

Genesis 11:27-25:18 Notes

I. The Generations of Terah (11:27-25:11)

- The generations of Terah focuses primarily on the life of Abraham, one of the main patriarchs of the nation of Israel. And really the main point of this section focusing on the life of Abraham is that the Lord is building his nation and laying the foundation for this nation to make an international impact. Remember we saw before with the establishing of nations, that you would then need a nation that the Lord can use to witness to the other nations and we start to see that unfolding with the life of Abraham. And so again the main point here is that the Lord is building his nation and laying the foundation for this nation to make an international impact.
- And this foundation for the nation is primarily focused on two important items: the Abrahamic Covenant and faith. These are absolutely central not only to the narrative of Abraham's life but also to the very nature and core of who Israel is as a nation. And so really you need to understand these two concepts to understand the life of Abraham but also to really understand the rest of the Scriptures as well.
- In this section of Genesis, we will see God make promises to Abraham that are part of this covenant, but then we will also see the emphasis on Abraham needing to have faith in the Lord and believe these promises. For example, from beginning to end, you can see this emphasis on faith. The first part of the narrative is God calling Abram to go to a land that he will show him and so essentially this is a call to have faith in him. And then there are multiple events throughout Abraham's life where his faith is tested, but then it all culminates in one final act of faith, which is what? Do you remember what he is called to do later on? Sacrifice his son. And really you can consider that as sort of the final exam. And so again from beginning to end the life of Abraham is focused on faith. So let's get into this.
- **Terah's Descendants (11:27-32)**
- We see in these verses an introduction to Abram. One thing of particular significance. Do you see where Abram is from in these verses? Ur of the Chaldeans. Do you know another name for the Chaldeans? The Babylonians or Babylon. Where did we just come across the mentioning of Babylon? The tower of Babel. So essentially what you have here is Abram is in enemy territory and the Lord is bringing him out of this land to a new land. On a side note. Do you remember who took the southern kingdom into exile later on in the OT? Babylon. And so do you see now the significance of that? What is the Lord essentially saying at that point? We are starting over. Just like Abraham was from Babylon and was called out of it, so too Israel will return to Babylon and be called out of it as kind of a starting over.
- Notice real quick in these verses how Sarai is described. She is said to be what? Barren. She had no child. This is important to keep in mind as we move forward in the narrative.
- **God's Promises to Abram (12:1-3)**
- The first three verses of chapter 12 contain the promises that God makes to Abram, which become part of the Abrahamic Covenant. Since they give us insight

into the Abrahamic Covenant these verses are extremely important in understanding not just the life of Abram but also the nature and foundation of the nation of Israel, as we mentioned before.

- We see the Lord calling Abram to leave his country to go to the land that he will show him. Notice in this verse what the Lord is calling Abram to leave behind and how it moves from the general to the specific: your country, your kindred, your father's house (your family). This is a significant call. Essentially to leave everything and go. The comfort of your homeland, the comfort and support of your family, you need to leave all of it. And also notice that the Lord doesn't even tell him where exactly he is going but just describes it as "the land that I will show you." This requires faith in the Lord. And again as we mentioned before, the narrative of Abram is all about faith and we see this right from the beginning.
- After calling him to go to a land that he will show him, the Lord makes a series of promises to Abram here.
- First, he will make him a great nation. This is in line with what we mentioned before when we talked about the Table of Nations in Genesis 10 and how with the creation of various nations, the Lord will need to raise up a particular nation that can witness to all the other nations. This is exactly what we have going on here as the Lord promises to make Abram into a great nation. And what do you need to be a nation? You need land and people. And so bound up in this promise is the necessity of land, which we actually kind of saw in the previous verse, but also we start to also see the necessity of offspring, which will become an issue later on because remember what we know about Sarai at this point? She is barren. So we will have to see how that unfolds.
- Second, the Lord mentions that he will bless Abram. Where have we seen blessing before? We saw it in the Noahic Covenant, which pointed back to the blessing of creation. So the Noahic Covenant stated that we are heading back to Eden and the original creation and the blessing and rest that is associated with that. And now we find that this blessing is picked up with the promises made to Abram to show that it will be through the Abrahamic Covenant that these promises will continue. The Abrahamic Covenant is now linked with the Noahic Covenant and it starts to specify how the Lord is going to bring us back to the original creation, the original rest and blessing; through Abram and his line. This is confirmed by the end of verse 2 and verse 3. Look what verse 2 says. It gives the purpose of this nation and blessing and name, which is so that "you will be a blessing." And then verse 3 states that it will be in Abram that what? That "all the families of the earth shall be blessed." This confirms what we just established. God's plan and agenda is continuing to move forward, we are heading back to Eden and it will be through Abram and his line.
- Third, the Lord also promises to Abram that he will make his name great. Why is this significant in light of what we have seen in Genesis so far? Who tried to make a name for themselves but failed? The people at the tower of Babel. They tried to make a name for themselves but what does God say, they don't get the name, you do Abram.

- Fourth, tied in with the blessing we mentioned before, is the idea that those who bless Abram the Lord will bless but then on the flip side, those who curse or dishonor Abram the Lord will curse. This is important to keep in mind because we will see this play out even in the coming chapters of Genesis.
- So we have all these promises that are part of what will eventually become the Abrahamic Covenant. We can summarize the main three aspects of this covenant: Land, Seed, and Blessing. These three elements comprise the Abrahamic Covenant and are going to be significant, again, not just for the life of Abram but also for the nation of Israel moving forward in the rest of the OT.
- **Abram's Response of Obedience (12:4-9)**
- In the following section we see Abram's obedience to what God has called him to.
- He goes just as the Lord had told him and they arrive in the land of Canaan. And as he passes through the land, notice in verse 7 that the Lord appears to Abram and promises him what? That he will give this land to his offspring.
- And how does Abram respond? He responds by building an altar. He worships the Lord, essentially affirming that he does in fact believe the Lord's promise that this will be the land that the Lord will give to him (made clear in 13:17) and his offspring. But then this belief is going to be tested.
- **Abram Goes Down to Egypt (12:10-20)**
- In verse 10 we see that there is a famine in the land. And what is Abram's response to this? What does he do? He goes down to Egypt. Why is this a little weird with what we just had before it? The Lord just promised him the land he was in and Abram said yes this is my land that the Lord is giving me, so then what would you expect him to do? Stay in the land. The Lord just promised you this land and so you should stay. But rather he goes down to Egypt instead, which seems to be the human solution to this problem rather than trusting the Lord. This seems to indicate that Abram had initial faith but he is struggling to fully believe all of what the Lord has promised him.
- And so we see here a test concerning land, which was an element of what? The Abrahamic Covenant. God is testing Abram to essentially ask, do you trust me? Do you actually believe all that I have promised you?
- And so he goes down to Egypt, which you're going to have to keep in mind for something that comes up later, which again will support that this decision of Abram was not actually a good one. And you are probably familiar with the story but as they come to Egypt Abram tells Sarai to say she's his sister, they do that, and then Pharaoh takes her.
- But then what happens to Pharaoh and his house? The Lord afflicts them with great plagues. Why is this significant in light of what we just mentioned as part of the promises God made to Abram back in verse 3? The Lord will bless those who bless Abram, and he will do what to those who dishonor or curse Abram? Curse. What do we have here? This promise coming to pass. Pharaoh, in taking Abram's wife (even unknowingly), has done what? Cursed Abram and so the result? Curse.
- So then Pharaoh returns Sarai to Abram and he sends them out with all they had, which if you look back to verse 16 you see that they actually began to also

accumulate a lot of wealth through this event. And so God was gracious to Abram even in the midst of a lack of faith.

- **Abram and Lot (13:1-18)**

- So Abram returns to the land of Canaan from Egypt and we start to see just how much the Lord is growing Abram into the nation that he promised. Because as they settle in the land what ends up happening? Abram and Lot have too many people and animals and possessions that they need to split up. Abram gives Lot the choice, and Lot sees that the Jordan Valley seemed good and he even describes it as what? It was like the garden of the Lord. And we know Lot ends up settling where? Sodom. And so you have this nice lush place, but do you know what is at that location today? The Dead Sea. The Dead Sea is kind of named that because nothing really lives in it except for like some bacteria or something and so do you think this was what Lot saw and experienced when he described this as the garden of the Lord? No. What changed? God's judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah.

- So Lot heads east to the Jordan Valley, but notice in verse 12, what does it say about where Abram dwelled? He settled in the land of Canaan. What was he supposed to do but failed to do before? Stay in the land. And now that's exactly what he is doing. He is learning and growing. And then the Lord speaks to him and again promises that this land will be his land and the land of his offspring. The Lord even goes on to mention he will multiply Abram's offspring like the dust of the earth. Why is this interesting that the Lord keeps bringing up offspring? Does Abram have any kids yet? No. He would probably be thinking, "you keep mentioning that this land will go to my offspring and you even just promised to make my offspring like the dust of the earth, but I still don't even have a kid. How is that supposed to happen?"

- This connects with what element of the Abrahamic Covenant? The Seed. And it is to that element that the text now turns to and it will be that promise that the Lord will now test Abram.

- **Lot Taken, Abram Rescues (14:1-16)**

- In chapter 14 you have this mentioning of a battle that took place between two different coalitions of kings, with one coalition containing the king of Sodom. Who did we just mention as being connected to Sodom? Lot. And so as the battle occurs we see the coalition that Sodom was a part of was defeated and so the enemy took all the possessions of Sodom and that included who? Lot.

- A messenger then comes to Abram and tells him what has happened and how Lot had been captured and so Abram gathers up his trained men, 318 of them, which again is showing the nation that he is becoming. And he pursues the enemy coalition and defeated them and brings back the possessions as well as Lot.

- We need to point out a couple things in regard to this account.

- First of all, we need to take a look at what is going on here with Abram and Lot. What is Lot's relation to Abram? His nephew. And so why is Abram so intent on rescuing Lot? Is it solely just because he is family? Or is something else going on here as well? We have to remember, does Abram have any children? No. And so who then does Abram think of as his likely heir at this point since he has no kids?

Lot, his nephew. That's his closest relative. But God has promised Abram that he will have an offspring and Abram is supposed to believe that and trust the Lord in that. And so really we are seeing that Lot is essentially Abram's "Plan B." He's the backup plan just in case the Lord doesn't follow through. That is why Abram is so intent on protecting Lot.

- But notice something else here in this passage before we move on. There is a heavy emphasis on kings here in this section. And then you have Abram come on the scene and interact with these kings and so what is Abram essentially kind of acting like? A king. And this again points to the reality that God is in fact making him into a great nation just as he promised.
- **Melchizedek (14:17-24)**
- After Abram returns from this battle he is met by two kings: the king of Sodom and Melchizedek king of Salem. There is a lot of questions about who Melchizedek is and all that but we don't have the time to go into too much detail in all of this but let's point out some things here before we move on.
- What we essentially see here with Melchizedek is the prototypical king, which we actually see later on in the OT as well in the book of Hebrews. The text here doesn't give us a whole lot of information about him but we do know that besides a king what else is he? A priest. And so we see the beginnings of a royal priest and this is showing to Abram as well as Israel later, this is what a king needs to be like. A king-priest combo. And this is exactly what we see in Psalm 110:4, when David, speaking about the coming Messiah, indicates that this individual would not only be a king but also a what? A priest. In the order of who? Melchizedek. Melchizedek as the priest-king is the paradigm of what Israel's true king should be like and again that is picked up in Hebrews as well.
- Real quick a lot of people have had various ideas of the identity of Melchizedek and one common one is that this is a pre-incarnate Christ, but this is likely not the case. We have seen in passages like Psalm 110:4 that the Messiah is supposed to be a priest in the order of Melchizedek and so that's kind of weird if Melchizedek is also the Messiah.
- And notice at the end there that the king of Sodom tried to give Abram some possessions as a reward but Abram refuses because he doesn't want the king of Sodom to be able to say he made him rich because who does Abram want to point to as the source of all his provisions? The Lord. He is trusting the Lord.
- **God Makes a Covenant with Abram (15:1-21)**
- In this chapter God is going to reaffirm his promises to Abram as well now actually makes a covenant with him.
- The chapter starts out with the word of the Lord coming to Abram but then Abram asks the Lord about the promise of a seed. The Lord has promised him offspring, but Abram points out, I still don't have an offspring. And so the Lord responds by telling Abram that he will in fact have a son, who will come from his loins. Abram you will have a son, trust me.
- And how does Abram respond? He believes the Lord and it was counted to him as righteousness. This verse may be familiar to you, Paul uses this verse in Romans 4 to show that justification (being declared righteous) has always been by faith

and even Abram is an example of that (remember he is setting the foundation for the nation, which has the foundation of faith). And that's exactly what we see here in Genesis 15:6. Abram believed the Lord's promise of an offspring, which included not just a child of his own but also the promise of a multitude of offspring, which ties in with the Abrahamic Covenant and the promise of in Abraham and his line that the whole world will be blessed, which links back to the seed promise of Genesis 3:15 because it is through that seed that this worldwide blessing will come about.

- And so you can see why Paul points to Abram because he was justified in the same way we are, by faith. And whereas Abram was looking forward to this seed, who we know to be the Messiah, we now look back at what Jesus, the Messiah, has done.
- So Abram is declared righteous by the Lord and then the Lord makes his covenant with him.
- Abram then gathers some animals for this covenant ceremony and he cuts most of the animals in half. You may be wondering what is going on with this and so we need to understand what was involved in the covenant ceremonies of the ANE. The ceremony involved cutting some animals in half and then the two parties would walk together in between the halves of the animals. And this was supposed to show that I will keep this covenant and if I don't then let me be as one of these animals. That is what is going on here with the cut up animals.
- But then notice real quick what happens in verse 12, Abram does what? Falls asleep. This should trigger a similar situation that we have already seen in Genesis. Anyone remember? Adam and how the Lord caused him to sleep when he created Eve. This seems to then be creating a link between the two and showing that there is a connection between Abram and Adam and likely indicating that all that was promised to Adam (including Genesis 3:15) is tied now to what? The Abrahamic Covenant. You can see how important this covenant is.
- God then promises that Abram's offspring will be sojourners in a foreign land for 400 years during which time they will be slaves and be afflicted. And we know this is in reference to their time where? In Egypt. And notice the reason God gives for why they will be there for that length of time in verse 16. It is because the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete. People often point to the conquest, like the events in Joshua, and they say that this is completely unfair and how could God ever command Israel to do such a thing to all those peoples. But what do we see here? How long did God actually wait to bring this judgment on the Amorites? 400 years. He gave them 400 years to repent and he waited until their iniquity was to the point of demanding the judgment of the conquest. And also keep in mind that during this time of waiting, what was happening to God's people? They were in slavery and being afflicted. This was completely fair and just. And also remember that what is Israel about to do when Moses is writing this? They are about to enter the Promised Land and carry out this judgment. This would then encourage them that this is completely just and all part of the plan.

- And then notice in verse 17 where the covenant ceremony takes place and we have to point out something very significant here. We see a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch pass between the animals and who is this referring to? Well who are the only two people on the scene? Abram and the Lord. And remember what's Abram doing? Sleeping. So not him and that leaves who? The Lord. The Lord is the only one who passes through the pieces of the animals, which indicates that all the responsibility to fulfill and uphold and keep this covenant falls on who? The Lord. This is what we call a unilateral covenant. Does Abram technically have to do anything for this covenant and all the promises contained in that covenant to be fulfilled? No. It is all on God, which guarantees that all the promises will come to pass and that is a certainty because it is only dependent upon the Lord. And remember this covenant is linked with everything right? It is linked with Adam and the promises of the seed in Genesis 3:15, it is linked with the Noahic Covenant, everything. And so God is declaring that he will be faithful to fulfill all of it.
- Everything seems so great, Abram has believed and God has reaffirmed the promise of a seed but then as we come to chapter 16 we see that Abram still struggles with fully believing this promise.
- **Hagar and the Birth of Ishmael (16:1-16)**
- We see at the beginning of the chapter that Abram and Sarai still do not have a child, even though the Lord has promised this multiple times up to this point. And so the test is to whether believe that the Lord will in fact give them a child or to kind of take matters into their own hands. And what do they do? They take matters into their own hands.
- They do this by Sarai telling Abram to go in to her servant Hagar, essentially as a surrogate mother situation I guess you could say. And we may be quick to judge this lack of faith but notice this occurs after they have been in the land of Canaan for 10 years. You can start to see the struggle to believe a promise over such a long period of time.
- And we are often quick to also judge Sarai here and solely blame her but we need to point out something significant. What does the text call Hagar? Hagar the what? The Egyptian. When were they in Egypt before and would have received Hagar (12:16)? When Abram failed to believe the first time in regard to the land. And so we see the consequences of that action coming up and you also have the point that the same thing is happening here again, a failure of Abram to fully believe God's promises.
- As a result of this failure you also have the birth of Ishmael, whose descendants will continually be an enemy of who? Israel. And so again you see the consequences of sin at play here.
- [Side note: since Ishmael is an offspring of Abram, some of the promises will be applied to him as well such as multiplying his offspring so they can't be numbered.]
- **The Sign of the Abrahamic Covenant: Circumcision (17:1-27)**
- In chapter 17 we again have the Lord reaffirming the promises that were part of the covenant that the Lord made with Abram. But notice in verse 1. How old is

Abram at this point? 99 years old. And how old was he at the end of chapter 16? 86 years old. So 13 years have passed by in between the events at the end of chapter 16 and the events in chapter 17. 13 years of silence from the Lord, which may be a judgment on Abram's unbelief in the last chapter.

- God then reaffirms his promises except this time there is a little more emphasis on the fact that kings and royalty will come from Abram. The Lord is essentially pointing out that Abram's descendants are destined for royalty. This is seen in verse 6 as well as 16.
- The Lord then gives three signs that confirm all these promises. First, he changes Abram's name to Abraham, which means "father of a multitude." He does this because Abraham will be a father of many nations. Second, he gives the sign of the covenant: circumcision, to show that this nation is set apart for God. Third, he changes Sarai's name to Sarah, which means "princess" and again points to the emphasis on royalty.
- We then have the Lord promise again that Abraham will in fact have a son through Sarah, and this son will be named "Isaac."
- When God is finished talking, Abraham responds in obedience by performing the sign of the covenant (circumcision) on him and his household.
- **The Final Promise of an Offspring (18:1-15)**
- In these verses we have the Lord's final promise of an offspring before it is fulfilled a couple chapters later.
- We have these three men come to Abraham and Abraham invites them in and shows great hospitality to them. And we find out that one of them is the Lord and the other two are angels.
- They then converse and the Lord declares that by this time next year they will have a son. Sarah overhears this and do you remember her response to this? She laughs. Why? Because Abraham and her are both old. Do you remember who else laughed about this in the previous chapter? Abraham. So both Abraham and Sarah laugh about this. But then the Lord confronts Sarah, asking "is anything too hard for the Lord?" And so we see here that not only does Abraham need to believe but also who? Sarah. And do you know what the name Isaac means? He laughs. Why is this significant? First, it plays off of the responses of Abraham and Sarah who laughed, but it also shows that their sorrow will be turned to joy as well as the likely fact that who ultimately gets the last laugh in all of this? The Lord. And so Isaac is going to be a reminder to Abraham and Sarah that they need to believe and trust in the Lord and his promises.
- **Abraham's Intercession for Sodom (18:16-33)**
- In the rest of chapter 18 we now have the men leaving Abraham to head where? To Sodom. Why? To bring judgment on their great wickedness.
- But notice that Abraham intercedes for Sodom and he essentially tries to bargain with the Lord asking the Lord to spare the city if 50 righteous people are found in it and then he sort of bargains down to 10 righteous people.
- Why is Abraham trying so hard to intercede for Sodom? Who lives there? Lot. And what is Lot to Abraham? His nephew but also what did we describe him before? He was Abraham's back up plan. And so you can see why Abraham is

trying so hard to spare this city because he is really trying to just preserve who? Lot. But he tries to do so without directly asking for it.

- **Sodom and Gomorrah (19:1-29)**

- Hopefully you are somewhat familiar with the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. We don't have time to go into all the details here, but we see that the wickedness of the city is great and as a result is deserving of judgment.
- There are some today who try to argue against this passage saying that homosexuality is not actually condemned here, and we don't have time to go into all of this but suffice it to say. Notice what it says in verse 5, the men of Sodom want Lot to bring out the two men so that they can "know" them. This term for "know" has been used in Genesis up to this point in such references as Adam knowing his wife Eve and Cain knowing his wife. And so it not only carries the idea of sexual intimacy but also the fullness of that intimacy in the context of marriage. And so these men desire to pervert this covenant of marriage and that is what is going on here. Even Lot understands this because he offers his daughters and he describes them as what? They have never "known" a man. This affirms that the men of Sodom were perverting God's design for sexual intimacy in the context of marriage.
- So the angels intervene and bring Lot and his family out of the city and they literally have to seize them and bring them out because they were lingering even when judgment was about to come.
- So God rains down sulfur and fire from heaven and destroys Sodom and Gomorrah.
- And notice especially verses 27-28. Abraham goes out in the morning and what does he see? Sodom and Gomorrah have been destroyed and he can see the smoke rising up from them. Now what does he assume here? Their all dead. Including who? Lot. His back up plan is gone. No more back up plan Abraham, you have to trust me.
- But real quick on a side note. Even though Abraham would have assumed the Lord did not answer his request of saving Lot, what do we know? The Lord actually did save Lot. And this is an important note for us on prayer sometimes because we can often think with certain things, that I prayed so much about this or that and the Lord never answered. But we learn from here, sometimes he does answer and we just don't know it.
- **Lot and His Daughters (19:30-38)**
- Chapter 19 then wraps up with detailing the story of Lot and his two daughters where after fleeing from Sodom they end up not staying in the city of Zoar but instead go up and live in a cave outside the city. And so then his daughters hatch this plan to get their father, Lot, drunk and then sleep with him so that they can have children. Their plan succeeds and they both get pregnant and have sons and notice the names of these sons. Moab, who becomes the nation of Moab. And Ben-ammi, who becomes the nation of the Ammonites. Both enemies of Israel later on. As you can tell this situation is really weird and messed up. And the names of the sons emphasize that as well. "Moab" can mean "from father" or "who is my father." And "Ben-ammi" means "son of my people." And we laugh

about these names but then stop and think for a second. Who is probably one of the most famous Moabites in Scripture? Ruth. And so you start to understand the stigma that would have come with being Ruth the Moabitess.

- **Abraham and Abimelech (20:1-18)**

- In chapter 20 we encounter a story that should sound familiar to us because similar events happen to when Abraham went down to Egypt. This time with a guy named Abimelech. Abraham says Sarah is his sister, Abimelech takes her, the Lord intervenes, and then Abimelech returns Sarah to Abraham with other goods and possessions.

- Now we have to step back and think about this for a second. Why do we have such a similar event happening here? What do you notice that is weird about this whole situation? The fact that Abimelech took Sarah. Why is this weird? She's old. She's over 90 years old. And what do kings normally look for in women to be a part of their harem? Good looking and can have children. Not necessarily what you would describe someone in their 90s, especially the ability to have children.

- So what is going on here? Abimelech isn't dumb and so what does he assume about Sarah? That she can do what? Bear children. And that's why he takes her.

- This is the point of this event. It's to show that in some way God has made Sarah young. She now is able to bear children. And to confirm this, what do we have in the very next section? The birth of Isaac.

- **The Birth of Isaac (21:1-7)**

- We see in these verses God fulfilling his promise to Abraham of an offspring. This is the one that the Lord's plan will continue through. It'll be through Isaac that the Abrahamic Covenant continues and therefore remember this connects with the Noachic Covenant as well as the promises of Genesis 3:15. Everything is now linked to Isaac and we'll see this confirmed as we move through Genesis.

- And we also see here the joy involved, as Sarah declares that the Lord has made laughter for her and others will laugh as well, but we have to remember, who has the last laugh? God. He essentially says, "I told you so. You doubted but I told you that this would happen."

- **Hagar and Ishmael Sent Out (21:8-21)**

- In the following section we see what God had essentially promised before unfolding. In Genesis 17 God had promised Abraham that Isaac would be the one that he would make his covenant with and not Ishmael. And so Ishmael and Hagar are sent out. But we have to also remember that in Genesis 17, the Lord also promised that even though Ishmael would not be the one that he would continue his plan through, Ishmael would still be blessed as a descendant of Abraham. And that again is what we see here in which the Lord declares to Hagar that he will make Ishmael into a great nation.

- **Abraham's Covenant with Abimelech (21:22-34)**

- Chapter 21 then ends with another interaction between Abraham and Abimelech. In this interaction we continue to see God's plan moving forward.

- Abimelech speaks to Abraham (which may indicate the superiority of Abraham) asking that Abraham would deal kindly with him and his descendants to which Abraham agrees. Then there arises a disagreement over a well. Abraham and

Abimelech then make a covenant that declares that Abraham did in fact dig this well and this then shows that Abraham has the water rites in this area. This doesn't mean he owns the land but rather he controls the water in that area, which is still significant since you need water to live.

- So if Abraham now has the water rites in this area, which is called Beersheba (the well of the oath), this is a step in the direction of which promise of the Abrahamic Covenant being fulfilled? The land promise. God's plan is moving forward.
- And so we have Isaac born and we have the land promise seeming to head in a good direction and everything seems to be coming together and now at this point you have the final test in the next chapter.
- **The Final Test: The Sacrifice of Isaac (22:1-24)**
- In this chapter we have the familiar story of the testing of Abraham in the sacrificing of his son Isaac. And you have to understand the significance of this. Because we have seen up to this point that this is not just a matter of a father losing a son, which would be dramatic on its own, but rather we have to remember all that is tied into this son. All of the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant and all that has come before that is linked to this covenant is also linked to Isaac. So what is the Lord essentially asking Abraham to give up here? Everything. And the question is whether he will continue to have faith in the Lord and trust him even when it seems as if he is going to lose everything. And so the Lord's question is, "Abraham, will you trust me to fulfill everything even when you lose everything?" So you can understand the intensity of this chapter now as we move into the details of the account.
- We see that the Lord tells Abraham to take his son and go. And we can't miss the similarities here to Abraham's original call back in chapter 12. There he was called to "go" and here again he is called to "go." This creates what we call an inclusio, which you can think of bookends to this section and this emphasizes the point that the whole life of Abraham is about faith and like we said before, this now is essentially the final exam.
- But also notice how just as in Genesis 12 where the Lord moves from the general to the specific when calling Abraham to leave his family (your country, your kindred, your father's house) he does the same thing when he describes who Abraham is now supposed to take. Notice this. Your son, your only son (because Ishmael has been sent out and is not the heir to the promises of God as we saw before), Isaac. And catch this last description. "Whom you love." Again you can feel the emotion here with each painstaking description.
- Abraham is to take him and offer him as a burnt offering to the Lord. This offering is one that is wholly consumed.
- And where are they to go? To the land of Moriah. The name Moriah is used only one other time in the OT and that is in 2 Chronicles 3:1 in reference to where Solomon would build the temple. And this is not by accident because remember what we talked about in the first class. Geography makes connections for us. And that's what we see here. Because we have a sacrifice that doesn't take place in the same location that many sacrifices will take place at the temple, which then also makes a connection to the ultimate sacrifice of the ultimate lamb of God, which

was who? Jesus. This is setting the stage for all of that and Scripture is going to build on that to make all of these connections.

- And we see once again Abraham's response of obedience. Early the next morning he goes. And you also should see that this is a three day journey. So Abraham will have to dwell upon this for three days as they travel to this location and the question is will he continue to remain faithful?
- They get near the location and they leave the other young men behind but notice what Abraham says in verse 5. He says that we will go over there and worship and come again to you. What's weird about that? Shouldn't he have said, "we will go over there and worship and then I will return to you"? And so we start to see again Abraham's faith at work here, which the writer of Hebrews picks up on in Hebrews 11 when talking about this event.
- And then you have Isaac question Abraham about the sacrifice and here we need to point out something. We often think of Isaac here as this little boy but really he is likely in his 20s and some people even suggest in his 30s but he is old enough to start catching on to what is happening. And so you start to see not only the faith of Abraham here but also the faith of who? Isaac. Because when Isaac realized that he was the sacrifice he could have easily just said, "not today old man" and fought back or something but he didn't. So we can't lose sight of that fact as well even though the text's emphasis is on Abraham's faith.
- So they get to the place and notice how in verses 9-10 it seems almost like the narrative slows down a little bit as each detail is laid out. Abraham builds the altar, he lays the wood in order, he binds Isaac, lays him on the altar, on top of the wood, he reaches out his hand, and takes the knife to slaughter his son. And so you essentially have the tension building up until the final moment when the Lord intervenes.
- The angel of the Lord calls to Abraham and tells him not to sacrifice Isaac because the Lord has seen his obedience and his faith. And the Lord then provides a ram for them instead.
- But we need to point out this next part here because it is so important. Look at starting in verse 17 how the Lord again confirms all the promises he has made to Abraham. He will "bless" Abraham, which we have seen before creates the link between the Abrahamic Covenant and the Noahic Covenant and even the blessing of creation. And then notice the rest of this verse. It says that the Lord will multiply Abraham's offspring like we have seen before but then at the end of verse 17 it says, "your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies." Some translations say "their" enemies but the Hebrew is singular, "his." And so you have this tension between the many and the singular, which again points to the fact that while there will be many offspring of Abraham it will culminate in the one who will conquer the gate of his enemies. This connects us back to which promise? Genesis 3:15. And then in verse 18 we see that all of these connections are confirmed because it will be in Abraham's offspring that all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. What we have seen implied before is now explicitly stated that Genesis 3:15 is now clearly linked to the Abrahamic Covenant.

- **Sarah's Death and Burial (23:1-20)**

- In the next chapter we have the death of Sarah. Some Rabbis actually somewhat jokingly state that this account comes right after the testing of Abraham and the sacrifice of Isaac because when she found out about it she died from the shock of it all. But whatever the case it was likely not too long after the events of chapter 22.
- So Sarah dies and Abraham wants to purchase a burial place from the Hittites. And do you remember this account? Abraham wants to buy the land but then the Hittites just say tell us where you want to bury and you can bury her so then Abraham picks a place but then he wants to buy it from the owner (Ephron the Hittite) but then he offers it for free but then Abraham wants to pay for it and all that.
- We tend to read this account and think man the Hittites are so nice to Abraham offering him this land for free but then you also may wonder, why does Abraham keep kind of pushing back and wanting to pay for this land? And so we need to talk about what is going on here.
- Remember before when we talked about Beersheba and how Abraham had the water rites there but didn't actually own the land, so now he wants to own some land so he can bury Sarah. And also in wanting to buy the land so that he actually owns it also points to Abraham's continued faith in the land promise that God has made to him.
- The problem, however, is that some scholars point out that in the culture at that time, in order to own land you had to own land. So essentially you had some sort of land owners association thing and it was only these people who could own land and the only way to be a part of this group was to own land. And so the problem for Abraham is that he doesn't own land. And so now you can start to see why the Hittites act the way that they do here because what are they trying to prevent Abraham from doing by offering their land for free? They are trying to prevent him from owning land and therefore joining their association thing, which would allow him to own more land.
- But Abraham insists to pay for the land and Ephron the Hittite eventually gives in. However, he charges 400 shekels of silver, which seems to be a large amount for such a plot of land. We don't quite know exactly how much this would be but you have later on in the OT Jeremiah buying a field for 17 shekels of silver (Jeremiah 32:9). This high amount again is likely to try to prevent Abraham from buying it, but Abraham does in fact buy it. This confirms not only that Abraham is wealthy and the Lord is making him into a great nation just as he promised but also it shows Abraham's commitment to believe the Lord's land promise, he will pay whatever it takes.
- **A Wife for Isaac (24:1-67)**
- In the previous chapter we saw the land promise moving forward and now in this chapter we will see the seed promise move forward as Abraham sends one of his servants to find a wife for Isaac.
- As he gives instructions to his servant, we need to point out two specific things Abraham tells his servant not to do. First, he tells him not to let Isaac marry a

Canaanite. Abraham understands the wickedness of the Canaanite people and the negative impact that will then have on Isaac if he were to marry one of them. Second, he tells him not to let Isaac leave the land. Why? Because he realizes it is dangerous, which he learned from personal experience right? And so after these two qualifications, he sends the servant off to his relatives to find a wife.

- When the servant arrives in the city, he prays to the Lord. And do you remember what he asks the Lord? He asks that the woman whom the Lord has appointed for Isaac be the one who allows him to drink some water that she has drawn as well as then provides water for his camels. How many camels did he have with him? 10. A camel can drink at least 30 gallons of water and so this woman would have to provide 300 gallons of water. And each water pot probably held close to about 3 gallons. So how many trips would you have to take? 100. On top of that you have to remember that it was not as simple as today turning on a hose and filling up the troughs. You had to go to a well and draw the water. And some wells during that time, and this well seems to be one of these based on the wording of verse 16, had stairs that led down to a reservoir and that is where you would draw your water from. So you would have to go down some stairs and then back up. So the woman he is looking for will have to go up and down these stairs roughly 100 times. Now you can understand why this would be a clear indication that this woman is the one the Lord has chosen because this is not an easy task.
- We then have Rebekah come on the scene, who is from the family of one of Abraham's relatives, and she does this very sign. And notice real quick in verse 20 that after she let the man drink she emptied the rest in the trough and then did what? Ran. And it seems like she may have actually ran the entire time.
- And the servant knows that this is the woman the Lord has chosen to provide for Isaac.
- So they go to the family and the servant recounts all that the Lord has been doing in the life of Abraham up until this point and then the family tries to delay sending Rebekah off but Rebekah knows she needs to go and so they leave. And real quick notice in verse 60 the blessing that they bless Rebekah with as they send her off. Did you catch the last phrase there? "May your offspring possess the gate of those who hate him." Does this phrase sound familiar? This is a similar phrase to the one the Lord declared to Abraham. And so we see here clearly that God's plan is moving forward and it will continue through Isaac and Rebekah.
- So then they head back home and when they near the home, Isaac goes out to meet them. And as he approaches Rebekah asks who he is and notice the servant's response. What does he say? "It is my master." This shows that Abraham has successfully passed along his legacy to Isaac and the servant understands that. God established a foundation in Abraham and he has successfully passed it along to Isaac.
- **Abraham's Death (25:1-11)**
- We then come to the end of this toledot section where we see Abraham take another wife and then have more children. And we have to understand that even though these children will have a form of blessing because they are offspring of

Abraham, they are not the ones that God is going to continue his plan through, this is reserved for who? Isaac and his line.

- So Abraham dies and they bury him with Sarah in the burial plot that he had purchased.

II. The Generations of Ishmael (25:12-18)

- Kind of building off what we just said, this section serves to show that Ishmael, as an offspring of Abraham, did have a form of blessing and we see that in his offspring, which the Lord promised. And so even though this was not the chosen line through which God would continue his plan, he was still faithful to fulfill what he had promised concerning Ishmael and his descendants.