

The Life of Abraham

Tuesday Bible Class

October 3, 2011

Intro: When studying any book of the Bible, it is always important to know the place that it has in all of the Scriptures, as well as the place that any part of the book has to do with the message of the book.

Here in the Tuesday Class we are going to be studying the life of Abraham. We all know, or should know, that the life of Abraham is recorded in the book of Genesis. So let us think for just a moment about the place that the book of Genesis has in the Bible.

The book of Genesis comes first, and it is followed by four other books, all of which were written by Moses. It would be impossible to overstate the importance of the book of Genesis. It is the foundational book of the whole Bible. It is definitely the book of beginnings. We would be at a loss as far as understanding the Bible if we did not have it.

Because of its importance, it has been one of the most maligned books of the Bible. The attacks against it continue to the present day. One major reason for the attacks is because of its importance to all of the Word and how vital it is to the understanding of the rest of the Word of God. The book of Genesis gives us the beginning of God's revelation concerning Satan, and that is a major reason for the Devil's attacks upon it.

We are going to be focusing our attention in this class on Genesis 12:1 to 25:10. Those are the chapters devoted to Abraham. Abraham was first known as Abram, and he is first mentioned in the last verses of Genesis 11, and he was called Abram until the opening verses of Genesis 17 when God changed his name to Abraham. Of course he is mentioned many times in the remainder of the OT and often in the New Testament. Actually Abraham is mentioned over two hundred times from Genesis 17 to 1 Peter 3:6 where his name appears for the last time. There is no question concerning the unique importance of this first book of the Bible, and of Abraham in particular.

Humanly speaking, the major source of opposition to the Bible comes from critical scholars. They look and look for any error or inconsistency of any kind that they can find in the Bible. Mainly they are people who do not believe the Bible to be the Word of God. We believe that if people will read the Bible with open minds and open hearts, that the Lord will convince them that the Bible is true. And so I was very interested to read a comment by a critic with reference to the Bible. He was actually encouraging the reading and study of the Bible. This was his comment:

The Bible is in every one's hand. The critic has no other Bible than the public. He does not profess to have any other documents inaccessible to the laity, not does he profess to see anything in the Bible that the ordinary reader cannot see. It is true that here and there he improves the common translation, but this is the exception, and not the rule (quote by Griffith Thomas in the Introduction to his commentary on the book of Genesis, p. 21).

Now it is usually a blessing, and very helpful, to read commentaries on the books of the Bible written by godly people, *but probably all of them would recommend reading the Word first and more often than their books about the Bible.* I would like to encourage you to read the whole book of Genesis for our study, but perhaps you can begin by reading the first twenty-five chapters. And I am going to be reading it with you. I taught Genesis to the freshman class at Multnomah for over ten years, twice each year, and yet every time I read it I see things that I haven't seen before, or understand what I am reading even more than before. For those of us who have read the Bible over and over, it is always good just to be reminded of blessings we have had before by reading the Word as often as we can.

The book of Genesis begins with the Biblical account of creation. And this is a subject which recurs repeatedly throughout the Bible.

From that point on Genesis is primarily biographical. Many people and nations are mentioned, but the account centers mainly around the lives of eight men: Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

The Spirit of God has given us divisions which He has indicated throughout the book of Genesis using the word, “generations.” It speaks of descendants, not ancestors. And so they are superscriptions, or headings, of that which follows in each case. There are ten of them, and with the Introduction give us eleven divisions.

They are as follows:

1. Introduction – the Creation (Gen. 1:1 -2:3).
2. “The Generations of the Heaven and the Earth” (Gen. 2:4-4:26).
3. “The Generations of Adam” (Gen. 5:1-6:8).
4. “The Generations of Noah” (Gen. 6:9-9:29).
5. “The Generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth” (Gen. 10:1-11:9).
6. “The Generations of Shem” (Gen. 11:10-26).
7. “The Generations of Terah” (Gen. 11:27-25:11).
8. “The Generations of Ishmael” (Gen. 25:12-18).
9. “The Generations of Isaac (Gen. 25:19-35:29).
10. “The Generations of Esau (Gen. 36:1-37:1)
11. “The Generations of Jacob (Gen. 37:2-50:26).

The first eleven chapters of Genesis are largely introductory, and they cover as much time as the rest of the OT put together. The doctrine of God is in chapters 1 through 11 – all three Persons. In addition to the doctrine of creation, we have the doctrine of marriage, the doctrine of sin and of God’s judgment against sin (which occupies a major part), and the doctrine of salvation. None of these is complete, but enough is given for the reader to have a good foundation of the truth of God.

Dr. Scofield had this to say about the relationship between the OT and the NT in his introductory notes on Genesis in the Scofield Bible, p. 3:

Genesis enters into the very structure of the NT, in which it is quoted above sixty times in seventeen books. In a profound sense, therefore, the roots of all subsequent revelation are planted deep in Genesis, and whoever would truly comprehend that revelation must begin here.

Dr. Griffith Thomas (pp. 18, 19) has pointed out that there are seven important beginnings recorded and explained in connection with the grace of God. I pass them on to you because they are very helpful in understanding the message of the book of Genesis in the light of the grace of God:

- 1) The beginning of the material universe, or the Sphere of the divine revelation of grace.
- 2) The beginning of the human race, or the Subjects of the divine revelation of grace.
- 3) The beginning of human sin, or the Cause of the divine revelation of grace.
- 4) The beginning of divine redemption, or the Character of the divine revelation of grace.
- 5) The beginning of the nations of the earth, or the Scope of the divine revelation of grace.
- 6) The beginning of the Hebrew nation, or the Channel of the divine revelation of grace.
- 7) The beginning of the life of faith . . . , or the Outcome of the divine revelation of grace.

Now all of this brings us to Abraham, or Abram, as he was originally named by his parents. He is first mentioned in the last verses of Genesis 11, but the Lord’s call to Abram is given in the opening verses of Genesis 12.