

CHAPTER 4

THE FATHER OF THE FAITHFUL Understanding the life of the Patriarch Abraham

The *Holy Scriptures* are filled with incredible, almost hard-to-believe, stories of human endeavor in this world. These episodes have been included in the Bible hopefully to motivate us, always to inspire us, often to titillate us, ever intrigue us, answer many questions, and to show us the way God wants us to *enjoy* our way through life, and ultimately to *become prepared* for the awesome rewards He wants us to have in His Kingdom. Prophecies are of major importance as they reveal the nature and plan of God, either through past-fulfillment or in the days and years just ahead, through awesome, incredible events that will take our breaths away!

This Study is not just about ancient history but is also about a major prophecy God has revealed in the pages of your Bible that has tremendous long-term effects on all of mankind. It has much to do with our Messiah, Jesus Christ, and what He is doing today in our lives, in His church, and in this world. Many of the things you are going to read in this Study are down-right shocking, unimaginable, almost unbelievable, yet *absolutely true*! Only in the pages of your Bible could you read such an incredible story, with incredible lessons for us!

What I am most concerned with is God's Plan *to restore His government* on this earth! Adam and Eve sinned and were forced out of the Garden of Eden. And, except for a few personalities in the Bible, man has failed to really follow God. Jesus Christ came from the God family as the Word to reveal His Father and His plan, and today awaits His Father's instructions to come back to this Earth with His Father's Government. What you read in the Bible is much of the story of how God is planning to re-establish His Government on this earth and how we fit into His great calling.

The core of this story is God's Plan to bring His Government back to this planet!

We read in the pages of your Bible the miserable lives of mankind, and their abject failure to follow His ways, but interspersed with the occasional successful lives of some of God's patriarchs who were willing to choose and faithfully follow His ways.

Preparing the way for the re-introduction of the Government of God

The heart of this story begins with one man, a 75-year old "senior" citizen who lived in a far-away city of Haran in ancient Mesopotamia. Born into the family of the patriarch Terah, this man, called Abram, had two brothers Nahor and Haran. Terah took Abram and Abram's wife, Sarai – ten years younger than he and childless, and his nephew Lot after living for many years in the city of Ur of the Chaldees, and to move to the land of Canaan, but Terah went only as far as the city of Haran and settled down there. Old Terah died at the age of 205 (Gen. 11:32):

"32. And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran."

Now God's revelation begins in earnest in Haran when Abram had a vision or dream from God which told him to continue on his travels to Canaan, for God had an adventure for him which would make this man into one of the outstanding patriarchs of all time, a prophet of all great prophets, a man considered in Scriptures as the Father of the Faithful, and a progenitor of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! An unbelievable story, but nonetheless absolutely true!

The clue to understanding the year of Abram's birth can be found in the very next verses found in Gen. 12:1-6:

"1. Now the Lord had 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: 2. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

Abram did not whine or argue with God, but simply obeyed! Undoubtedly, his family had already taught him something about *faith* and the importance of *obedience* to God! His faith was to grow many fold in the future years of his life! Continuing in Genesis 12:4-6:

"4. So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was *seventy and five years old* when he departed out of Haran. 5. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came. 6. And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land."

2008 A.M. Abram The implication of these scriptures is very clear. Abram's father died in Haran at age 205. God then called Abram to move to Canaan, and he was 75 when he left shortly after his father's death. Therefore, his father must have been 205 less 75 or 130 years old when Abram was born. This is all the scriptures reveal on this matter, so what other solution could we have? Dr. Hoeh and most commentaries agree with this conclusion. I have chosen this solution too. We conclude that Abram was born in 2008 A.M.

2018 A.M. Sarai His wife Sarai was born ten years later in 2018 A.M. See Gen. 17:17:

"17. Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?"

2083 A.M. to Canaan Next, we come to Abram's journey South to Canaan and then onto Egypt. It is covered in detail in Gen. 12:7-10. How long this journey took is not defined in the Bible. It is not significant to our Study.

Notice in verses 2 and 4 God promised Abram that he would become a great nation and in all the families of the earth Abram would be a blessing. God then appeared to Abram again and promised him that to his descendants He would give this land. Continuing:

“7. And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him. 8. And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord. 9. And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south. 10. And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.”

Abram still had valuable lessons in faith to learn. The powerful 4th Pharaoh of Dynasty XI of Thebes was Nebhepetre Mentuhotpe, according to Dr. Hoeh's *Compendium of World History*, who ruled at the time Abram entered Egypt, and was the Pharaoh who took Sarai into his harem. The story continues in Gen. 12:11-20:

“11. And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: 12. Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. 13. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee. 14. And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair. 15. The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. 16. And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels. 17. And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife. 18. And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? 19. Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way. 20. And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.”

It was true that Sarai was Abram's sister, his *half-sister*. Abram did not yet have enough faith to put his total trust in God to protect him and his wife! That great lesson of faith was to come later when God asked him to sacrifice Isaac his son!

The tie-in of the Bible to early Egyptian history will be covered in Chapter 8. You will find it fascinating!

Again, God spoke to Abram concerning His expanding promises (Gen. 13:14-17):

“14. And the LORD 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: 15. For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. 16. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, *then* shall thy seed also be numbered. 17. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.”

Approaching eighty years of age, with no children yet, this man is promised the inheritance of the land, AND many descendants! This is just the beginning of incredibly-expanded promises made to this man and his family by Almighty God. What a road God has started this humble servant Abram down! After a short visit to Egypt where Abram learned a valuable experience in telling “half-truths” (Sarai was truly his half-sister), he returned to the Negev a man very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold (Gen.13:2). But the land could not sustain both the abundance of Lot and Abram, so they separated (v. 6), Abram to Canaan and Lot to the environs of the wicked city of Sodom.

Amraphel was the king of Shinar, a place where a major part of civilization began (Gen. 14:1). We discussed much of this part of ancient history in Chapter 3. Then we read in Gen. 14: 9-12 that Abram’s nephew Lot was taken captive:

“9. With Chedorlaomer the king of Elam, and with Tidal king of nations, and Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar; four kings with five. 10. And the vale of Siddim was full of slimepits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountains. 11. And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all the victuals, and went their way. 12. And they took Lot, Abram’s brother’s son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.”

Abram learned of his nephew’s plight, armed his 318 trained servants, and pursued these foes to Dan (Gen. 14:14). He divided himself against them, thoroughly defeated them, and rescued Lot (v. 15-16). Amraphel, as well as the other kings, were killed. Dr. Hoeh figures this happened when Abram was in his 79th year. I cannot confirm this, but I do know from the Bible that this war occurred between Abram’s 75th year (Gen. 12) and his 86th year (Gen. 16). Tying this with the dating of the First Dynasty seems to support the death of Amraphel, Horus’ son (4th Pharaoh of Dynasty I also known as Gilgamesh in Mesopotamia). More details of this Egyptian Dynasty will be presented in Chapter 8.

At this time in his life, these promises were *conditional* based upon Abram being obedient. But he was still childless! God appeared in vision to Abram again (Gen. 15:1-6):

“1. After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I *am* thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great reward. 2. And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house *is* this Eliezer of Damascus? 3. And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. 4. And, behold, the word of the LORD *came* unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. 5. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. 6. And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.”

Abram's faith in God had grown so much that the Eternal counting his belief as righteousness! God responded to Abram's request when he asked, "How may I know that I shall possess it?" Continuing in Gen 15:7-21:

“7. And he said unto him, I *am* the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. 8. And he said, Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? 9. And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. 10. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not. 11. And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away. 12. And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. 13. And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land *that is* not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; 14. And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. 15. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. 16. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet full. 17. And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. 18. In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: 19. The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, 20. And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, 21. And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.”

The promises to Abram had expanded to all the land between the Nile River to the River Euphrates! He was now 85 (Sarai was ten years younger than Abram) and still without child.

2094 A.M. But like many people Sarai and Abram thought they could take some

Ishmael actions of their own and had to “aid” God in their childless condition. Listening to his wife, Abram took her maid Hagar to be a concubine who bore Ishmael when Abram was 86 years old (Gen 16:16).

“16. And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.”

Later, Ishmael was to become the father of many Islamic peoples. The problems Hagar and Ishmael encountered are probably the major causes of the animosity and hatred the Arab people have with the Jews today. Scripture has this also to tell us about this man’s future which does not foretell a very peaceful and happy people (Gen. 16:12):

“And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man’s hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.”

Covenant of Circumcision

2107 A.M. Another thirteen more years passed and Abram reached the age of 99 when **Covenant** God again appeared to him (Gen. 17:1-9):

“1. And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I *am* the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. 2. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. 3. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, 4. As for me, behold, my covenant *is* with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. 5. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be *Abraham*; for a father of many nations have I made thee. 6. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. 7. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. 8. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. 9. And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.”

God had established a covenant-relationship with Abraham (changing his name to mean “father of a multitude of nations) and his wife’s name to Sarah (mother of nations) through the covenant of circumcision. He promised a child through his wife who was to be named Isaac. Abraham, his son Ishmael, and all Abraham’s male servants were circumcised to confirm their agreement to this monumental covenant. (Gen. 17:23-27):

“23. And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that

were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him. 24. And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 25. And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 26. In *the selfsame day* was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son. 27. And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him."

The expression *the selfsame day* will be visited again!

Anything too hard for God?

On His way to inspect Sodom, God and two angels appeared to Abraham, had a meal with him, and reconfirmed His promise to Abraham and Sarah that she would have a son in her old age (Gen. 18:11-14):

"11. Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. 12. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? 13. And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? 14. *Is anything too hard for the LORD?* At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son."

Upon hearing the fate of the Sodomites, Abraham intercedes for the righteous men (including his own nephew Lot) but there were less than ten (!), so God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot, his wife and two daughters, were saved by the actions of the two angels (Gen. 19:15-16). They fled to the city of Zoar, then on to the mountains, but Lot's wife turned to look back on Sodom (probably still with the desire of returning there) and she was turned into a pillar of salt. To preserve seed of their father, Lot's two daughters got their father drunk, had sexual relations with him, and had sons whom they named Moab (father of the Moabites) and Benammi (father of the Ammonites).

Abraham makes another mistake with "half-sister"

Abraham's faith was not complete yet. He journeyed towards the south country, down to Gerar where Abimelech their king took Sarah for his wife. But this time God warns Abimelech in a dream, that though he may have been honorable in this affair, God did not allow him to sin with Sarah. It's a good lesson for all of us: Yes, positively don't sin; but always give God the credit and thanks even if you don't! Always give Almighty God all the credit for any righteousness you may show! The prophet Isaiah tells us in Isa. 64:6 that "...all our righteousnesses are considered as filthy rags;..." Now read Gen. 20:1-6:

“1 And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar. 2. And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah. 3. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man’s wife. 4. But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation? 5. Said he not unto me, She is my sister? and she, even she herself said, He is my brother: in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this. 6. And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her.”

By this time God had considered Abraham a prophet. See verse 7:

“7. Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine.”

Later Abraham prayed for this king and his wife, so that they could have children. Apparently, God had closed the wombs of all of Abimelech’s house! Abraham’s prayer was heard and they were healed.

We will read of Isaac’s remarkable birth in Genesis 21 in the next chapter of this Study. Abraham would be 100 years old and Sarah, 90. God would keep His promise to give them a son!