



bb-TBC-14

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📅 Target Date	@Apr 8, 2021
☰ Working Title	Abraham's Longest Day Pt 1
Σ days left	1
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bb-TBC-14 - A Day in the Life of Abraham Pt 1

Introduction: TBC Chapter 4

Tonight we begin a two-part study of one of the most mysterious passages in the Bible

If you are synchronising this Study Guide with the book "The Better Covenant" we have arrived at Chapter 4 - A Day in the Life of Abraham. This is the backtrack I promised earlier.

Last time we scanned almost 2000 years, tonight we will just focus on a single day... and it will take us 2 whole studies to do that.

Jehovah" There are very large gaps in the Bible storyline. They're not really omissions; it's just that what we have has been carefully selected to keep us on the track of salvation history. As I have mentioned before, one aspect that often takes new readers of the Bible by surprise is the unevenness of the way it records time. Abraham's story is a case in point. It takes four chapters to cover 25 years (Genesis 12–15), then it takes five chapters to cover one year (Genesis 17 to 21) and now it will take a whole chapter to record a single day. The narrative is not intended to be full-length biography but a recording of 'the steps of the faith of our father Abraham'. (Rom 4:12) To take a whole chapter to record the events of one day might suggest that this day is of special significance.

Keep an eye open for the Bible's 'date-stamps'; they are valuable markers." Let's make sure we have some sense of the time-line here. The event we are going to study occurred almost 2000 years before the time of Christ. The events of the Exodus occurred almost 500 years later c1500 BC, as far as we can tell. So this study will be looking at a day in the life of Abraham that occurred 500 years earlier than our last study.

Abraham had been called from a pagan background to obey the voice of God. His journey took him first to Haran and then to Shechem. While he was based in Shechem he became 'involved in the local politics' of the neighbourhood. We will remind ourselves of this later and what I am calling here 'Abraham's Longest Day'.

1. Paul's Revelation

Let's remind ourselves of the time gap with a reference from the letter to the churches in Galatia. The passage refers to God's promise to Abram relating to

an unborn son. Throughout this letter we are reminded that the Sinai Covenant is not the New Covenant, and the Abram's experiences were much earlier than the Sinai Covenant. We discover that God's promise to Abram had a deeper significance than Abram might have thought.

▼ Galatians 3:15–16

¶ Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ. (Galatians 3:15–16 NKJV)

The promise had had Christ in view, from the beginning.

▼ Galatians 3:17–18

And this I say, that the law, which was **four hundred and thirty years later**, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise. (Galatians 3:17–18 NKJV)

Being declared 'right with God' could never be 'achieved' by the Sinai Law. The giving of the Law was for a different purpose. Paul acts as his own inter-locator here with a question. If that is true what was the point of the Sinai Covenant and its Law?

▼ Galatians 3:19–20

¶ **What purpose then does the law serve?** It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one. (Galatians 3:19–20 NKJV)

This is a key verse that we shall return to. Paul declares that the promise we shall study was not made primarily to the natural descendants of Abraham but to a particular, single, descendant. The promise was made to 'the coming Seed'. Remember that...

▼ Galatians 3:15–16 NKJV

¶ Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it.

Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ. (Galatians 3:15–16 NKJV)

The Promise was made **to** the Coming Seed. Christ.

The Better Covenant: Chapter 4

2. Abraham obeyed, by faith

Abraham's first recorded encounter with God

▼ Acts 7:2–3 NKJV

¶ And he said, "Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said to him, "Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.' (Acts 7:2–3 NKJV)

This record makes no mention of any promise. It just contains a command.

The writer to the Hebrews seems to draw our attention to this

▼ Hebrews 11:8–9 NKJV

¶ **By faith Abraham obeyed** when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. **And he went out, not knowing where he was going.** By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; (Hebrews 11:8–9 NKJV)

He set out without a destination and paused in Haran. We have no details as to how long he settled in Haran, but we do know he was 75 years when he started the second leg of his journey.

▼ Genesis 12:4–5 ASV

So Abram went, as Jehovah had spoken unto him. And Lot went with him. **And Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.**

And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran: and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan: and into the land of Canaan they came. (Genesis 12:4–5 ASV)

The earlier verses add some details

▼ Genesis 12:1–3 ASV

¶ Now Jehovah said unto Abram,
1) Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee:
2) and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing:
3) and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed. (Genesis 12:1–3 ASV)

▼ The message has three sections

1. a clear command to leave home and family
2. a promise of a substantial family
3. the worldwide implications of 1 & 2

The Promise of the Land

It was not until Abram arrived in the land of Canaan that Jehovah promised the land he was standing on to his descendants.

▼ Genesis 12:5–7 ASV

And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran: and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan: **and into the land of Canaan they came.**

And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Shechem, unto the oak of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.

And Jehovah appeared unto Abram, and said, **Unto thy seed will I give this land:** and there builded he an altar unto Jehovah, who appeared unto him. (Genesis 12:5–7 ASV)

Modern translations usually choose to translate the Hebrew word for 'seed' here as 'descendants' but I will stick to the older choice of 'seed'. There is a series of promises regarding 'the seed' from Genes 3:15 onwards and, to me, seems a pity to break the clear link.

3. The Longest Day

▼ Genesis 14:22–15:1 ASV

And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted up my hand unto Jehovah, God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth,

that I will not take a thread nor a shoe-latchet nor aught that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich:

save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men that went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them taken their portion.

¶ **After these things** the word of Jehovah came unto

Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. (Genesis 14:22–15:1 ASV)

Let's go to our familiar refrain... context, context, context

▼ After these things? What things?

1. The battle of the four kings against the five kings
2. The taking of Lot as a hostage
3. Abram's daring night raid with his covenant partners; Mamre, Aner and Eschol
4. The deliverance of Lot

A crucial choice

1. The maintenance of his Desert Shield covenant with the three brothers, the fabulous wealth of the city kings... or a life changing choice to be loyal to the God of Melchizedek, the Possessor of the whole earth.
2. He turns down the Desert Shield and the Rewards of his Victory...
3. and 'after these these thing'

▼ How long was this day?

▼ Genesis 15:1–12 ASV

¶ After these things the word of Jehovah came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

And Abram said, O Lord Jehovah, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and he that shall be possessor of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?

And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house in mine heir.

And, behold, the word of Jehovah came unto him, saying, This man shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.

And he brought him forth abroad, and said, **Look now toward heaven, and number the stars,** if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

And he believed in Jehovah; and he reckoned it to him for righteousness.

And he said unto him, I am Jehovah that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.

And he said, O Lord Jehovah, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?

And he said unto him, Take me a heifer three years old, and a she-goat three years old, and a ram three years old, and a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon.

And he took him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each half over against the other: but the birds divided he not.

And the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away.

And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, a horror of great darkness fell upon him. (Genesis 15:1–11 ASV)

1. This record starts in the starlight
2. and is followed by a busy night of animal slaughter
3. the vultures would not be airborne until late morning
4. Abraham stood guard for the rest of the day until the sun was going down
5. This is probably just a little less than a 24 hour day

3. The Seed is Christ

So we have taken a huge jump of 2000 years to Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia.

▼ Galatians 3:16 NKJV

Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ. (Galatians 3:16 NKJV)

We have jumped almost to the end of the story but sometimes that can be necessary to keep us on track.

In English, if I were describing a grain of wheat I might describe it as 'a seed', using the singular form of the word. If I were describing a handful of grain or a barn-full of wheat I would still use the singular word 'seed'. Something similar

happens in the Hebrew language. Most uses of the word 'seed' in the Bible use the word in the singular, although not always.

Paul, who doesn't believe in coincidences, believes the Holy Spirit has inspired the way the language works here. Let's see if we can follow his thought. Taught by the same Spirit, he makes his amazing link...

The promises of the 'seed' had a double focus; they had a near fulfilment and relevance for Abram and his descendants, but they also had a distant focus on a single individual. And that single individual was Christ himself; the Seed of Abraham.

▼ Galatians 3:16 NKJV

Now to Abraham and **his Seed** were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ. (Galatians 3:16 NKJV)

▼ The Better Covenant: Chapter 4

We observed last time that prophetic scripture can often make these 'time shifts'; the distant peaks of the mountain give no hint of the deep valleys between them. So as God has made his promises to Abraham and he has always had further peak in view and not just the nearer peak of Abraham and Isaac. The ultimate fulfillment was not in Isaac but in Christ himself.

It may seem a huge jump to follow Paul's reasoning, but this is not so much reasoning as revelation. Paul has seen something that was always there but that was only revealed at the time chosen by the the one who hid it. To understand this deep Bible truth we need to re-read the story of Abraham with Paul's revelation in mind.

God always intended to bring his 'blessing' not only to the physical descendants or 'seed' of Abraham but also to all the nations. Abraham was to be not just the recipient of a personal blessing, but the channel through which God's blessing would reach the Gentiles ie the nations. Again, we

see Paul makes this connection a little earlier in the same letter to the Galatians churches;

▼ Galatians 3:13–14 NKJV

¶ Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”),

that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

(Galatians 3:13–14 NKJV)

So let's take a closer look at this promise that was made to the Seed... next week... God willing...