

Lesson for September 21, 2008

Old Testament Survey

Abraham (Genesis 12:1-25:11)

There are three main events that surround the life of Abraham. The first is the formation of the Jewish nation, the second is the story of the deliverance of his nephew, Lot, from Sodom and Gomorrah and the third is the miraculous birth and command from God to sacrifice his son, Isaac.

God chose Abram to establish the nation of Israel and the Jewish race. Abram (whose name was changed to Abraham) had left his home in Ur of the Chaldees with his father, his wife and his nephew Lot and settled in Haran. While Abram was still in Haran, God made a covenant with him, which we call the Abrahamic Covenant.

Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-4; 13:14-17; 15:1-7; 17:1-8)

This *unconditional* covenant was given to Abraham in seven parts:

- 1) "I will make of thee a great nation" – The Jewish nation was a great and mighty nation at various times in history.
- 2) "I will bless thee" – Abraham was blessed with physical prosperity, as well as spiritual prosperity.
- 3) "And I will make thy name great" – Considered the Father of the Jew, he has a very recognizable name among all nations of the earth.
- 4) "And thou shalt be a great blessing" – Because of Abraham's seed (the Lord Jesus Christ), he has been a great blessing to millions of people that have come to know Christ as Savior.
- 5) "I will bless them that bless thee" – Seen throughout history, those who protect and ally with Israel are always blessed.
- 6) "And I will curse him that curses thee" – In like manner, those who oppose Israel have eventually been destroyed.
- 7) "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" – This refers to the coming of Messiah through the lineage of Abraham and the blessings that accompany the Hypostatic Union of Christ for all mankind.

Because this covenant was unconditional, nothing was required on the part of Abraham in order to enjoy its promises. The Abrahamic Covenant coincided with the Age of Promise in the Dispensation of Israel.

The next event of significance in the life of Abraham was the deliverance of Lot, his nephew, from Sodom. Abraham and Lot had been blessed by God with great wealth. They had very large flocks and herds. These herds became so large that they could no longer dwell in the same place. Therefore, Abraham and Lot had to separate their herds. Abraham gave Lot the choice of which land he would like to have. Lot chose the land of Jordan and the Bible says that he pitched his tent toward Sodom.

Sodom and Gomorrah were twin cities and both were extremely corrupt. So much so, that when Lot was visited by two angels (who appeared in the form of men) the men of the town tried to persuade Lot to let them “have their way” with the angels. (Genesis 19) The story continued and the cities were destroyed by the angels. Lot’s wife was turned into a pillar of salt for disobeying God’s command not to look back at the cities as they were fleeing. Lot and his two daughters end up living in a cave and his two daughters have children by their father. The lesson in this story is how continued exposure to sinful activities, even by others around you, can lead to a state of reversionism and black out of the soul.

Reversionism is the condition of a believer who is negative toward Bible doctrine and as a result has stopped growing spiritually. It is failure to follow God’s plan of executing the Christian Way of Life. The reversionist is a believer in perpetual carnality, out of fellowship with God and controlled by his sin nature. (If you are not advancing toward spiritual maturity as a Christian, you are retreating into reversionism). The reversionist is said to be “an enemy of God,” “an enemy of the Cross,” “a child of the devil,” “double-minded” and “unstable in all his ways.” He does not “abide in the teaching of Christ,” “he deludes himself,” “he lacks faith,” “he faints in his mind,” “he is a prisoner to sin,” “he has come short of the grace of God,” “his soul is tortured” and he is subject to divine discipline. The reversionist has left his first love, fallen away from his spiritual life and has become a lukewarm believer. (James 4:4; Philippians 3:18-19; I John 3:10; James 1:8, 4:8; II John 9; James 1:22-24; Romans 7:23; Hebrews 12:3-15; II Peter 2:7-8; Revelation 2)

Some believers start their Christian lives very well, under sound, accurate doctrinal teaching from their pastor-teacher. Others wander off immediately after salvation, and remain in a state of carnality until they die. Then we have the reversionist that begins well but finishes poorly. Controlled by the sin nature and Human Viewpoint Thinking, the soul of the believer in reversionism gradually darkens into a state of blackout. Deliberate rejection of the study or rejection of application of Bible doctrine on a consistent basis leads the reversionistic believer directly into evil. In this case, evil is not what most people think of as evil. Here, evil is succumbing to satanic doctrine, which has entered the soul through the vacuum created by negative volition over a prolonged period of time.

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The vacuum is an emptiness or void in the mind that is going to be filled with something. For the believer it is going to be either Divine Viewpoint Thinking or Human Viewpoint Thinking. In this stage of reversionism the believer is operating solely on human viewpoint to life and circumstances. For this reason he is easily influenced by demons and this World System. Since thinking has become totally distorted, the believer blames all his problems on God, on others or on circumstances, failing to take responsibility for his own bad decisions, bad choices and bad behavior. (Ephesians 5:11; 6:12)

The final event of importance in the life of Abraham is the sacrifice of his son Isaac. The birth of Isaac is a story of God's faithfulness and man's lack of faith. One of the promises that God made to Abraham was that he would have an heir. (Genesis 15:4-5) In his impatience and at the insistence of Sarah, his wife, Abraham had a child by the handmaiden Hagar, which demonstrated Abraham and Sarah's lack of faith in the promise of God. The child Ishmael became the father of the Arab nation and continues to be a thorn in the side of the nation of Israel to this day.

At a very old age when both Abraham and Sarah were past the age of childbearing, God performed a miracle and Isaac was born. It would be through the line of Isaac that the humanity of Jesus Christ would be born. To test the faithfulness of Abraham who had now learned to trust God, he was commanded by God to take Isaac and sacrifice him. This was God's way of teaching Abraham and Isaac about the coming Messiah and His sacrifice on the Cross.

Abraham took Isaac and put him on the altar with the full intention of sacrificing his only son. However, God provide a ram, which was caught in the bushes as the substitute sacrifice in place of Isaac. The parallel should be obvious, Abraham represented God the Father, Isaac represented the human race and the ram represented the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice the degree to which Abraham's faith had increased according to Genesis 22:5, where he tells his servants to wait at the bottom of the mountain and he and Isaac would return to them after a time of worship. Abraham obviously believed that even if he killed Isaac that God would raise him from the dead. (Genesis 22)

Jesus Christ is the perfect sacrifice for mankind's sin. He alone was qualified to make the necessary payment for sin that would completely satisfy the righteousness and justice of God. Though our personal sins do not condemn us, they still must be dealt with by the justice of God. God dealt with our sins by imputing personal sin and Adam's original sin to Christ on the Cross and judging them. Therefore, sin is not the issue in salvation - accepting God's gift of eternal life by faith in Christ is the only issue. (John 3:17; Romans 5:18; II Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 2:8-9)

We must remember that Christ was perfect, without a sin nature or personal sin. It is this uniqueness that qualified Him to be our substitute and pay the penalty for our sins. Christ is the “second Adam,” in that He was born perfect, as Adam was created perfect. By a single act of *disobedience*, Adam introduced sin into the human race. By a single act of *obedience*, Christ paid the penalty for that sin on our behalf and satisfied the righteousness and justice of God. (John 3:16; Romans 5:15)

However, the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross is of no value unless appropriated by faith. It is God’s desire for every person to know Christ as Savior and share in the fantastic temporal and eternal blessings that accompany salvation. These blessings are only for the believer and even then are only potential. If God accomplished *the most* at salvation (by sending His only Son), how much more can He accomplish in our lives both now and in eternity? (Romans 5:16-17; I Corinthians 2:9; II Peter 3:9)

At salvation, God imputes His righteousness to the soul of the believer. In theology we call this act “Justification” (in Greek “dikaiosisune”). “Dikaiosisune” is a judicial act of declaring one vindicated or justified. It was a judicial act that condemned us at birth (the imputation of Adam’s sin) and it is another judicial act that justifies us (the imputation of God’s righteousness). It is this act that sets up the *potential* for divine blessing for the believer.

Please understand that the righteousness that we are referring to is God’s very own righteousness, not our self-righteousness. The Bible declares in Isaiah 64:6 that all of our “righteousnesses” are as filthy rags. We are also told that we all come short of God’s righteousness. The conclusion is that we need God’s righteousness in order to enter Heaven. By Jesus Christ becoming our substitute, any member of the human race can potentially share God’s righteousness. (Romans 3:23; 5:8; II Corinthians 5:21)

Justification has nothing to do with *acting righteous* and has nothing to do with *feelings*. At salvation you may or may not feel saved, and especially *after* salvation, when all the “old sins” continue to plague you. How you feel at the time of faith in Christ has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with your justification. Justification is God’s judicial verdict that you are now positionally righteous, whether you feel righteous or not! (Romans 3:20-28; Galatians 2:16)

Even though Abraham made some bad choices and at times doubted God, he became a great testimony of faith, to the point of being called the “friend of God.” God doesn’t use perfect people to accomplish His purposes (since there are none), he uses faithful people, as He did with Abraham.

