

Abraham, My Friend: 04 When He Was called...

by Ron Bailey

This sermon explores Abraham's calling by God and the significance of his obedient response in the context of faith.

Duration: 14:05

Scripture: Genesis 12:1, Job 11:7, Matthew 14:29, Luke 1:37, John 8:56, Acts 7:2, Romans 10:17, Hebrews 11:8

Topics: "Abraham"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the story of Abraham and his obedience to God's call. The speaker emphasizes the importance of obeying God's word without demanding explanations or visions for the future. Abraham's faith and obedience are highlighted as key factors in his relationship with God. The speaker encourages listeners to have faith and respond to God's revelation, trusting in His guidance even when the path is uncertain.

Transcript

Well, hello again. You're listening to a Bible Base podcast, and I'm your host, Ron Bailey. These 60 or so meditations on the life of Abraham were first published on the sermonindex.net website, where you can still find the original text versions.

The aim of the series is to discover the way in which Abraham became a praying man and the friend of God. This is number four in our series, and we've entitled it, When He Was Called. The story of the steps of the faith of Abraham, our father, is not only to be found in the book of Genesis.

Again and again, the scriptures return to this man, often adding unique information to the original story. So the story builds continually of the man who, a thousand years after his death, God still called Abraham, my friend. I wonder how many people actually left Ur at this time.

At the head of the group was Tira, whose name links him with the worship of the moon god. He was head of the clan, and the scripture says he took Abram, his son, and Lot, the son of Haran, his son's son, and Sarai, his daughter-in-law, chapter 11, and he set out with the intention of travelling to the land of Canaan, although he never arrived. From later evidence, we deduce that Nahor and his family were also part of that caravan.

I wonder too, how many servants and members of the household were part of this migration. It seems from the evidence that the clan prospered in Haran, and on the second leg of the journey to Canaan, they took with them all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had got in Haran, it tells us in Genesis 12. By the time we get to Genesis 14, Abraham is a minor chieftain, with a personal army of over 300 men.

If we were to give each of those men a wife, and two children, that's very modest for these days, we can estimate that by this time Abraham's own clan was more than 1,200 souls. As an answer to our original question, my personal estimate of the size of that original group which migrated from Ur is more than 2,000 souls. Perhaps it's time to revise those Sunday school pictures of Abraham in his solitary tent in an empty desert.

We can't be sure of the conscious motivation for their journey. Perhaps they were migrants or refugees from troubled areas. Perhaps Lot just followed his grandfather.

Perhaps the servants had no choice. But for one man out of the thousands, there was an entirely different motivation. Abraham had seen God.

This is how Stephen recorded it in the Acts of the Apostles. And he, that Stephen said, men, brethren, and fathers, hearken. The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran.

We can see again the Bible's insistence upon God being the initiator. Abraham did not find God. God appeared to Abraham.

In the midst of his muddled theology, in the book of Job, Zophar, the Nehemiathite, asked Job a very pertinent question. He said, Can you, by searching, find out God? The answer, by implication, is no. It is not possible for the finite to discover the infinite.

We could know nothing at all about God if God had not chosen to reveal himself. But we are not left in the dark. The God of glory has appeared.

The God of glory, the King of glory, the Lord of glory, these seem to be titles that are often associated with the one we call the Son of God. Is this partly what he was referring to when he said in the Gospel, John chapter 8, Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he saw it and was glad. We shall look at some other possibilities later.

According to the Scripture, God's appearances to Abraham were very few. But Abraham's response to those revelations changed the history of the world. There is something very wonderful about this event.

It did not happen in a lonely desert or at a religious convention. It happened when Abraham was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran. In the city dedicated to the moon god, in a family which served the moon god, the God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham.

In the ordinary course of his everyday life, God broke in. The God of glory appeared. God still breaks in to the everyday patterns of our lives.

Later we may look back at his providential preparations and see his kind hand in a thousand touches upon our lives. But for the man or woman who will be God's friend, there must be some kind of conscious

encounter. We may not see a form or hear a voice, but we will have absolutely no doubt that we have met him.

It may be that he will appear in the Scripture as we read, but if so, it will not be by logical deductions drawn from proof texts, as A. W. Tozer once described them, but as a vital encounter with God himself. It is this encounter with God that begins the process of separation from the herd. Many may appear to be heading in the same general direction, thousands even, and for a while their paths may be side by side.

But ultimately, Abraham's footsteps of faith will lead him in unique ways. Abraham's real journey begins with a personal revelation of the God of glory, and so does ours. We are not told if he fell at his feet as dead, as did John in the revelation, but like John he heard a voice, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee, and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing, and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee, and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

We shall need to return to this word to Abraham, but for the time being take careful note of the personal pronouns, I and thee, and you may need to dig out your old King James version to identify them. This is an I thee encounter, initiated by God in the midst of Abraham's family, in the midst of a city wholly given over to idolatry. The voice of God singled out Abraham, Get thee out of thy country, and I will make of thee a great nation.

There is promise of great personal blessing here, and the promise of being a channel for even greater blessing, but its implied condition is obedience. God is saying Abraham you do this, and I will do this. The moment is captured wonderfully in a single verse in Hebrews 11 and verse 8. By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and he went out not knowing where he went.

If we compress the verse, we may see its impact more clearly. Abraham, when he was called, obeyed. It is a simple life if we would but live it simply.

Faith is response to revelation. Revelation comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. We cannot kick-start faith.

God must speak. We must not berate ourselves that others have achieved more and gone further. We cannot obey until he calls.

To go earlier would be presumption. To go later would be disobedience. But when God speaks, his word has creative power in the lives of those who receive it, and we must never say I can't.

For as Gabriel said to Mary, no word from God is without power. When God speaks, you can walk on water. You can stretch out a withered hand, but not until he speaks.

This word to Abraham is a little short on explanation. It is simply a command. Get thee out.

It was addressed to Abraham and no other. It was the beginning of a pilgrimage in which God would strip Abraham of all dependence upon any other resource other than God himself. He would not be able as a contingency to fall back on his family or his culture.

This is all Abraham's eggs in one basket. And the simple wonder of it all is that when this man was called, he obeyed, and he went out not knowing where he went. Many would obey God if he would only explain to them where or why he was leading them.

But Abraham's greatness lies in that not knowing where. He could have had no idea where his simple obedience would lead him, nor can we. Here then are important questions for us.

When he calls, will I obey or will I demand an explanation? Will I demand a vision for the future or will my vision of God himself be sufficient? Will I demand a route map with all the answers written in it, or am I ready to move out now, not knowing where? The God of glory stands ready to be all in all to the man or the woman who, when he calls, by faith will obey. If you would like to find out more about Biblebase, do come and join us on www.biblebase.com. We look forward to seeing you.

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