

Lesson Five — The Progressive Call of Abraham

Day One — The Call

Day Two — The Delay

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Last week we learned that this present world system is governed by Satan and his fallen angels. As we will learn in upcoming weeks, the good news is that though we presently live in this corrupt world system, we can look forward to that glorious day when Jesus Christ puts the present ruler down and takes His rightful place on the throne. Jesus presently sits at the right hand of the Father waiting “until He [the Father] makes His [the Son’s] enemies a footstool for His [the Son’s] feet” (Ps. 110:1; Mt. 22:44; Mr. 12:36; Lu. 20:42; Heb. 1:3, 13; 10:12).

This week we will learn how God continues to unfold His promise of Genesis 3:15. We will see that God calls to Himself a man who would be faithful and obedient, and through whom God would raise up a people of His own. In Genesis 3:15, God reveals some detail as to the unfolding of God’s redemptive plan. It is interesting that God directed this promise to the “god of this [present] world” (Satan), when He said, “... *And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*” It is upon this foundation that we can begin to build the whole picture of salvation — the WAY of salvation, the WHY of salvation, and the END of salvation.

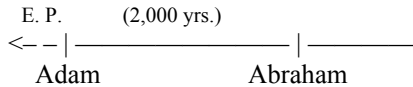
Two thousand years after God created Adam, He called forth one man who would be the father of His Chosen People — the people through whom God would literally set His plan into motion. Abraham’s call is the subject of our study this week.

Throughout this week’s study you may want to schedule a little daily time for reading Genesis 12-22. A good grasp of these chapters will be a very definite help in future study. Particular chapters are recommended at the end of each day’s study.

Day One — The Call

We are at a very important turning point in history. Looking at your Biblical timeline, the Bible shows the birth of Abram is 2,000 years after the creation and fall of Adam and Eve. If you did not previously do so, take your timeline sheet and fill in this information. Of course, the horizontal line represents *time*. The

first vertical line represents the creation of Adam. The second vertical line on the horizontal line represents the birth of *Abraham*. The space between Adam and Abraham is about 2,000 years. Then, at the age of 70, God called Abram to leave Ur.



Let's begin with the initial promises God gave to Abram. Stephen, the first New Testament martyr, stated some information concerning Abraham and God's initial call to him. Let's read about it—

Acts 7

2 ... “Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran. 3 ‘Leave your country and your people,’ God said, ‘and go to the land I will show you.’ 4 So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After the death of his father, God sent him to this land where you are now living...”

Being inspired by God, Stephen points out that God called Abram while he was still in Mesopotamia, prior to Abram going to Haran. Genesis chapter eleven ends with several verses covering the lineage of Abraham's father's family and the death of his father, Terah, in the land of Haran. Then chapter twelve flashes back to the initially stated promises which God gave to Abram while he was still in Mesopotamia, prior to Abram, Sarai, Terah and Lot moving to Haran, prior to Terah's death. The passages are printed below in chronological order.

Genesis 11

27 Now these are the records of the generations of Terah. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran; and Haran became the father of Lot. 28 And Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans. 29 And Abram and Nahor took wives for themselves. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and Iscah. 30 And Sarai was barren; she had no child.

This is what the Lord said to Abram while he was still in Mesopotamia —

Genesis 12

1 Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; 2 And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; 3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

(Note that the name *Abram* means ‘*honored father*.’)

What was the command God gave to Abram?

What were the promises God gave to Abram?

How many nations did God say He will make of Abram?

Who will be blessed through Abram?

Abram left his country, but took part of his family with him. His father and nephew, Terah and Lot, accompanied Abram and Sarai, as they left Ur in Mesopotamia. He stopped in Haran, spent three to five years there until Terah died, and then Abram finally moved on to the land where God wanted to take him in the first place. Here is some information about it —

Genesis 11

31 And 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 out together from Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan; and they went as far as Haran, and settled there. 32 And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran.

Notice that Abram was 75 years old *when he left Haran*, not when God called him out of Mesopotamia.

Genesis 12

4 So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Does it appear that Abram *exactly* obeyed God in Mesopotamia? Give evidence of your answer.

For Level Two and Three students, there is a sheet at the end of this lesson entitled PROMISES MADE TO ABRAHAM. Throughout this week you will be asked to do two things: 1) on the sheet provided, list the promises God gives to Abraham as you come to them, and 2) read through Genesis chapters 12-22, briefly summarizing each chapter. Begin doing those two things today, and continue this week as your time allows.

See you tomorrow.

Day Two — The Delay

Begin with prayer.

Note that it was *after* Abram's father died that Abram finally went to the place where God had originally called him to go. (Did you know that the name Terah means 'delay'? Isn't that interesting?) Read the detail.

Genesis 12

4 So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. **5** And Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan.

6 And Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite was then in the land. **7** And the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him.

Do you see 100% obedience on Abram's part yet? Give the evidence for your answer.

According to this passage, to whom will God give this land?

What did Abram do after God told him this?

Add any additional promises or detail to your promise sheet.

We'll follow the story in detail just a little further. We need to get Lot settled, then we will get back to Abraham.

Genesis 13

2 Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold.

... **5** Now Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. **6** And the land could not sustain them while dwelling together; for their possessions were so great that they were not able to remain together. **7** And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. Now the Canaanite and the Perizzite were dwelling then in the land. **8** Then Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers. **9** Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me: if to the left, then I will go to the right; or if to the right, then I will go to the left."

10 And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere — this was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah — like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar. **11** So Lot chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan; and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus they separated from each other. **12** Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled in

the cities of the valley, and moved his tents as far as Sodom. 13 Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the LORD.

Briefly write out what has happened.

Finally, the Lord has Abram where He wants him — in Canaan, alone!

Genesis 13

14 And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; 15 for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. 16 And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered. 17 Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you.” 18 Then Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to the LORD.

NOTES:

List the additional promises and/or detail to what God has already spoken to Abram on your promise sheet.

Continue your reading through Genesis chapters 12 through 22, briefly summarizing each chapters.

Day Three — The Covenant

We will continue to follow God’s dealings with Abram.

In Genesis chapter fourteen, a number of problems surfaced concerning Lot. Abram had received word that his nephew Lot had been caught in the midst of a war between several kings and had been taken captive by the group of victorious kings. Upon hearing this, Abram called 318 trained men to pursue Lot’s freedom. The Lord gave the victory to Abram, and his nephew was freed. It was at this point in time

that Abram met a very important individual — Melchizedek, a king/priest of God Most High. This is the beginning of a very important type used in Scripture. We will study it in brief this week, but be sure to remember the detail as we will need it in future weeks.

Genesis 14

14 And when Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. **15** And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. **16** And he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his relative Lot with his possessions, and also the women, and the people.

17 Then 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). **18** And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. **19** And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; **20** And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tenth of all.

21 And the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself." **22** And Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have sworn to the LORD God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, **23** that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich.' **24** "I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their share."

(Too bad for a chapter break here. Keep reading.)

Genesis 15

1 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield <04043> to you; Your reward <07939> shall be very <03966> great <07235>."

Write a brief review of what you have just learned in these passages —

shield <04043>

reward <07939>

very <03966>

great <07235>

After studying the definitions of these Hebrew words, rewrite Genesis 15:1 in your own words.

Now read Abraham's response —

Genesis 15

2 And Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what wilt Thou give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" **3** And Abram said, "Since Thou hast given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir."

4 Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who shall come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir." **5** And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." **6** Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. **7** He also said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought <03318> you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess <03423> it." **8** And he said, "O Lord GOD, how may I know that I shall possess it?"

NOTES:

The question must be asked — According to the context surrounding v. 6, what was it that Abram believed?

brought <03318>

possess <03423>

In God's own words, why did He bring Abram out of Ur?

Compare this promise with the original promise God gave Abram in Genesis 12:1-3. Do you see a progression? Explain.

What questions concerned Abram?

As you continue to read, pay particular attention to *the subject matter* of the unconditional covenant which God made with Abram.

Genesis 15 Continued —

**8 And he said, “O Lord GOD, how may I know that I shall possess it?”
9 So He said to him, “Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” 10 Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds. 11 And the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away.**

12 Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him. 13 And God said to Abram, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. 14 But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve; and afterward they will come out with many possessions. 15 And as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. 16 Then in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.”

17 And it came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces. 18 On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: 19 the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite 20 and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim 21 and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Girgashite and the Jebusite.”

NOTES:

From the text in Genesis chapter fifteen, what did this covenant have to do with?

List the additional promises and/or detail to what God has already spoken to Abram on your promise sheet.

Continue your reading through Genesis chapters 12 through 22, briefly summarizing each chapters.

Day Four — The Test

We will continue today looking at the progressive call of Abraham. Be sure to pray before you begin.

Genesis 17

1 Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless. **2** And I will establish My covenant between Me and you, And I will multiply you exceedingly.”

3 And Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, **4** “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, And you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. **5** No longer shall your name be called Abram, But your name shall be Abraham; For I will make you the father of a multitude of nations. **6** And I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come forth from you.

7 “And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. **8** And I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

NOTES:

List the added information to the promises God made to Abram on your sheet, and make note of Abram’s name change.

While the name Abram means *honored father*, God changed Abram’s name to *Abraham*, which means *father of a multitude*. It is interesting what God was doing in and for Abraham, don’t you think?

9 God said further to Abraham, “Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. **10** This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. **11** And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. **12** And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a servant who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants. **13** A servant who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. **14** But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”

NOTES:

What was Abraham to do? Who also was supposed to do this? For how long were they to continue this practice?

What would happen if a person did not do this?

15 Then God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. 16 And I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.”

Write down any new information that God revealed to Abraham.

Note Sarai’s name change. The name *Sarai* has the connotation of *head person*, but God changed her name to *Sarah* which means *princess* or *female noble*.

Genesis 21

1 Then the LORD took note of Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had promised. 2 So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him. 3 And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac. 4 Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.

NOTES:

We need to jump ahead to the next section in Genesis concerning Abraham. This deserves some very close observation. You are probably familiar with it, but pray that God will open your eyes to truths which you may have previously missed.

Genesis 22

1 Now it came about after these things, that God tested <05254> Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” 2 And He said, “Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.”

NOTES:

tested <05254>

Do you remember in Lesson Three when I asked you why God placed the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden? I have the same question for you here. In your own words, why do you think God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac?

Now back to the story —

Genesis 22

3 So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. **4** On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. **5** And Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship and return to you.”

6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. **7** And Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” And he said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

8 And Abraham said, “God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” So the two of them walked on together. **9** Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there, and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. **10** And Abraham stretched out his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

11 But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” **12** And he said, “Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.” **13** Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. **14** And Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, “In the mount of the LORD it will be provided.”

15 Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, **16** and said, “By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, **17** indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. **18** And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

NOTES:

In Genesis 22:2, what did God specifically tell Abraham to do?

How soon did Abraham obey? Was there any indication of hesitation?

What do you think is the significance of what Abraham said in Genesis 22:5b?

What do you think is the significance of what Abraham said in Genesis 22:8?

Compare this act of obedience as it is spelled out here in chapter twenty-two to what Abraham did in Genesis 15:6. Is there any difference? If so, what is (are) the difference(s)?

In Genesis 22:13, 14, what was provided? What do you think the significance of this is?

(Look particularly at vv. 13 and 14. You see another example in *substitution* here. This was something that Abraham's descendants would need to understand. This is also part of God's revelation of His unfolding plan of redemption to His people. A substitute was offered *instead* of Abraham's son — the ram caught by his horns in the thicket. The idea of substitution is not new at this point in Scripture. Substitution has been seen in Genesis chapter three, when God slew the animal[s] — revealing a substitutionary death in place of Adam and Eve. More revelation is seen in Genesis chapter four, when Cain slew Abel — revealing that a man will die, even a brother. These instances are part of the continuing revelation of the future fulfillment of redemption through Christ. And here in Genesis chapter twenty-two, we see that *a son* is involved.)

Re-read vs. 15-18 and see if there is anything added to what God had already promised Abraham. Write out additional promises on your promise sheet.

Continue your reading through Genesis chapters 12 through 22, briefly summarizing each chapters.

Day Five — The Overall Scope

Today we will summarize a few things that we have learned through the story of Abraham.

First, we have a question to consider. At what point in Abraham's life do you think he was saved? In other words, when did Abraham first put faith in God? And what would be the indicator of his faith?

Now that you have considered that question, we will look at a New Testament passage which would indicate how early in Abraham's life he was saved. Read it in Hebrews chapter eleven.

Hebrews 11

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.

Two things must be remembered — Salvation is never apart from death and shed blood, and God *never commends a work* apart from faith, for works done in the flesh are as filthy rags in His eyes (Isa. 64:6). And this passage in Hebrews chapter eleven clearly states that Abraham acted on faith while in Mesopotamia! And this *work* done *in faith* is commended by God (Heb. 11:8). Through the author of Hebrews, God commends this work saying that Abram acted *through faith*. **His faith for salvation had to have been *prior* to his being called out of Ur!**

The point is this — many people have been taught that Abraham's moment of salvation is in Genesis 15:6. But that cannot be, due to what the writer of Hebrews is dealing with, and due to the fact that God began giving Abraham promises *while still in Mesopotamia*. Abraham believing God in Genesis chapter fifteen, was believing Him for what He was telling him about — *his inheritance!* And *because he believed* what God was saying about this, God counted it to him as righteousness, even subsequent to his salvation. The covenant made in Genesis chapter fifteen has to do with things beyond salvation. What would it be about? (Look at the context and answer the question.)

God's continuing revelation to Abraham in the form of a covenant reveals that God's plans and purposes will not be changed.

Let's take a moment to consider something written about this in the New Testament. James relates Genesis 15:6 with events in Genesis chapter twenty-two in his epistle. Look at how he relates them —

James 2

20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? 22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God.

You see, Abraham believed God concerning his descendants and the inheritance in the land in Genesis chapter fifteen. It was on *this* point that his faith was tested in Genesis chapter twenty-two. His work of obedience (in offering up Isaac) brought his faith to perfection (lit., to its goal; to maturity). Any thoughts?

Also, Paul specifically speaks about these things in his writings as well.

Romans 4

13 For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.

To whom is the promise given? And what is the promise?

We will learn more about the descendants of Abraham in succeeding weeks of study, and more about the inheritance. Do you have any thoughts or questions at this point?

As we close for the week, finish up your list on the promises given to Abraham and your reading in Genesis chapters 12 through 22, briefly summarizing each chapter.

See you in class.

Promises Made To Abraham

