

Abraham, Isaac & Jacob

The Custodians of the Covenant and their Descendants

Part 3

Why is faith important?

Hebrews 11:6 AMPC

6 But without faith it is impossible to please and be satisfactory to Him. For whoever would come near to God must [necessarily] believe that God exists and that He is the rewarder of those who earnestly and diligently seek Him [out].

The word “please” means to comply with, conform to, or satisfy and it is based on choice or a decision to comply and conform.

John 1:1 AMPC

1 In the beginning [before all time] was the Word (Christ), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God Himself.

In Revelation 5:12 John is writing about those who have just been raptured prior to the 7 year Tribulation and we are in Heaven’s thrown room waiting as Jesus is taking His position on the Bema seat.

Revelation 5:12 KJV

12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

He is our supreme authority. He has all riches. He is all wisdom. He is all-powerful. He is all honorable and glorious. He is worthy to be praised, worship, and revered.

When God created mankind in His own likeness, He gave us a measure of His authority, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, and glory. All these blessings and gifts are entrusted to us and come from God. He alone is worthy to receive them back from us in the form of thanksgiving, praise, and the dedication of our lives to Him. He created us for His pleasure.

Revelation 4:11 KJV

*11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, **and for thy pleasure they are and were created.***

The fact that God created us for His pleasure might seem a little odd until we realize that there is not one speck of selfishness in God. His pleasure is always right or righteous. He is kind and loving, pure and holy. In His pleasure we will truly experience the pleasures for which He created us and that is what Abraham, Issac and Jacob found to be true and did... and it was accounted unto them as they were righteous.

The paradox of life is that when we selfishly seek pleasure for ourselves, it is only for a sinful season (Hebrews 11:24-25); but when we seek to bring pleasure to God by loving and obeying Him, we experience pleasure in Him for eternity. This is related to what Jesus was saying in ***Matthew 16:25, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."***

Hebrews 11:24-25 KJV

24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

*25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, **than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;***

Hebrews 11:25 AMPC

*25 Because he preferred to share the oppression [suffer the hardships] and bear the shame of the people of God **rather than to have the fleeting enjoyment of a sinful life.***

We are warned about desiring and seeking our own pleasure instead of His Pleasure or His Plan...

2 Timothy 3:1-5 AMPC

1 But understand this, that **in the last days will come (set in) perilous times** (spiritually difficult) of great stress and trouble [hard to deal with and hard to bear].

2 For people will be lovers of self and [utterly] self-centered, lovers of money and aroused by an inordinate [greedy] desire for wealth, proud and arrogant and contemptuous boasters. They will be abusive (blasphemous, scoffing), disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy and profane.

3 [They will be] without natural [human] affection (callous and inhuman), relentless (admitting of no truce or appeasement); [they will be] slanderers (false accusers, troublemakers), intemperate and loose in morals and conduct, uncontrolled and fierce, haters of good.

4 [They will be] treacherous [betrayers], rash, [and] inflated with self-conceit. **[They will be] lovers of sensual pleasures and vain amusements more than and rather than lovers of God.**

5 For [although] they hold a form of piety (true religion), they deny and reject and are strangers to the power of it [their conduct belies the genuineness of their profession]. **Avoid [all] such people [turn away from them].**

2 Timothy 3:4 KJV

4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

2 Thessalonians 2:10-12

10 And by unlimited seduction to evil and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing (going to perdition) because they did not welcome the Truth but refused to love it that they might be saved.

11 Therefore God sends upon them a misleading influence, a working of error and a strong delusion to make them believe what is false,

12 In order that all may be judged and condemned who did not believe in [who refused to adhere to, trust in, and rely on] the Truth, **but [instead] took pleasure in unrighteousness.**

Philippians 2:13 AMPC

13 [Not in your own strength] for it is God Who is all the while] effectually at work in you [energizing and creating in you the power and desire], **both to will and to work for His good pleasure and satisfaction and delight.**

Hebrews 10:38-39 AMPC

38 But the just shall live by faith [My righteous servant shall live [a]by his conviction respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, and holy fervor born of faith and conjoined with it]; **and if he draws back and shrinks in fear, My soul has no delight or pleasure in him.**

39 But our way is not that of those who draw back to eternal misery (perdition) and are utterly destroyed, **but we are of those who believe [who cleave to and trust in and rely on God through Jesus Christ, the Messiah] and by faith preserve the soul.**

These are just some of the answers to why is faith important and why were we created. So, knowing that...

How do I get or increase my faith?

Romans 10:17 AMPC

17 So **faith comes by hearing** [what is told], and what is heard comes by **the preaching** [of the message that came from the lips] **of Christ** (the Messiah Himself).

Note: _____

Jesus, who is the Word said the pastor, preacher and teacher needs to be speaking about Him, the Truth or the Word in it's entirety.

John 14:6 KJV

6 Jesus saith unto him, **I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**

Matthew 24:3-5,11 AMPC

3 While He was seated on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately and said, **Tell us, when will this take place, and what will be the sign of Your coming and of the end** (the completion, the consummation) of the age?

Note: _____

4 **Jesus answered them, Be careful that no one misleads you [deceiving you and leading you into error].**

5 **For many will come in (on the strength of) My name [appropriating the name which belongs to Me], saying, I am the Christ (the Messiah), and they will lead many astray.**

11 And **many false prophets** will rise up and deceive and **lead many into error.**

What is the proof of faith? How do I please Him or God?

James 2:26 AMPC

26 For as the human body apart from the spirit is lifeless, so **faith apart from [its] works of obedience is also dead.**

James 2:26 KJV

26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so **faith without works is dead also.**

John 14:15, 21 AMPC

15 **If** you [really] love Me, you will **keep (obey) My commands.**

21 The person who has My commands and keeps them is the one who [really] loves Me; **and whoever [really] loves Me will be loved by My Father,** and I [too] will love him and will show (reveal, manifest) Myself to him. [I will let Myself be clearly seen by him and make Myself real to him.]

John 14:15 KJV

15 **If** ye love me, **keep my commandments.**

Note: _____

Jesus is telling the Jewish people and you and I today what it looks like to follow Him or the Word. What it means to please Him, to do His Plan or Pleasure which means to live by Faith. Faith without the acts of obedience leads to death. But if we want the Father to love us in return we will be obedient which shows our Faith in who He is.

17 In your [own] Law it is written that the testimony (evidence) of two persons is reliable and valid.

18 I am One [of the Two] bearing testimony concerning Myself; and My Father, Who sent Me, He also testifies about Me.

19 Then they said to Him, Where is this [b]Father of Yours? Jesus answered, You know My Father as little as you know Me. If you knew Me, you would know My Father also.

20 Jesus said these things in the treasury while He was teaching in the temple [[c]court]; but no one ventured to arrest Him, because His hour had not yet come.

21 Therefore He said again to them, **I am going away, and you will be looking for Me,** and you will die in (under the curse of) your sin. Where I am going, it is not possible for you to come.

22 At this the Jews began to ask among themselves, Will He kill Himself? Is that why He says, Where I am going, it is not possible for you to come?

23 He said to them, **You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world (of this earthly order); I am not of this world.**

24 That is why I told you that you will die in (under the curse of) your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He [Whom I claim to be—if you do not adhere to, trust in, and rely on Me], you will die in your sins.

25 **Then they said to Him, Who are You anyway? Jesus replied, [Why do I even speak to you!] I am exactly what I have been telling you from the first.**

26 I have much to say about you and to judge and condemn. But He Who sent Me is true (reliable), and I tell the world [only] the things that I have heard from Him.

27 They did not perceive (know, understand) that He was speaking to them about the Father.

28 **So Jesus added, When you have lifted up the Son of Man [on the cross], you will realize (know, understand) that I am He [for Whom you look] and that I do nothing of Myself (of My own accord or on My own authority), but I say [exactly] what My Father has taught Me.**

29 And He Who sent Me is ever with Me; My Father has not left Me alone, for I always do what pleases Him.

30 **As He said these things, many believed in Him [trusted, relied on, and adhered to Him].**

31 **So Jesus said to those Jews who had believed in Him, If you abide in My word [hold fast to My teachings and live in accordance with them], you are truly My disciples.**

32 **And you will know the Truth, and the Truth will set you free.**

33 **They answered Him, We are Abraham's offspring (descendants) and have never been in bondage to anybody. What do You mean by saying, You will be set free?**

34 Jesus answered them, I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, Whoever commits and practices sin is the slave of sin.

35 Now a slave does not remain in a household permanently (forever); the son [of the house] does remain forever.

36 So if the Son liberates you [makes you free men], then you are really and unquestionably free.

37 [Yes] I know that you are Abraham's offspring; yet you plan to kill Me, because My word has no entrance (makes no progress, does not find any place) in you.

38 I tell the things which I have seen and learned at My Father's side, and your actions also reflect what you have heard and learned from your father.

39 They retorted, Abraham is our father. Jesus said, If you were [truly] Abraham's children, then you would do the works of Abraham [follow his example, do as Abraham did].

40 But now [instead] you are wanting and seeking to kill Me, a Man Who has told you the truth which I have heard from God. This is not the way Abraham acted.

51 I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, if anyone observes My teaching [lives in accordance with My message, keeps My word], he will by no means ever see and experience death.

52 The Jews said to Him, Now we know that You are under the power of a demon ([d]insane). Abraham died, and also the prophets, yet You say, If a man keeps My word, he will never taste of death into all eternity.

53 Are You greater than our father Abraham? He died, and all the prophets died! Who do You make Yourself out to be?

54 Jesus answered, If I were to glorify Myself (magnify, praise, and honor Myself), I would have no real glory, for My glory would be nothing and worthless. [My honor must come to Me from My Father.] It is My Father Who glorifies Me [Who extols Me, magnifies, and praises Me], of Whom you say that He is your God.

55 Yet you do not know Him or recognize Him and are not acquainted with Him, but I know Him. If I should say that I do not know Him, I would be a liar like you. But I know Him and keep His word [obey His teachings, am faithful to His message].

56 Your forefather Abraham was extremely happy at the hope and prospect of seeing My day (My incarnation); and he did see it and was delighted.

57 Then the Jews said to Him, You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?

58 Jesus replied, I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, before Abraham was born, I Am.

59 So they took up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus, by mixing with the crowd, concealed Himself and went out of the temple [[e]nclosure].

Jesus along with the New Testament writers continuously connected faith with obedience to God's Word. The 2 are connected and that is the pattern we see from the story of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

James 2:17-24 AMPC

17 So also faith, if it does not have works (deeds and actions of obedience to back it up), by itself is destitute of power (inoperative, dead).

18 But someone will say [to you then], You [say you] have faith, and I have [good] works. Now you show me your [alleged] faith apart from any [good] works [if you can], and I by [good] works [of obedience] will show you my faith.

19 You believe that God is one; you do well. So do the demons believe and shudder [in terror and horror such as [a]make a man's hair stand on end and contract the surface of his skin]!

20 Are you willing to be shown [proof], you foolish (unproductive, spiritually deficient) fellow, that faith apart from [good] works is inactive and ineffective and worthless?

21 Was not our forefather Abraham [shown to be] justified (made acceptable to God) by [his] works when he brought to the altar as an offering his [own] son Isaac?

22 You see that [his] faith was cooperating with his works, and [his] faith was completed and reached its supreme expression [when he implemented it] by [good] works.

23 And [so] the Scripture was fulfilled that says, Abraham believed in (adhered to, trusted in, and relied on) God, and this was accounted to him as righteousness (as conformity to God's will in thought and deed), and he was called God's friend.

24 You see that a man is justified (pronounced righteous before God) through what he does and not alone through faith [through works of obedience as well as by what he believes].

Note: _____

Speaking to the church about the signs prior to the return of Jesus, this is what Jude and Peter had to say...Note, Jude and Peter are referring back to what their audience already believed to be true. They were building on what was agreed upon to bring clarity and conviction to how they were living.

Jude AMPC

1 Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ (the Messiah), and brother of James, [writes this letter] to those who are called (chosen), **dearly loved by God the Father and separated (set apart) and kept for Jesus Christ:**

2 May mercy, [soul] peace, and love be multiplied to you.

3 Beloved, my whole concern was to write to you in regard to our common salvation. [But] I found it necessary and was impelled to write you and urgently appeal to and exhort [you] to contend for the faith which was once for all [a]handed down to the saints [the faith which is that sum of Christian belief which was delivered verbally to the holy people of God].

4 For certain men have crept in stealthily[[c]gaining entrance secretly by a side door]. Their doom was predicted long ago, ungodly (impious, profane) persons who pervert the grace (the spiritual blessing and favor) of our God into lawlessness and wantonness and immorality, and disown and deny our sole Master and Lord, Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One).

5 **Now I want to remind you,** though you were fully informed once for all, that though the Lord [at one time] **delivered a people out of the land of Egypt, He subsequently destroyed those [of them] who did not believe [who refused to adhere to, trust in, and rely upon Him].**

6 And **angels who did not keep (care for, guard, and hold to) their own first place of power but abandoned their proper dwelling place** these He has reserved in custody in eternal chains (bonds) under the thick gloom of utter darkness until the judgment and doom of the great day.

7 **[The wicked are sentenced to suffer] just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the adjacent towns**—which likewise gave themselves over to impurity and indulged in unnatural vice and sensual perversity—are laid out [in plain sight] as an exhibit of perpetual punishment [to warn] of everlasting fire.

17 **But you must remember, beloved, the predictions which were made by the apostles (the special messengers) of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One).**

18 **They told you beforehand, In the last days (in the end time) there will be scoffers** [who seek to gratify their own unholy desires], following after their own ungodly passions.

19 **It is these who are [agitators] setting up distinctions and causing divisions**—merely sensual [creatures, carnal, worldly-minded people], devoid of the [Holy] Spirit and **destitute of any higher spiritual life.**

20 But you, beloved, **build yourselves up [founded] on your most holy faith** [[d]make progress, rise like an edifice higher and higher], praying in the Holy Spirit;

21 **Guard and keep yourselves** in the love of God; expect and patiently wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah)—[which will bring you] unto life eternal.

Note: _____

2 Peter 3 AMPC

1 Beloved, I am now writing you this second letter. In [both of] them I have stirred up your unsullied (sincere) mind by way of remembrance,

2 That you should recall the predictions of the holy (consecrated, dedicated) prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior [given] through your apostles (His special messengers).

3 To begin with, you must know and understand this, that scoffers (mockers) will come in the last days with scoffing, [people who] walk after their own fleshly desires

4 And say, Where is the promise of His coming?

Jude AMPC

18 They told you beforehand, In the last days (in the end time) there will be scoffers [who seek to gratify their own unholy desires], following after their own ungodly passions.

Matthew 24:3-5,11 AMPC

4 Jesus answered them, Be careful that no one misleads you [deceiving you and leading you into error].

5 For many will come in (on the strength of) My name [appropriating the name which belongs to Me], saying, I am the Christ (the Messiah), and they will lead many astray.

11 And many false prophets will rise up and deceive and lead many into error.

Jesus said go read the prophet Daniel when you see the End Time events that were foretold in the Old Testament coming to pass... Jesus was building their trust on Him, the Word from what they believed to be true.

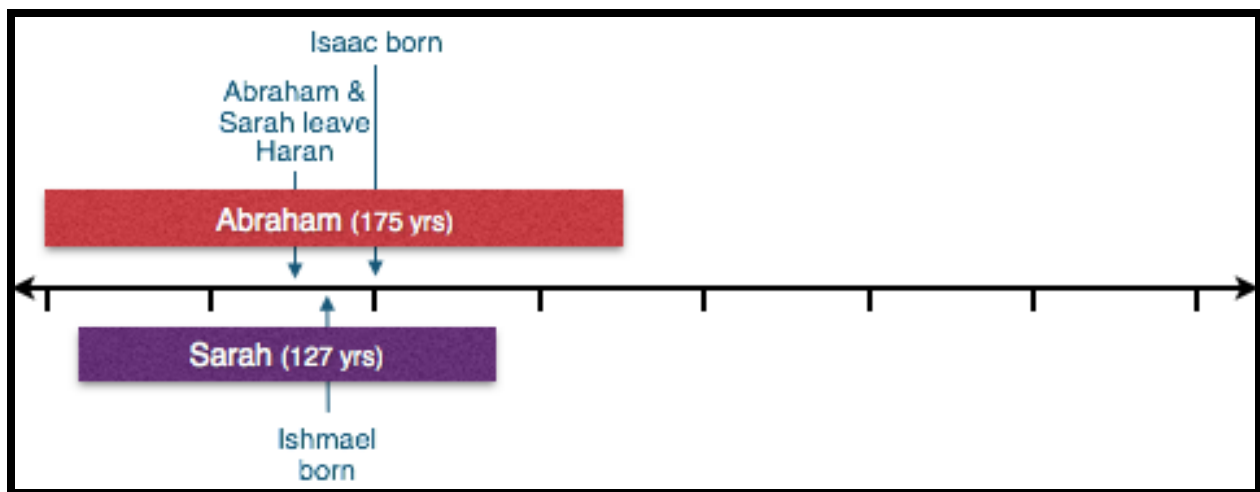
Matthew 24:15 AMPC

15 So when you see the appalling sacrilege [the abomination that astonishes and makes desolate], spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the Holy Place—let the reader take notice and ponder and consider and heed [this]—

Jesus and the New Testament writers always pointed to what was already written (God’s Word never changes) and what was already believed to illuminate the “things” that were to come that have yet to see or believe. As a result of their unbelief or faith in things or judgment and prophecies to come, their sin, judgment and righteousness issues were not being corrected...they were habitually in disobedience or sin.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob time line overview...

As we study God’s Word it is useful to take the time to sketch out a chronology of the lives of those we are studying. Often, we assume the ages of the characters to be what we saw depicted in children’s Bible classes when we were young. When we start to look at what the Bible says, we often get a far different and sometimes surprising picture. A case in point is Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Although some of us may have a knowledge of Abraham’s age, we often do not know how Isaac and Jacob work into the Biblical timeline.



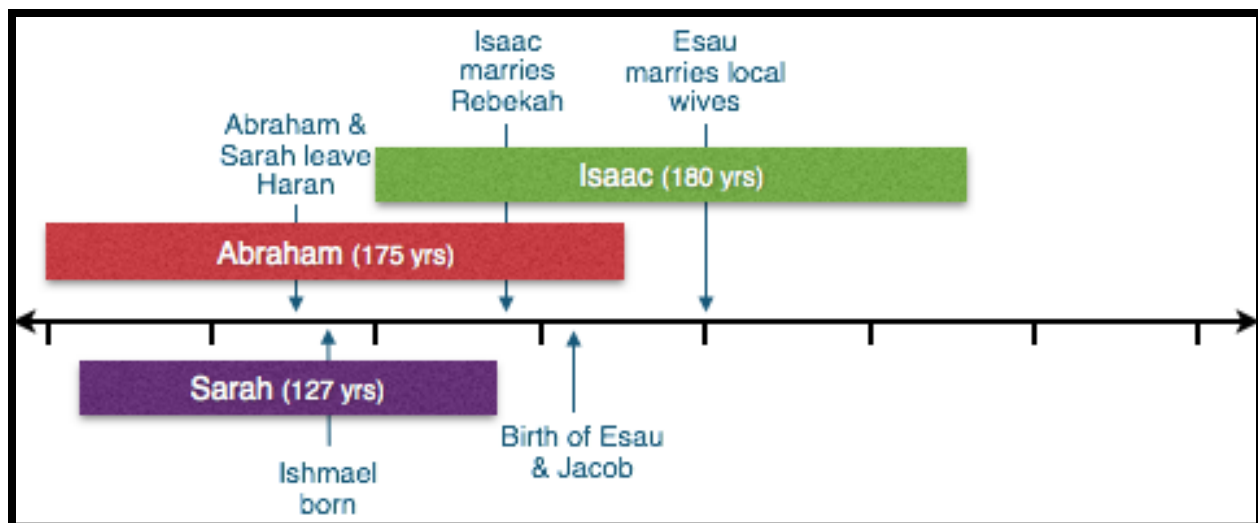
When we first meet Abraham in Genesis 11, he and his family had just moved from Ur of the Chaldees to Haran. It is in Genesis 12 that we find the first age marker for Abraham. “Now Abram was 75 years old when he departed from Haran” (v.4). The next marker we have is in Genesis 16:16, “Now Abram was 86 years old when Hagar gave birth to Ishmael.” In the next verse, he had advanced to 99 years: “When Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to him...” (Genesis 17:1).

It is in this chapter that we also find that Sarah was ten years younger than Abraham (17:43). Sarah was ninety when Isaac was born and Abraham was 100 years old (21:5). Sarah died when she was 127 (23:1) so Abraham would have been 137 and Isaac would have been 37.

It was after this that Isaac married Rebekah and Abraham took Keturah as a wife (see Genesis 24 and 25:1). Abraham then died at 175 years of age (25:7) ...Isaac would have been 75 years old.

Note: When Abraham lied about Sarah because of her beauty, the first time she would have been in her sixties (Genesis 12) and the second time in her late eighties and possibly pregnant with Isaac (Genesis 20).

After Abraham's death, the narrative goes back several years to concentrate on Isaac. We discover that Isaac was 40 when he married Rebekah (25:20). We do not have any age markers for Rebekah, although it would probably be safe to say that she was 15-20 when she married Isaac. She seems to have been of a normal marriageable age for that society. She, like Sarah, was unable to have children for years. Finally God intervened (25:21) and granted her twins: Esau and Jacob. Isaac was 60 when their sons were born (25:26).



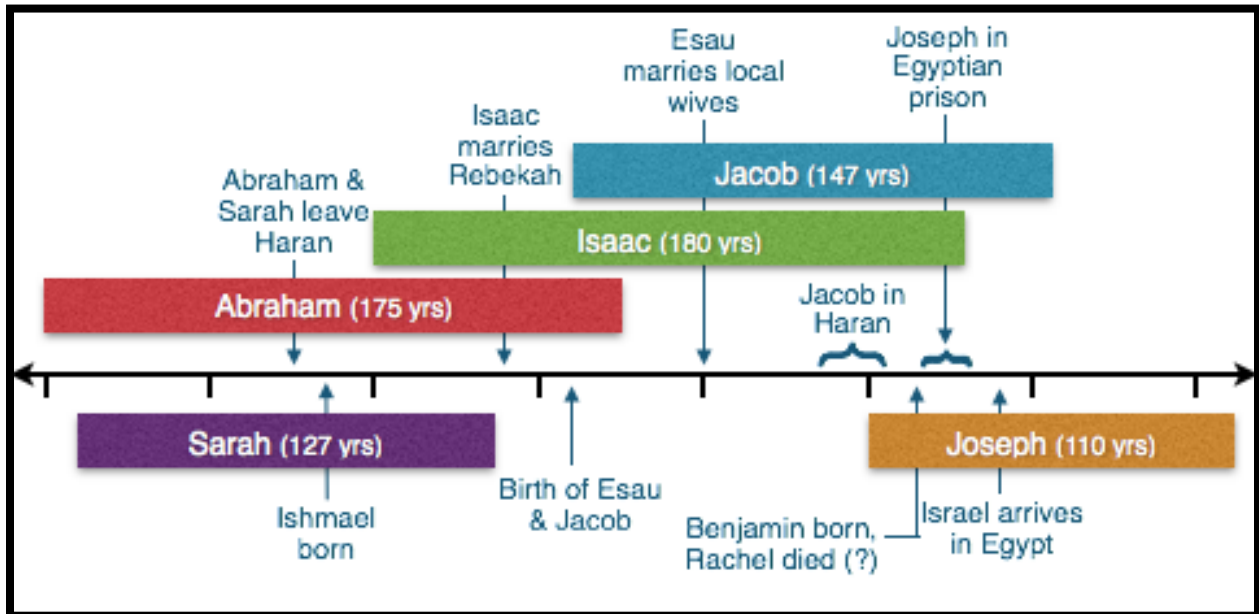
Our next time marker occurs at the end of chapter 26 “When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, as well as Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite. They caused Isaac and Rebekah great anxiety” (26:34-35). If Esau was 40, his twin brother Jacob was also be 40 and Isaac would have been 100.

Chapter 27 opens with Isaac being old and fearing he was about to die, beginning to arrange for the family blessing to take place. This is when Jacob is sent to Laban to find a wife amongst Rebekah’s family. Although he was blind and apparently depressed, it would be many more years before Isaac died – it is another nine chapters before we find his death: “Isaac lived to be 180 years old. Then Isaac breathed his last and joined his ancestors. He died an old man who had lived a full life. His sons Esau and Jacob buried him” (35:28-29). At the time that Isaac died, his sons would have been 120 years old.

One of the things we learn from sketching out the chronology is that Abraham would have been alive when Esau and Jacob were born and that they were fifteen when he died. According to history, they lived in close proximity, Esau and Jacob would have known Abraham.

To construct Jacob’s life in the chronology is a bit more difficult. We are not given any dates until towards the end of his life, so to an extent we need to work backwards. We find in Genesis 47:9 that Jacob was 130 when he arrived in Egypt. Verse 28 of that same chapter tells us that Jacob lived a total of 147 years, the last seventeen being in Egypt.

By using the dates we are given for Joseph, we can fit in a bit more of Jacob’s life. We first find a date marker for Joseph when he was 17 years old (37:2) and sold into slavery in Egypt. He was 30 when he became the first minister of Egypt (41:46). There were seven good years of crops in Egypt (41:53). Two of the years of famine passed before he revealed himself to his brothers and the family of Israel moved to Egypt (45:6). Putting all of this together, Joseph would have been 39 at the time that Israel moved to Egypt. This would mean that Jacob was 91 when Joseph was born.



Although we can pinpoint Joseph's birth in relation to Jacob's, and we know that this took place during the last 13 years of Jacob's stay in Haran working for Laban, it is more difficult to work out what year of Jacob's stay this would have been. Allowing that Leah would not have had more than one child each year, although there could be overlap with the births with the other wives, Joseph could have been born around Jacob's 15th year in Haran. There are a few years leeway in either direction, but that gives us a rough estimate of when he was born and also of when the twenty years Jacob spent in Haran took place.

Let's draw some conclusions about Jacob's life. If you notice, he would have been in his 70s when he arrived in Haran. We usually think of Jacob as being a young man, falling in love with young Rachel. While Rachel may have been young, Jacob was getting up in years...

Notice, as well, that although Isaac was old and felt he was about to die when Jacob stole the blessing (Genesis 27), the reality is that he still had over forty years of life left! Perhaps this says something about what happens when we lose one of our senses and the depression that follows... Isaac felt he was about to die, but feelings do not necessarily mean that something is about to happen. Jacob left a single man in his 70s owning nothing and returned with two wives, two concubines and 12 children and immense wealth in his 90s. And he still had over twenty years to live in the vicinity of his father.

It would seem that Isaac could have known all his grandchildren that were Jacob's, as they arrived in that area about 15 years before his death. We also see that Joseph would have been in slavery and presumed dead before Isaac's death...in fact, Joseph became first minister in Egypt a year after his grandfather's death. Jacob moved his family to Egypt only ten years after Isaac's death. If we have placed Rachel's death and Benjamin's birth correctly, Joseph would only have known Benjamin as a baby before next seeing him as a grown man... he would have been around 25-30 when Joseph next saw him. Again, this places Joseph treating him as a child when he was a grown man in an interesting light. It is of interest that Benjamin had ten sons when they moved to Egypt... perhaps this was because of his sheltered life and spending all his time at home?

Why all this background? By placing the Biblical characters in their correct place in history we can better see the time in which they lived. When we learn that some were actually old men as they were still serving God, that should tell us about our usefulness to God in our later lives. Notice that both Abraham and Isaac spent time with their grandchildren.. what lessons about faith could they have passed on to them? We need to realign our mental images of these people with the reality that they were quite a bit older than we have been previously taught.

Finally, notice the amount of history that takes place in these three men's lives. From Abraham's birth to Jacob's death is over 300 years. If we take into consideration Joseph's life, as well, then we have over 360 years taking place. During this time, Abraham's family went from being just a childless couple to being a small nation that caused other kings to feel they had to deal with them (see Exodus 1:8-10).

During this series we are going to look at specific Bible stories in each of their lives (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) and why Jesus and the New Testament writers told us to remember and recall the Old Testament.

These great men and women of the faith heard first hand from those who had gone before them, who had a testimony of God's Faithfulness as a result of the test and they chose to ultimately please God.

Romans 10:17 AMPC

17 So faith comes by hearing [what is told], and what is heard comes by the preaching [of the message that came from the lips] of Christ (the Messiah Himself).



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