

# **“The God Of Our Father Abraham”**

## **Acts 7:1-7/Genesis 15:1-21**

Message by Michael J. Barnard

April 23, 2023

**Teaching Aim:** To recognize Stephen begins his defense by pointing the Jewish religious leadership back to their father Abraham. To examine the faith of Abraham to see why he is known today as *“the father of the faithful.”* To observe Abraham’s faith and obedience in action, even when from the world’s perspective there appeared to be no hope. To encourage every believer to trust God, no matter what they are going through in life. To realize there is a major difference between *“believing God exists”* and *“believing God.”*

### **DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (BIBLE STUDY)**

#### **Part I: The trial begins with Stephen’s defense (Acts 7:1-7)**

1. In **chapter 6** we saw Stephen, who was full of faith and power, performing great signs and wonders among the people. Stephen did these works in the name of the resurrected Lord Jesus. Stephen’s actions brought opposition from a group of Jews known as the Synagogue of the Freedmen. (See **Acts 6:8-9**) Who were these individuals and why were they so opposed to Stephen? How far would they go in this persecution? (See **Acts 6:11-15**)
  
2. According to **verse 1** of **chapter 7**, who presided over Stephen’s trial? Which historical figure do many people think this was? Note: The high priest gave Stephen the go ahead to give his defense and Stephen took full advantage of the opportunity, he preached a sermon from Israel’s history to the council. How did Stephen initially attempt to connect with the Sanhedrin (**vs. 2a**)? What made this patriarch so important to the Jewish people?
  
3. What command did God give to Abraham (then Abram) in **Genesis 12:1-3 (vs. 3)**? Where had Abram been living before this command was given? (See **Gen. 11:28-31; 15:7**) Where did Abram and his party stay until his father Terah died? Where was Haran located? (Hint: See Bible map) Where did God move Abram to once his father had died (**vs. 4**)?
  
4. When Abram arrived in the Promised land, it belonged to other people. What can we learn about the situation from **verse 5**? God promised Abram both descendants and land, Abraham had no children, he had to trust God by faith and sometimes that was hard to do. Have you ever had to struggle with your own faith in God? What were the circumstances around that struggle?

5. What major event in Israel's history did Stephen refer to in **verses 6 & 7**? (See **Gen. 15:13-14**) Why would this be an important reminder to the Sanhedrin? What Old Testament stories should this have reminded the Jewish religious leaders of?

## **Part II: God promises Abram both descendants and the Promised Land (Gen. 15:1-8)**

1. The Abrahamic Covenant is one of the primary covenants in Scripture and in **Genesis chapter 15**, we find one of the most powerful presentations of this covenant. In the early days, Abraham was known as Abram. "*Abram*" means: "*Exalted Father.*" Abram's name was later changed in **Gen. 17:1-6** to "*Abraham*", which means, "*Father of many nations,*" or "*Father of the multitude.*" Which of the two names was used to refer to Abraham in **Genesis 15**? What promise do we find in **Gen. 17:6**? How did this promise ultimately point to Jesus?
2. **Chapter 15** begins with the words, "*After these things.*" What things? (See **Gen. 14:13-24**) Why do you think Abram became afraid following his huge military victory (**vs. 1**)? How was Abram's reaction similar to Elijah's following his huge victory on Mount Carmel? (**See 1 Kin. 19**) Have you found it true in your own life that, "*after the mountaintop comes the valley?*" Why does the enemy attack especially hard after you've had a major spiritual victory?
3. What two promises did God make to Abram in **verse 1**? How did Abram respond to the LORD's promises in **verses 2 & 3**? Do you ever find yourself questioning God as you focus on your own problems? How does "*focusing on yourself*" affect you both emotionally and spiritually?
4. According to **verses 2 & 3**, who was considered to be the most-likely heir of Abram? Why was it especially important for Abram to have a son? What promise did God make to the elderly Abram in **verse 4**? Had God made this promise to Abram before? (See **Gen. 13:14-16**)
5. What did God ask Abram to do in **verse 5**? Have you ever observed the Milky Way on a dark clear night? What did you see? What message did God reveal to Abram through the stars? Why do you think God waited for Abram and Sarai to get so old before fulfilling His promise to them? Is it possible God is doing the same with you in your challenges? (See **Rom. 1:17**)

6. Abram and Sarai were so old that they were beyond childbearing age humanly speaking. How did Abram respond to this seemingly impossible promise from God (**vs. 6**)? Why is **verse 6** sometimes called the **John 3:16** of the Old Testament? Note: This key verse is quoted three times in the New Testament. (See **Rom. 4:3**; **Gal. 3:6**; **Jam. 2:23**) What makes this verse so important to the Gospel message?
  
7. What truth can we learn from **verse 7**? Does this land still belong to the descendants of Abram? How do you see God's promise in **verse 7** being reaffirmed May 14, 1948? (Hint: Search date online) What caused Abram to question God in **verse 8**?

### **Part III: An unusual way of confirming a very special promise (Gen. 15:9-21)**

1. What request did God make to Abram in **verse 9**? Was this an unusual request for that time? Why? (See **Jer. 34:18-19**) How does this request demonstrate the saying: "*God meets us where we are*?" Did Abram submit to God's command (**vs. 10**)? What do some people believe the vultures represented (**vs. 11**)? (See Commentaries)
  
2. Have you ever experienced a deep dream where you felt like you were paralyzed (**vs. 12**)? What was it like in that dream? What dark revelation did God give to Abram while he was in this trance-like state (**vv. 13-14**)? What period of Israel's history was prophesied about following the strange events of that night?
  
3. Abram and his wife Sarai were already old during this encounter with God. What special promise did God make to Abram in **verse 15**? How old was Abram when Isaac was finally born? (See **Rom. 4:19**) How old was Abram at the time of his death? (See **Gen. 25:7**)
  
4. What nation's sin is specifically mentioned in **verse 16**? Once Jacob left for Egypt, how many generations would it be until the descendants of Abram would be allowed to return home to the Promised Land? What does **verse 16** teach us about the length of the human lifespan at this time in history?

5. What supernatural event took place in **verse 17**? Whose presence do these two items symbolize? What was the significance of Abram being in a trance-like state as the visible manifestation of the invisible God passed through the animal parts alone that night? Where does the phrase, "*cutting a covenant*" come from? How does this supernatural act of God ultimately point towards Jesus Christ and His death on the cross? Who alone took on the responsibility to keep the terms of the Abrahamic Covenant? Why is this significant?
  
6. What did God affirm to Abram on that same day (**vv. 18-21**)? According to these verses, how many nations would the Jews displace in order to take possession of the Promised Land?
  
7. What struggles are you currently going through in your life. How do you see God working in your life through these circumstances? (See **Rom. 8:28**) How does **Rom. 1:16-17** relate to you and to your spiritual growth?

#### **MINER'S CORNER ~ *Manna to live by!***

- In **Acts chapter 7**, Stephen gave the religious leaders a lesson in Jewish history pointing them toward their need for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Abram (or Abraham) trusted God and was willing to follow Him anywhere.
- Abraham believed God, even when God's promise seemed impossible from a human perspective.
- There is a big difference between "*believing God exists*" and "*believing God.*" (See **Jam. 2:19**)
- Abraham "*believed God,*" and it was accounted to him for righteousness.
- Abraham and Sarah's advanced age at the time of the birth of Isaac was not an accident; God waited until it was humanly impossible for them to have a child together, in this way God alone would receive the glory.
- God is faithful to keep His promises, right down to the smallest details.
- The blessing that ultimately comes through Abraham is salvation that is found only in his descendant Jesus Christ; this salvation comes by grace through faith to those who repent of their sin and put their trust in Him.