant partnership?

What transpired at the visitations? *Genesis 17*

1. God's first encounter with Abraham was to give him the sign of the promised covenant *Genesis 17*

a) God did the talking and renewed the 3 promises for Abram

- God renewed His promise to multiply him exceedingly ... *I will multiply... Genesis 17:2*
- Enlarged his vision by changing his name Abram (father) to Abraham (father of multitudes) ...*I have made you a father of multitudes of nations... Genesis 17:5*
- Made him exceedingly fruitful, producing kings and kingdoms, descendants included in this covenant, without a time limit ...*everlasting... Genesis 17:7,8,13,19*

b) The condition - you and your descendants must keep the covenant

c) The sign – circumcision of all your male descendants

d) The countdown – the appointed time: In a year Isaac will be born *Genesis 17:21*

- Abraham had laughed *Genesis 17:17*

2. God's second encounter with Abraham was to confirm the promised covenant *Genesis 18*

a) Abraham recognised the epiphany of the Lord Jesus

- Eagerly welcomed the Lord and His two angels and engaged in conversation with them
The Lord promised to return within months of arrival of Isaac.
...*I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son... Genesis 18:10*
- Sarah laughed *Genesis 18:12*

b) Did Abraham and Sarah perceive themselves too old or was it a fact they were indeed old?

- If so, God had extended their lives
 - Sarah by 37 years (she died 127 years old less age 91 when Isaac was born)
 - Abraham by 100 years (he died 176 years old less age 100 when Isaac was born)
- Faith enables one to laugh at the impossible
 - God's response to their laughter?... *Is anything too hard for the Lord? Genesis 18:14*
- What would your answer be? This rhetorical question is to challenge us to shift our paradigm.
 - Abraham's faith challenge lasted 25 years.
When his son finally arrived, this phase of his faith journey ended.
When the answer is received, there is no more a call for faith to be exercised.

3. God allowed Abraham a higher level of covenantal partnership with Him, being the fruit of faith

God now took Abraham as His confidante.

...The Lord said ...Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? Genesis 18:17

Why did God feel this way about Abraham?

a) God considers a done deal with Abraham *...Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what He has promised him. Genesis 18:18,19*

b) God knows He could trust Abraham *... I have known him... Genesis 18:19 (nkjv)*

Abraham could be trusted to fulfil his fatherly role in commanding his descendants to keep the Lord's way, to live righteously and justly.

c) Abraham could share God's heartbeat for a lost world.

- He stood still before the Lord
- He knew how to talk to the Lord concerning a city about to be destroyed.
...will You sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Genesis 18:23
- He interceded for Sodom and each time the Lord agreed. Abraham stopped at 10 righteous men because he must have thought what he had asked for might be too much.
 - What if Abraham had reduce it to one man, do you think God would have restrained from destroying Sodom?
 - Does God *give us a say* in such a serious matter as to whether the death sentence on a city may be given a reprieve?
 - What a great privilege is God giving to us who are His covenant partners!
 - Finally, when Sodom suffered the catastrophic destruction, the destroying angel rescued Lot and his family only because of God's covenant relationship with Abraham
...God remembered Abraham... Genesis 19:29

Application

1. It seems like a long journey but Abraham's model shows us how faith works. Faith must have the foundation in God's promises. In this case, God promised to be His exceedingly great reward
Genesis 15:1.

God is never too late; by His great wisdom, He sets the appointed time.

Peter writes *...God is not slack concerning His promise... 2 Peter 3:9*

Can you trust God for His answers to prayer that His timing will always be perfect?

2. Young people, who are hoping for a great future, may find that life is full of twists and turns.

It seems that God is always taking too long to answer simply because we are too used to getting quick answers. We google questions and get quick answers, but life does not work at this speed.

What are your concerns?

Is it getting through exams?

Is it looking for that right life partner?

Will I be able to find a good job that pays well?

3. Faith involves an unknown future and God alone determines our destiny.

What does Abraham's journey have to do with us?

Firstly, the way God blessed him will be the same way God will bless us, in covenantal relationship. He was always progressing in his faith and did not settle into stagnation, but did greater things with God, thereby increasing in his faith.

Secondly, the blessings to Abraham are also available to us because the covenant God made was not only with him and his descendants forever. We Gentiles are grafted into his lineage through faith in Christ. *Galatians 3:19*

Thirdly, the conditions and blessings of the covenant must be learnt, remembered and kept. Therefore, we must take personal responsibility for the learning and remembering of these conditions.