

The Importance of families

God's Big Picture

The truths and applications that the study will highlight

The facts – A family story, the characters in the story, the less than savoury aspects of their family life, God as the chief Character who knows them all completely.

God's Purposes – at every stage to bring about change and spiritual growth in each individual for their good and his glory and to bless them richly.

– to make them into a great nation in the land of Canaan where Messiah Jesus would be born, and then die to save his people from their sins.

– As they obediently worship, live and flourish under God's gracious hand and become a nation, they are to be a model and a blessing to all nations.

The call and commissioning of Abraham in Ur by the God who speaks. God's promises to him

Called with his wife Sarah from – Ur of the Chaldeans, in Mesopotamia.

Called to – settle in an unknown destination that God promised to show him.

Genesis 12:1–3 The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you;

I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse;

and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you”

The Story Begins!

The start – Terah, Abraham's father and the family move 1000kms north to Harran.

The stop – At Harran, an urban, pagan city like Ur, that became home for Terah who died there, and for Nahor, Abraham's brother and his family, who settled in the region.

The restart – Abraham and Sarah with Lot, his nephew, set off in obedience to God's call to him and travel around 240kms south to Canaan.

But God continued to speak! – repeating the promises to Abraham and to his son Isaac, and then specifically to Jacob, the father of Joseph, a major character in the study.

Where are we? *The usefulness of maps of the patriarchs time, and of Egypt*

The city of Ur. Population – at least ¼ million Society – sophisticated and cultured

Commerce – manufacturing, trading, use of river connection to Persian Gulf. Religion – 300 pagan gods, idols, temples, degrading religious practises, magic, ritual prostitution, bondage.

The gods of Ur and Mesopotamia did not speak a word. They could not, but the God who called Abraham did speak, as he had been speaking to his people since he created them.

A Relationship Broken

Genesis 1 God speaks the cosmos and humanity into being and then continues in relationship with his special creation, (Genesis 2) until sin enters (Genesis 3) and the relationship is broken.

But God continues to speak now through his *written* word as the Holy Spirit enlightens our minds to understand it.

A family will be chosen to begin to build a nation

A relationship to be restored

God begins the process of repairing the relationship in the Garden. The promise of a Saviour God did not forget his promise, he continued to speak to individuals and family members.

God spoke to Noah, whose son Shem was an ancestor of the Semitic people, the Semites,

Abraham's family tree in Genesis 11 all the way back to Shem.

God's call on the 'unlikely'

Not always the eldest son, Joseph is Jacob's second youngest son.

But, individuals are moulded, changed, the family preserved, then blessed to prosper.

Joseph, was to come to know this God who speaks.

God's sovereign plans were not to be thwarted!

Understanding their times and ours! – Getting a handle on BC dates.

Are the Patriarchs, lost in the mists of time in our thinking? Pre-history belongs there, and the time of the return of Jesus is unknown. But concerning the past genealogical lists tell the story in real time.
'Them' – Abraham around 2000 years before Christ, in the 21st Century 'BC'. Archaeology continues!

Cloud on Mount BC

Cloud on Mount AD

2000yr
1800yr
1000yr
500yr

2000yr
1800yr
1000yr
500yr

A cross outside Jerusalem

Abraham set off from Haran at 75 years old. They were in Canaan when Isaac was born when his father was 100 years old. Isaac was 40 years old when *his* son Jacob was born.

Jacob and his family were somewhere in the early 1800s before Jesus came.

'And Us?' – We stand in the 2020s on *this* side of the cross.

Placing them in perspective with our own family dates. Your grand or great-grandparents?

A conclusion! The earliest times suggested for these families were approximately the same distance from the time of Jesus as we are – but on the other side of the cross!

The Canaan where Jacob settled with his family

The Geography (from the West at the Mediterranean Sea to the Eastern Desert

A coastal plain –not always the easiest route north from Egypt and to Mesopotamia.

A central mountain range – With wadis and streams, but the ridge route much used in bible times.

A Rift Valley 240kms long in Israel. Lake Galilee 210 mt below sea level. The Dead Sea shore 400 below.

River Jordan flowing from Mt Hermon to Dead Sea, from high to negligible rain-fall.

The Transjordan Mountains rising from rift valley floor descending gently to the Eastern Desert.

The place Joseph called home – West of the Dead Sea at 1000mts at Hebron

A farming area – Good rainfall, terraced Western slopes, crops and fruit, pasture for livestock.

Commerce – Hebron already a city when Abraham camped there, accepted and respected in the area.

On a trade route from the south for bartering the produce of the hill country for sheep, donkeys, camels and leather goods from the South, Egypt, Africa and Sinai.

Joseph, setting out to find his brothers.

The Bible writers were the narrators of the story, they were not commentators on it

Our reaction – to what is written in these dangerous times?

Shechem – 80 kms North. A surprising place for the 10 older brothers to pasture their flocks!

Dothan – A further 24km North. A shocking episode in the life of this family.

To remember, God is in control here, using every situation they get themselves into, to bring about his plans and purposes for this family.

The Egypt Joseph was exiled to – with the Nile providing the only possibility of life in the desert!

Politically – Pharaoh head of state and the religious leader. Which Pharaoh? – uncertain.

Religiously – Concerned with death and the afterlife. Up to 9 new pyramids built at this stable time.

Culture – Much revealed in the contents of the Pyramids and also in Egyptian art and writing.

The Delta area, The Eastern area where Goshen situated, ideal for shepherds or cattle herdsman at that time, and very fertile with crops, fish and fowl, fruit, vineyards, and settlements between the canals.

Traders – from Canaan and Mesopotamia are used and directed by the loving hand of a Sovereign Lord whose care and plans for one special family, and one somewhat proud and tactless 17-year-old, are as detailed as they are gracious.

The story of Joseph is truly 'amazing'! As the musical version says. In the Bible version we see this family as God sees them, may we see the hand of that gracious and all-knowing God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and may he teach us the lessons that he wants us to learn.

The sharing instances of God's sovereign control of our lives

Experiences you have had of the Lord's overruling in the circumstances in your life. Those times you look back on with awe and wonder, as you *now* see the path on which he led you.