

LESSON 8 - February 25, 1888.

## CALL OF ABRAHAM

1. WHERE did Abraham live when the Lord first appeared to him ? Acts 7 : 2.

2. What did the Lord say to him ? Verse 3.

3. What promise did the Lord then make to him ? Gen. 12 : 1-3.

4. What did Abraham then do ? Acts. 7 4.

5. How old was he when he went to the land of Canaan ? Gen. 12 : 4,5.

6. Did he know before he started where he was going ? Gen 12 :1 ; Acts 7 : 3.

7. In thus going ; from his home, what did he manifest ? Hebrews 11 : 8.

8. What promise did the Lord afterward make him ? Gen. 13 : 14, 15.

9. To whom besides himself was the promise made ? Verse 15.

10. How numerous did the Lord say that his seed should be? Verse 16.

11. Had Abraham any children at this time ? Gen. 15 : 2..

12. What did the Lord again say as to the number of his posterity? Verse 5.

13. How did Abraham regard the word of the Lord? Verse 6, first clause.

14. How did God regard Abraham's faith ? Verse 6, last clause.

15. What is meant by faith being counted for righteousness ?  
Ans.-The forgiveness of sins. See Rom. 4 : 5-8.

16. Through whom were the promises confirmed to Abraham ? Gal. 3 : 17.

17. And who are the promised seed? Gal. 3:29.

18. What is the inheritance of which they, with him, are heirs ? Rom. 4 : 13.

## **Patriarchs and Prophets Chap. 11 - The Call of Abraham**

After the dispersion from Babel idolatry again became well-nigh universal, and the Lord finally left the hardened transgressors to follow their evil ways, while He chose Abraham, of the line of Shem, and made him the keeper of His law for future generations. Abraham had grown up in the midst of superstition and heathenism. Even his father's household, by whom the knowledge of God had been preserved, were yielding to the seductive influences surrounding them, and they "served other gods" than Jehovah. But the true faith was not to become extinct. God has ever preserved a remnant to serve Him. Adam, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Shem, in unbroken line, had preserved from age to age the precious revealings of His will. The son of Terah became the inheritor of this holy trust. Idolatry invited him on every side, but in vain. Faithful among the faithless, uncorrupted by the prevailing apostasy, he steadfastly adhered to the worship of the one true God. "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth." Psalm 145:18. He communicated His will to Abraham, and gave him a distinct knowledge of the requirements of His law and of the salvation that would be accomplished through Christ. {PP 125.1}

There was given to Abraham the promise, especially dear to the people of that age, of a numerous posterity and of national greatness: "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing." And to this was added the assurance, precious above every other to the inheritor of faith, that of his line the Redeemer of the world should come: "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Yet, as the first condition of fulfillment, there was to be a test of faith; a sacrifice was demanded. {PP 125.2}

The message of God came to Abraham, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee." In order that God might qualify him for his great work as the keeper of the sacred oracles, Abraham must be separated from the associations of his early life. The influence of kindred and friends would interfere with the training which the Lord purposed to give His servant. Now that Abraham was, in a special sense, connected with heaven, he must dwell among strangers. His character must be peculiar, differing from all the world. He could not even explain his course of action so as to be understood by his friends. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and his motives and actions were not comprehended by his idolatrous kindred. {PP 126.1}

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." Hebrews 11:8. Abraham's unquestioning obedience is one of the most striking evidences of faith to be found in all the Bible. To him, faith was "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Verse 1. Relying upon the divine promise, without the least outward assurance of its fulfillment, he abandoned home and kindred and native land, and went forth, he knew not whither, to follow where God should lead. "By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." Hebrews 11:9, R.V. {PP 126.2}

It was no light test that was thus brought upon Abraham, no small sacrifice that was required of him. There were strong ties to bind him to his country, his kindred, and his home. But he did

not hesitate to obey the call. He had no question to ask concerning the land of promise-- whether the soil was fertile and the climate healthful; whether the country afforded agreeable surroundings and would afford opportunities for amassing wealth. God has spoken, and His servant must obey; the happiest place on earth for him was the place where God would have him to be. {PP 126.3}

Many are still tested as was Abraham. They do not hear the voice of God speaking directly from the heavens, but He calls them by the teachings of His word and the events of His providence. They may be required to abandon a career that promises wealth and honor, to leave congenial and profitable associations and separate from kindred, to enter upon what appears to be only a path of self-denial, hardship, and sacrifice. God has a work for them to do; but a life of ease and the influence of friends and kindred would hinder the development of the very traits essential for its accomplishment. He calls them away from human influences and aid, and leads them to feel the need of His help, and to depend upon Him alone, that He may reveal Himself to them. Who is ready at the call of Providence to renounce cherished plans and familiar associations? Who will accept new duties and enter untried fields, doing God's work with firm and willing heart, for Christ's sake counting his losses gain? He who will do this has the faith of Abraham, and will share with him that "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," with which "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared." 2 Corinthians 4:17; Romans 8:18. {PP 126.4}

The call from heaven first came to Abraham while he dwelt in "Ur of the Chaldees" and in obedience to it he removed to Haran. Thus far his father's family accompanied him, for with their idolatry they united the worship of the true God. Here Abraham remained till the death of Terah. But from his father's grave the divine Voice bade him go forward. His brother Nahor with his household clung to their home and their idols. Besides Sarah, the wife of Abraham, only Lot, the son of Haran long since dead, chose to share the patriarch's, pilgrim life. Yet it was a large company that set out from Mesopotamia. Abraham already possessed extensive flocks and herds, the riches of the East, and he was surrounded by a numerous body of servants and retainers. He was departing from the land of his fathers, never to return, and he took with him all that he had, "their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran." Among these were many led by higher considerations than those of service and self-interest. During their stay in Haran, both Abraham and Sarah had led others to the worship and service of the true God. These attached themselves to the patriarch's household, and accompanied him to the land of promise. "And they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came." {PP 127.1}

The place where they first tarried was Shechem. Under the shade of the oaks of Moreh, in a wide, grassy valley, with its olive groves and gushing springs, between Mount Ebal on the one side and Mount Gerizim on the other, Abraham made his encampment. It was a fair and goodly country that the patriarch had entered--"a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey." Deuteronomy 8:7, 8. But to the worshiper of Jehovah, a heavy shadow rested upon wooded hill and fruitful plain. "The Canaanite was then in the land." Abraham had reached the goal of his hopes to find a country occupied by an alien race and overspread with idolatry. In the groves were set up the altars of false gods, and human

sacrifices were offered upon the neighboring heights. While he clung to the divine promise, it was not without distressful forebodings that he pitched his tent. Then "the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land." His faith was strengthened by this assurance that the divine presence was with him, that he was not left to the mercy of the wicked. "And there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him." Still a wayfarer, he soon removed to a spot near Bethel, and again erected an altar, and called upon the name of the Lord. {PP 127.2}

Abraham, "the friend of God," set us a worthy example. His was a life of prayer. Wherever he pitched his tent, close beside it was set up his altar, calling all within his encampment to the morning and evening sacrifice. When his tent was removed, the altar remained. In following years, there were those among the roving Canaanites who received instruction from Abraham; and whenever one of these came to that altar, he knew who had been there before him; and when he had pitched his tent, he repaired the altar, and there worshiped the living God. {PP 128.1}

Abraham continued to journey southward, and again his faith was tested. The heavens withheld their rain, the brooks ceased to flow in the valleys, and the grass withered on the plains. The flocks and herds found no pasture, and starvation threatened the whole encampment. Did not the patriarch now question the leadings of Providence? Did he not look back with longing to the plenty of the Chaldean plains? All were eagerly watching to see what Abraham would do, as trouble after trouble came upon him. So long as his confidence appeared unshaken, they felt that there was hope; they were assured that God was his Friend, and that He was still guiding him. {PP 128.2}

Abraham could not explain the leadings of Providence; he had not realized his expectations; but he held fast the promise, "I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing." With earnest prayer he considered how to preserve the life of his people and his flocks, but he would not allow circumstances to shake his faith in God's word. To escape the famine he went down into Egypt. He did not forsake Canaan, or in his extremity turn back to the Chaldean land from which he came, where there was no scarcity of bread; but he sought a temporary refuge as near as possible to the Land of Promise, intending shortly to return where God had placed him. {PP 129.1}

The Lord in His providence had brought this trial upon Abraham to teach him lessons of submission, patience, and faith--lessons that were to be placed on record for the benefit of all who should afterward be called to endure affliction. God leads His children by a way that they know not, but He does not forget or cast off those who put their trust in Him. He permitted affliction to come upon Job, but He did not forsake him. He allowed the beloved John to be exiled to lonely Patmos, but the Son of God met him there, and his vision was filled with scenes of immortal glory. God permits trials to assail His people, that by their constancy and obedience they themselves may be spiritually enriched, and that their example may be a source of strength to others. "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil." Jeremiah 29:11. The very trials that task our faith most severely and make it seem that God has forsaken us, are to lead us closer to Christ, that we may lay all our burdens at His feet and experience the peace which He will give us in exchange. {PP 129.2}

God has always tried His people in the furnace of affliction. It is in the heat of the furnace that the dross is separated from the true gold of the Christian character. Jesus watches the test; He knows what is needed to purify the precious metal, that it may reflect the radiance of His love. It is by close, testing trials that God disciplines His servants. He sees that some have powers which may be used in the advancement of His work, and He puts these persons upon trial; in His providence He brings them into positions that test their character and reveal defects and weaknesses that have been hidden from their own knowledge. He gives them opportunity to correct these defects and to fit themselves for His service. He shows them their own weakness, and teaches them to lean upon Him; for He is their only help and safeguard. Thus His object is attained. They are educated, trained, and disciplined, prepared to fulfill the grand purpose for which their powers were given them. When God calls them to action, they are ready, and heavenly angels can unite with them in the work to be accomplished on the earth. {PP 129.3}

During his stay in Egypt, Abraham gave evidence that he was not free from human weakness and imperfection. In concealing the fact that Sarah was his wife, he betrayed a distrust of the divine care, a lack of that lofty faith and courage so often and nobly exemplified in his life. Sarah was fair to look upon, and he doubted not that the dusky Egyptians would covet the beautiful stranger, and that in order to secure her, they would not scruple to slay her husband. He reasoned that he was not guilty of falsehood in representing Sarah as his sister, for she was the daughter of his father, though not of his mother. But this concealment of the real relation between them was deception. No deviation from strict integrity can meet God's approval. Through Abraham's lack of faith, Sarah was placed in great peril. The king of Egypt, being informed of her beauty, caused her to be taken to his palace, intending to make her his wife. But the Lord, in His great mercy, protected Sarah by sending judgments upon the royal household. By this means the monarch learned the truth in the matter, and, indignant at the deception practiced upon him, he reproved Abraham and restored to him his wife, saying, "What is this that thou hast done unto me? . . . Why saidst thou, She is my sister? So I might have taken her to me to wife. Now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way." {PP 130.1}

Abraham had been greatly favored by the king; even now Pharaoh would permit no harm to be done him or his company, but ordered a guard to conduct them in safety out of his dominions. At this time laws were made prohibiting the Egyptians from intercourse with foreign shepherds in any such familiarity as eating or drinking with them. Pharaoh's dismissal of Abraham was kind and generous; but he bade him leave Egypt, for he dared not permit him to remain. He had ignorantly been about to do him a serious injury, but God had interposed, and saved the monarch from committing so great a sin. Pharaoh saw in this stranger a man whom the God of heaven honored, and he feared to have in his kingdom one who was so evidently under divine favor. Should Abraham remain in Egypt, his increasing wealth and honor would be likely to excite the envy or covetousness of the Egyptians, and some injury might be done him, for which the monarch would be held responsible, and which might again bring judgments upon the royal house. {PP 130.2}

The warning that had been given to Pharaoh proved a protection to Abraham in his after-intercourse with heathen peoples; for the matter could not be kept secret, and it was seen that

the God whom Abraham worshiped would protect His servant, and that any injury done him would be avenged. It is a dangerous thing to wrong one of the children of the King of heaven. The psalmist refers to this chapter in Abraham's experience when he says, in speaking of the chosen people, that God "reproved kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm." Psalm 105:14, 15. {PP 131.1}

There is an interesting similarity between Abraham's experience in Egypt and that of his posterity, centuries later. Both went down into Egypt on account of a famine, and both sojourned there. Through the manifestation of divine judgments in their behalf, the fear of them fell upon the Egyptians; and, enriched by the gifts of the heathen, they went out with great substance. {PP 131.2}