

Father Abraham

Study Guide

LESSON
TWO

THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM: ORIGINAL MEANING



THIRD MILLENNIUM
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CONTENTS

HOW TO USE THIS LESSON AND STUDY GUIDE	3
PREPARATION	4
NOTES	5
I. INTRODUCTION (0:20)	5
II. CONNECTIONS (5:25)	5
A. Definition (7:10)	5
B. Types (9:23)	6
1. Backgrounds (10:37)	6
2. Models (14:15)	6
3. Foreshadows (18:19)	7
C. Summation (24:59)	8
III. IMPLICATIONS (28:12)	10
A. Basic Impact (29:36)	10
B. Major Themes (31:51)	10
1. Divine Grace (32:52)	10
2. Abraham's Loyalty (34:37)	11
3. Blessings to Abraham (36:38)	11
4. Blessings through Abraham (38:41)	12
C. Five Steps (41:09)	12
1. Background and Early Experiences (42:38)	12
2. Early Contacts with Others (45:41)	13
3. Covenant with God (49:25)	15
4. Later Contacts with Others (53:11)	17
5. Progeny and Death (58:20)	19
IV. CONCLUSION (1:04:34)	21
REVIEW QUESTIONS	22
APPLICATION QUESTIONS	26
GLOSSARY.....	27

HOW TO USE THIS LESSON AND STUDY GUIDE

This study guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video lesson. If you do not have access to the video, the study guide will also work with the audio and/or text versions of the lesson. Additionally, the lesson and study guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule viewing** — In the Notes section of the study guide, the lesson has been divided into sections that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the study guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each section and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
 - **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
 - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
 - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Preparation

- Read Genesis 11:10–25:18

Notes

I. Introduction (0:20)

It is important to read the stories of Abraham's life in light of when they were written and to whom they were written.

We will explore the original impact these stories were intended to have on the nation of Israel as they followed Moses toward the Promised Land.

II. Connections (5:25)

Original meaning — Moses connected his stories about Abraham with the experiences of the Israelites.

A. Definition (7:10)

“That World” — the world of Abraham

“Their World” — the world of Moses and the Israelites who followed him

Moses drew attention to connections between Abraham’s life and the lives of his original audience.

B. Types (9:23)

1. Backgrounds (10:37)

Israel’s experiences were historically rooted in the events of Abraham’s life.

2. Models (14:15)

The similarities between Abraham’s life and the Israelites’ life made it possible for Israel to see examples to follow and to reject.

Telling stories for the sake of providing models or examples is a common way to connect stories to their listeners.

Moses exhorted the Israelites to boldness against the threat of the Canaanites who occupied Canaan.

Moses encouraged his readers to imitate Abraham's boldness by going into the land even though Canaanites still occupied it.

3. Foreshadows (18:19)

Moses showed how events in the patriarch's life foreshadowed events in Moses' day.

Foreshadowing occurs when “that world” of Abraham looks almost exactly like “their world” of Israel.

When biblical writers saw that events in the past seemed to be repeated in the lives of their audiences, they often made this connection clear.

- Example: Genesis 15:1-21

- Example: Genesis 12:10-20

C. Summation (24:59)

Each major step of Abraham’s life connected to the lives of the original audience.

- Abraham’s background and early experiences — Similar to the background and early experience of the Israelites in Moses’ day.

- Abraham's early interactions with others — Prepared Moses' original audience for encounters with foreign nations and rulers.

- God's covenant with Abraham — Israel had entered into covenant with God as well.

- Abraham's later interactions with other peoples — The Israelites would be living among other peoples.

- Abraham's progeny and death — The Israelites ancestry and land claims were based on these details of Abraham's life.

III. Implications (28:12)**A. Basic Impact (29:36)**

Moses wrote about Abraham to turn their hearts away from Egypt and toward possessing the Promised Land.

B. Major Themes (31:51)

Genesis 12:1-3 presents at least four themes.

1. Divine Grace (32:52)

The motif of divine grace was designed to remind the Israelites in Moses' day that God had shown great mercy to them as well.

Moses stressed God's mercy to Abraham to remind his original audience of the mercies God had shown to them.

2. Abraham's Loyalty (34:37)

God held Abraham responsible to obey his commands.

Moses emphasized Abraham's loyalty because God also required Israel's loyalty.

The status of each person in each generation depended on how they responded to the commands of God.

3. Blessings to Abraham (36:38)

Moses focused on Abraham's blessings because these promises were also for Abraham's descendants, the people of Israel whom Moses led.

4. Blessings through Abraham (38:41)

God's blessings would come through the patriarch to the entire world.

The blessings of Abraham — God would give Abraham success through a process of blessing Abraham's friends and cursing his enemies.

The nation as a kingdom of priests:

- The nation would be blessed with the privilege of being a holy people serving God.
- The children of Israel would serve God's purposes throughout the world.

C. Five Steps (41:09)

1. Background and Early Experiences (42:38)

Moses taught his original Israelite audience about their own family background and their call from God.

- **Favored Lineage, 11:10-26**

Abraham was a climatic character in the family of Shem, God's special chosen people.

- **Father's Failure, 11:27-32**

Abraham had to avoid repeating his father's failures. The Israelites had to avoid repeating the failures of their fathers and mothers:

- Idolaters of the first generation of the exodus
- Failed to reach Canaan

- **Abraham's Migration, 12:1-9**

The Israelites in Moses' day were to follow in the footsteps of Abraham, migrating to the land of Canaan.

2. **Early Contacts with Others (45:41)**

The patriarch interacted with other groups of people in a variety of ways. The original Israelite readers would have to do the same.

- **Deliverance from Egypt, 12:10-20**

Abraham learned that Egypt was not his home.

The experience of Moses' original Israelite readers was similar to Abraham's story.

Egypt was not to be the home of the Israelites.

- **Conflict with Lot, 13:1-18**

Abraham's kind treatment of Lot showed the Israelites how to treat the Moabites in their day.

- **Rescue of Lot, 14:1-24**

Abraham defeated powerful, tyrannical kings who had come from afar, and showed kindness to Lot by rescuing him.

By rescuing the Moabites and Ammonites, Israel followed the model that Abraham had set for them.

3. Covenant with God (49:25)

God's covenant with the patriarch revealed the character of Israel's covenant relationship with God.

- **Covenant Promises, 15:1-2**

God entered into covenant with Abraham.

The Israelites were Abraham's promised progeny. They were returning to the land that God had promised to their patriarch.

- **Failure with Hagar, 16:1-16**

Moses' original audience repeatedly turned from God's promises and desired the comforts of Egypt.

Just as Abraham's plan had been rejected, their alternatives to God's plan would also be rejected.

- **Covenant Requirement, 17:1-27**

God confronted the patriarch over his failure to follow God's plan.

Only as the Israelites were faithful to their covenant God could they rightly hope for his great blessings.

4. Later Contacts with Others (53:11)

Abraham's interactions taught Israel how to interact with:

- Canaanites
- Moabites and Ammonites
- Philistines and Ishmaelites

- **Sodom and Gomorrah, 18:1-19:38**

These events spoke directly to the situation facing Moses' original audience.

- God's threat against the Canaanites
- Concern for the righteous among the Canaanites
- The destruction of the evil Canaanite cities
- The Israelites relationship with Lot's descendants: the Moabites and Ammonites

- **Intercession for Abimelech, 20:1-18**

Abraham interceded for an inhabitant of the land, namely for Abimelech the Philistine.

The Israelites in Moses' day were to have the same attitudes toward the Philistines living in their day.

- **Isaac and Ishmael, 21:1-21**

Moses helped the Israelites understand the nature of their relationship with the Ishmaelites of their day.

- **Treaty with Abimelech, 21:22-34**

The Philistine Abimelech acknowledged God's favor toward Abraham. Abraham agreed to live in peace with Abimelech and his descendants.

The well called Beersheba still remained in Moses' day, reminding Israel:

- Of the treaty made there
- To pursue peace and mutual honor with the Philistines

5. Progeny and Death (58:20)

Abraham's legacy extended his covenant relationship with God to future generations.

- **Abraham's Test, 22:1-24**

God called Abraham to sacrifice his son. Abraham complied. The result was a bright future for Isaac.

This passage reminded the Israelites that God was testing the nation of Israel to see the depth of their loyalty to him.

- **Burial Property, 23:1-20**

Abraham acquired a family burial site in Hebron when his wife Sarah died.

This story demonstrated that the proper place for his descendants was the land of the Canaanites.

- **Wife for Isaac, 24:1-67**

In order to ensure that Isaac would avoid Canaanite corruption, Abraham insisted that Isaac not marry a Canaanite woman.

Abraham ensured a great future of blessings from God for Isaac and his descendants.

Isaac's bright future of blessing would be the Israelites bright future as well, if they resisted the corruption of the Canaanites.

- **Death and Heir, 25:1-18**

Several brief accounts list:

- Abraham's sons by wives other than Sarah
- The patriarch's death when Isaac received Abraham's final blessing as legal heir
- A contrasting section that briefly lists Ishmael's descendants

IV. Conclusion (1:04:34)

5. How does the lesson summarize the impact of Abraham's story on its original audience?

6. What four main themes did Moses express when writing about Abraham? How did these relate to his original audience?

7. Briefly summarize the five main steps of Abraham's life, and some of their main implications for the original audience.

Application Questions

1. The motif of divine grace reminded the Israelites that they were recipients of God's mercy. How have you benefited from God's divine grace?
2. Although God had shown mercy to the Israelites, the status of each person in each generation depended on how they responded to the commands of God. What is the significance or meaning of this teaching for followers of Christ today?
3. The events in Abraham's life were told to impart a vision for God's plan to use Israel to spread his kingdom to the entire world. What does it look like for the kingdom to spread to the entire world in our day? How should our plans be shaped by the experiences of Abraham and other biblical people of faith?
4. How do the stories of Abraham's interactions with other people provide a model for followers of Christ in the modern world?
5. Like Abraham's failure with Hagar, at times we justify our own plans instead of following God's plan. In what situations are you tempted to do this?
6. How is Abraham's legacy the legacy of Christians today?
7. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study?

Glossary

Adumbrate – Another word for "foreshadow" or "prefigure," used to describe how earlier persons, things, and events foreshadow later persons, things, and events

Canaan, land of – Region given to Abraham and his descendants as an inheritance in his covenant with God; encompasses present-day Israel, the Palestinian Territories, Lebanon, Jordan, the adjoining coastal lands and parts of Egypt and Syria

Canaanites – People descended from Canaan, the son of Ham, who lived in the land of Canaan before Joshua's conquest

Circumcise/Circumcision – The Jewish tradition of excising the foreskin of the male penis instituted by God as a sign and seal for his covenant people in Genesis 17:10-14

Covenant – A binding legal agreement made either between two people or groups of people, or between God and a person or group of people

Exodus – The deliverance of the people of Israel out of bondage in Egypt

Foreshadow – Literary device in which certain events hint at or point to future events that will occur later in the story

Hebron – City in Canaan where Sarah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were buried

Moabites – Descendants of Lot that interacted with Israel in the period of Moses; God told Israel not to harass them or provoke them to war

Perizzites – One of the people groups living in Canaan at the time of Abraham

Rebekah – Isaac's wife and the mother of Jacob and Esau

That world – The world that biblical authors wrote about

Their world – The world of Scripture's original audience