

TRUTH LESSONS—LEVEL ONE
LESSON EIGHT
A KEY VIEW OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

(2)

FROM ABRAHAM TO JOSEPH

- I. In Abraham is seen God's calling, God's promise, justification by faith, the living by faith, and the living in fellowship with God:
 - A. God's calling.
 - B. God's promise:
 - 1. To make Abraham a great nation.
 - 2. To bless Abraham.
 - 3. To make Abraham and his seed a blessing to all the families of the earth.
 - C. Justification by faith.
 - D. Living by faith:
 - 1. Building an altar.
 - 2. Pitching a tent.
 - 3. Fighting for the brother.
 - E. Living in fellowship with God:
 - 1. Communion with God on the human level.
 - 2. The offering of Isaac.
- II. In Isaac is seen the inheriting of grace and the resting and enjoying:
 - A. Inheriting grace:
 - 1. Born of grace.
 - 2. Grown in grace.
 - 3. Being the heir in grace.
 - 4. Inheriting the promise given to his father.
 - B. Resting and enjoying.
- III. In Jacob is seen God's selection, the transformation in life, and the maturity in life:
 - A. God's selection:
 - 1. Before his birth.
 - 2. Not of his own works, but of God who calls.
 - B. The transformation in life:
 - 1. Being dealt with.
 - 2. Being met by God and receiving God's promise.
 - 3. Being broken.
 - 4. Being transformed.
 - C. The maturity in life:
 - 1. The heart numb, but the spirit revived.
 - 2. No begging after arriving in Egypt.
 - 3. Blessing people.
- IV. In Joseph is seen the reigning aspect of the maturity in life:
 - A. Joseph's life being a part of Jacob's generation.

- B. Joseph being given the authority to reign.
- V. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, including Joseph, being three aspects of a complete experience in life.

TEXT

In this lesson we come to the history of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Their combined history speaks of the complete experience of a called one.

I. IN ABRAHAM IS SEEN GOD'S CALLING, GOD'S PROMISE, JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH, THE LIVING BY FAITH, AND THE LIVING IN FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

A. God's Calling

Abraham originally dwelt in Ur of the Chaldees. The background then was that of the fourth step of man's fall. First, man had conspired to rebel against God. Second, man had made bricks by his own labor to build a city and live a man-made godless life. Third, man had built a tower to declare his rejection of God and to make himself a name (Gen. 11:3-4). Fourth, according to Joshua 24:2, man had turned from God to serve idols, that is, to worship demons.

Abraham lived in such a dark age. But one day the God of glory appeared to him and called him to leave his country and his kindred and to go into a land which God would show him (Acts 7:3). The God of glory appeared to him, spoke to him, called him, and even gave him the promise.

God called Abraham twice. The first calling of God, referred to in Acts 7:3, was when Abraham was at Ur. God called Abraham out of his country and his kindred into the land which He would show him. Abraham, however, did not accept that calling immediately, and God sovereignly caused his father, Terah, to bring the family from Ur to Haran. They stayed there until Terah died (Gen. 11:31-32). Then, God appeared to Abraham the second time (Gen. 12:1) and told him to leave his country, his kindred, and also his father's house. In God's second calling, He not only told Abraham to leave his country and his kindred but also his father's house. Furthermore, God gave him the promise in three aspects.

B. God's Promise

1. To Make Abraham a Great Nation

In Genesis 12:2 God said to Abraham, "I will make of thee a great nation." God promised Abraham that He would make of him a great nation, which is the kingdom of God, composed of the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, the church in the New Testament, the millennial kingdom in the coming age, and the new heaven and the new earth in eternity.

2. To Bless Abraham

God promised to bless Abraham (Gen. 12:2). This is the blessing of God's creation and redemption, including all that God wants to give man—God Himself and all that He has in this age and in the age to come. Galatians 3:14 shows us that this blessing eventually is the promise of the Spirit.

3. To Make Abraham and His Seed a Blessing to All the Families of the Earth

God not only promised that He would be a blessing to Abraham, but that Abraham and his seed would be a blessing to all the families, all the nations, of the earth (Gen. 12:3; 22:18). In His calling, God turned from Adam to Abraham, indicating that He gave up the Adamic race. But, in His promise, God turned again from Abraham back to all the families of the Adamic race through Christ, the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:14, 16).

C. Justification by Faith

God gave the promise to Abraham, and Abraham believed in Him. So God counted it to him for righteousness (Gen. 15:5-6). This was his justification by faith before God (Rom. 4:21-24).

D. Living by Faith

Hebrews 11:8-9 says, "By faith Abraham, being called, obeyed to go out to a place which he was about to receive for an inheritance, and he went out without knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt as a foreigner in the land of promise as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents."

1. Building an Altar

From Haran Abraham brought Sarah his wife, Lot his brother's son, and all their substance and people into the land of Canaan. When Abraham came to the place of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh, Jehovah appeared again to him, and there he built an altar unto Jehovah, who appeared to him (Gen. 12:7).

2. Pitching a Tent

After Abraham built an altar, he pitched a tent (Gen. 12:8). At Babel, the people first built a city and then erected a tower. But Abraham first built an altar and then erected a tent. This means that Abraham was for God. He first took care of the worship of God, his fellowship with God. Then he took care of his living. His dwelling in a tent also shows that he did not belong to the world, but lived the life of a sojourner on the earth.

3. Fighting for the Brother

Abraham's nephew, Lot, had separated himself from Abraham and dwelt in Sodom. Because of the fighting between the four kings and the five kings, Lot was taken captive. When Abraham heard this, he led forth his trained men who were born in his house, and fought against the four kings; he smote them and brought back all the goods. After his

return, Melchisedec, king of Salem, met him with bread and wine and blessed him (Gen. 14:18). Melchisedec as the priest of the Most High God is a type of Christ as God's High Priest (Heb. 7:1-3, 16-17). Christ today is the High Priest according to the order of Melchisedec. He is always living to intercede for us and to nourish us with bread and wine.

E. Living in Fellowship with God

1. Communion with God on the Human Level

Genesis 18 speaks of Abraham's intimate experience of God. When Abraham was sitting in the tent door one day, he saw three men coming to him. Of the three, one was Jehovah God and the other two were angels. Abraham prepared water for God to wash His feet and served Him with a meal. Thus, Abraham enjoyed the sweet fellowship with God, and in this fellowship he received the revelation from God regarding the birth of Isaac and the destruction of Sodom.

2. The Offering of Isaac

Genesis 22 speaks of the peak of Abraham's experience with God. In verse 2 God said to Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." How difficult it must have been for Abraham to do this! By faith, however, Abraham immediately obeyed God's word and did it. Abraham took his son and journeyed three days to the mountain. "And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood" (v. 9). As he stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son, the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven and said, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad" (v. 12). Then God prepared a ram to replace Isaac. Therefore, as far as Abraham was concerned, Isaac was raised from among the dead. This was Abraham's peak experience in satisfying God because of his obedience by faith. The offering of Isaac typifies the offering of Christ, God's only begotten Son, on the cross.

II. IN ISAAC IS SEEN THE INHERITING OF GRACE AND THE RESTING AND ENJOYING

A. Inheriting Grace

In the record of Isaac's life the experience of grace is implied. Isaac experienced the inheriting of God's grace.

1. Born of Grace

After God dealt with Abraham's natural strength and self-effort, Isaac was born. This means that Isaac was born of grace, which is signified by Sarah (Gal. 4:24-28, 31).

2. Grown in Grace

Isaac was grown up in grace (Gen. 21:8). From his history we know that he did not labor to do much. He was born in grace, and he was also grown in grace.

3. Being the Heir in Grace

Isaac also became the heir in grace (Gen. 21:9-12). All that his father had was his, for Abraham gave all his riches to this unique heir. It was by grace, not by his effort, that he became the heir of his father's riches.

4. Inheriting the Promise Given to His Father

Isaac inherited not only all that his father had, but also the promise which God had given to his father, especially the aspect concerning Christ as the blessing to all the nations of the earth (Gen. 26:3-5).

B. Resting and Enjoying

Isaac's entire life was a life of rest and enjoyment without much suffering. He was always calm and restful. Isaac was not a laboring person; he was a person of enjoyment. His father and his servant did everything to secure a bride, Rebekah, for him (Gen. 24:61-67). Throughout his entire life, he never suffered thirst. Wherever he went, whether to a wrong place or a right one, there was always a well. In sowing, Isaac received a hundredfold harvest and became very great (Gen. 26:12-14).

III. IN JACOB IS SEEN GOD'S SELECTION, THE TRANSFORMATION IN LIFE, AND THE MATURITY IN LIFE

A. God's Selection

1. Before His Birth

Jacob was chosen before his birth, even before the foundation of the world. "And the children struggled together within her;...And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels;...and the elder shall serve the younger" (Gen. 25:22-23). Before the children were born, God had already said that the elder would serve the younger, for God had chosen the younger Jacob. According to Ephesians 1:4, God's choosing is long before the foundation of the world.

2. Not of His Own Works, but of God Who Calls

Romans 9:11, referring to Jacob and Esau, says, "The children not yet being born, nor having done anything good or bad, (that the purpose of God according to selection might remain, not of works, but of Him who calls)." In this verse we see that God's selection does not depend on our works, but on God who calls.

B. The Transformation in Life

1. Being Dealt With

Although Jacob was defeated in his mother's womb by his brother and was born second, he kept struggling to seize the birthright. After Jacob finally seized the birthright and his

father's blessing, Esau hated him and plotted to kill him. So he was forced to leave his parents and to flee to his uncle Laban.

Jacob, after coming to Laban's home, was dealt with even more than before. He was consumed in the day by the drought, and in the night by the frost. He could not sleep. He served Laban for fourteen years for his two daughters, and six years for his cattle. Laban changed his wages ten times (Gen. 31:40-41).

Jacob married Leah, Rachel, and the two maids, begetting twelve sons and one daughter. They were all used by God to deal with Jacob from every side in order that he might be transformed.

2. Being Met by God and Receiving God's Promise

During his escape to Laban's house, Jacob one night lay down to sleep in the wilderness, taking a stone for a pillow. As he dreamed, he saw a ladder set up on the earth. And the Lord stood above the ladder and said, "I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed...and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 28:10-14). Furthermore, God promised that He would give him and his seed the land of Canaan and that in his seed (Christ) all the families of the earth would be blessed, just as God had promised to Abraham and Isaac. So Jacob took the stone that he had put for his pillow and set it up for a pillar and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel, the house of God (Gen. 28:18-19).

3. Being Broken

Genesis 32:22-32 relates a crucial experience in Jacob's life. Jacob's experience in this chapter is practical, personal, and intimate. The Lord in the form of man wrestled with Jacob "until the breaking of the day" (v. 24). He did this in order to expose Jacob's natural life. As the day was dawning, the man touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh and Jacob was crippled. Jacob asked the man to bless him, but the man asked Jacob, "What is thy name?" The Lord wanted Jacob to know himself; then the man changed his name to Israel. The primary meaning of Israel is "a wrestler with God," and the secondary meaning is "the prince of God."

4. Being Transformed

In Genesis 35 God told Jacob to go up to Bethel, so Jacob took his household and went. Before they left for Bethel, however, they made a thorough clearance by putting away their foreign gods, purifying themselves, and changing their garments, that is, their manner of life (v. 2). Upon arriving at Bethel, Jacob built an altar. There God appeared to him and again changed his name to Israel. And Jacob set up a pillar of stone and poured upon it a drink offering and oil. He called the name of the place Bethel (vv. 14-15).

C. The Maturity in Life

1. The Heart Numb, but the Spirit Revived

When Jacob heard in his old age that Joseph had become ruler over all the land of Egypt, what was his reaction? We are told that his heart became numb, but that his spirit was revived (Gen. 45:26-27, Heb.). His soul life was deadened, but his spirit and his soul had been divided. So when he heard the good news concerning Joseph, his reaction was that his heart became numb yet his spirit was revived.

2. No Begging after Arriving in Egypt

After Jacob arrived in Egypt he did not beg for anything. However, when he was young, he did not only beg but also supplanted others.

3. Blessing People

The strongest sign of Jacob's maturity was his blessing others. After arriving in Egypt, he blessed Pharaoh (Gen. 47:7, 10). According to Hebrews 7:7, "the lesser is blessed by the greater." Thus, the fact that Jacob blessed Pharaoh was a proof that he was greater than Pharaoh.

Jacob also blessed Joseph and Joseph's two sons, and all his children, one by one, and he even prophesied through his blessing (Gen. 49:1-28).

IV. IN JOSEPH IS SEEN THE REIGNING ASPECT OF THE MATURITY IN LIFE

Joseph's biography indicates that he had no defects and was altogether perfect. Joseph signifies the reigning aspect of a matured saint, the matured Israel.

A. Joseph's Life Being a Part of Jacob's Generation

Genesis 37:2 says, "These are the generations of Jacob." Then it goes on to tell us of the life of Joseph. This proves that Joseph's life was a part of Jacob's generation.

The biographies of Joseph and Jacob are blended together in Genesis because they are actually the biography of one person, not of two.

B. Joseph Being Given the Authority to Reign

Joseph was sold into Egypt by his brothers, and then he was imprisoned due to the false accusation of the wife of Potiphar, the captain of the guard, but God was with him. Later, Pharaoh dreamed, yet no one but Joseph could interpret the dreams. Pharaoh saw that the Spirit of God was in him and that he was discreet and wise, so Pharaoh set him over all the land of Egypt (Gen. 41:38-41). Joseph's reigning actually was the reigning of Jacob through Joseph.

V. ABRAHAM, ISAAC, AND JACOB, INCLUDING JOSEPH, BEING THREE ASPECTS OF A COMPLETE EXPERIENCE IN LIFE

The called race began with Abraham, passed through Isaac, and was completed with Jacob. Even though Abraham had a good beginning with being called, there is no record of his being chosen or of his reaching an ultimate and matured life. For this completion, Abraham needed Jacob. In Jacob we see that the called one was chosen long before his birth; in him we also see the maturity in life. His hands were hands of supplanting, but in his old age, his hands became hands of blessing. Jacob became fully mature. He reached a level of maturity such that he was reigning over the whole land. (The reigning of Joseph was the reigning of Jacob.) In Jacob's life, however, we cannot see the calling, justification by faith, and the living by faith. He was a person without faith; he supplanted everything. Moreover, in both Abraham and Jacob we cannot see the inheriting of grace, nor the resting and enjoying. Isaac was one who did not labor and struggle. He just inherited, rested, and enjoyed. In Isaac, however, we cannot see the selection, the calling and the maturity in life.

If we add all the experiences of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob together, we see a clear picture of the complete experience of a called one. In them we see God's selection, God's calling, justification by faith, the living in fellowship with God, the inheriting of grace, the resting and enjoying, the transformation in life, and the maturity in life.

SUMMARY

From Abraham to Joseph, the Bible gives a full picture of a person chosen by God, from being called by God to maturing in life. In Abraham, we see God's calling, justification by faith, living by faith, and dwelling in fellowship with God. In Isaac, we see the inheritance of grace and also the rest and enjoyment gained through grace. In Jacob, we see God's choosing, transformation in life, and maturing in life. In Joseph, we see the aspect of reigning in the maturity of life.

QUESTIONS

1. What experiences of a called one do we see in Abraham?
2. What was the manifestation of Abraham's living by faith?
3. What was the peak of Abraham's experience of God?
4. What experiences of a called one do we see in Isaac?
5. What experiences of a called one do we see in Jacob?
6. What was the common promise God gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?
What was the fulfillment of this promise?
7. Explain why the experiences of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, including Joseph, are the complete experience of a called one.