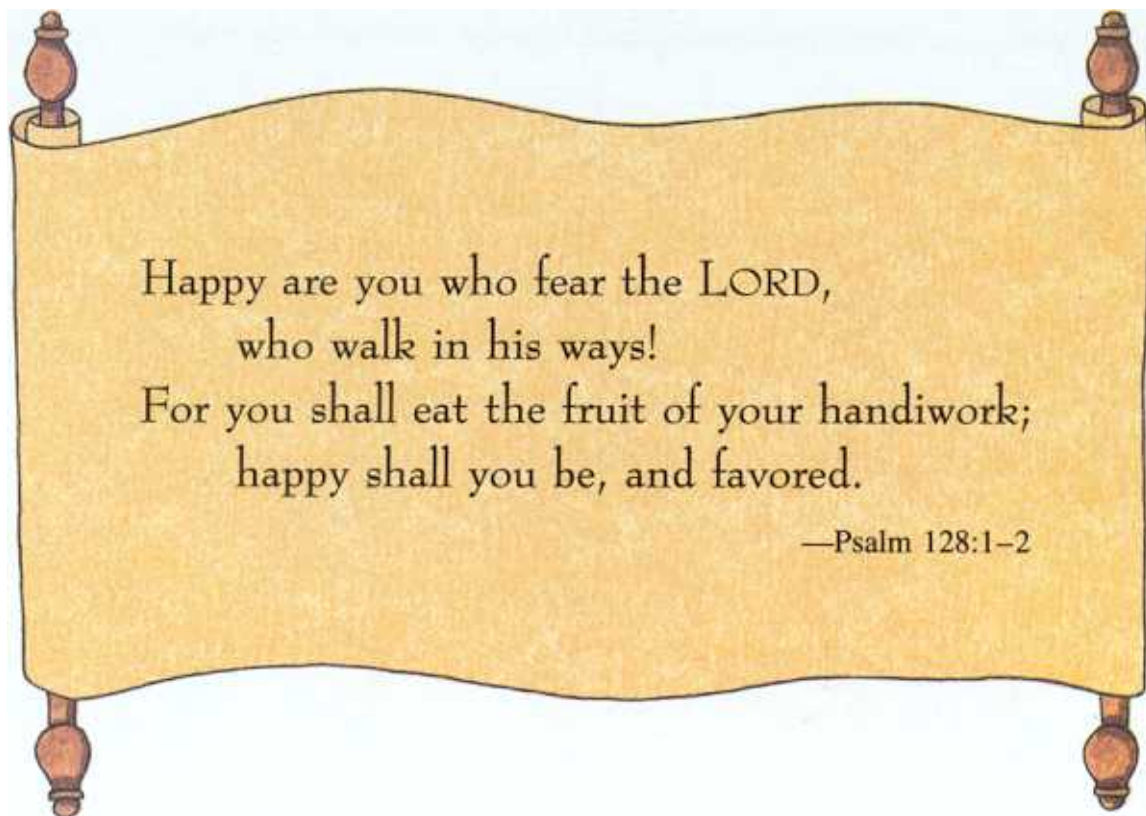


Abraham, Our “Father in Faith”



In the previous lesson, we learned that the people of Babel thought that they could do great things without God. They forgot that God should be the most important Person in their lives. Without God, the people of Babel no longer knew how to act as His images. They became confused and unable to understand one another. Eventually, the people left the city and were scattered all over the earth.

But God loved His people mercifully. In Genesis 12, the Bible focuses on one man, Abram, who later becomes known as Abraham. It is through Abraham that God drew good from the scattering of people from Babel. Through Abraham and the new nation that he formed, God continued His message of merciful love.

Abraham is known as our “father in faith”. In fact, there are three world religions that call Abraham their “father in faith”. Islam, Judaism, and Christianity share the belief that Abraham was called by God to play a special role in the formation of their faiths. In this chapter we will learn how Abraham answered this special call.

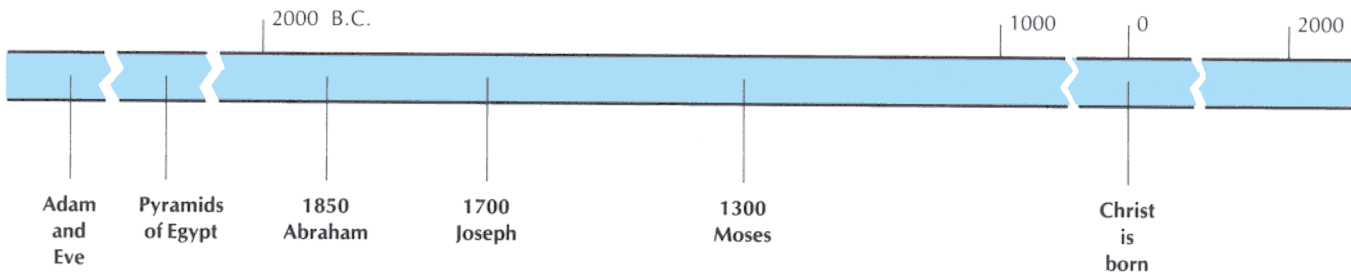
REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did God show His merciful love after the people of Babel were scattered?
2. What three religions call Abraham their “father in faith”?



Abraham's World

Abraham lived nearly four thousand years ago, as you can see by the time-line. Abraham lived approximately one thousand years before Moses and two thousand years before Christ. Although this time period is now studied as ancient history, the culture of the people was quite advanced. Abraham lived in a world of many languages. His world had made much progress in the fields of science, astronomy, law, the arts, trade, and commerce.



Trade routes had been long established, both by land and sea. Though travel was much slower than it is today, neighboring countries shared their knowledge and goods. Metal products, including gold; jewelry; pottery; clothing; food, including grain; exotic fruits; spices—these were all exchanged between countries. Cities were established along trade routes, and many cities expanded to the size of some modern-day cities.

Look at the map on page 78. There are many cities labeled on this map. Throughout the reading of this chapter, the map will help us follow Abraham's journey of faith.

Locate these three cities: Ur, at the southern end of the Euphrates River; Nuzi, on a tributary of the Tigris River; and Ebla, located east of the island of Cyprus. Discoveries in these three cities have told us much about the world in which Abraham lived. Archaeologists have discovered thousands of clay tablets in Ebla and Nuzi. On these tablets were recorded many things about the world of Abraham. Laws, customs, trade agreements, and population counts help us to know more about these early times.

The city of Ur was prosperous. Located on the Euphrates River, it was a major center for commerce and trade. Archaeologists have discovered that Ur was a city with wide streets and large houses. And, as in the cities of Ebla and Nuzi, careful records of commerce, trade, and other business transactions were written down on clay tablets. Abraham was born in Ur. The Bible tells us that Abraham had many possessions and that he was “very rich in livestock, silver, and gold” (Gen 13:2).

Abraham’s world was one that worshiped many gods. The people had forgotten the one true God. Knowledge of the one true God would come to the world again through Abraham.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Approximately how long ago did Abraham live?
2. How have we come to know about Abraham’s world?
3. In what city was Abraham born?
4. Did the people in Abraham’s world know the one true God?

God Calls Abraham

The story of Abraham begins in Genesis 11:31. At first, Abraham was called Abram. “Abram” means “father”. Later on, God changed Abram’s name to “Abraham”, which means “father of many nations”. The name of Abraham’s father was Terah. The family established their home and wealth in the city of Ur (refer to the map on page 78). But after the death of Abraham’s brother, Terah decided to move his family and possessions to the land of Canaan. When Terah and his family arrived at the city of Haran, they settled there. Then Terah died, and Abraham became the head of the family.

The call of Abraham and his journey to the land of Canaan begin when Abraham hears the voice of God.

Read Genesis 12:1–3.

In this passage, God calls Abraham to leave his home. God promises to bless Abraham, to make his name great, and to form a new nation through him.

The Bible immediately continues, in Genesis 12:4, with Abraham’s response to God’s call. “Abram went as the LORD directed him.” Now this was an amazing