

Third Term Course: Men and Women of the Bible

Study Nine: The Man Who Saw the Glory

The Things Abraham Saw

Stephen addressed the Jewish Parliament, the Sanhedrin with the words, 'Brethren and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, "Depart from your land and from your kindred and go into the land which I will show you."' The following are some of things Abraham saw,

- (i) He saw idols all around him and nothing of God (Josh. 24:2).
- (ii) He saw the glory of God in Mesopotamia (Acts 7:1-2). He also saw the glory of God in a number of theophanies as God appeared to him to speak to him. The most awesome, perhaps was scene of the 'cutting of the covenant' recorded in Genesis 15.
- (iii) He saw the coming inheritance God had often promised him (Heb. 11:8-10).
- (iv) He saw 'a city to come whose builder and maker is God'. (Heb. 11: 10).
- (v) He saw with joy the day of Jesus (John 8:56). Whether it was the 'day of Messiah' or not we do not know. Jesus is only making the point that he to whom the Jews talked was prior to Abraham, but Abraham knew the prophecies concerning him.
- (vi) He saw the justification of God which accounted him righteous (Gen. 15:6).
- (vii) He saw, by faith, the birth of his son Isaac through whom all the promises were to be fulfilled (Rom. 4:18-22).
- (viii) He saw by faith the resurrection of his sacrificed son, Isaac, (James 2:21-24: cf. Heb. 11:17-19).

The Things Abraham Rejected

- (i) He rejected all idols by believing only in God and worshipping only Him (Gen. 13:18).
- (ii) He rejected living in the fertile Jordan Valley and dwelt in the less fertile uplands (Gen. 13:8-18).
- (iii) He rejected the spoils of battle the king of Sodom would have given him. He knew the Canaanites in general were doomed for their idolatry and wickedness (Gen. 15:16).
- (iv) He rejected the offer of a piece of land and cave in which to bury Sarah and insisted he pay four hundred shekels for it (Gen. ch. 23) so that it was his ground forever.

Abraham and His Fellowship with God

(i) His separation from idols was a radical happening. Romans 1:19ff. We must see that idols demean God's glory. When God's glory appeared to Abraham the radical change came about. Man is made in the image of God and when he sees the true 'shape' or glory of God he has to fight hard to resist surrendering to that revelation.

(ii) Abraham's fellowship with God was not simply for its own enjoyment. Abraham's name was originally Abram 'exalted father' but God changed it to Abraham 'father of a multitude'. 'Exalted father' could have pertained to his own family, perhaps springing from Ishmael, but the promises of Genesis 12:1-3; 15:12-16; 17:6-8; 18:17;22:15-18 meant he was to be 'the father of a multitude of nations' a point which Paul takes up in Galatians 3 where all persons of faith are the children of Abraham-through his seed, the Messiah. It is to be noted that at the same time Sarai became Sarah for the promise was to her, 'I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall come from her. Sarah and Abraham were to be the parents of many nations as being the parents of faith.

(iii) In all his travels, his adversities and his actions of faith and obedience God had fellowship with Abraham. Abraham's fellowship with God was a gift.

(iv) This fellowship was expressed in the sacrifices Abraham offered. The offering of his son on Mount Moriah brought him into the deepest fellowship he could know with God-in the giving of his own son to God, in love and obedience. Was this 'the day of Jesus' which he saw? Certainly it was the day his fatherhood was tested and confirmed, and in which he came to know richly the fatherhood of God.

(v) It was his fellowship with God which increasingly developed him as a man of faith. Three times he is spoken of as being 'the friend of God' (Isa. 41:8; 11 Chron. 20:7; James 2:23).

Abraham the Husband of Sarah

A key to the life and ministry of Abraham was Sarah. She was faithful to him, endured much because of him, but 'she was not afraid to call him lord' (I Pet. 3:6, AV). Her life is so significant that we will take her as our next study of a person of the Bible. We will also be able to see more of Abraham through her. We may sum up Abraham as a great man of faith but we must remember that it was because 'the glory of God appeared to our forefather Abraham'. He also appeared to Sarah.