

The Story: Chapter Two
God Builds a Nation: Abraham

Movement 1:

In the Upper Story, God creates the Lower Story. His vision is to come down and be with us in a beautiful garden. The first two people reject God's vision and are escorted from Paradise. Their decision introduces sin into the human race and keeps us from community with God. At this moment God gives a promise and launches a plan to get us back. The rest of the Bible is God's story of how he kept that promise and made it possible for us to enter a loving relationship with him.

Let's look at the TIMELINE!

Transition to Movement 2:

- Noah's family repopulated the earth.
- Farms, businesses started to grow.
- People started to travel and spread out.

And then it was time for God's next move:

Movement 2:

God builds a brand-new nation called Israel. Through this nation, he will reveal His presence, power, and plan to get us back. Every story of Israel will point to the first coming of Jesus-the One who will provide the way back to God.

- Do you see that? Every story of Israel (this new nation) will ultimately point to Jesus. The One who will actually provide the way back to God.

Everything we read about the Israelites, including their struggles, was a part of showing you and me the path back to God.

Here's where it started:

Connection:

- Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japeth
- Ham was the Father of Canaan and was the one that brought sin into the tent. This is why Noah proclaimed a curse on the Canaanites and said they would always serve as slaves to their brothers.

But, Shem is the one we want to follow:

Shem had Arphaxad;

Generations later we get to Terah.

And when Terah was 70 years old he became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran.

Haran was the father of Lot. Then he died early so that's why we see Lot connected so often to his uncle, Abram!

The Start of the Nation:

Genesis 12:1-5

12 The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. ² "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

⁴ So Abram left, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. ⁵ He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they **arrived there.**

This is big...

Genesis 11:31

³¹ Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they **settled there.**

This is huge to me because his father had set out to go to Canaan but settled in Haran before he reached his destination.

- His father was an idol worshipper
- Was he known for settling before he reached his goal?
- Was this something that God overcame in Abram when He called him to go?

But the key is this:

⁴ So Abram left, as the Lord had told him;

LOOK AT THE MAP!

The Promise:

What had God promised to Abram if he was willing to obey Him?

- He would be a great nation
- He would be blessed
- His name would be great
- He would be a blessing
- He would protect Him
- And all the people's on earth would be blessed through Him.

Only a few problems:

- He was 75 years old
- His wife was 65 years old and had no children
- His background was not really one to make him worthy of this honor

Aren't you glad that God makes a habit of picking the people to do great things that don't seem to be the likely choice!

- I mean, if you're going to start a nation, you might think about picking people that could still have some children!

Later in chapter 12 he ends up in Egypt for a while because of a famine. In chapter 13 he and Lot separate because they've gotten too big to stay together.

Genesis 13:14-18

¹⁴ The Lord said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. ¹⁵ All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. ¹⁶ I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. ¹⁷ Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you." ¹⁸ So Abram moved his tents and went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he built an altar to the Lord.

The whole time God was reassuring Him of His promise and Abram was continuing to obey!

Genesis 14 Abram has to go rescue Lot from some trouble with the Kings around Sodom and Gomorrah.

Then we see God actually make a covenant with Abram.

Genesis 15:1-8

15 After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision:

“Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.”

² But Abram said, “O Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” ³

And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.”

⁴ Then the word of the Lord came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.” ⁵ He took him outside and said, “Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”

⁶ Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

⁷ He also said to him, “I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.”

⁸ But Abram said, “O Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?”

Isn't this a question that we ask for ourselves: [“How can I know...?”](#)

Look: Abram is being credited as righteous in the midst of asking God to prove Himself!

But look what God does for Abram:

Genesis 15:9-16

⁹ So the Lord said to him, “Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.” ¹⁰ Abram brought all these

to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. ¹¹ Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away. ¹² As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. ¹³

Then the Lord said to him, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. ¹⁴ But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ You,

however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age.¹⁶
In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of
the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.”

This is how you made a covenant back then.

- You would sacrifice these animals.
- Place them apart from each other
- And then each party would walk between them together.

Basically both parties saying “may it rest on me” if I do not keep my end of our agreement!

But look at verse 17 and 18:

¹⁷ When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. ¹⁸ On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates— ¹⁹ the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, ²⁰ Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, ²¹ Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.”

The smoking firepot and the blazing torch are symbols of the Spirit of God coming down and making the covenant with Abram.

- Here’s the crazy thing though...
- Abram didn’t walk through the sacrifice, ONLY GOD!!!

This means that God promised Abram on this day that what He said would come to pass and it was not AT ALL dependent on anything Abram did!

God basically told him, “Let it fall on ME alone if I do not do what I’ve promised I would do for you.”

Future: This is another picture that points toward Jesus as the ultimate answer to our sin problem.

- God made the promise to Abram.
- All Abram had to do was surrender to God and the promise would be his.

That’s exactly how it works with our salvation today.

- Jesus made the whole sacrifice.
- And, when we surrender our lives to Him, it is TOTALLY up to Him to keep us for our promised and guaranteed future!!!

In a sense, the Father walked through the broken and bloody body of Jesus to establish His covenant with us, and God signed it for both of us. We merely enter into the covenant by faith; we don't **make** the covenant with God.

Good news: Your future isn't dependent on you!!! God has got you right where you need to be.

Even after all of this Abram and Sarai decided God needed a little help.

- Abram was now about 85 and Sarai was 75.
- So, Sarai gave her maidservant, Hagar, to her husband and he slept with her.
- She became pregnant and bore a son named Ishmael.

Genesis 17 – God reconfirms His covenant with Abram.

This is when He changes his name to Abraham, from Father to Father of Many.

- He also changes Sarai's name to Sarah: from Princess to Queen, or mother of many!

Abraham again asks God, "Won't you just use Ishmael to build the nations?"

- But that was not God's plan.

Timeframe: Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed.

Genesis 21: Sarah gives birth to Isaac!

- Abraham was 100, and Sarah was 90 years old.
- Everything seems to finally be going according to plan.

Then, **Genesis 22, Abraham is tested!!**

- God tells Abraham to do something that makes absolutely no sense in the Lower Story.
- He asks him to sacrifice his own son, Isaac.

And, because of his amazing faith, He heads out to be obedient.

Genesis 22:9-14

⁹ When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then he reached out his hand and took the

knife to slay his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!” “Here I am,” he replied. ¹² “Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.” ¹³ Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, “On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.”

There are so many things that we can learn from right here in this story.

But the main picture is again that, one day, God will provide the ultimate substitute for our own sacrifice in Jesus Christ!

Moving forward in the story...

Isaac marries Rebekah

Abraham dies at a good old age just like God told him he would.

Isaac and Rebekah have Jacob and Esau:

- They ended up being two different nations from one womb!
- The Edomites (from Esau) were an enemy nation of Israel.

God visits Jacob in a dream in Genesis 28 and reminds him of the promise he had made to Abraham.

- Jacob commits to follow the Lord and do all that He commands.

Shortly after that he marries two sisters, Leah and Rachel.

- He heads back up to Bethel when God calls him to move.
- He meets with God and God changes his name to Israel.

This is where we see the beginning of the nation of Israel.

- He had 12 sons who were the 12 tribes of Israel.
- His very favorite son was named Joseph.

AND THAT’S WHERE WE’LL START NEXT WEEK!