

Abraham - Part One

by Charles E. Wigg

Genesis 9:20 to 25:9

Abraham was a remarkable man, who enjoyed a close relationship with God, and in three places in the Bible he is called God's friend. The Jews claimed him as their father, (John chapter 8, verse 39), but Jesus told them that if that were so they would do the same works as their father. In Romans chapter 4;11 & 18, & Gal. 3;7. The Christian believers are said to be Abraham's children. What an honour then is conferred upon us, and how we should seek to be like our illustrious father in matters of faith and conduct. Not that we are to follow all Abraham's ways: because like all sons of Adam, he did fail sometimes, so that he is both an example, and a warning to us.

His Background:

It would be well for us to look at Abraham's background, the circumstances in which he lived, the generation in which he served God.

After the flood, mankind was able to make a fresh start. However though the flood had cleansed the earth of the pollution of the sin of man, and of the wicked generation that had polluted it, yet it did not change the nature of man. Satan continued his dreadful work of temptation, and poor Noah fell. Once he was the only righteous man on the earth, and God's lone witness to the wicked race of men who came under God's judgment, yet the last view we have of him, is as a fallen, drunken, man, exposing his shame, and cursing a third of the human race. This account stands as a solemn warning to any who would be tempted to dabble with liquor. It is a terribly sad story, about a man who was once so great, yet was cast aside by God, who could use him as a witness no longer. This is proved by the fact that Abraham was alive during the latter part of Noah's life, and he was a lonely man, (as we shall see), and seeking after God, yet God never used Noah to bring Abraham the light, the truth, the message of God.

Noah's sons, Shem and Japheth, sought to restore their fallen father to his former position of greatness, and brought a blessing on themselves by so doing, whereas Ham made a joke out of it all, and brought a curse on his descendants, a curse that remains until this day. It is a sad fact, that there are many who have brought a curse on their children, by becoming slaves to liquor.

Social conditions:

The social conditions that existed amongst men are described in chapters 10 and 11 of Genesis. In chapter 10 we are told of the multiplication, and the ultimate distribution of the human race, an interesting study in anthropology. The human race became divided into three branches, the Semitic, the Hamitic, and the Japhethic, families. These divisions continue until this day

In pronouncing the blessings on Shem and Japheth, Noah prophesied the ultimate course of the history of God's dealings with men. The blessings of Jehovah the God of Shem were to be upon him and his descendants. Japheth was to be blessed, and to dwell in the tents of Shem. This is precisely what has happened. Of the descendants of Shem, God chose one man, Abraham, revealed Himself to him, vouchsafed His blessings of salvation upon him, and ordained that through his descendants ultimately, all the families of the human race would be blessed

.Japheth was to be enlarged, and was to dwell in the tents of Shem. When God's promise to Abraham was fulfilled in the incarnation, the holy life, and the atoning death, the triumphant resurrection of Christ. Abraham's descendants rejected God's Salvation, and God's Savior, but the Gentiles, the descendants of

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Japheth received that Savior and His salvation, and the untold blessings, both spiritual and material that went along with it. Thus Japheth came to dwell in the tents of Shem, and will continue to dwell there until the Lord Jesus comes to take His Church away.

For the information of my Indian brethren, it would seem that the Dravidian races of India have descended from Cush, but the Arian peoples are descendants of Japheth. Some segments of India's varied populations, the Gujarathis and the Marathis may have Semitic roots. To prove this would take more space than our small studies will allow.

Political Conditions:

As the human race multiplied, it lapsed into unbelief. God had promised that He would never again destroy the earth with a universal flood. However, unbelief brings both fear and insecurity, thus the principle of 'unity is strength' was born. They considered that there was power in their uniting together, a lust for fame, (make a name for ourselves), also spurred them on. So it was that the 'Labor Movement' was born, "Workers of the World unite", is still their catch cry.

As well as these things, there was the desire to reach heaven by their own efforts, a basic element of all human religion today. Though the climatic conditions were drastically changed by the disaster of the flood, reducing the life span of man, yet still they were living for hundreds of years. The strength and vitality of the race had not been so drastically reduced and eroded by the sinful living, as it has been in the succeeding millenniums, so their potential to achieve their aim was enormous.

Added to all this was the great advantage of the whole human race having but one speech or language. They were obviously highly intellectual also; they had knowledge of the science and practice of building construction. Bricks made at that time are still in existence today, more than 4,000 years later.

This overall situation inflamed the lust for power in the heart of one called Nimrod, who saw the opportunity for self-exaltation, and the establishment of a World Empire. Thus it was that what we now know as Politics came into being, the domination of man, by man, for personal gain and human greatness. Nimrod, who was a mighty hunter of men, established an empire for himself, its first capital was Babel, but it spread abroad until he had four capitals, Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh. Like all politicians he was a master at deception as well as coercion, and was able to persuade most that his politics were for **their good**, rather than his own gain and glory.

Religious Decline:

At the same time, the 'Ruler of this world', lured men further away from God, hardening their hearts, creating feelings of hostility towards God. He saw that the time was ripe to introduce his master plan, which would further alienate men from God. It would also make God to be angry with men, he then introduced **Idolatry**, which corrupted the souls and spirits of men, yet attempted to fill the vacuum that was in every heart, by occupying them with religious activity, and festivity.

After the death of Nimrod, his cunning wife Semiramis, saw an opportunity for her to gain a position of power. She taught the people that such a person as Nimrod, one so mighty, one who had showered such "blessings", upon them, could not possibly die, but had gone to live in the sun. Thus she established "Sun Worship", and it continues to this day. This idolatry blossomed out into all the forms that we see today, and spread into every branch of the human family.

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God saw the potential that man possessed, and though He knew perfectly what men intended, and what they were doing, yet to demonstrate His infinite fairness, He came down to observe what men were about. He then put a stop to their rebellious plans, and did it quite simply. He confounded their tongues, so that when they came to work as usual, one could not understand another. Thus the work came to a halt, and the human race was broken up into language groups, and scattered abroad according to those language groups. It was into such a society that Abraham was born:

Abram's ancestors:

Abram, (his first name, meaning Exalted Father), was a descendant of Eber, from which later the name 'Hebrew' was derived. This name was given to the descendents of Abram, and to the language that they spoke.

Eber's son Peleg, is considered by many Bible scholars to have been a godly man, and it was in his days that the earth was divided amongst the different races. It is apparent that Paul believed this, as he referred to it in his address at Athens, (Acts 17; 26).

It would seem that for some generations they settled at Ur, for this city is called the 'the land of his nativity, Gen. 11; 28. It is probable that the citizens of that city were farmers, because Chaldees means 'Clod Breakers'. The people were obviously very intelligent and possessed great skills in building. When the ruins of Ur were discovered, and excavated by the archeologists earlier this century, it was discovered that the city had its own underground drainage & sewerage system. (Many of India's cities do not have this even today). The houses were large, made of burnt bricks, and some of them were 2 stories and had as many as fourteen rooms.

They had developed great skills in the manufacture of jewelry, pottery; they were using cosmetics, and needles for stitching garments. Cities came into being, because of insecurity. Men crowded together because of fear. Fear of other men, fear of wild animals etc. This fear was multiplied, because of their rebellion against God, and their refusal to believe His promises, and to believe in His infinite goodness, His care, and His concern for their well being and lasting happiness.

It was in such a city that Abram was born, and it would seem that he was the eldest of three sons. It would seem that Abram's father, Terah, had at least two wives, because later on Abram explained that Sarai was the daughter of his father, but not the daughter of his mother. Of his two brothers, the younger, Haran, was the most rebellious. He married at an early age, suggesting that he was a man who was ruled by his carnal lusts and passions. He had one son, (Lot), and two daughters, Milcah, and Iscah. Milcah married her uncle, and their daughter Rebecca later became Isaac's wife.