

## SESSION 7

# GOD TOOK ABRAM TO CANAAN

God's story now tells us about a man called Abram. He lived about ten generations after the people built the tower at Babylon. Ten generations is about 350 years. Abram was part of Shem's family. Shem was one of Noah's sons. You can read the names of all the generations between Shem and Abram in Genesis 11:10-26.

Abram had grown up in the southern part of Mesopotamia. Today, we call that area Iraq. Back when God confused all the languages at Babylon, a group of people began to speak a language that we now know as Aramaic. They stayed close to the Babylon area and lived there. The city they started was called Ur. At the time that Abram was born, these people did not worship God. They worshiped other things that they had made themselves out of wood, stone or metal. They said that these things had the power of God. They also worshiped things that God had created, like trees or animals. They asked these things for help that only God could give them. Instead of listening to God and asking him to help them, they asked these other things to help them.

God's story tells us about Abram's family and also about his wife. Abram's wife, Sarai, could not have children. She was not able to get pregnant.



<sup>27</sup> This is the account of Terah's family. Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran was the father of Lot. <sup>28</sup> But Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans, the land of his birth, while his father, Terah, was still living. <sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, Abram and Nahor both married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of

## HIS STORY: THE RESCUE

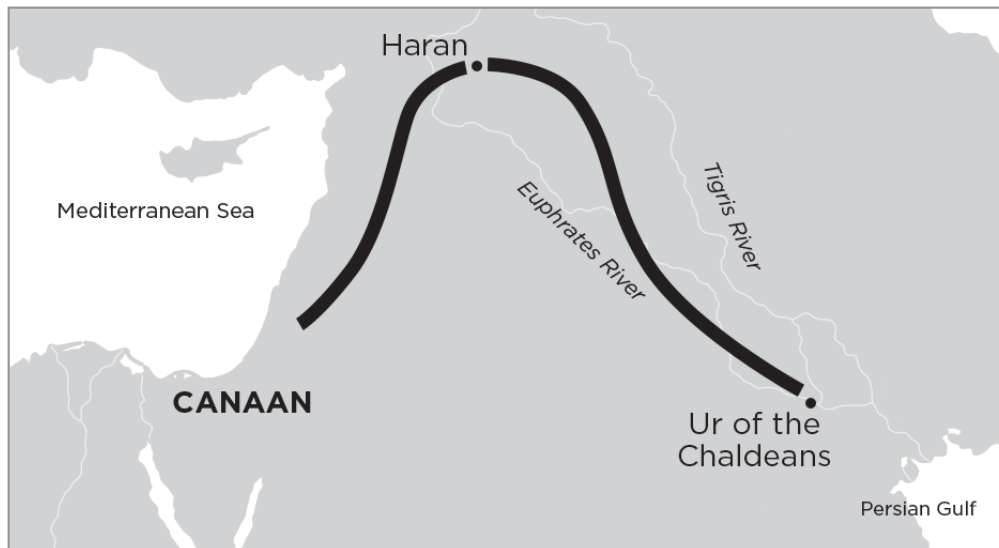
Nahor's wife was Milcah. (Milcah and her sister Iscah were daughters of Nahor's brother Haran.)<sup>30</sup> But Sarai was unable to become pregnant and had no children.

One day, Abram's father, Terah, wanted to move away from Ur.



GENESIS 11:31,32

<sup>31</sup> One day Terah took his son Abram, his daughter-in-law Sarai (his son Abram's wife), and his grandson Lot (his son Haran's child) and moved away from Ur of the Chaldeans. He was headed for the land of Canaan, but they stopped at Haran and settled there. <sup>32</sup> Terah lived for 205 years and died while still in Haran.



Terah wanted to move his family to Canaan. Canaan was west of Ur near the Mediterranean Sea. Abram left the city of Ur with his wife and his father. His brother's son, Lot, also went with them. First, they had to go north, because there was a desert<sup>57</sup> between Ur and Canaan. They couldn't go through the desert, so they went north and arrived in a city called Haran. Haran is in the area we call Turkey today. While they were staying in Haran, Terah died. God's story says that God spoke to Abram.



GENESIS 12:1

<sup>1</sup> The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you."

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57. **desert** - a very dry place with no water

## SESSION 7 : GOD TOOK ABRAM TO CANAAN

Abram was different from most of the other people who were alive then. Most people worshiped false gods.<sup>58</sup> God's story tells us that Abram knew the true Creator<sup>59</sup> God, because God spoke to him. God told Abram to start out again and go to a land that God would show him. God also said some other things to Abram.



GENESIS 12:2,3

<sup>2</sup> I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.”

God told Abram that he would use Abram to start *a great nation*. God meant that Abram's family would grow very large and that many other people would know about it. God also told Abram that he would be a *famous*<sup>60</sup> and important man.

God said that he would take care of Abram. God said he would help people who helped Abram and *curse*<sup>61</sup> people who went against Abram. The last thing God said to Abram was that *all the families on earth will be blessed* through him. Blessed means that good things would come to all the people of the earth through Abram.

Remember when Adam and Eve were sent away from the garden that God had made for them? God spoke to the snake and said that a man would come who would hurt Satan's head. This man would defeat<sup>62</sup> Satan. He would come because God said he would come. When God says something, it always happens. The man that God talked about who would defeat Satan would be a member of Abram's family. We will hear all about that as we follow God's story. That is why God said to Abram that all the families of the earth would be blessed through him.



GENESIS 12:4,5

<sup>4</sup> So Abram departed as the Lord had instructed, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. <sup>5</sup> He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all his wealth—his livestock and all the people he had taken into his household at Haran—and headed for the land of Canaan.

Abram listened to God and he believed that what God said was true. He had no children because his wife could not get pregnant. But Abram believed that what God said was true. He believed that he would be the father of a great nation because God said that he would. When someone believes that what God says is true, we call it 'faith.'

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58. **gods** - we write the name of the true God with a capital "G" but false gods with a small "g"

59. **Creator** - the one who created, or made, everything

60. **famous** - known about by many people

61. **curse** - to want hurt or harm to happen to someone

62. **defeat** - to win over someone else in a fight or competition; to overcome or beat

## HIS STORY: THE RESCUE

Abram listened to God and left the city of Haran. He took his nephew<sup>63</sup> Lot and their families, servants, and all of their animals. They started to move west and then south. They went down the coast of the Mediterranean Sea to Canaan.



GENESIS 13:5-13

<sup>5</sup> Lot, who was traveling with Abram, had also become very wealthy with flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, and many tents. <sup>6</sup> But the land could not support both Abram and Lot with all their flocks and herds living so close together. <sup>7</sup> So disputes broke out between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot. (At that time Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land.)

<sup>8</sup> Finally Abram said to Lot, “Let’s not allow this conflict to come between us or our herdsmen. After all, we are close relatives! <sup>9</sup> The whole countryside is open to you. Take your choice of any section of the land you want, and we will separate. If you want the land to the left, then I’ll take the land on the right. If you prefer the land on the right, then I’ll go to the left.”

<sup>10</sup> Lot took a long look at the fertile plains of the Jordan Valley in the direction of Zoar. The whole area was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the Lord or the beautiful land of Egypt. (This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) <sup>11</sup> Lot chose for himself the whole Jordan Valley to the east of them. He went there with his flocks and servants and parted company with his uncle Abram. <sup>12</sup> So Abram settled in the land of Canaan, and Lot moved his tents to a place near Sodom and settled among the cities of the plain. <sup>13</sup> But the people of this area were extremely wicked and constantly sinned against the Lord.

God said that he would take care of Abram and Abram was a rich man because God had helped him. He had many animals and a big group of people with him. They settled in the land of Canaan and had a big area of land for their animals to graze.<sup>64</sup> Abram’s nephew, Lot, was also a rich man with many animals. They needed a big area of land for all their animals. Abram and Lot moved away from each other to get more land for their animals. Lot found good land with a lot of grass beside the Jordan River. This land was near a city called Sodom. Abraham went to a place further west, where the land was dry. It was near the city of Hebron.



GENESIS 13:14,15

<sup>14</sup> After Lot had gone, the Lord said to Abram, “Look as far as you can see in every direction—north and south, east and west. <sup>15</sup> I am giving all this land, as far as you can see, to you and your descendants as a permanent possession.

After Lot had gone, God spoke to Abram again. He gave Abram all the land that Abram could see. God gave that land to Abram and his descendants.<sup>65</sup>



GENESIS 13:16

<sup>16</sup> And I will give you so many descendants that, like the dust of the earth, they cannot be counted!

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63. **nephew** - the son of your brother or sister

64. **graze** - eat the grass

65. **descendants** - any people in your family who are born and live after you

## SESSION 7 : GOD TOOK ABRAM TO CANAAN

God also said that he would give Abram *so many descendants that, like the dust of the earth, they cannot be counted!* God meant that Abram would have many, many descendants. Abram's wife, Sarai, could not have children. And Abram and Sarai were now old. So, Abram needed to believe that what God said was true. He needed to have faith<sup>66</sup> in God. A bit later, God again said to Abram that he would have a son and that he would have many descendants.



GENESIS 15:1-6

<sup>1</sup> Some time later, the Lord spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, "Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great."

<sup>2</sup> But Abram replied, "O Sovereign Lord, what good are all your blessings when I don't even have a son? Since you've given me no children, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth. <sup>3</sup> You have given me no descendants of my own, so one of my servants will be my heir."

<sup>4</sup> Then the Lord said to him, "No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own who will be your heir." <sup>5</sup> Then the Lord took Abram outside and said to him, "Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That's how many descendants you will have!"

<sup>6</sup> And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith.

It says that Abram believed the Lord and that *the Lord counted him as righteous*. What does that mean? Abram, like every other person, was born into the world of sin and death. Like all other people, he did not always do everything right. God is perfect and everything God does is perfect. But people are not perfect. They are born as people who sin. Sin means that they disobey God. Abram was born that way, too. In Genesis 20:1-18, you can read about a time that Abram did not trust in God. He was not perfect. If God didn't rescue Abram, he would go to the place of death after he died. He would be separated from God forever.

But God had made a way for people to come to him. Abram came to God that way. He came to God in the way that God said he should, by killing animals and letting their blood run out. Abram believed that what God said was true. He showed that he believed God by coming to God in the way that God said. Abram believed the things that God said. He wanted a relationship with God and he did not want to be separated from God. He believed that God would give him a son and many descendants. So, because Abram believed what God said, God said that Abram was 'righteous'. That meant that Abram did not have to pay for his sin with his own death.

Like all people, Abram had a debt<sup>67</sup> to God that he could not pay back. He was born into the world of sin and death and he could not save himself. Only God could save him. Abram knew that, so he killed animals and let their blood run out. He did that to show that he believed that only God could save him. Abram knew that he should be the one to die, not the animals who had not done anything

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66. **faith** - when someone believes that the things that God says are true

67. **debt** - something that you owe to someone else and have to pay back

## HIS STORY: THE RESCUE

wrong. God had made a way for Abram to come to him so that he didn't have to die and so that he could be close to God and not be separated from him. Abram came to God in the way God said because he believed what God said.

God saw that Abram believed him. God did not have to save Abram, but he did because he wanted to. God gave Abram a free gift and saved him from going to the place of death. God said that Abram did not have to pay back the debt that he owed God. Abram did not have to die for his sin. That is what it means when the Bible says that the Lord counted Abram as righteous.

God says some more things about Abram's descendants.



GENESIS 15:12-16

<sup>12</sup> As the sun was going down, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a terrifying darkness came down over him. <sup>13</sup> Then the Lord said to Abram, "You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, where they will be oppressed as slaves for 400 years. <sup>14</sup> But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and in the end they will come away with great wealth. <sup>15</sup> (As for you, you will die in peace and be buried at a ripe old age.) <sup>16</sup> After four generations your descendants will return here to this land, for the sins of the Amorites do not yet warrant their destruction."

God said that Abram's descendants would be *strangers in a foreign<sup>68</sup> land*. He said that they would be slaves<sup>69</sup> for 400 years. God said that he would punish the nation that made them slaves. He said he would bring Abram's descendants back to the land he had given to Abram.

Sometime later, God said again to Abram that his family would grow to become many nations. He told Abram that he was making a contract or a *covenant* with him. A covenant is a very strong promise<sup>70</sup> to do something that you say you will do. God wanted Abram to know that he always does what he says he will do. Then God changed Abram's name to Abraham. The name Abraham means 'father of many.'



GENESIS 17:4,6

<sup>4</sup> "This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of a multitude of nations! <sup>5</sup> What's more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be Abram. Instead, you will be called Abraham, for you will be the father of many nations. <sup>6</sup> I will make you extremely fruitful. Your descendants will become many nations, and kings will be among them!

Then God changed the name of Abraham's wife from Sarai to Sarah. The name Sarah means 'mother of many.'

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68. **foreign** - a land that was not their own land

69. **slaves** - people who have to work for other people without being paid

70. **promise** - to say that you will do something

## SESSION 7 : GOD TOOK ABRAM TO CANAAN



<sup>15</sup> Then God said to Abraham, “Regarding Sarai, your wife—her name will no longer be Sarai. From now on her name will be Sarah. <sup>16</sup> And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly, and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings of nations will be among her descendants.”

<sup>17</sup> Then Abraham bowed down to the ground, but he laughed to himself in disbelief. “How could I become a father at the age of 100?” he thought. “And how can Sarah have a baby when she is ninety years old?”

God told Abraham that Sarah would have a son. This did not seem possible to Abraham. He was already 100 years old and Sarah was 90 years old. Sarah had never had any children before. So Abraham did not think that they could have a son. But God can do anything that he wants to do. He is the only one who can create life. And God always does what he says he will do.



1. God spoke to Abram. Think back over God’s story so far and try to remember all the times that God spoke to people.
2. Today, God speaks to us through his words written in the Bible. Why do you think that God tries so hard to speak to people?
3. Where Abram grew up, most people did not listen to God. But Abram believed in the Creator God. Do you think it would have been hard for Abram to grow up there? Why?
4. What does it mean when it says that ‘God counted Abram as righteous’? Was it because Abram always did the right thing?
5. God told Abraham and Sarah that they would have a son, and many descendants. How could God know about something that had not yet happened?



This lesson has been adapted from the book *His Story: The Rescue, The Bible message from Genesis to Christ in easy English* (ISBN: 978-0-9944270-4-5)

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