

## Abraham - Part Two

*by Charles E. Wigg*

### **The Religion of Abraham's people and city:**

As explained earlier, idolatry developed around the preceding decades: Man has always been most willing to believe Satan's lies, to follow error rather than truth. Before the advent of idols, men began to worship the Sun, and the Moon. This was in part; because of their obvious beneficial effects for man, both in the light, the warmth they gave, and the life and growth they gave to the trees, the crops etc. They" worshipped and served the creature, more than the Creator; who is blessed forever!" (Romans 1; 25).

The people of Ur, were very religious, and the city was built around a huge Ziggurat, a stepped temple tower, on whose flat top, there were altars where sacrifices were offered to the Sun, the Moon, and the Host of heaven. It is evident that they also indulged in the hateful practice of the worship of idols, and later Joshua reminded the descendants that their ancestors had worshipped other gods on the other side of the river, (the Euphrates), Josh. 24; 2 & 14 - 15.

The verses quoted indicate that Abram went along with these religious exercises and joined in with them. Yet for all this he was a lonely man, all this religious activity and the festivity that went along with it did not satisfy his deep inner longings. There was a certain shame and depravity that went along with the worship of idols, whereas the creation that Abram observed both day and night; testified to a God who was almighty, and All-glorious.

### **Possessions did not satisfy him:**

The wealth and luxury that surrounded him and the mere comfort of his circumstances did not bring satisfaction to his soul either. The Lord Jesus said, "a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses", (Luke 12; 15.) In spite of all, and a happy marriage to a beautiful girl also; he was a lonely man. Through Isaiah God said "I called him when he was alone" Isaiah 51; 2. (J.N.D.), that is when he was just a lonely man.

### **The first great crisis in Abram's life:**

While passing through the things we have described, a great tragedy happened in Abram's life: His youngest brother Haran died. Earlier we noticed Haran's character, and we are told that he "died before the face of his father". This seems to indicate a degree of shame. It was not the normal thing for a man to die before his father did in those days, and his death was possibly because of his wicked way of life, and God's judgment on him.

Death was a dark mystery, and still is to those who are still in sin's darkness. The question that must have come to Abram's mind, as he looked on his brother's dead body, probably was; where has my brother gone? What use are all those things we have labored to assemble? He has left them all behind. Is this all that there is to life? What will happen to me when I die? Such questions still come to the minds of thinking people when confronted with death!

### **The God of GLORY appears:**

Stephen tells us that "the God of Glory, appeared to our father Abraham", (Acts 7; 2), and it was probably at this crisis time. God had his eye on Abram, He saw and understood the void, the loneliness that was in

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Abram's life. God took notice of the effect that this tragedy had on the life of the one, which he had chosen for such a wonderful role:

Though we are not told, yet personal experience, and the experience of many others, makes me to think that it was at this time that God appeared to him.

I recall speaking on this subject on one occasion in Kerala, (India), and after that meeting a young man told me how the remarks had touched his own heart. His own brother had committed suicide, and it was at his brother's graveside that God spoke to him, and led him to wholly yield his life to Him, for His service. He has continued to serve the Lord faithfully ever since, though with many trials and afflictions.

It was the **God of Glory**, who appeared to Abram, not the gods of shame, whom he had worshipped, in his ignorance. The One who gives life, and the One who also takes it away?

We are not told in what form God appeared to him, but we are told what God said. This would emphasize the importance of the **word of God, what God says**. It is much more important that anything we may see, in dreams, visions or such like. We live in a day when people claim many things, to see visions, dream dreams, hear voices. Satan can counterfeit all of these; but though he may pervert the scripture through the weakness, or even the willfulness of translators, yet he cannot counterfeit them. In our dispensation we are told that "We walk by **faith and not by sight**", (2Cor. 5; 7,) and again in Romans 14; 23, he tells us that whatever is not **of faith**, is sin.

Sometimes, where people are illiterate, that is cannot read or write; then God may speak to them through visions, but this too is very rare. God speaks to us through His word, and we should shun all else. Paul tells us in Romans 10; 17, that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. He also tells us in the earlier verse, 8, that the word is near thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart;

### **The God of Glory speaks:**

When God spoke to Abram, He did not enquire what it was that Abram sought, but He gave him a command. That command must have seemed to be unreasonable, because He told Abram to leave his home, his business, his relatives, his city and its religion. I guess that Abram had to wrestle with that command. It meant that he had to leave all that he had trusted in previously. Those things represented security, but he was to leave them all.

No doubt Satan would have attacked Abram at this point, because though he is not omniscient, yet he had heard the promise that God had made to Eve; (the promise of a redeemer), and he would do all that he could to prevent that promise being fulfilled. We know from experience how that Satan will always attack when we are thinking of obeying God's will.

Perhaps he asked Abram, "What did God say to you? Did He ask you to leave this lovely city, your lovely home, and all these other things? What did he offer to give you, Nothing? He did not even tell you where to go! Abram do not be a fool, hold on to what you have, you may never get such things again, you may never have the chance."

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But Abram had come to see that such things were of no eternal value. If he had stayed, he would only have to die, like Haran had done, and then whose would those things be? If he was to obey, then all he had to go on, was the promise of God, and a God whom he had not known before.

The same is true today, for all that would obey the word of God, they must do so with nothing else but a simple, but blind faith in God and His ability to keep His promises. Abram was no fool, he knew that even the fair city of Ur, would someday crumble to ruins. He wanted a city that had foundations, whose builder and maker was God. He wanted wealth and possessions that death could not take away from him.

A young man, who later gave his life in taking the gospel to the Auca Indians in South America, once wrote in his diary, "He is no fool, who gives up that which he cannot keep, in exchange for that which he cannot lose!"

If Abram had not obeyed, he would have lost everything, because not long after his death the city of Ur was attacked and totally destroyed. Its destruction was so complete that for more than 3,000 years it was totally forgotten. It was only in this century that its ruins were discovered and excavated by the archeologists.

### **Hindrances:**

When Abram did obey, his old father, Terah, decided to go along also, as well as Lot the son of Haran, whom it seems that Abram had adopted as a son. Neither of these were called of God, but were obviously impressed by Abram's faith, and the strength of his convictions. It happened also later with the children of Israel, when they left Egypt. When departing that place, a **mixed multitude**, went along with them, (Exodus, 12; 38).

One of the great weaknesses of the Church today, is that there are so many who regard themselves as a part of the Church, but they do not have faith, they do not have convictions, they are just carried along by the faith and enthusiasm of others.

When Abram left Ur, he did not know where he was going, the destination was revealed to him after he went out. When we read in Genesis 11; 31, we are told that Terah took Abram and went out, This is because of the respect that there was, and still is, in the Eastern Culture, for age. It is because of this respect that the credit of leaving Ur, was given to Terah. We are clearly told in Hebrews chapter 11; 8 to 10, that it was by Faith that Abraham obeyed to go forth. However behind all this was the hand of God, because He told Abraham in chapter 15; 7, that it was He who brought Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees. There is no contradiction here, Abraham was responsible, and he obeyed; yet the unseen hand of God was in it all. Thus we see demonstrated once again, on the one hand, the responsibility of man, (Abraham obeyed), and on the other the sovereign grace and power of God. These two principles never clash; the one complements the other. The end result is that the glory, the credit, all belongs to God.

Abraham's father was evidently a hindrance to his full obedience, because it was not until Terah died that Abraham saw his shortcoming and resumed the journey.